

CONSTRUCTIONS OF HOME: A STUDY OF TRANSNATIONAL PROFESSIONALS IN HYDERABAD

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Abstract: For many immigrants, returning home is a prospect they cherish and one that sustains them during their migration history. With a number of different ties with their home country, they keep their aspirations alive. Though many are seen to be making multiple multiples over a period of time, some will return home and others will not, some will move to a new destination, while others will be caught up in a cycle of circular migration. But though return migration forms a major component of migratory flows, knowledge of it is still in fragments. Return migration describes a situation where migrants return to their country of origin by their own choice, often after a significant period abroad. The need for revisiting the concept of homeland and diaspora is also due to the massive growth of movements of people across nations and continents. Millions of people are always on the move and they no longer reside at a common homeland. They travel to far-off places but still are connected with one another in various significant ways. People find homes through habitual interactions, memories, myths and stories that they have had. They have attachments towards both the host and the country of origin and thus get anchored in both the locations.

Keywords: Return Migration, Home, Professionals, Information Technology, Hyderabad

I. INTRODUCTION

The world has been transformed by the process of globalization. States, societies, economies and cultures in different regions of the world are increasingly integrated and interdependent. As a result of the globalisation process, global communications networks provide people with the information they need to move from one place to another. Global transportation networks have made it much faster and cheaper to cross the globe. The subsequent growth of global social networks and diasporas have made it easier for people to move to another country and adapt to a new society. New technologies enable the rapid transfer of capital, goods, services, information and ideas from one country and continent to another. The global economy is expanding, providing millions of women, men and their children with better opportunities in life. It has also heard of many success stories: migrants who have gained new skills while working abroad and who have returned to their own country and established successful businesses.

The reasons that stimulate people to migrate are numerous and operate in complex and interactive ways at individual, family and socio-economic levels. The dissemination of information and lower transportation costs increased labour mobility and the creation of transnational communities. All countries in the world have experienced some degree of international migrations. Increasing globalization and integration of international economy facilitated by communication and transport revolutions have been contributing to this trend. Migration has been taking place amidst increasing global economic, political and social integration, which has been accompanied by the greater speed and ease on international transportation and communication. And as a result of improved international 'communications and media networks migrants can now stay in close touch with those left behind and keep up with news, events, and even television programs back home' (Tsuda, 1999: 1). Human mobility is likely to assume even greater significance in the future. With increased transnational capital movements and globalization of trade in goods and services, people too can be expected to move across national boundaries with a greater frequency than ever before in what has been described as the 'age of migration' (Castells and Miller, 1998).

A better understanding of the processes of geographical mobility can enable more comprehensive insights into issues such as economic restructuring, globalization, development and social polarization. And apart from all its relationships with these 'macro' processes, human migration also reflects numerous interconnected 'micro' processes in society such as changes in housing markets, family structures, work routines and less tangible changes in individuals experience.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of Home:

The world is now expressed as a global village without boundaries owing to the developments in all the spheres of life that has altered the lives of people. The growth of world-wide markets and improvements in information technologies have made nations to prosper and individuals more cosmopolitan (Levy and Weingrod, 2005). The need for revisiting the concept of homeland and diaspora is also due to the massive growth of movements of people across nations and continents. Millions of people are always on the move and they no longer reside at a common homeland. They travel to far-off places but still are connected with one another in various significant ways.

