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A content analysis of media reports on the Indian Community in Finland

Liina Mustonen

DEMO-India Research Report 2015/02

DEMO-India
Developing Evidence based Management and Operations in
India-EU Migration and Partnership

Research Report
Thematic Report
DEMO-India RR 2015/02

A content analysis of media reports on the Indian Community in Finland

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DEMO-India – Developing Evidence based Management and Operations in India-EU Migration and Partnership (DEMO: India-EU MaP)

The Demo: India-EU MaP project, co-funded by the European Commission, is a continuation of the Carim India project (www.india-eu-migration.eu) and it examines the multiple facets of Indian migration to the EU. Its overall aim is to improve migration management between India and the EU, strengthen EU-India relations, and produce in-depth empirical knowledge about the different migration streams and pathways of Indian nationals in the EU. Its specific goals include providing:

1. Evidence based research for more informed policy making and state intervention.
2. Improved source country capacity in managing migration.
3. Raising awareness among potential migrants of the risks of irregular migration.
4. Collaboration with civil society groups.
5. Empirical research and analysis of Indian communities across the EU, and their impact.

The project is led by the Indian Centre for Migration in Delhi with the partnership of the Migration Policy Centre, RSCAS, EUI.

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Abstract

The report analyses the media representation of Indian community resident in Finland. The four major Finnish newspapers were analysed during the period between 2012 and 2015. In comparison with many other European countries with larger migrant communities, the Indian community in Finland is small. Although specific reporting on ethnic communities is limited in the Finnish press, interesting insights on the media representation of the Indian community can be drawn from the data. The research concludes that reports on business relations and Finnish companies' operations in India, mostly concerning Nokia's failures in India, are often portrayed in a negative light. India is considered as a difficult business environment and culturalist explanations dominate over others. At the same time the reporting recognizes the opportunities that India's new rising market can offer to Finnish companies. In turn, residents with Indian origin in Finland are portrayed as hard-working and important part of the economy in Finland. Indian culture understood as art is also seen as an enriching addition to the Finnish culture. However, occasional notions in the Finnish press point to the idea of a "Finn" as a somewhat closed category – a migrant becomes Finn, or resembles a Finn instead of "Finnishness" becoming more inclusive. Similarly the press sometimes gives an essentialized representation of gender roles among the Indian community in Finland without giving a voice to the immigrant community that is being essentialized.

Key words: Finland, Indian community, media portrayal, India-Finland business relations

Table of contents

- 1. Introduction 7
 - 1.1. Indian community in Finland 7
 - 1.2. Method 7
- 2. Education 8
- 3. Business/investment 8
- 4. Labour market 11
- 5. Culture 12
- 6. Gender 13
- 7. Religion 14
- 8. Conclusion 15
- References 16
- Sources 16
- Appendix. List of News Media 19

1. Introduction

1.1. Indian community in Finland

Finland has a relatively small population of residents with non-Finnish origin. According to the statistics of the Family Federation of Finland from 2012, 3.6 percent of the people residing in Finland have a foreign nationality and 5.2 percent of the population were born outside of Finland, which is the lowest figure in Western Europe.¹ The community of residents with Indian origin is relatively small in comparison with other immigrant groups. The community does not feature among the ten biggest immigrant groups in Finland. A recent article in the biggest Finnish newspaper Helsinki News indicates that the size of Indian Sikh community residing in Finland is 600.² Laura Hirvi (2011) arrives at a similar estimate.

Until the 1990s Finland was an emigration country and it was only in the 1990s that the number of immigrants began to exceed the number of emigrants. The first Sikhs came to Finland in the 1980s, much later than to other European countries. Laura Hirvi explains that they came in search of new opportunities: while men came in search for work, women arrived to marry Sikhs already resident in Finland. Families then gradually brought other family members over. Hirvi's study suggests what the newspaper reports analysed later in this report will confirm: the Indian Sikh community is well integrated in Finland in economic terms. Like many other immigrants in Finland, most Sikhs in Finland work in restaurants. New community members continue to arrive in Finland through work arrangements in restaurants owned by other community members. Hirvi's ethnographic study shows that while finding a job in Finland can be difficult due to limited language skills, work in the restaurant sector can provide future prospects. Hence the restaurant branch provides an entrance point to the labour market for the members of the Sikh community. Solidarity among members of the community is considerable and helps to mitigate problems such as the Finnish state's lack of recognition of formal education achieved in India and, as noted above, inadequate language skills (Hirvi 2011).

