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

Co-financed by the European Union

Indian Migrants in France: Country Report

Christine Moliner

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Developing a knowledge base for policymaking on India-EU migration

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Indian Migrants in France:
country report

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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

Indian migration in France is remarkable for its diversity and social invisibility.

Indian migrants belong to a wide spectrum of religious, ethnic, linguistic and social backgrounds and their migration routes to France are multiple : one can roughly distinguish between French speaking groups linked to France by the colonial past and more recent migrants from Panjab and Gujerat who ended in France because they could not migrate to the UK. Unskilled labour predominates among the first generation of non-French speaking migrants, but the second generation, supplemented by highly qualified professionals from India, start entering the job-market with qualifications.

Few in numbers, Indians tend also to be invisible as migrants for the general public and in academic research –the latter traditionally focusing on formerly colonised migrants.

India benefits from a good image in France, and Indians tend to be considered as a model minority

Introduction

A recent and little studied phenomenon, Indian migration to France is unique in its diversity. It includes both direct migrants from India and twice-migrants from the Indian Ocean, French-speaking Indians from the former French colonial possession Pondicherry and Indians with no historical or cultural connections to their host country. Some migrants are highly skilled the majority are, meanwhile, unskilled labour.

Because of a traditional focus on former colonial migrants from Africa or Southern Europe, Indian migrants in France have been under-studied and correspondingly, they tend to be invisible in the collective imagination. This invisibility also has political advantages in a context where migrants have faced increasing stigmatisation. Economically successful, Indian migrants see themselves as a model minority, and they benefit from the good reputation of their home country.

The term “Indian” refers to a socio-historical construct that covers more ground than is commonly understood. Besides direct migrants from India, it includes migrants of Indian origin who were born in the Indian Ocean Islands (Mauritius, La Réunion, Madagascar), in the West Indies (Martinique and Guadelupe) and in South East Asia (Cambodia and Vietnam).

Moreover, “Indian” and “Hindu” are frequently used interchangeably in contemporary French popular usage, and they often refer to South Asians who are neither Indians nor Hindus (such as Pakistanis and Bangladeshis).

This terminological fuzziness contributes to the lack of social awareness about these unknown minority groups.

- A brief history of Indian migration to France.

Indian migration to France is a centuries-old phenomenon: indeed, as early as the seventeenth century, a few *lascars* (seamen) and *ayahs* (domestic helps) found their way to France¹. Later in the nineteenth century, Paris became a fashionable destination for Maharajahs, the Indian intelligentsia and businessmen involved in the silk and precious stones trades. The latter, originating mostly from Gujerat, settled with their families in Paris in the 1920s thus forming the nucleus of an Indian community, with the creation of professional associations and the celebration of Hindu festivals². They were supplemented by Indians from the French Island of Madagascar, trading in agricultural products, who tended to settle in Marseilles. During the Second World War the Indian population sharply decreased, and after the war the migration flows from South Asia to Europe were channelled towards the UK. Among the very few Indians who migrated to France during the 1950s and 1960s were the businessmen and traders who had previously lived in Paris, who came back after the war. The Independence of former colonized countries had a negative impact on their Indian population, who traditionally occupied the position of middlemen between the colonial masters and the colonised people. Hence Indians left Madagascar *en masse* after the 1972 *coup*. Another similar migration flow originated from South-East Asia: Indians left Indochina in several migration waves and settled in France, when the formerly colonised countries became independent³. After the 1962 transfer of the French enclave of Pondicherry to India, most French nationals of Indian origin chose to migrate to France.

¹ Catherine Servan-Schreiber et Vasoodeven Vuddamalay (dir), « Diasporas indiennes dans la ville », *Diasporas indiennes dans la ville, Hommes et migrations*, n°1268-69, juil-oct 2007.

² Catherine Servan-Schreiber et Vasoodeven Vuddamalay (dir), « Diasporas indiennes dans la ville », *Diasporas indiennes dans la ville, Hommes et migrations*, n°1268-69, juil-oct 2007.

³ Natasha Pairaudeau, « Via l'Indochine : trajectoires coloniales de l'immigration sud-indienne », in Catherine Servan-Schreiber et Vasoodeven Vuddamalay (dir), « Diasporas indiennes dans la ville », *Diasporas indiennes dans la ville, Hommes et migrations*, n°1268-69, juil-oct 2007.

From the 1970s, France became a destination of substitution for unskilled migrants from Mauritius, Northern India, as well as Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, when the UK closed its doors to further migration from South Asia. In the 1980s and 1990s, political asylum played an important role in regulating migration flows from the Indian sub-continent. In the same period, family reunification led to the emergence of a second generation.

