



Event: Workshop on Canadian Diaspora in India: Policy Implications for Canada

Participants: 26 government officials, academics, business and NGO representatives

Location: University of the Fraser Valley, Abbotsford, BC.

Date: July 7, 2008

Main conclusions: It was observed that a limited number of Indo-Canadians are moving back to India with Canadian citizenship. While limited, this movement raises a wide-ranging set of policy issues which can only be identified by further research.

Workshop on the Canadian Diaspora in India: Policy Implications for Canada

Summary Report

Prepared by the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada

Introduction

The Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada and the Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies at the University of the Fraser Valley jointly hosted a half-day workshop entitled *Canadian Diaspora in India: Policy Implications for Canada* on July 7, 2008 in Abbotsford, BC.

India is Canada's second largest immigrant source country with an average annual inflow of approximately 30,000 newcomers from India, or 12% of Canadian immigrant inflows (CIC, 2007). This has led to an Indo-Canadian community of over 1 million in Canada (Census, 2006). However, the size and other characteristics of the population of Canadian citizens living in India are not well documented.

The purpose of this workshop was to provide a forum for an initial discussion of Canada's diaspora community in India and its potential economic political, security and cultural impacts. The workshop is also part of APF Canada's three-year project on Canadians Abroad and Transnational Migration which is supported by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the BC Government and the Gordon Foundation.

The names of the 26 participants who attended the workshop are listed in Appendix C. The workshop consisted of four sessions, as shown in Appendix A, namely:

- Background information – what is the Canadians Abroad Project about?
- Canadians in India – status quo and issues?
- What are the implications – economic and cultural?
- What are the implications – political, security and beyond?

The remainder of this summary report is organized in three sections: background information, Canadians in India – status quo and various issues, and suggested topics for further research.

Section One: Background Information

Satwinder Bains and Don DeVoretz co-chaired the workshop. In their opening remarks, the co-chairs welcomed all participants and briefly introduced the Centre of Indo-Canadian Studies at UFV and the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada respectively.

DeVoretz also stated that the number of Canadian citizens living abroad was increasing significantly and that this phenomenon could advance Canadian interests but also prove a liability in the future. APF Canada has begun a comprehensive study on both the causes and consequences of Canadians living abroad, with support from CIC, the BC government and the Gordon Foundation. The project is intended to produce country profiles of Canadians in major diaspora countries including India. He reminded participants that diaspora issues arise in various contexts including, but not limited to, economics, education, security, politics and cultural/social relations.

Kenny Zhang further provided some background information on Canada's diaspora (see Appendix B) and APF's Canadians Abroad Project. He noted that the project's goals are to gain a better understanding of, and share knowledge about the following:

- a) the size, country of residence and characteristics of the Canadians abroad;
- b) the (push-pull) factors underlying the creation of the Canadians abroad;
- c) the economic, fiscal and political implications of a growing body of Canadians abroad; and
- d) Canada's possible policy responses to the Canadians abroad.

Section Two: Canadians in India – Status Quo and Issues

In a roundtable-style discussion, participants offered observations about the Canadian citizens in India through their particular professional or personal experience. A wide range of topics were discussed which touched upon definitions as well as the economic, social and cultural implications of this Canadian diaspora in India.

It was immediately realized that there existed stories of transnational movement of Indo-Canadians which replicated the movements of other foreign-born Canadian citizens (e.g., Hong Kong-Canadians and Lebanese-Canadians).

It was noted that, in order to gain a thorough understanding of the Canadians abroad, we had to distinguish between Canadian citizens by birth and naturalized Canadians, as issues may differ for the two groups. In particular, for many foreign-born (naturalized) Canadians, living abroad is perhaps an issue of return migration. Thus, if an immigrant is not satisfied after spending time in Canada, one option is to return to the country of their birth or move to a third country. Thus Canada's immigrant selection policy and settlement programs are significant conditioners of the growth in this portion of Canada's diaspora. Given this context, the following questions arose:

- What kind of immigrants does Canada really seek?
- Can the current point selection system attract the immigrants needed to fill Canadian labour market shortages and not lead to cab-drivers with PhDs?

In addition, it was noted that the transnational nature of the Canadian diaspora in India also reflects the individual/family's strategic planning at different stages of their life/business circle. For example:

- Some Indo-Canadian families desire to raise children in India, even if they were born in Canada, to expose them to Indian culture, and then move them back to Canada at around nine years of age so that they can benefit from western education and avoid discrimination by being culturally both Indian and Canadian.
- Some Indo-Canadians have successfully achieved their objectives after moving to Canada and then return home.
- Some Indo-Canadians obtain Canadian citizenship and then move to take advantage of this new convenient passport.
- Some families are split: men remain in India to secure a good job while their wives and children reside in Canada so that their children can benefit from being Canadian.
- In some occupations or businesses, western experience is crucial for a successful career path. Thus some Indian immigrants come to Canada to gain North American experience and then move to where their North American experience is more valued. Some businesses are created by Indian immigrant entrepreneurs in Canada to stimulate expansion. Once the business matures, expansion in the Indian market is sought.