Much reporting on the Indian community in Finland, analysed for the purpose of this study concerns business relations, that is, Finnish companies operating in India and Indian companies that have entered the Finnish market. The newspaper articles clearly articulate problems in the business sector. This is mostly due to the failures of the Finnish technology and telecommunications company Nokia in India and because of the somewhat arcane operations of Indian companies in Finland. In both cases culturalist explanations take precedence over others. Although it is not only the business sector where reporters echo suspicions and rely on cultural relativism, in other sections, when it comes to individual Indians working in Finland the reporting is largely affirmative.

1.2. Method

This study on the media representation of Indian community in Finland has been compiled from the four biggest Finnish newspapers from 2012 to early 2015. The newspapers are *Helsingin Sanomat* (*Helsinki Times*), *Iltasanomat* (*Evening News*), *Aamulehti* (*Morning News*) and *Kauppalehti* (*Trade Newspaper*). The *Evening News* is a widely read tabloid; the others are considered less sensational newspapers. The news articles appearing at the website of the Finnish broadcasting company

¹ Statistics of the Family Federation of Finland (Väestöliitto), available on: http://www.vaestoliitto.fi/tieto_ja_tutkimus/vaestontutkimuslaitos/tilastoja-ja-linkkeja/tilastotietoa/maahanmuuttajat/maahanmuuttajien-maara/ [Accessed 30 March 2015].

² *Helsinki News*, 27.1.2013: Working one's fingers to the bone.

Yleisradio (YLE) were included as well. The above-given English translations will be used in the analysis. For further background information about the newspapers see the appendix. For the sake of clarity, the footnotes mention only the relevant newspaper and the translated title of the article. A proper list of referenced sources can be found at the end of the report. The Finnish equivalent of the following search words were used in the news archives: Indian, Hindu, Sikh, Muslim and India.

2. Education

There are only a few articles addressing education in India or the experiences of people with Indian origin studying in Finland. The education sector in India, however, is seen as a market for Finnish universities. One article on the YLE website (2013) discusses the plans of the University of applied sciences of Lahti to export Finnish education to India. The aim is to sell education packages and consultation services to Indian universities and companies. The program had started with student exchanges a few years earlier and the aim now is to expand the services.³ Another article discusses cooperation between the school of biotechnics of the University of Turku and other companies in Delhi. Here the aim is to import technology solutions to the Indian health market and thereby save lives “in the poverty stricken country”. The director of the initiative is quoted in the article as saying: “The Indian markets are so difficult that it is impossible to enter without a local partner”.⁴

Without a specific link to the Indian community, one article addressing education discusses the number of non-Finnish applicants to higher education programs taught in English in Finnish universities. The number reached 10,000 in 2013. *The Helsinki Times* interviewed an applicant from India. The student, who had already lived in Finland for a certain period, expressed his satisfaction with the Finnish system as in many other articles addressing the life of Indians residing in Finland or immigrants in general; the article emphasizes his appreciation of Finland and some presumed Finnish national characteristics. The interviewed person thought that Finland had made him a better person.⁵ The impact of planned introduction of tuition fees for non-EU students was not discussed in the articles.

3. Business/investment

Many of the articles addressing Finnish investments in India concern the communications and information technology company Nokia. Due to problems the company has faced in India the reporting is overtly negative. It is a question of Nokia’s problems with the Indian state authorities, as well as its declining reputation. In 2013 the focus was on the company’s tax dispute with the Indian government. The Indian tax authorities accused Nokia of tax evasion with regard to the operations of its factory in the capital city of the Indian state Tamil Nadu, Chennai. The daily *Trade Newspaper* reports that Nokia had to pay 248 million euro to the Indian government with the possibility that the sum might go up ten times through accumulated interest rates. Due to the tax dispute Nokia’s Chennai factory was excluded from the acquisition deal made between Microsoft and Nokia, which was completed in April 2014.⁶ The dispute led to the closure of the factory and the loss of many jobs. With regard to the tax dispute, the tabloid *Evening News*, looking for sensational headlines, reports that India is the most aggressive tax collector. Further the *same tabloid* warns that eventually it could be the Finnish state that has to pay for Nokia’s taxes, the reason being that Nokia had paid the required

³ YLE, 11.6.2013: Lahti wants to take education to India.