- Regional and ethnic breakdown

The Indian population in France is remarkable for its ethnic, linguistic and regional diversity. Direct migrants from India should be distinguished from indirect migrants from the Indian Ocean and from South-East Asia.

Tamils represent the most numerous ethnic group: they come from Pondicherry, a former French enclave in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu and also, to a lesser extent, from Sri Lanka. They are predominantly Hindus, with a sizeable Christian minority: Indians were encouraged to convert to Christianity by the French. Indians from Indochina are predominantly of Tamil origin.

Gujeratis are probably the second most numerous ethnic group among Indians in France. They belong to trading castes: those coming directly from India are Hindus; those from Madagascar are Shia Muslims.

Panjabis are also well represented in France: most come from Pakistan; the others are Sikhs from the Indian state of the Panjab.

Sindhis and Bengalis, are all Hindus: very few in France, they are prominent among the business and intellectual Indian elite⁴.

Twice-migrants originate from the Indian Ocean (Madagascar, La Réunion, Mauritius) and from Indochina (predominantly from Vietnam): their ancestors migrated from India in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as part of colonial movements of labour (mostly indentured labour, except for Madagascar). Hindus represent a majority, with though important numbers of Christians, and, to a lesser extent, of Muslims.

Demographic characteristics of the Indian population

	Total	Men	Women	French by acquisition	Foreign nationals
Indian-born population 2007	29,056	14,747	14,310	16,430	12,625

Age	0-17	18-60	Over 60
2007	8.7%	82.2%	9.1%

Employment	Employed	Unemployed	Inactive
2007	50.6%	6.6%	42.8%

Source : Recensement général de la population, INSEE, 2007.

The French census (*Recensement général de la population*) provides the main source of demographic information regarding immigrants in France. To avoid any stigmatisation of migrant population, the collection of data on ethnicity is prohibited. This policy has meant a lack of information regarding migrants that tend to be statistically invisible. This is particularly true in the case of Indians, since national groups numbering less than 50,000 do not necessarily constitute a separate category in the census and in surveys. Hence Indians are frequently subsumed into the wider “Asian” category.

An immigrant is defined as a person residing in France who was born abroad with non-French nationality. The census distinguishes those who have acquired French citizenship from those who have remained foreign nationals.

According to the latest available census results, there were 29,057 Indians (people born in India) residing in France in 2007. However, there is a wide gap between census figures and estimates by researchers that put the number of Indians as high as 100,000⁵. This difference can be explained by several factors. Firstly, illegal migration – an important phenomenon among Indians in France – is not taken into account in the census data. It can also be explained by the high mobility of Indian migrants, and more crucially by the statistical invisibility of two significant groups: people born abroad with French nationality (e.g. Pondicherrians, a population currently estimated at 50,000⁶, and of Indians from Madagascar and Indochina); and the second and third generations born in France.

The Indian population almost doubled between 1982 and 1990 from 5,956 to 11,389. But it has increased only slightly since 2000 with a 4.8% increase between 2006 and 2007. There is an almost equal number of men (14,747) and of women (14,310).

The data also reveals that a majority of Indians (56.7%) have acquired French nationality, nationality being relatively easier to obtain in France than in neighbouring European countries.

Regarding their age profiles, most Indians are in the working-age group (82% in the 18-60 years old age group as compared to a national average of 54.2%), with few, to date, under 18 or over 60⁷.

The Indian population is concentrated in the capital and its metropolitan area (Ile de France), with small numbers of students and restaurant owners in other major cities such as Toulouse, Bordeaux, Lyon and Strasbourg.

We have not been able to find data concerning the family size and structure of the Indian population.

Socio-economic profile

We lack statistical data to assess the socio-economic profile of Indians in France as this population is subsumed under the “other Asians” category in most surveys about migrants. We, therefore, have to rely on qualitative information collected during our own fieldwork⁸.

(Contd.) _____

⁴ B. Ashok, *La présence des Indiens du Nord en Ile-de-France. Histoire migratoire, fixation géographique et organisation sociale*, thèse de doctorat, Paris IV-Sorbonne, 1997.

⁵ See Catherine Servan-Schreiber et Vasoodeven Vuddamalay (dir), « Diasporas indiennes dans la ville », *Diasporas indiennes dans la ville, Hommes et migrations*, n°1268-69, juil-oct 2007

⁶ According to Sophie Lakshmi Dassaranayadou, « Tamouls indiens : De Pondichéry à la France », in Catherine Servan-Schreiber et Vasoodeven Vuddamalay (dir), « Diasporas indiennes dans la ville », *Diasporas indiennes dans la ville, Hommes et migrations*, n°1268-69, juil-oct 2007.

