The Factors that Affect Indian Migrants' Decision to Stay in or Counter Migrate from the United States: A Study with Special Reference to the Role of Tourism Related Imagery as a Determinant

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Abstract: In the light of the changing socio-economic realities of the present times, this paper explores the complex dynamics underlying Indian immigrants' decision to continue to stay in the United States or to counter migrate back to India. In a reversal of fortunes, the specific set of conditions that once triggered a massive inflow of economic migrants from India to the US has been causing a counter migration to India. Based on a review of literature and an exploratory study involving focus groups the paper identifies some of the major migration / counter migration related factors. Then, employing a survey, the relative importance of each of these factors is gauged for individuals associated with different professions. In addition, the study explores as a special case the role of tourism related images about the US being held by immigrants as determinants of their migration related decisions. Tourism images held by the migrants and the tourism opportunities provided by the US act more as hygiene factors than as motivators. In course of the exploration, a number of hypotheses are emerged that are of interest to future researchers. The study has got significant implications for migration / counter migration policy makers, industry practitioners, and the migrants themselves.

Keywords: *Determinants of migration and counter migration; tourism-migration inter-relationship; work and tourism; focus group; life history of migrants; implications for policy; USA; and India.*

Introduction

In many parts of India, it is rare to find a family without at least a single migrant (Mosse *et al*, 2002). There exist two major types of outbound migration from India (Pandey, 1996): firstly, the migration of people with technical skills and professional expertise to countries such as the USA, Canada, UK and Australia; secondly, the migration of unskilled and semi-skilled workers to oil exporting countries of the Middle East. Most migrants in either category come from the

southern states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, in addition to the northern state of Punjab. In percentages, it is just one percent of the Indian population that has migrated so far; yet, the consequences to the sending regions are myriad.

India's massive investment in higher education, particularly technology, during the past decades has resulted in large numbers of the highly trained personnel willing and seeking to work abroad. The US has emerged far and above its competitors as the number one choice for immigration, although there exists a great deal of competition amongst developed nations for India's highly trained workforce. In addition to technical competence, cultural openness, willingness to learn, and mastery over the English language make the Indian labor pool a superior class compared with the other seekers of migrant labor to the US. Another reason for the Indian labor presence in the US is the existence of large numbers of Indian owned or managed MNCs in the US. Also, Indian students represent a significant chunk of overseas students being enrolled in the US higher education system every year; most of these students get an H1-B work permit or a green card after their graduation and continue to work in the US. Some commentators note that the Indian migration to the US will continue unabated even in the event of a US policy shift against migration (Reichl, 2005). This is because Indians in the US constitute a highly collective society just like they are at home and the social networks and ties will sustain migration even without policy support.

Extant literature has listed out a number of generic causes for migration (Castles and Miller, 1998; Skeldon, 1997). The attractions in the destination countries include higher levels of income, low poverty level or at least social support for the poor, low level of crime, opportunities for self expression, opportunities for courtship, avenues for career growth, tolerance for religious practices, higher standard of living, family ties and cultural proximity, colonial ties, escape from wars and other calamities, escape from environmental degradation, escape from political oppression, prospects for entrepreneurial activities, escape from overcrowding, among others. Some studies show that it is the educated middle class that is most likely to migrate (Kritz, *et al.* 1992). Once someone migrates successfully, the same leads to a chain reaction: the migrant's colleagues, friends, relatives, and so on are more likely to migrate in that event, with the snowballing effect increasing exponentially with the passage of time. Thus, although mass migration is almost always through the same paths treaded by a few pioneers, over a period of time, it becomes a self-sustaining social mechanism

(Castles, 2000). Most temporary workers in wealthy destination countries seek permanent residency, too, as the case with H1-B visa holders in the United States (Meissner *et al.,* 2006). A study by OECD (2001) found that, of the 33.5 million foreign born residing in the US, approximately 38 percent have obtained US citizenship through naturalization.