⁴ YLE, 30.5.2013: University of Turku aims to the billiard markets in the Indian health business.

⁵ *Helsinki Times*, 27.2.2013: Centria the most popular among foreign language programs.

⁶ *Trade Newspaper*, 11.12. 2013: This is how Nokia’s unpaid taxes summed up.

taxes to Finland. It is also emphasized that Finland had a tax agreement with India and hence the dispute came as a surprise for Nokia and the Finnish state.⁷

A year later, a commentary on the website of YLE discussed the consequences of Nokia's failure in Chennai for Finnish tourism (or more specifically Finnish tourists in India) and the overall reputation of Finland. The argument goes that, while a few years earlier Finnish tourists could capitalize on Nokia's success and were greeted in a friendly fashion, now things have changed. Tourists from "Nokialand" are associated with Nokia's defeat, its damaged reputation and the lost jobs that the factory in Chennai had provided, mostly for women, before the closure of the factory (at its peak 8000 and by the time the factory was shut down about 1000). The journalist explains that it is difficult to regain a lost reputation especially because the local newspapers now write gloomy stories about unemployed former employees of Nokia.⁸

Moreover, the strategy change in Nokia's India policies is reported as well as is the decrease in its market share.⁹ Nokia postponed the launch of its new Lumia phone, while in 2012 it had 19 percent of the market share (Samsung had more than 40 percent). Even before the tax dispute, Nokia's reputation had been overshadowed by a scandal in India. These problems were also reported in the Finnish media. In 2012 the communications and information technology company became famous for its dispute with a Bollywood film production company that, as Nokia argued, tried to defame Nokia's brand. The Finnish information technology company asked the high court in Delhi to order a permanent ban on the distribution of a film that had, in Nokia's view, harmed the company's reputation. The high court in Delhi in fact ordered the film – originally called *Mr. Nokia* – to change its title. Subsequently the title was changed to *Mr. Nookayya*, a move that did not satisfy the information technology giant and, instead, Nokia continued to ask for reimbursements from the film production company. However, to the discredit of Nokia, the dispute resulted in wide-reaching discussions in the media, which included mockery and ridicule against the company by the members of the film crew in the social media. The main actor in the film *Mr. Nookayya* Manchu Manoj was quoted in an Indian newspaper saying that Nokia should concentrate on its own business advancement instead of intervening in the film business by trying to sabotage their work. These comments were then republished in the Finnish *Trade Newspaper*. Manchu Manoj also discredited Nokia by saying that he had not known that a company called Nokia even existed because everyone used Blackberry, Samsung or iPhone in India.¹⁰

To sum up, media coverage of Finland's pride Nokia and its businesses in India is hardly encouraging for further Finnish investments in the country. However, even before the Nokia debacle in India, several articles in the *Trade Newspaper* discussed the business climate and "business culture" in India. These articles usually emphasized potential difficulties new investors might face in the newly emerging Indian market. An article entitled "Old traditions are still intact" (2012) discusses the problem of regulations of foreign ownership in India, which, according to the article, impedes foreign investment in the country. The article explains: "Foreign ownership in trade business in India is continuously a cause of arm wrestling". The analysis of the writer contends that, while foreign money would be capable of modernizing parts of one of the largest economic powerhouses, India's politics is often a "theater play fought in a sand-box". Persistent disputes between different interest groups are given as a reason for the prolonged conflicts. No law amendment goes through without political controversy the *Trade Newspaper* comments.¹¹ The same *Trade Newspaper* criticizes the taxation of foreign companies in India. It argues: "The clumsy judicial system and constant corruption scandals

⁷ *Evening News*, 12.12.2013: The Finnish state might need to pay for Nokia's tax dispute.

⁸ YLE, 3.1.2015: Opinion: Nokia's lost reputation and Finnish tourist in India.