Some participants noted that the Canadian diaspora in India is a completely new research arena in terms of the diaspora literature. Thus some critical comments were offered:

- The concept of a Canadian diaspora needs to be defined carefully in order to avoid confusion with the more traditional concept of the diaspora.
- The length of time spent living in India needs to be defined clearly in order to classify who is a part of the Canadian diaspora. Should six months plus one day, or a year plus one day, or even longer, be used as a criterion?
- The literature is biased - migration literature favours American case studies, examples and issues. Similar studies in the Canadian and Indian contexts need to be undertaken.

There is a need to disentangle the reasons for leaving in the Canadian context – even the regional Canadian context. For example:

- Are there different integration policies and successful retention rates across Canadian cities or provinces?
- Are there different emigration rates by Canadian regions or cities?
- Are Canadian citizenship policies too permissive in terms of facilitating transnational movements of immigrants?
- Indo-Canadians may leave Canada for emotional reasons.
 - For example, leaving Canada to set up a school in Goa in order to give back to Indian society. This resonates even with Indo-Canadians who are generations removed from India
- Indo-Canadians may also leave for economic/social status reasons.
 - Why leave a life in India where you have servants to come to Canada to *be* a servant? So that children benefit from Western opportunities?

In the Indian context, some issues were cited as important to understand the reasons why Indo-Canadians move back to India:

- North vs. South: differences between regions of origin of Indian immigrants lead to different economic and social outcomes in Canada.

- Economic vs. family class: Indian immigrants who enter through economic class are more likely to respond to the economic opportunities in India where the GDP growth is now among the highest in the world. Those immigrants who enter Canada through the family class stream may have little desire to go back to India for family reasons because their families are all in Canada. (India is a class-stratified society, and many lower income or marginalized people from India come to Canada then try to bring their entire families to join them. Indians who come to Canada from high social classes are more migratory in nature and more likely to return as they retain familiar ties and bonds in India.)
- Historical vs. contemporary: it may be worth looking at historical perspectives on Indian immigration to Canada. The phenomenon of return to India may be associated with earlier immigration patterns to Canada. Thus the historical perspective could help in understanding the motivation to move.
- Old vs. young generations: it is important to establish an age profile of people moving back to India. Is youth going back too?

Section Three: Topics for Future Research

Almost every participant around the table suggested one or more research question(s) to the APF project team to examine and address in the future about Canadians living in India.

1.) Why is the Canadian diaspora an issue?

- Is the building of a Canadian diaspora in India a real problem, or just a natural and inevitable result of globalization?
- Who stands to benefit from this research?
- Do highly skilled Indian immigrants in Canada owe a debt to India, i.e., should they eventually return to India?

2.) Settlement and departure

- Why do immigrants leave?
- Who goes back to India? Is there a differential pattern of leaving between entry streams of immigrants?
- What are the push factors affecting the Indo-Canadian citizens' decision to leave BC/Canada?
- Can settlement services be improved to dissuade new Canadians from leaving?
- Should there be an educational component added to settlement services? Sometimes we do not realize what skills immigrants have to offer and there are obstacles to overcome in the recognition of foreign credentials and the more efficient use of newly-acquired Canadian skills sets.
- Are there policy lessons to be learned from a comparative analysis of integration/retention policies between Canadian urban centres?
- Should we conduct regional studies of the Lower Mainland to start, or a comparative analysis of urban centres – Greater Vancouver, Greater Toronto, Greater Montreal, Greater Calgary, etc. It was noted that Dr. Kristen Good from Dalhousie University has already done extensive research on multicultural integration policy as part of her dissertation from the University of Toronto and has a book forthcoming on the subject.
- What changes can be made to Canadian retention/immigration policies *before* immigrants arrive? Perhaps over-qualified cab drivers and janitors could be employed by the government to offer English language training to older Indian immigrants?
- Does Canada's immigration policy devalue older immigrants? Are older Canadian citizens returning to India because their work is not truly valued?

- The government is not valuing the stabilizing benefit of older immigrants. Some hidden socio-economic benefits derived from older immigrants include:
 - work in the underground economy
 - child care
 - education
- Does Canada's immigrant maintenance and support policy need to be revised?

3.) Motivation for leaving

- Are Canadians following business interests globally?
- Why are Indo-Canadians going back when the same businesses operate in Canada and India?
- Do immigrants have an exit strategy when they plan to immigrate to Canada?
- How can Canada lure immigrants back?
- What will be the effect of India's Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs policy on the Canadian diaspora in India?
- Are marginalized people prone to emigration?
 - Can we use this to inform policy makers?
 - We should seek media attention.

4.) Consequences of leaving

- Does the socio-economic status of foreign-born Canadian citizens change after they leave Canada? In other words, did they leave India poor, become Canadian citizens, and then return to India better off economically than they were before immigrating to Canada?
- What types of economic linkages does the Canadian diaspora have with Canada? What can be done to strengthen these linkages?
- What are the connections between migration/diaspora and family life?
 - Do arranged marriages facilitate movements of entire families?
 - Challenging social roles based on power relationships
 - How does one deal with "split" families and return migration?