⁷ INSEE, *Recensement général de la population*, 2007.

⁸ See our report on South Asian migrants, Christine Moliner, « Invisible et modèle ? Première approche de l’immigration sud-asiatique en France », *Rapport d’étude pour la Direction de l’Accueil, de l’Intégration et de la Citoyenneté, MIINDS*, septembre 2009.

A majority of Indians are unskilled workers, with a low level of education. Nonetheless in recent years the migration of highly-qualified professionals in the banking, IT and engineering sectors has increased. The Indian student population has also taken off: indeed, the number of student visas granted to Indians has almost doubled since 2006⁹.

A majority of Indians work, but a large proportion (over 40%) is inactive: this may be partly due to the numbers of students among the Indian population and to a high rate of inactivity among women, especially among direct migrants from India¹⁰.

Regarding language skills one has to differentiate between two groups: Indians linked to France by its colonial past, such as Pondicherrians, most of whom speak French fluently; and other migrants, mostly from the Panjab and from Gujerat, who have no command of the language of the host country. This lack of proficiency in French constitutes a major barrier in terms of socio-economic integration and professional mobility (see below).

Most Indian women migrate through family reunification, as wives or daughters of previously settled migrants, skilled or unskilled. First generation women tend to be unemployed, depending entirely on their husband, whereas second generation women are now entering the labour market.

Caste patterns vary according to the ethnic origins of migrants. A large proportion of untouchables, converted to Christianity during French colonial rule are to be found among Pondicherrians and Indians from Mauritius. Among other ethnic groups, dominant castes are overrepresented: for example, Gujeratis and Sindhis belong to trading castes. Among Sikhs Jats, the dominant caste in the Punjab, are by far the most numerous group, followed by low caste Lubanas (a service caste) and untouchables (Ravidasia). Caste plays an important role in the Sikh migration process: migrants already settled in France usually sponsor their fellow-caste members (usually belonging to their extended family), help them find a job and accommodation in France. This chain migration process tends to reinforce caste social networks and internal solidarity. Migration also increases the social mobility of marginalised groups, as shown by the untouchables from Pondicherry who, after joining the army or the French administration migrated to Indochina and then France, thus in part escaping the stigma of “untouchability”.

The volume of remittances depends on the social and family ties maintained with India. It is highest among first generation direct migrants, who often have to pay back their (illegal) passage to Europe to extended families members. Among agricultural groups such as the Sikhs, remittances are used to buy land, enhance family status and pay for marriage arrangements (including a large dowry) for daughters and sisters. Among trading castes remittances take the form of direct investments in India or in countries of the Indian Ocean (East Africa and Madagascar).

Ties with India are various: with recent and direct migrants, they remain strongest among the first generation and are sustained through remittances, frequent visits home and marriages arranged in India with fellow Indians. Among families who are entirely settled in France (Pondicherrians for instance), social ties with India have weakened, though some members of the second generation, in a quest for their roots, visit India, but not necessarily their village/region of origin.

Indians apparently do not have a high level of India-related political activity, except for political refugees, such as the Sikhs, who were, until recently, involved in the Khalistan movement. The Indian National Congress has a branch in France, headed by a Sikh.

Marriage patterns depend on the different migration histories of the various ethnic groups. Direct migrants from India demonstrate a very high rate of endogamy (marriage within the same religious

⁹ Bérénice Girard, *Migration, Scientific Diasporas and Development : Impact of Skilled Return Migration on Development in India. Report on Recent Indian Skilled Migration to France*, Campus-France, octobre 2011.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

and caste community) and, therefore, of arranged marriages. Spouses come from India, and, in a few instances, from the UK and other European neighbours. Among Indians from Madagascar, endogamy is the norm, and marriages are also frequently transnational, with the spouse originating in East Africa, the UK and North America. Indians from Pondicherry, especially Christians, increasingly marry outside their community, particularly with French people. Indo-Mauritians demonstrate the same tendency towards exogamy and mixed marriages, but mostly with direct migrants from India (Sikhs) and from Sri Lanka.

Among the 278,213 international students established in France in 2010, only 2000 are Indians¹¹. France is clearly not one of the main destinations for Indian students, because of the language barrier and because French universities are not very well known in India. But a positive evolution can be seen in the sharp increase in the number of student visas given to Indian nationals: it has almost doubled since 2006. Most Indian students are male, they tend to come as part of an exchange program and join prestigious business schools. Since the current legal framework makes it difficult for foreign students to work in France after completing their diploma, most Indian students leave France to work elsewhere.