⁹ *Trade News*, 20.11.2012: Launch of the new Lumia phone postponed.

¹⁰ *Trade News*, 14.3.2012: Nokia demands compensation from Bollywood film producers.

¹¹ *Trade News*, 1.2.2012: Old traditions still intact.

have given India the reputation of a country that it is not interested in the opportunities of a market economy”.

The above mentioned article also notes that investing in India requires patience and well done homework. The investment world in India is described as a mixture of superstition, old traditions, nepotism, and a dash of the Wild West.¹² A third article in the *Trade Newspaper* on the business environment titled “War against nepotism” takes a more nuanced stance on culturalist explanations. It argues that the business world tries to tackle nepotism and correct a culture based on unreliable management. It describes the Indian business environment as a dichotomy: there are bad and good companies. On the one side there are good companies that “generate money and behave well”. Their operations are flawless and they have accessed markets outside of India, the multinational consulting company Infosys being one example. On the other side of the dichotomy, the *Trade Newspaper* observes that the Wild West is thriving everywhere where the state is heavily involved. The same newspaper argues that this is especially true for raw materials, heavy industry and infrastructure where foreign competition is rare. The article claims that while corruption has always been an issue, between 2004 and 2010 the situation most likely got worse.¹³ Hence, on the one hand, the importance of Indian markets is emphasized, and on the other, the *Trade Newspaper* points to the differences in the culture and the resulting code of business conduct. The Indian business environment is caricatured as difficult and traditional.

Despite these culturalist explanations, there are a few other Finnish companies that have had more positive experiences in India. The Finnish elevator manufacturer, Kone was able to almost triple its net revenue in the greater Asia region in 2012. *The Helsinki Times* recognizes that Kone is the biggest deliverer of elevators to India. Unlike Nokia, no negative news is reported with regard to Kone’s operations in India.¹⁴ Moreover, as indicated above, newspaper articles on the importance of the new Indian markets are common, just like the above-mentioned health and education sectors.¹⁵

Those Indian companies in Finland that make it into the news do not receive favorable press coverage. They are accused of concealing key information and blamed for unethical lay-offs. The reporting concerns two big global Indian technology consulting companies “HCL Technologies Limited” and “Tata Consulting Services” (TCS, or Tata) to whom Nokia outsourced many of its employees. In this context, however, Nokia is mentioned as the source of the problem because it decided to outsource employees instead of firing them. Nonetheless, the media attention concentrates on Nokia’s former employees with emphasis on their new identity as employees of the two Indian companies in the capital region of Finland. A few months after the transfer both of the Indian companies announced employee co-operation negotiations that, as they often do, resulted in large-scale layoffs. The newspaper articles emphasize that the two companies in question are of Indian origin, and also that the former employees of Nokia are Finns. *Helsinki News* reports that of the 460 data administrators whom Nokia had outsourced to Tata Consulting Services 290 were faced with layoffs two months after the outsourcing. Moreover, it continues, most of Nokia’s outsourced employees do not work for TCS anymore.

The former employees of Nokia who were transferred to the other consultancy giant, HCL, faced a similar outcome *Helsinki News* reports.¹⁶ Another article by YLE looks at the problem from the

¹² *Trade Newspaper*, 22.11.2012: Patience is the key in India.

¹³ *Trade Newspaper*, 13.12.2012: War against nepotism.

¹⁴ *Helsinki News*, 25.1.2013: Success in Asia took Kone by surprise.

¹⁵ *Trade News*, 29.10. 2013: The Health business in India entices Finnish companies; YLE, 30.5.2013: University of Turku aims to the billiard markets in the Indian health business.