Janine (2008) explains how people experience home in different ways-as concrete fixed locations, as specific practices and routines, as social relationships, or as emotional connections and symbolic concepts. Blunt (2005), 'Home can be a residence, place or where one's family is, it can also be nostalgic past or a utopian future'. Janine talks of how home, spatially, can exist as a house, neighbourhood, city, nation or region. Temporarily, home can be developed through activities, habits and knowledge that differentiate some places from others. Socially, home constitutes established social relations that validate an individual as a human

being or a collection of people as a group. Symbolically, home develops through the investment of resources, emotional commitment or meaning, familiarity with past actions and future intentions and the expression of personal or group identities. For Terkenli (1995), home is therefore not necessarily a fixed place or even a mode; it is also about relationships to both people and things. Thus, the importance of different aspects of home may be quite fluid or even confusing and can change as spatial and temporal proximity changes. Blunt and Varley (2008: 123), suggests that 'home must be understood not just as fixed and bounded location, but as: 'traversing scales from the domestic to the global in both material and symbolic ways...and located on thresholds between memory and nostalgia for the past, everyday life in the present and future dreams and fears'. Janine describes how the infusion of imaginative and symbolic meaning makes a physical location or everyday relationships, practices and objects a home.

Nowicka (2007) discusses how mobility challenges the notion of home. Taking the case of mobile professionals who are always on the move, travelling continuously on a regular basis, the notion of home has been contested. Going beyond the notion that home is a fixed location; he describes how professionals have constructed the notion of home under constant mobility. Home has been considered as a given and fixed in earlier studies amongst mobile professionals, but focusing on the relationship between mobility and place, they are and feel at 'home in the world'. Describing the construction of home after settling down in a new place and how mobility and resettlement influence the way they construct a home environment. It was found that individuals adapt to new places and do not miss their previous locations. Their mobile lifestyle affects the way they construct/achieve security, stability and familiarity under conditions of temporality, flexibility and anxiety.

People find homes through habitual interactions, memories, myths and stories that they have had. They have attachments towards both the host and the country of origin and thus get anchored in both the locations. Home should be understood as the focal point of particular kinds of relations (Nowicka 2007:73). Home should be understood as secondary to social relations and a dynamic process of localizing a particular kind of relationships. It does not exist prior to identities but acts as an integral part. Thus, home should be considered as an open space, as relatively open and porous. Home is not a fixed location as it is both a place where one grows up and it is also something which one constructs. Building up a home in a new place offers new ideals and patterns of what 'home' meant as it opens up new horizons and allows one to adopt different kinds of things for creating one's own. The new place, different from one's own brings a conscious organization of home. Home cannot be limited to a single site, as being at home transcends the boundaries, not only objects but also the surroundings which are equally important of being at home.

Sahay (2009) pointed out that in all of the literature on return migration, there exist some underlying assumptions about return: the first assumption views return as temporary, the second as permanent and lastly where return is chosen owing to different factors like failure or homesickness. Migration studies relating to return draw our attention to the different typologies of return migration keeping in mind the differences between migrants intending their departure to be permanent and also those who intend it to be temporary.

Goulbourne (1999) has defined return as 'not a permanent or static feature but is rather a recurring and dynamic process. India is particularly important source country for skilled migration in sectors such as IT, engineering and health care. In recent years, India has also 'experienced increased incidence of return migration and a growing role of overseas Indians in its economy, especially in sectors such as IT and business process outsourcing (BPO)' (Chanda and Sreenivasan 2006: 215). They claim that these trends have mainly been spurred by the phenomenal growth of these sectors in India in the past 5-10 years, including the presence of important multinationals and growing employment opportunities. Brought out the differences in the earlier and the present studies, while the earlier studies dating to 1960s and 1970s focused on the brain drain and loss of public subsidies in higher education, the present studies are now dealing with understanding the impact of skilled migration through brain circulation, in terms of contributions in skill and technology transfer, FDI and startup capital, diaspora networks and return migration.