Media perception of the Indian community

Indians tend to be unproblematic and invisible migrants, little noticed by the general public and by French institutions¹². Both research and public debates have so far focused on larger migrant groups from former colonies, or on more recent migration waves from Turkey, Romania and China. In the press, several articles have nonetheless been published over the years about the development of Indian ethnic enclaves in Paris.

The general representation of India happens to be positive, and there is an increased interest among French people about all things Indian: food, clothes, Bollywood, yoga, spirituality... The presence of Indian migrants and the availability of a wide range of Indian products and services have allowed for a rise in Indo-French cultural encounters.

Aware of the predominantly positive image of their country of origin, Indian migrants seem to be increasingly at ease displaying their "Indianness" openly, an identity that is perceived as exotic and non-threatening. They also make a point of portraying themselves as "model migrants", and of distancing themselves from stigmatised migrant communities, such as North African Muslims.

Religious and cultural associations

There are numerous Indian cultural and religious organisations in France, but some have very few members and are not very active.

The religious diversity found in India is replicated in France, with the presence of Sikhs, Christians, Hindus, Jains, Shia and Sunni Muslims. The earliest religious communities to establish their own place of worship were the Shia Muslims from Madagascar and the Sikhs from Northern India.

Shia Muslims started renting a hall in Paris, on a weekly basis, in the early 1970s, and for that purpose created a religious association. This relatively prosperous community has since then built two big religious centers (called *Jamat*) in the Southern and Eastern suburbs of Paris. Besides religious worship, the *Jamat* provide various services: linguistic and religious education to the young; sponsorship for poor Indian students from Madagascar wanting to study in France; and social services for the elderly. Other Indian Muslims (mostly Sunni) attend North African mosques close to their place of work, particularly for Friday prayer.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² Christine Moliner, « Invisible et modèle ? Première approche de l'immigration sud-asiatique en France », *Rapport d'étude pour la Direction de l'Accueil, de l'Intégration et de la Citoyenneté*, MIINDS, septembre 2009.

Sikhs started their first *gurdwara* (Sikh place of worship) in 1986, in Bobigny. Since then, four other *gurdwara* have been created along caste lines. The first purpose-built *gurdwara* in Continental Europe was inaugurated in early 2012: replacing an earlier make-shift one. The *gurdwara*, besides offering daily worship, thanks to a permanent *granthi* (priest) and daily *langar* (free kitchen) operated by volunteers, also offers, on Sunday, Panjabi classes to children. It has also been organising, for the past 10 years, a grand religious parade (*nagar kirtan*) in the Eastern suburbs of Paris, where the *gurdwara* is located, to commemorate *Baisakhi*, the Sikh New Year. This parade has helped to bring Sikhs to the attention of the local press (which has dedicated several articles to the event) and to the attention of local people.

Similarly the Ganesh parade organised every August, in Paris itself, has contributed to the new visibility of Hindus in French society. This parade is organised by the most important Hindu temple in France, located in the area of Paris called “little Jaffna” because of its concentration of Sri Lankan businesses and shops. Dominated by Sri Lankans, it is attended by a lot of Indian Tamils and French visitors.

Regarding cultural organisations, one might distinguish here between the organisations created by the tiny Indian elite and those started by less educated migrants. Only the former are strictly speaking “cultural” and their following is not restricted to a particular religious or ethnic group. The latter appear to be offshoots of religious organisations, created merely because the Laïcité law makes it compulsory to differentiate clearly between religious and cultural activities. These two sets of organisations do not seem to interact with each other.

Among the first category of cultural organisations, the Maison de l’Inde plays a prominent role. Created in the 1960s to provide Indian students and scholars with accommodation in the Cité Universitaire Internationale, it has since then become a kind of Indian cultural center, organising concerts, dance shows and other cultural events. Although not a migrant organisation *per se*, its cultural activities are well attended by the Indian elite in France.

The Fédération des Associations Indiennes (FAFI), created in the late 1990s, aims to bring together all the Indian cultural organisations in France¹³. So far, 28 organisations are members. The main focus of its activities has, in fact, been to promote the creation of an Indian cultural center in Paris, for which the Indian embassy has recently purchased a plot of land in the heart of Paris.

The Indian Professionnal Association is an organisation created in 1995 by Indian professionals. By organising monthly meetings and dinners, it helps its 50 members to network. Its membership tends to be restricted to the long-established Indian elite and does not include recently arrived younger Indian professionals.

Besides these high-profile organisations, a myriad of others focus on the cultural heritage of India, particularly classical Indian dance that has a long and rich history of performance and teaching in Paris.

Are these organisations playing a role in bridging the gap between the immigrants and their host society?