¹⁶ *Helsinki News*, 19.6.2013: Nokia’s subcontractor’s layoffs through dismissals and contracts; *Helsinki News*, 7.10.2013: Also Nokia outsourced to an Indian company; *Helsinki News*, 22.8.2013: TS: HCL might fire 140 Nokia’s ex-employees.

perspective of the trade and labor unions. The article claims that nearly half of Finnish employees who have been transferred to these two Indian companies have either left the companies voluntarily or have been dismissed from their jobs. Moreover, the labour unions claim that many of these jobs have now been taken over by Indians. The unions contend that the codes of business conducted by these Indian companies differ greatly from Finnish standards. For example, the companies in question have not noted the number of new Indians workers. Their transparency has also been questioned because the TSC is not part of the trade union and hence labour disputes cannot be taken to the specific labour court, but instead will be dealt with in the district court. This can take a long time. The Finnish broadcasting company YLE inquired about the numbers of TSC's and HCL's workers, but neither company replied. As a comparison the *Helsinki News* mentions that all the Finnish companies that were asked the same question answered on the same day.¹⁷

On a more positive note, a recent article (2015) published in the *Helsinki News* discusses the business affairs of a smaller company with an Indian founder. The interviewed founder and CEO, also a former employee of Nokia, Rajive Acharya, he said that he appreciates the Finnish Education system and believes in remaining in close contact with his employees, which is the reason he has decided to stay in Finland. After fifteen years in the Nordic country he has adapted well and prefers to run his company from there instead of using cheap labor in India.¹⁸

4. Labour market

The few articles addressing the day-to-day realities of people of Indian origin working in Finland are positive and depict Indians as hard working people. These representatives of the Indian community portrayed have adapted well to Finnish culture and their manners and work ethic is often compared to the supposed Finnish work ethic. A lengthy article titled "Working one's fingers to the bone" described the life of the six-hundred-member Sikh community in Finland and emphasizes that the community is hard working. Many of the community members own businesses, including two very popular nightclubs in Helsinki. The same article mentions that the unemployment rate among the Sikh community in Finland is close to zero and hence much lower than the unemployment rate among the native Finnish population. The Sikhs are not only well integrated in the job market, but some of them are also active in community politics through different political parties. The article refers to one member of the Sikh community who explains that he is more Finnish than Indian.¹⁹ However, this and other recurrent comments in the Finnish media tell perhaps less about the interviewed person and more about the persistent pattern in the Finnish media of measuring immigrants' "Finnishness".

The most prominent person with an Indian background is the Chief Executive Officer of Nokia Rajeev Suri. Before he became CEO of Nokia he was already making positive headlines in Finland.²⁰ Suri is also compared in the media to native Finns. According to the major newspaper, *Helsinki News*: "If the previous CEO of Nokia [Stephen Elop] looked like a Finn, Rajeev Suri certainly feels like one [Finn]."

So even though Suri was brought up in an Indian household, while living in Kuwait with his parents, *Helsinki News* states: "He is a reserved man who stays with facts, but when he starts to speak he speaks freely about his life. He does not use the American over-polite language and talks a lot about modesty."

¹⁷ YLE, 2.11.2013: Trade unions criticize Indian technology companies for concealing some key information.

¹⁸ *Helsinki News*, 2.2.2015: An Indian entrepreneur appreciates the efficiency of Finnish employees.

¹⁹ *Helsinki News*, 27.1.2013: Working one's fingers to the bone.

²⁰ *Helsinki News*, 30.3.2013: Suri is preparing Nokia Siemens Networks for the race.

Helsinki News says that Suri cherishes the values of Nokia such as openness, hard work, simplicity, the non-hierarchical organization and the horizontal allocation of responsibility. Suri also likes what the *Helsinki News* calls the “Finnish national character” and the way people work. “Humbleness is the most important value for me” he is quoted as saying. As most of the “native Finnish population”, the article continues, Suri is known as a sports-lover and this in-depth interview in the major newspaper claims that the then new Nokia CEO calculates his success by his fat percentage.²¹

Hence, judging from the articles that describe the then new CEO of Nokia and the rest of the Sikh community in Finland, as well other articles cited elsewhere in the text, the Finnish media often portrays persons with Indian origin as hard-working and an important pillar of Finland’s economy.

5. Culture

Indian culture understood in its broader, anthropological sense, and in terms of its adaptability to Finnish society, is at issue only in a few articles. One article mentions problems such as the smell of Indian food in an apartment building that had resulted in complaints from other inhabitants of the building. Before appearing in the *Evening News*, the article came out in a regional newspaper. The *Evening News* describes how the strong smell of food became a problem when two families with Indian origin moved into the apartment building. The article concludes that the problem could not be solved despite the involvement of different state institutions, including the police and the office for environmental issues.²² Another article addressing culture in the anthropological sense of the term, concerns the worries of Finnish Sikh-parents who think that their children have become too Finnish. The parents interviewed in the article do not want their kids to go to nightclubs and consume alcohol like Finnish teenagers. Rather, they want their kids to work as hard as they themselves did.