India is witnessing large droves of graduates and other Indian technologists who were previously working abroad, and as Wadhwa (2010) pointed out, they started returning in small numbers in the 1980s and 1990s and fuelled the early growth of India's IT industry, driving the subcontinent to become the world's system administrator. He further pointed out that since 2000, hundreds of global multinationals have set up research labs in India to capitalize on cheap but highly skilled labor and to move closer to emerging markets in Asia. He further expressed that with the US economic downturn and political pressure, stopping this drain will be challenging and as a research by their team at Duke, Harvard and Berkeley Universities has shown, smart Indians and Chinese are now leaving for a broad combination of professional and cultural reasons. The desires to be closer to friends, family and comfortable lifestyles now easily available in their countries are strong drivers. Of all these factors, the most important factor driving their return is a strong belief that they will have brighter professional and economic futures at home, regardless of politics or even a rebounding US economy (Wadhwa 2010: 21). The study further revealed that most foreign national students now express little desire to settle in the US, many said to have preferred to return to their home country to start a business or build a career.

Due to the economic liberalization, there is the emergence of job opportunities in the Indian labour market at various sectors. The highly-skilled professional Indians who had earlier gone abroad in search of better educational and professional opportunities are now starting to make a move back owing to the changing scene. The highly skilled are moving back to reap the good that has come out of the liberalization process and the booming of the Indian economy. India once viewed migration of educated individuals as brain drain are now reaping benefits in the form of brain gain owing to the huge exodus of people including the highly skilled individuals who are returning home after having some foreign exposure. Their 'return is now being seen as 'brain gain' for the source country, as return migrants come back with improved levels of knowledge and technical skills, i.e., human capital' (Khadria 229: 73). Owing to the stable growth of the Indian economy, not only is the outflow of high-skill professionals from India expected to decline, there is a hype about enhanced return migration to India (Khadria 2009: 134).

Although much of the skilled migration from India to the developed countries has tended to be permanent in nature, increasingly, there is a reversal of such flows (Chanda and Sreenivasan 2007: 231). They opined that the recent slowdown in the US economy and the bursting of the tech bubble coupled with the growing business and employment opportunities in India, return migration to India is on the rise. The Indian IT and BPO industries are playing an instrumental role in driving return flows to India.

According to NASSCOM, between 2001 and 2004, roughly 25, 000 Indian IT professionals settled abroad have returned to India. In spite of the fact that these numbers are small, the point to be noted is that they are rising. It is estimated that around 6, 000-7, 000 technology professionals returned to India in 2001 and that this figure could be anywhere around 8, 000-10, 000 in 2004. Furthermore, according to NASSCOM sources, reverse migration is not restricted to the IT industry but also visible in the financial services sector (Hindu Business Line, Dec 16, 2004).

The growing interest in returning to India is indicated by the results of a recent online survey of Indian American executives in US corporations. According to the findings of the survey, 68 percent said that they were actively looking into opportunities for returning back to India, 12 percent said that they were returning to India, and an equal percentage noted that they were open to exploring such ideas. The survey found that many who came to the US in the 1970s, 1980s and even the 1990s were planning to go back to India (Oberois, July 21, 2004). Recent recession and the rise in unemployment in North America is an important reason for the increased return migration and also the improving economic conditions in India are also spurring return migration (Chanda and Sreenivasan 2006: 232). They are of the view that many overseas Indians want to return in order to contribute to and participate in India's growing and dynamic economy, such as by providing research and leadership skills in its growing outsourcing market. They further pointed out that overseas Indians are increasingly viewing employment opportunities in India as being comparable to those in the US, especially since off-shoring activities are on the rise and leading companies like Intel and IBM are now doing cutting edge work in India.

The 21st century has witnessed a change in the brain drain pattern that most experts had never expected to take place as soon as pointed out by Batra (2007). She pointed out that, backed by a booming economy, Indian companies and MNCs with branches in India, started offering young Indians salaries that were unheard of until even a decade ago. Bangalore and Hyderabad quickly gained the reputation of global IT hubs and as a result, some of India's brightest skilled labour remained in and returned to these cities to work. Rohan Bhargava was working as a computer engineer at one of the country's leading IT firms and returned to India only when he realised that the current opening at a job search was offering better opportunities as the difference in income in America and India was negligible and secondly because it was important for him to work in an environment that offers a tremendous scope for growth and he saw more growth in the Indian economy that anywhere else in the world (Batra 2007: 2).