Religious organisations do not initially encourage interactions with the outside world. They might on the contrary insulate migrants. But at a later stage, when, for instance, these organisations wish to set up a place of worship, they have to seek permits and authorisation from various local bodies, which they subsequently invite to attend their major religious festivals. Besides this, the organisation of street parades by Sikhs and Hindus, typically well attended by the local population, demonstrates the desire for better visibility in the host society.

¹³ Bérénice Girard, *Migration, Scientific Diasporas and Development : Impact of Skilled Return Migration on Development in India. Report on Recent Indian Skilled Migration to France*, Campus-France, octobre 2011.

The festivals, lectures and classes organised by non-religious associations are usually open to all. Their activities contribute to the overall good representation that India has in France.

Integration report

Economic integration

Indian migrants demonstrate a low rate of unemployment: only 6.6% compared to 8% among the general public, and 16% among migrants (INSEE, General Census 2007). They probably suffer less from unemployment because so many are self employed. Second, since a lot of them are illegal, their employment situation is not recorded in official data. But their inactivity rate (40%) is quite high, probably because of the low level of employment among first generation women.

One can distinguish three levels of economic integration among Indians in France, depending on their migration history and their legal or illegal status.

- Illegal migrants constitute a lumpen proletariat, exploited and denied access to social rights. Upon their arrival in France, they usually work for fellow migrants in the informal economy, dominated by the following three sectors: construction, restaurants and textile work. They typically work as dishwashers in the kitchen of Indian and Pakistani restaurants (the least paid job in the trade). They load and unload huge textile rolls for Chinese/Jewish/Pakistani warehouses and workshops. And they renovate or do up private housing. Illegal work is usually easy to obtain, because it is much cheaper for the employer who will not pay taxes; it saves 60% of labour costs. They do not have access to basic social rights, such as minimum wages, a labour contract, social security, employment benefits, sick leave...

Their insulation from French society is due to the nature of their employment: they work for and with fellow country men and mostly speak their mother tongue both at work and at home.

As long as they remain illegal, there can be no social mobility for them.

- Legal unskilled migrants: a lot of legal migrants were formerly illegal ones. The possession of legal documents of residence (such as a *carte de séjour*) has a tremendous effect on their socio-economic integration. First they quickly move out of the precarious and ill-paid jobs described above. They take up salaried and legal employment and they frequently stop working for fellow countrymen, who prefer to employ illegal migrants. Their aim then becomes to secure a permanent job (*contrat à durée indéterminée*), with associated labour rights. After a few years in that job (that usually remains ill-paid and socially devalued), they save some money and the next step is self-employment. They usually borrow money from their kinship network and from friends, not from banking services, to set up a small business in the trade they were originally employed when they arrived in France and where they have gained some skills and experience. Therefore, a lot of first-generation legal migrants are small-scale entrepreneurs engaged in ethnic business: Indian restaurants, shops (either selling Indian food items or female clothes), textile warehouses, plumbing and building enterprises. They mostly employ illegal migrants from their region of origin.
- The second-generation follows two types of economic integration. Among the boys, there is a trend to join their father in the family business, especially when they are under-achievers in school: a common destiny for those who arrived in France when they were older than twelve. Self-employment also constitutes a way to escape discrimination in the job market. But one can also encounter several cases of second-generation males who have gone into further education and who have joined the professions (as accountants, doctors or as professionals in the financial sector).

Girls at least finish their college education and get to the final diploma and usually, from there, go into further education. They enter the labour market, a lot of them preferring to work in public administration, in hospitals and education.

- Highly-skilled Indian professionals have a very different profile. They are recruited in India by French or Indian firms to work for three years in France. Because of administrative and linguistic barriers, they prefer ultimately to migrate elsewhere, preferably to an English-speaking country.

The access to social benefits depends on the legal/illegal status of foreign residents. All legal migrants are entitled to the full range of social benefits. These include maternity leave, child benefit (for families with at least two children), sick leave, unemployment benefit, vocational training, income support, health insurance and housing benefit. At first, newly arrived/legalised migrants and their families lack basic information about the range of benefits they are entitled to. In that respect, their lack of proficiency in French represents a major hinderance, especially considering that public services do not offer sufficient provisions for translation.