Reporting on Indian culture in the narrow sense of the term (music, festivals, dance etc.) is positive. Indians bring colour and joy to the more reserved Finns. An article in the regional *Morning News* tells about a dance group with colourful dresses visiting a middle-sized Finnish city and bringing centuries of Indian culture with them. Moreover, an article in the *Helsinki News* tells a story of an Indian student who came to Finland to study biotechnology but ended up as a dance teacher. The project, his dance school, became so successful that he decided to abandon his PhD dreams. The article emphasizes the success of the school under Indian leadership and its plans to expand to other cities.²³ The media also takes pride in the fact that in 2014 the first Indian Bollywood production company arrived in Finland with the aim of filming one of its big productions there. Balkin Shamitabh – the director of the film – came to see the country that had produced Nokia.²⁴

²¹ *Helsinki News*, 4.5.2014: The executive manager of Nokia Rajeev Suri – a man of 1500 sit-ups.

²² *Evening News*, 26.11.2014: Indian food causing a big dispute in an apartment house in Helsinki.

²³ *Helsinki News*, 25.10.2014: Daniel Paul is teaching Bollywood dance in Tampere, the challenge is to make Finns relax.

²⁴ *Helsinki News*, 28.6.2014: Bollywood-team shot in Finland.

6. Gender

The discussion of gender issues in India is often related to the recent rape cases and the portrayal of oppressed Indian women. In addition to the many articles that discuss rape, one lengthy article analyzes a new trend in India, which is the hymen repair or hymenoplastia. It is useful to refer to the article as it discusses the role of Indian women more broadly and hence can be used as a lens through which Finnish people view Indian women residing in Finland. The article explains that purity and chastity of a woman is often a condition for marriage for Indian women. It makes clear that across the Indian society where arranged marriages are very common, virginity is important for unmarried women and the shame associated with pre-marital sexual intercourse is noted. The article explains that these cultural patterns have led many young women to restore their virginity through hymen repair surgery in the recent years. As we can see these explanations given in the article for the women's behavior are cultural and not religious. The article describes the life of a doctor who is busy with surgeries that restore girls' virginity. Even though liposuction, nose surgery and breast surgery are still also important in India, hymenoplastia has become one of the most important new trends. The interviewed doctor explains that most of the women decide themselves to come to the surgery. The availability of the surgery has increased its popularity as more and more women come to hear about it. 600 euros is the price of the surgery and hence, the article describes, it is most popular among wealthier women from upper segments of the society.²⁵

The above-mentioned long article on the Sikh community in Finland in the *Helsinki News* ("Working one's fingers to the bone") also discusses women's role in the Sikh community. It explicitly explains how Sikh women eat the food first and the men come to the table to eat and discuss important matters only when women have left. The article relies on several essentializing notions such as "these are the traditional gender roles in a Sikh community" without giving voice to the Sikh woman and men themselves. It explains that the code of behavior is stricter for Sikh women than for Sikh men. For example if Sikh parents residing in Finland do not find a proper man for their daughter in Finland they will search for a husband in the Punjab. The article contends that the life of a Sikh man is much freer than that of a Sikh woman in Finland. The article also tells a concrete story of an eighteen-year old Sikh-woman whose parents found her a Sikh husband from the Punjab and the *fiancé* is soon to arrive in Finland.²⁶ However, it is not only with regard to daughters that the role of the family is emphasized. Essentialized versions of traditional family roles at times define the representations of Indian male family members too. An article that discusses the previously mentioned Indian-led dance school in a middle-sized city in Finland points to how it took time for the parents of the founder of the dance-school to accept his choice to become a dance teacher instead of striving for a biotechnology degree at the university: after all, "in India it is traditionally the family that decides on their children's professions".²⁷

A more facetious column on marriage "Nice to meet you, will you marry me" in the *Evening News* discusses the differences between Western conceptions of marriage and other conceptions. This includes arranged marriages in India. The column refers to an interview with an Indian man whose marriage was arranged and the author aims to explain that the sorrows and joys of couples in different marriage situations can be very similar independently of the way that a marriage came into being. The column concludes that an arranged marriage in itself is not necessarily a bad thing. The issue became topical after the launch of a TV-program in Finland in which people can get married without ever having met their future husband/wife.²⁸

²⁵ *Evening News*, 8.3.2015: Hymen repair became a trend in India.