5.) Canada's role in the world

- Do Canadians abroad have an impact on the host societies? (for example, gender issues in the Punjab). Are so-called "Canadian values" being transmitted to other societies? Does the diaspora result in institutional changes? (for example, the British and the Indian tend to build museums).
- Are foreign-born Canadian citizens learning and adopting these "Canadian" values in other societies?
- What are the cultural effects of being "Canadian" in India? Do foreign-born Canadians think differently about society, politics and people?

6.) Indian experience

- Since India has created a Ministry devoted to overseas Indians, can we learn policy lessons on the study of Canadian diaspora groups from the Indian government?

7.) Research methods

- Use of focus groups and large sample groups will be necessary to provide convincing evidence to the public and government.
- Questionnaire first, followed by detailed case studies.
- Industrial case studies (Harvard Business Review style), including the following sectors:
 - IT and Software
 - mining
 - hydroelectricity

- manufacturing
- agriculture

Wrap-up and Final Thoughts

It was announced that participants and their communities will be kept informed of the progress of the project. The project will welcome research ideas and proposals in the Indian context for grant opportunities. Appeal to identify “famous” Canadians living in India for the project website is open to all participants and others.

Appendix A: Workshop Program

Workshop on “Canadian Diaspora in India: Policy Implications for Canada”

Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies, University of the Fraser Valley
33844 Kind Road, Abbotsford, BC
Monday, July 7, 2008

Program

Workshop Moderator: Don DeVoretz, APF Canada

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|---------------|--|
| 11:00-11:15am | Welcome & Opening Remarks
- Satwinder Bains, Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies
- Don DeVoretz, APF Canada |
| 11:15-11:30 | Briefing on APF Project on Canadian Diaspora
- Kenny Zhang, APF Canada |
| 11:30-12:30 | Roundtable: Canadians in India – Status Quo and Issues? |
| 12:30-1:00 | Lunch Break |
| 1:00-2:00pm | Policy Roundtable 1: What are the implications – economic and cultural? |
| 2:00-2:15 | Coffee break |
| 2:15-3:15 | Policy Roundtable 2: What are the implications – political, security and beyond? |
| 3:15-3:30 | Wrap-up and Future Directions |

Appendix B: Background Information on the Canadian Diaspora

- An estimated 2.7 million Canadian citizens currently live abroad, of which
 - The majority of 44% live in the U.S., followed by 24% in Asia
 - Nearly 70% are Canadian citizens by birth, and 30% by naturalization
 - While living abroad, two-thirds still call Canada home and 69% intend to return to Canada
 - Ontario (40%), British Columbia (30%) and Quebec (12%) are major home provinces of Canadian diaspora

- Following career opportunities is the dominant reason motivating Canadians to reside abroad

- Nearly 30% are working abroad for Canadian entities, and another 27% for international organizations or multinational entities

- Two-thirds of Canadians at home (67%) believe that 2.7 million Canadian citizens living abroad is a good thing for Canada:
 - likely to be good ambassadors for Canada (39%)
 - will bring home valuable experiences (22%)
 - useful for Canadians to learn about other parts of the world (21%)
 - strengthens Canada's role in the world (15%)
 - spreads Canadian values (8%)

- One in six (16%) believe having so many Canadian citizens living in other countries is a problem:
 - Canadian citizens should simply be required to live on Canadian soil (23%)
 - free-riding, i.e. take advantage of Canadian public services without paying for them (16%)
 - Canadian abroad expect the Canadian government to help them when they are in trouble (10%)
 - do not pay Canadian taxes (10%)
 - general disloyalty to the country (10%)

Sources: APF Canada, 2006 and 2007; Environics Research, 2008

Appendix C: List of Participants

Parm Bains

President & CEO
Westberry Foods Inc

CEO

Progressive Intercultural Community
Services Society
Surrey, BC

Satwinder Bains

Director
Centre for Indo Canadian Studies
University of the Fraser Valley

Norm Gill

Family Outreach Worker

John Belec

Geography: Cross Border Studies
University of the Fraser Valley

Madhavee Inamdar

Researcher
City of Coquitlam, BC

Francois Bertrand

Senior Policy Advisor
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Multiculturalism and Immigration
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Sumeet Jammu

Student
University of the Fraser Valley

Noman Deng

Consultant
Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada

Parashar Malla

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Don DeVoretz

Senior Fellow
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Nicola Mooney

Anthropology
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Dildeep Singh Dhillon

Computer Technology

Anne Murphy

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University of British Columbia

Cherie Enns

Geography: Community Planning and
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University of the Fraser Valley

Arti Nanavati

Professor of Economics and Director
Centre for Canadian Studies
The Maharaja Sayajirao University of
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Garry Fehr

Geography
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Zareen Naqvi

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University of the Fraser Valley

Charan Gill

Ram Singh Padwal

Retired Professor

University of Saskatoon

Jatinder Sidhu
Sidhu Group

Ajay Parasram
Post Graduate Research Fellow
Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada

Kusum Soni
Multicultural Settlement Worker
Immigrant & Multicultural Services
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