The income levels of Indian migrants vary greatly. At the top, highly-skilled migrants are extremely well-paid, and enjoy a range complimentary benefits from those companies eager to woo them: schooling benefit, a private health insurance, relocation services... The most successful among the unskilled first-generation entrepreneurs can compete economically with this intellectual elite and manage to earn a lot of money that they reinvest in France or elsewhere (sometimes in India, more frequently in business ventures in Europe). A few Indians are well-known for their economic success. Here are a few examples. After his arrival in the early 1980s, one migrant continuously worked in Tamil restaurants, first as a dishwasher then as a chef. After getting French citizenship in the late 1990s, he opened his first restaurant, mostly catering to a local Indian clientele. He now owns a dozen of restaurants and cafes, and has his son (as manager) and daughter (as legal adviser) working for him. Another highly-successful migrant, of Panjabi origin, first worked on a daily basis unloading textile rolls from trucks, and then learnt the textile trade in a Jewish workshop for ten years. He now has a thriving textile company with several warehouses in Paris, dealing with clients in Britain, Ireland and Germany. A very well-know brand of ladies garments, Tam-Tam, was created in the late 1980s by two sisters, Indians from Madagascar who had first open a small shop in Gare Montparnasse.

These successful entrepreneurs frequently assume a position of leadership in their respective community, taking part in and funding various organisations. They serve as role models for newly arrived migrants.

Socio-cultural integration: housing

The Indian (as well as South Asian) population is highly concentrated in Paris and its region (Ile de France). Within the Ile de France, most Indians are to be found in Seine St Denis (93) and Val d'Oise (95), the two *départements* with a largely underprivileged immigrant population. The qualified migrants have chosen the highly privileged and green surroundings of Les Yvelines (78), particularly St Germain en Laye, and of Neuilly (92). The two major South Asian enclaves in France are in Paris itself, a Tamil one ("Little Jaffna") in the eighteenth district of La Chapelle and an Indo-Pakistani one ("Little India") in the tenth district of Strasbourg St Denis. Interestingly these two enclaves are driven by ethnic businesses; they are places of work, of trade, and places to socialise (through the associations based there). But they do not include residential enclaves.

Housing patterns among Indian migrants are quite different from those of other migrant groups in at least three respects¹⁴. First, as opposed to African migrants, first generation Indian males do not live

¹⁴ See on the issues on housing and socio-spatial dynamics among Tamil migrants, Antony Goreau-Ponceaud, *La diaspora tamoule : trajectoires spatio-temporelles et inscriptions territoriales en Ile-de-France*, thèse de géographie, Bordeaux, 2008. On South Asian migrants housing patterns, Christine Moliner, « Invisible et modèle ? Première approche de

in workers' hostels (*foyers de travailleurs migrants*). Second, there seem to be rather fewer in social housing and third they become property owners more quickly and more completely. The type of housing they inhabit depends on the phase of their migration history and their life cycle. Newcomers live in over-crowded and unsanitary flats, frequently a two-room flat will be shared by half a dozen men. The owner, usually a well established Indian or Pakistani migrant, charges them a very high overall rent, but for each of them it amounts to no more than 200 euros. A change in the legal status and professional profile of the migrant will usually lead him to buy a cheap flat (he will do up the flat himself) whose mortgage he will pay by sub-letting it to *biradari* members. Besides being socially highly valued as a status symbol, house ownership meets several needs of the migrant. First it represents one of the very few forms of capital accumulation and savings open to low-paid workers. Second, it helps with family reunification, especially when rent prices are on the rise in the Ile de France. And finally it is a way to circumvent discrimination in the housing market. After his family has joined him, the Indian migrant usually rents the first property he purchased (commonly a two-bed room flat) to fellow countrymen (at a very high rent, to finish repaying his mortgage) and so as to buy a detached house, the ultimate success symbol in France.

Socio-cultural integration: education and linguistic integration

Regarding the educational level of Indian migrants, one has to distinguish between direct migrants and twice-migrants and between French-speaking and non-French speaking ones. Twice-migrants migrants have usually received French schooling, therefore, they speak French fluently and they are familiar with the French schooling system, which proves very useful for their children's education. Overall, they usually have a good level of education (up to the French *baccalauréat* and beyond).

Among direct migrants, those from rural background have a low level of education that usually does not go beyond secondary school (matriculation is an Indian term). They are proficient neither in English (a surprise to many French natives), nor in French. Lack of proficiency in French represents a major barrier to them getting access to professional training.

What is the educational profile of the second generation? The lack of proficiency in French of their family usually results in the children falling behind other pupils. But most catch up before entering secondary school. Those who arrived in France after they were twelve do not catch up and they leave school at sixteen. Those who go into higher education tend to choose a short and vocational course of study for two or three years in accountancy, computing, secretarial work or biology. This preference can be explained by a lack of adequate vocational guidance during their schooling and also because they wish to enter the job market as soon as possible.