²⁶ *Helsinki News*, 27.1.2013: Working one's fingers to the bone.

²⁷ *Helsinki News*, 25.10. 2014: Daniel Paul is teaching Bollywood dance in Tampere, the challenge is to make Finns relax.

²⁸ *Evening News*, 27.1.2015: Opinion: Nice to meet you, will you marry me?.

7. Religion

Between 2012 and 2015 no articles discuss the religious traditions of the Indian community in Finland in any detail. Islam appears often in the news but in the analysed articles Islam is not mentioned in the context of the Indian community. In general the Indian community is rarely addressed in terms of any religion. It is rather cultural explanations that dominate public discourses. In *Helsinki News*' "working one's fingers to the bone" (an article mentioned above) only a few Sikhs in Finland wear the traditional turban and let their hair grow as Sikh tradition require. The journalists of *Helsinki News* examine why that should be. First, maintaining long hair and wearing a turban is a time-consuming practice and hence many Sikhs refrain from doing it. Second, the article contends that Sikhs have abandoned the turban because they think that some Finns might connect the turban with Islam. Thereby the journalists (or perhaps the interviewed Sikhs themselves) imply a certain negative representation of Islam in Finland.²⁹

Despite the claim presented in the *Helsinki News* at the beginning of 2013 that only a few Sikhs in Finland wear the turban, the headgear worn by the Sikhs made headlines across all Finnish media the same year. The discussion started when one transportation company, Veolia Transport, forbade their drivers from wearing the turban during working hours. One driver then complained about the restriction. The issue was first taken to the regional state administrative agency that called the regulation discriminatory the Veolia Transport company had imposed on its employees working clothes. The regional state administrative agency saw that the regulation forced the employees to act against their religion. Veolia Transport, in turn, had said that the ban was to guarantee uniformity in employees' working clothes and work safety. However, the company could not prove the claimed negative effect of the turban on employees' work safety.³⁰

Several articles discussed the issue at the time, but it was only in 2014 when the turban dispute was solved between the trade union and labor unions allowing the use of the turban for bus-drivers across the whole country. The driver who had waited for the decision for one year got to keep his turban.³¹ He was interviewed speaking positively in the newspapers. Among others the Finnish Sikh comments in the *Helsinki News*: "it was a good decision: I have the right to my own religion and I am allowed to wear a turban. Finland is a free country"; "I have lived in Finland for 28 years and worked as a bus driver for 12 years. I pay taxes and I have a family here with children. My own religion is important to me. The fact that we have our own religion, culture and language does not disturb others."³²

Further discussions followed after the Sikh driver expressed his wish that one day his son would be able to use the turban in the Finnish army.

From the religious perspective, the only article that touches upon the Sikh religion is the lengthy article on the Sikh community. It compares Sikhism to the dominant protestant faith in Finland in terms of work ethics and thereby tries to explain why the Sikh community is hard working. The Sikh religion is portrayed as a positive trait of the immigrant community as it is comparable to the Lutheran religion. However, despite the small size of the Sikh community in Finland (600 members), it is divided into two smaller communities along the lines of the theological disputes also prevailing in the global Sikh community. The division stems from the concern over purity from Hinduism and Islam (i.e. whether or not the holy book *Dasam Granth* originates in its entirety from the text of Gobind Singh). While previously the community lived peacefully together in Finland, some years ago one part

²⁹ *Helsinki News*, 27.1.2013: Working one's fingers to the bone.

³⁰ *Evening News*, 27.6.2013: The ban on turban was judged discriminatory – making the bus driver happy.

³¹ *Helsinki News*, 27.2.2014: Fact sheet.