Return Migration: A new perspective

For many immigrants, returning home is a prospect they cherish and one that sustains them during their migration history. With a number of different ties with their home country, they keep their aspirations alive. Though many are seen to be making multiple multiples over a period of time, some will return home and others will not, some will move to a new destination, while others will be caught up in a cycle of circular migration. But though return migration forms a major component of migratory flows, knowledge of it is still in fragments and as Feindt and Browning (1972) defined return migration is a significant but insufficiently studied phenomenon. The main motivation for emigration is generally economic, the reasons for return are numerous, complex and sometimes contradictory (Conde, 1989). Both individual and societal factors play a role in effecting the homeward flow of emigrants. Returning home does not necessarily mean the end of the migration pathway nor is it always final.

Return migration describes a situation where migrants return to their country of origin by their own choice, often after a significant period abroad (Dustmann and Weiss, 2007). What is the scope and nature of return migration? Are young people, women or skilled workers more likely to return home? Why do some migrants settle permanently in the host country, while others choose to stay only a short time? What role should immigration policies play in this respect? For International Migration Outlook (2008; 163), while return can be defined as the situation where a migrant goes back to his home country after living in another country for some period of time, the definition will often conceal more complex situations (secondary or repeat migration, temporary or return, etc.). The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD, 1998), has defined returning migrants as, persons who are returning to their country of citizenship after having been international migrants (whether short-term or long-term) in another country and who are intending to stay in their own country for at least a year. According to this definition, a migrant's home country refers to his nationality, however for persons born abroad and naturalised and for those born as foreigners in the host country, a definition based exclusively on the country of nationality does not seem appropriate as differences in the legislation may pose problems of international comparability. Thus the country of birth as the criterion for identifying returning migrants will be taken into account.

The contributions of the return migrants to their origin country may result from a combination of the resources they transfer upon their return; they bring back with them the education and working experience they acquired abroad. Secondly they may come back with financial capital in the form of savings and they may also have specific social capital obtained from their migration experience. IMO (2008) espouses that return migration can have a positive impact in the form of creating new businesses by the returnees and help improve the functioning of markets in their home country. They can also help in fostering the transfer of adoption of new technologies. For many of the migrants, 'return allows them to capitalise on the skills they have acquired abroad by landing a more highly skilled job than they could have hoped for had they stayed at home' (IMO, 2008).

The dynamics of the globalising cities in India and the opportunities they offer now draw skilled immigrants homeward. Well educated and affluent first generation Indian expatriates are returning to India to take advantage of new job opportunities and to strengthen their connections with their heritage. Returning immigrants bring with them skills, connections and capital that helped thrust the Indian IT industry to the forefront. They are also involved in improving the physical and social infrastructure of their hometowns not only with capital but with personal involvement, helping the cities and communities from which they originated. The rising number and strength of transnational linkages forged by returning immigrants in Hyderabad is mirrored in the global connections of firms, services and institutions located in the city. National, state and city government as well as private enterprise have also been instrumental in promoting transnational ties that are economic, social and cultural in nature.

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

Objectives:

- To understand why people return back. What were the reasons behind their decision to return?

- The very notion of 'home' to these sets of people as they have been traversing through multiple locations and what does it mean for them to be 'at home'

Methodology:

This study is designed to make an assessment of return migrants to attain the objectives specified above. Thus the perception of respondents was obtained from a qualitative investigation on the basis of snowball sampling. Respondents were drawn from returnees who have moved back to India after staying abroad for a minimum of 5 years and above and presently living and working in Hyderabad. An analytical questionnaire was prepared prior where data was gathered. The instrument consisted of questions designed to provide information determining the explanations and analysis in relation to return migration and their concept and notion of home as they have been traversing multiple locations with the purpose of attaining the objectives. Secondary materials such as books, articles, journals and electronic materials were also reviewed for the compilation of the study.