The language skills and practices of Indian migrants play a major role in their socio-cultural integration. Indian languages continue to be practiced in the family and other social settings. Since the major Indian languages (Hindi, Urdu, Gujerati, Tamil, Bengali) are taught only at the university level, the transmission of the language of origin to the second generation is done by the parents and increasingly by religious institutions (mosques, *mandir* and *gurdwara*).

For non-French-speaking first-generation migrants, their lack of proficiency in French represents a major hindrance in integration and a serious disability in their everyday life. Linguistic skills depend on two factors: education and gender. Educated migrants manage better in French, particularly those who came to France for higher education. But Indian professionals who work in an English environment frequently have little command of French. First-generation females face more language difficulties than males, despite the fact that they usually benefit from more language training sessions. This may be due to the lower education level of females as compared to males in India, but it probably depends more on them being housewives in France. With the set up of the *Contrat d'accueil et*

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l'immigration sud- asiatique en France », *Rapport d'étude pour la Direction de l'Accueil, de l'Intégration et de la Citoyenneté*, MIINDS, septembre 2009, pp. 38-46.

d'intégration in 2003, a four-hundred-hour free language training program is now offered to new migrants (or newly regularised ones). It is compulsory for those whose level of French has been assessed as insufficient and, in these cases, the renewal of residence papers depends on attendance.

However, despite the availability of language training, Indian migrants' command of French remains very poor.

Socio-cultural integration: mixed marriages and involvement in community life

Our own fieldwork data suggest that endogamous and arranged marriages remain the norm among Indian migrants. However, a variety of matrimonial practices can be observed, depending on several variables such as migration history, generation, education level. Exogamous marriages – marriages formed outside one's community, whether defined in religious, ethnic or national terms – are not unknown among first-generation male migrants. Strict immigration legislation and cumbersome family reunification provisions make it impossible for some of them to go to India to get married or to have the prospective bride migrate to France. In these cases, migrants marry outside their community of origin, with a French spouse or a spouse of immigrant background (frequently with Indo-Mauritians). Only Indian males engage in such marriages, Indian females, both first and second generations, marry within their community.

The involvement in various non-ethnic associations depends on several factors, a major one being proficiency in French. Indeed, it is notable (you mean notable?) that non-French speaking migrants do not readily join these associations. For instance, despite being very involved in their children's education, parents feel shy about taking part in parents' associations as meetings and social interactions will be in French.

Social actors routinely notice (and complain about) the difficulty of getting Indian migrants (that is first generation non-French-speaking ones) involved in civic associations such as local housing associations, trade unions, migrants associations or even sports-clubs. Their social, religious or cultural needs are usually met within their own community (through attendance of a place of worship, for instance). Because of what French society perceives as a lack of language and social skills, these migrants tend, as we have seen above, to isolate themselves from mainstream society by joining Indian organisations.

French-speaking Indians are usually more involved in wider society associations and institutions.

Nonetheless, as a whole Indians are described as "invisible" migrants, whose involvement in civil society seems far inferior to that of other migrant groups. This might be explained by the recent character of their settlement in France.

Women usually occupy a marginal and passive position in the migration project: they migrate only to join their husband or father. They have little say in the decision making process, as the choice to migrate is usually taken by the male members of the joint family in India.

First generation women depend financially on their husband, as most of them, even after several years in France, do not work. This situation is due, in part, to their lack of language skills, but also, in part, to their social background. Direct migrants from India belong, for the most part, to dominant groups and castes of rural landowners, that are particularly conservative *vis a vis* the position of women and their access to the job market. Female work outside the home is perceived as socially degrading: high status women have a low level of employment in the rural society of origin. Besides this, traditional values and representations promote the domestic role of women. Adding to these cultural aspects, their lack of language skills represents a substantial obstacle in their access to the job market.

Political participation

Political rights, such as voting rights, are available only to French citizens. This is true of all elections, legislative, presidential and local ones. The granting of voting rights at local elections (*élections municipales*) to foreign residents (with at least 10 years of residence in the country) has been on the electoral agenda of the socialist party for more than 20 years.

A majority of Indians (56.7%) can vote as they have acquired French citizenship. The conditions of access to citizenship have been hardened in the past 20 years. The overall framework allows migrants to become French after marrying a French national or after applying for French citizenship (after at least 10 years residence in the country) and, as per *jus soli*, it grants citizenship to their children born in France. Among Indians, the case of Pondicherrians and of Indians from Madagascar and Vietnam is specific as most were: born French; became French through marriage with and descent from a French national of Indian origin; or were offered citizenship once their country of birth accessed Independence.

Little is known about the political participation of Indians in France.