³² *Helsinki News*, 25.2.2014: The trade and labour unions decide that the use of turban is allowed.

of the community left the only gurdwara in the capital city of Helsinki and formed their own community in a nearby city.³³

Another dispute concerning not only the Sikh community but all non-Protestant communities in Finland is over burial/funeral customs. Despite the increasing number of those who do not belong to the “state church”, almost all Finns are still buried according to the Lutheran tradition. An article describing the dispute between priests explains that the priests are discussing what to do in situations where the person to be buried belongs to another religion than the relatives of the deceased. More than 90 percent of funerals in Finland are still conducted by the church. The country also lacks graveyards for non-Christians. There are differing opinions about the appropriate proceedings within the church. The current policy allows for the burial of non-Christians if the relatives of the deceased person ask for it. However, some consider it wrong for the church to do so, because if the person did not belong to the state church it was obviously not his or her intention to be buried according to that church’s rites. Moreover, some priests also expressed the concern that people still think that they will get the benefit of a church burial without being a member of the institution.³⁴

8. Conclusion

The small Indian community in Finland is portrayed in the Finnish media as a well-integrated group in economic terms. No reporting on crime committed by people with Indian origin came out, nor was the issue of integration discussed in the media during the period of analysis. Reporting on individuals of Indian origin is mostly positive as pointed out in the above-mentioned examples of the new CEO of Nokia and the hard-working business-oriented restaurant workers and owners. Nevertheless, presumed “Finnishness” is often taken to measure those of non-Finnish origins and culturalist explanations do persist when it comes to gender roles. Indian women are not given a voice to explain their position in the community. Moreover, reporting on Indian companies in Finland is negative as is reporting on the experiences of the technology giant Nokia in India. While very little reporting could be found on the “Indian culture” understood in the anthropological sense of the term, the reporting on Indian culture as art is seen as enriching the Finnish society.

³³ *Helsinki News*, 27.1.2013: Working one’s fingers to the bone.

³⁴ *Evening News*, 1.4.2015: Dispute among the priests: who should be buried, where and how?.

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Appendix. List of News Media

Helsingin Sanomat [Helsinki News]. *Helsingin Sanomat* referred here as *Helsinki News* is the largest subscription newspaper in Finland. It is published every day (except certain national holidays). *Helsingin Sanomat* belongs to Sanoma media group (which also publishes *Iltasanomat/Evening News*, see below). Its distribution reaches 313,062 during weekdays and 352,541 during weekends amounting to 784,000 readers on a daily basis. In addition to the published tabloid format it has a good website, but most of the articles are only available to paid subscribers. In a small country with little more than five million inhabitants *Helsingin Sanomat* has a significant influence on the Finnish society and it is often said that it has its own agenda. However, it claims to be politically independent.

Iltasanomat [Evening News]. *Iltasanomat/Evening News* belongs to the same Sanoma group as the above mentioned *Helsingin Sanomat*. The boulevard type of newspaper is the second biggest newspaper in Finland. The circulation is around 140,000 copies and during the weekends a bit higher. Its website is one of the most visited websites in Finland. The *Evening News* publishes six times a week. The newspaper is politically independent.

Aamulehti [Morning News]. *Aamulehti/Morning News* is also one of the oldest newspapers in Finland. Its circulation is somewhat below the circulation of *Iltasanomat* (around 139,000). It belongs to the Alma Media group and is based in Tampere. It serves the greater area of that region. It is published seven times a week – excluding some holidays. It does not have a good website and its readers rely on the tabloid format of the newspaper. It is politically independent after leaving the alliance with the National Coalition party.

Kauppalehti [Trade Newspaper]. *Kauppalehti/Trade Newspaper* is the Finnish business daily. Like the *Morning News* it belongs to the Alma Media group. It reports on business news and publishes six days a week. It has a good website but one that is available only to subscribers. It is independent but clearly advances the interests of the business community.

Yleisradio (YLE) [The Finnish National Broadcasting Company]. YLE is the Finnish Broadcasting Company. It runs several TV and radio channels in Finnish and Swedish. It has a website where certain articles either related to the TV programs or independent opinions pieces are published. It belongs to the Finnish state.