Respondents were drawn from those who have stayed anywhere outside of India for a minimum of 5 years and above and is presently living and working in Hyderabad. 35 respondents were approached in their offices, homes and through other contacts, as convenient to the respondents and they were interviewed basing on the questionnaire. The study is therefore based on the data collected from only these 35 respondents as the researcher could not locate more of them. Attempts were made to capture respondents from different occupational mix in order to enrich the insights and minimize the bias that may result from selecting a particular group.

IV. FINDINGS

Out of the 35 respondents, the majority are male (27) and (8) are female, married and falls in the age group of 36-40. All the 35 respondents are graduates and out of which 25 of them also possess post graduates and other higher qualifications.

Majority of the respondents went abroad either for education and work, stayed overseas ranging from 5-33 years, and the maximum number of them (27) returned from the US and the rest from different other locations across the globe.

Self-motivation, family and friends are the biggest motivating factors responsible for going abroad. Better job opportunities, gaining professional experience and higher studies were the immediate purposes/reasons for going abroad for the maximum number of respondents.

The top factor emerging or responsible for going abroad was better infrastructure and career opportunities abroad and the major push factor for going abroad was limited career opportunities in India. Majority of them worked at different places overseas and the top reason was better opportunities.

The maximum number of respondents (22) has the Indian passport, while the rest (13) has the citizenship of other countries. 12 respondents have the OCI card and 1 has the PIO card, the rest has the Indian passport.

The maximum number of respondents returned to Hyderabad, India between 1998-2009 and they have been living in Hyderabad after return for 1-11 years. In trying to understand the motives behind choosing Hyderabad as their return destination, respondents were asked if they belonged to Hyderabad, worked or stayed in Hyderabad before. 23 belong to Hyderabad, 10 have worked in Hyderabad earlier, 2 does not belong to Hyderabad but have worked in Hyderabad earlier before emigration and the rest 10 respondents are the first timers to work in Hyderabad after return.

The top factor emerging or responsible for returning to Hyderabad as their return destination is family and relatives in Hyderabad. The one ultimate factor responsible for coming back to India for majority of the respondents was because of family obligations. It was a post-emigration decision for the majority of the respondents, self motivation and family are seen as the two most important factors that prompted the respondents to come back.

For the majority of them, their work experience overseas and knowledge and skills gained overseas are the two most important contributions that have benefitted them in their current work. For the majority of the respondents, they are often travelling overseas after their return for projects and assignments of the company.

Majority of the respondents are living with their parents and families after their return and almost all of them are still in touch with their friends and colleagues abroad through mail/phones, social visits and networking sites.

The maximum number of respondents said that they may go abroad either temporarily or permanently. Majority of the respondents opined that migration at this stage is not a brain drain and they all agreed that there should not be any restriction from country as it is democratic and that putting restrictions will only harm the country. All the respondents opined that the country is definitely benefitting from the international migration of the skilled. Majority of the respondents agreed that return migration is taking place in the country and they also believe that development is taking place because of return migration. The majority also opined that the gap of living standards, salaries and facilities at the work place between the origin and destination countries have narrowed down to a certain extent.

Negotiating entry into an old society as well as adjusting to familiar socio-cultural settings and their structures is an integral part of returnee experiences. It involves tremendous efforts on the part of the returnees to come to terms with the society they have encountered early on and the challenges, difficulties and opportunities the new phase of life is ushering. The process of renegotiating entry is about the right to establish a 'home' in the receiving society while renegotiation of the series of changes and adjustments mentioned is about the process of creating a 'home' and becoming of place. The 'home' here refers to a complex set of relationships that make acting possible and meaningful through shared understandings and shared interpretations of actions, as Xenos (1996) put it.

People organize their experiences in different settings in order to negotiate a place for themselves. They are always on the move and feel at home everywhere, not having any affinity to any place whatsoever. The returnees are welcomed to their 'homeland' with rights, opportunities and possibilities to reinvent their lives all over again. They are offered incentives and opportunities to start their lives all over again in the place they once called their own.