The current phase of transnational migration is one in which immigrants forge and maintain concurrent multi-stranded relations between home and host societies (Glick Schiller et al., 1995). Literature has segregated the traditional 'political' migrants to the more recent 'economic' migrants (Pedraza-Bailey, 1995). While the United States has historically received millions of political migrants in the past, the nature of migration has fundamentally changed in the recent decades (Suárez-Orozco et al, 2005). While issues like persecution, war, famine, and calamities motivated political migrants, economic migrants are a totally different class: they leave their country of origin motivated by the economic advancement opportunities and the associated enhancements in the quality of life offered by the host countries. Generally, they do not have socio-political or cultural deprivations that drive them out of their home countries and even while at the host country they ardently practice the cultural practices of their home (Iredale, 2001). This factor plays a very important role in the counter-migration of Indian and Chinese economic migrants from the United States. As a result of the recent economic surges in the emerging economies across the world, the very same conditions that triggered migration in the past have begun to appear in these countries. This is a significant motivator for many economic migrants who want to take the mantle of the new wave. The US experience is a big advantage for them in getting lucrative offers from the neo-multinationals in these countries who want the US corporate history from the mid 1950's replicated in their corporations. Likewise, many senior executives have begun to go back home to launch start-ups, often with the wealth they have accumulated while being in US or with venture capital funds that are widely available for start-ups. If immigration has shaped the United States over the past century, counter migration has become a formidable force in shaping the destiny of countries like India in the twenty first century.

During the 1970s and 1980s, there existed serious concern that India was losing its educated workforce to the West, particularly to the United States (Bhagwati, 1976). However, since the first decade of the 21st century, attention has re-focused from 'brain drain' on 'reverse-brain drain' or 'brain-gain' (Chacko, 2007).

The reverse brain drain that began in small numbers seems to have a snow-balling effect as well: the few who counter-migrate initially induce their colleagues to go back to India and the effect has dramatically spiraled over the past few years. Long back, Piore (1979) noted that migration sustains itself. Likewise, in the present set of conditions, we find that counter-migration too seem to sustain itself. Studies show that the pride of migrant Indians about their homeland has been steadily on an increase; especially, the phenomenal growth of India's information technology industry has produced a transnational class of professionals who are actively engaged in constructing a notion of a new India that is global in scope, yet Indian in essence (Radhakrishnan, 2008). Discourses of a new belonging that emphasize the re-invention of Indian family values gain strength through constant circulation among the expatriate circles.

If immigration is historically demand driven and is primarily facilitated through recruitment from the receiving nations to fill unattractive jobs at home, even in the initial years of counter migration, it is not so. The migrants in the host countries were generally looked down upon, until they acquired a respectable status due to their professional competence. However, the counter-migrants to India, from the very beginning, has been able to create an elite class of their own in India: They come back home as respectable citizens who have done wonders in another country and are looked towards with awe and aspiration by the rest of the society. There is an added dimension to this: most of the Indian migrants to the US are from the lower castes of the highly class-structured Indian society. Being able to work in the US seems to have the effect of erasing the traditional stigma attached to being a lower caste individual. A testimony to this is the fact that lower caste individuals have increasingly gotten into traditionally higher caste occupations through the experience and contacts developed in the US in the last few years.

In the context of the temporary specialty workers, technically termed as H1-B Visa holders, who constitute the largest chunk of Indian immigrants in the US, an unanswered issue in the literature is where to put them in the available classification schema. If we follow the dual labor market hypothesis of Piore (1979), H1-Bs should fall under the secondary sector laborers. But, according to the traditional theory, the flexibility of the secondary sector manifests itself in a general undesirability of the jobs it offers: lower wages and prestige, expendability, and part-time or irregular work. And, the nature of the jobs in this sector renders

them unattractive to natives; thus there is an inherent, constant demand in the secondary sector regardless of general unemployment or wage changes. But, H1-Bs constitute a highly qualified and specialized labor pool, often more educated and experienced than the natives who are in the primary labor sector (Chakravartty, 2001). Also, natives do compete with the temporary workers for these specialty jobs and when selected are rarely paid any more that what the temporary workers are paid. Thus, based on the nature of their job, they do not fall under the secondary labor sector. Yet, the checks and balances that are placed upon their jobs, especially Visas that are tied to particular employers, tend to denigrate their societal status and make them to exhibit at least certain characteristics of the traditional secondary labor pool. Another noteworthy thing is that many so called specialty occupations that get filled by temporary workers are 'specialty occupations' merely from a legal standpoint: for instance, Iredale (2001) noted that, due to the increased standardization of software programming and interoperability, the mobility of IT workers from one job to another has tremendously increased, leading to the situation of an invisible deskilling. Despite the fact that these jobs have become 'clerical' in scope, the societal acclaim attached to them has not reduced significantly since the mainstream society remains largely unaware of these changes.