French citizens of foreign origins are notably under-represented in French political institutions. French citizens of Indian origins have so far remained aloof from the French political scene, except for local elections, in which a handful of them stood (mostly in the Ile de France) to become municipal councillors.

The Global Organisation of People of Indian Origins aims at promoting the interests of NRIs (non-resident Indians) both with the Indian government and with the host country. But its French chapter, created in 2006, does not have any political influence and it is mostly culturally oriented. Its president and most of its members are twice-migrants from the Indian Ocean and, as a result, their ties with India are rather loose.

Judicial indicators

Unfortunately, neither judicial figures nor figures recording racial discrimination against Indian migrants are available. Regarding racial discrimination, qualitative data provide useful information¹⁵. Indian migrants complain much less of racial discrimination than other migrants from former colonies. The second generation though tends to be more sensitive to this issue and a few complain that they have been discriminated against in the job market. But the general impression is that Indians, being perceived and perceiving themselves as “good migrants”, do not bear the brunt of hostility and discrimination.

Demographic indicators

Most demographic surveys do not include Indian women because they number fewer than 50,000. From our general observation, the fertility rate is only slightly higher as compared to the general population, with 3 children/woman and lower than that of other migrant groups: Pakistani and African migrants demonstrating a much higher rate. The Western model of a family with two children tends to be emulated. There is a strong preference for boys especially among Panjabis: a couple will have more than two children for the sake of securing a boy. In the light of what has been observed in the UK and Canada, further research should be conducted to find out if there is an imbalance in the rate of females versus males among the second generation born in France; which might indicate the use of selective abortion to get rid of female foetus.

¹⁵ See the ethnographic material collected in Christine Moliner, « Invisible et modèle ? Première approche de l’immigration sud- asiatique en France », *Rapport d’étude pour la Direction de l’Accueil, de l’Intégration et de la Citoyenneté*, MIINDS, septembre 2009.

Indian legal migrants have full access to the public health-care system, and they are very appreciative of it. Illegal migrants face specific health concerns: they normally do not have health insurance and they have to pay for their medical care unless they go to the association Médecins du Monde. An exception would be if they had a serious disease or injury which would then be treated for free in a public hospital. For minor problems, they forgo a visit to the doctor. Work-related pathologies particularly affect building workers, who frequently do not wear adequate protection. The use of roofing felt for thermic isolation is particularly damaging for the lungs of unprotected workers.

Indian perceptions of their host society

Overall, Indian migrants are positive about French society, something which echoes their favorable self-image. First generation migrants appreciate the opportunities for socio-economic mobility in France and they consider they have made a significant contribution to the socio-economic evolution of their host country, contrasting themselves with other less successful migrant groups. However, they are very critical of some values and social norms, such as individualism, lack of social and family solidarity, neglect of the elderly, the high divorce rate, 'permissiveness'... Though less critical, the young today have internalised 'Indian' values, such as respect for their parents and they accept the latter's decisions for their own lives (particularly marriage), the primacy of the group over the individual, traditional gender roles... But they also praise the freedom and openness that they enjoy in France, while finding it difficult to reconcile the two cultural systems. As opposed to some other young migrants, they do not feel alienated from French society.

Conclusions and policy recommendations

Indians in France are notable for their diversity: diversity of their migration histories and settlement processes, of their socio-economic and educational profiles and of their ethnic and religious affiliations. But they share one thing: an ingrained vision of themselves as a model, economically successful, socially integrated and 'unproblematic' minority.

They have developed dense networks of ethnic cooperation and solidarity that alleviate the difficulties they face while settling down. The precarious status of illegal migrants is a major problem, as it strongly hinders socio-economic and emotional involvement in the host society and makes the migrants even more dependent for their own survival on ethnic networks. While French society and institutions have made commendable efforts to integrate migrants, the current migration policies that create new categories of illegal migrants and criminalise the same represent backward steps.

A second issue when dealing with Indian migration to France is the lack of attractiveness of the country for skilled and educated migrants; these prefer to migrate to English-speaking countries. In Europe, Germany and Scandinavia fare much better than France in attracting that category of migrants. The complexity of the administrative procedure (visa delivery, change in status for students who enter the job market, family reunification) stands as a major disability. France dispenses with an important source of human capital and opportunities for economic development. The lack of a sizeable elite also distorts, sociologically-speaking, the Indian population, where rural, non-educated migrants predominate.

Finally, language has been identified as a major obstacle to integration. Provisions for adult language training should be developed and made more effective. So far such training is compulsory for newly arrived or newly regularised migrants but the level of language skills imparted remains very basic. Full-time courses with financial incentives should target particularly first-generation Indian women who face social isolation.

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