In the traditional settler migration model, migration is a once-in-a-lifetime change of country of residence. Home is understood as a single localized place often associated with the migrant's country of origin. However, in today's highly globalised world, 'migrants can maintain intensive contacts and multi-stranded relations that link together their societies of origin and destination.

People find homes through habitual interactions, memories, myths and stories that they have had. They have attachments towards both the host and the country of origin and thus get anchored in both the locations. Home should be considered as an open space, as relatively open and porous. Home is not a fixed location as it is both a place where one grows up and it is also something which one constructs. Building a home in a new place offers new ideals and patterns and opens up new horizons and allows one to adopt different kinds of things for creating one's own. The new place, different from one's own brings a conscious organization of home. Home cannot be limited to a single site, as being at home transcends the boundaries, not only objects but also the surroundings which are equally important of being at home.

V. CONCLUSION

Depending on the study, respondents moved back owing to various factors ranging from familial obligations to the welfare of their children, better economic opportunities, and also owing to the changing landscape of India, the various industries mushrooming after liberalization and opening up of the market to the outside world. For the majority of them it was a post-emigration decision, while for some, it was pre-emigration decision while for some it was an unexpected one. The expectations and plans of almost all the respondents have been fulfilled and they all are satisfied with their current personal and professional lives in India. When it comes to their plans, they are willing to go overseas for various factors, for personal, professional reasons, for some, they are not sure as to whether they wish to settle there permanently but are willing to go for certain number of years, for some, they do not have any plans as such. The majority of them is in touch with their overseas contacts through various avenues and makes occasional visits too. Though majority of them are no longer member of any associations and networks overseas, they are in touch with their professional networks through phone, mails and participating in various seminars and conferences. They are all concerned about the basic infrastructure in India, they lament that the basic infrastructure are not paid necessary attention and thus most people who are contemplating return seem to consider this as one of the factors they consider when planning their return journey. Hygiene, environment, pollution, transportation and corruption at various levels are some of the vices that they struggle to at every phase. They opined that the government should pay attention to building industries similar to IT so as to pull in people from various other sectors. Granting dual citizenship is also seen as a good avenue for some of the respondents, tax benefits to those who are investing here. Improve the educational scenario in India as it is seen that majority are going out of the country so as to get better and quality education in some of the best universities outside of the country.

Home is probably the initial place with which we identify ourselves with and an important place often taken for granted. A critical understanding of the concept of home suggests that it is not merely a physical, well-defined place. Rather it is a complex idea acquiring multiple associations that change in time and space. While transnational families and communities have existed for centuries, the increasingly affordable transportation and telecommunication technologies in the current age of globalization have enabled most migrants to stay better in touch with their families and friends in different parts of the world. Home is defined by one's location and in today's world the transnational population has the ability to be comfortable with multiple identities and homes in two or more different continents.

Thus, home should be considered as an open space, as relatively open and porous. Home is not a fixed location as it is both a place where one grows up and it is also something which one constructs. Building up a home in a new place offers new ideals and patterns of what 'home' meant as it opens up new horizons and allows one to adopt different kinds of things for creating one's own. The new place, different from one's own brings a conscious organization of home. Home cannot be limited to a single site, as being at home transcends the boundaries, not only objects but also the surroundings which are equally important of being at home.

Limitations of the study:

Locating returnees in the community at large is costly and time consuming especially because there is no such statistics as to how many are 'returning' back and under which category. Secondly, there is no such association, directory or other efficient means enabling one to locate the returnees without difficulty.

The study thus used a snowball technique to select respondents and collected the data. Attempts were made to capture respondents from different occupational mix in order to enrich the insights and minimize the bias that may result from selecting a particular group. It could also be noted that snowballing sampling technique may not always be representative of the wider population of returnees.

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