Chacko (2007) notes that Indians began immigrating to the United States in large numbers after the Immigration and Naturalization Services Act of 1965 abolished the national-origin quotas that had been in place in the United States since 1924. At the beginning of the 20th century, there were only a couple of thousands of persons from India in the USA. But, according to the 2000 Census, the foreign born in the US of only three countries, namely, Mexico, Philipienes, and India had a population of over one million; the Indians represent the third largest immigrant group in the US. Even though the foreign born from India make up only one percentage of the total US population, in a single decade from 1990 to 2000, the Indian immigrant population almost doubled, highlights a statistics released by the Immigration Policy Institute (IPI, 2003). During this period, data available with the United Nations reveal that the overall percentage of international migrants in the US has just moved from 17.8% to 22.9% (UNO, 2008). According to the US Department of Homeland Security, 47,582 applications from Indians for naturalization have been approved in the year 2006 alone (YIS, 2006).

Table 1 summarizes the number of Indians in the US over a period of ten years. As per the US Census (2000), most of the Indian population resides in the following states: California, New Jersey, New York, Illinois, Texas, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Florida, Maryland, and Virginia, in the descending order.

Table 1: Stock of Indian born population in the US from 1995 to 2006

Year	1995	'96	'97	'98	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06
Population (In thousands)	540	757	748	722	839	1007	1027	1304	1142	1262	1411	1446
Percentage	2.2	3.1	2.9	2.7	3.2	3.5	3.4	4.0	3.4	3.7	4.0	4.1

Source: Migration Policy Institute

The Census also highlights that the number of male/female migrants from India are almost equal: 53.9% males and 46.1% females. Individuals in the age group of 25-34 comprise 30.7% of the migrants, followed by individuals in the age group of 35-44 which comprises 20.7% of the population. The median age is calculated to be 35.4 years. Of the migrants, 74.8% come as married people. These statistics taken together may imply that most of the migrants come for employment while others come as their dependents.

The educational attainment of Indian migrants is remarkable, too: 69.1% of the Indian population has got at least a Bachelors degree; and, 38% has attained a graduate or professional degree. Also, 57.8 % of the Indian population had registered for a college or graduate school program when the census was undertaken. The types of jobs that Indians get in the US may imply their societal status: As per the Census, 42.1% of the Indian migrants do jobs related to education, health, social services, science, and professional administration and management. Among the total number of professional highly skilled immigrants admitted to the US from all countries, India made up 19.5 percent in period between 1971-1980, and 13.4 percent between 1981-1990 (Nayyar, 1994). Most interestingly, according to the Census 2000, the unpaid family workers are only 0.4% of the total Indian population in the US. Also, 67.9% of the population has

own car, truck, or van. Almost a half of the population has got own homes while the remaining half lived in rented homes.

The Study

The present study was conducted during December 2007. Three focus groups, in two stages, were organized among the migrants from India in the United States. The focus group was mainly to elucidate the reasons held be the Indian migrants to stay on in the US or to go back home in the light of the newly emerging realities. In addition, the focus groups discussed the importance of touristic images of the US being held by Indians in their migration and counter migration decisions as well as in their attitude towards work. Focus group is an accepted exploratory technique often used to unearth opinions, beliefs, and attitudes on issues of interest held by a community. The semi-formal setting arranged for a focus group interview encourages guided brainstorming on topics of interest. The immediate outcome of this exercise is the understanding of what people think, which helps the researcher to generate testable hypotheses for more structured and quantitative studies in the future. Some contend that a quantitative stage as noted above is avoidable if multiple focus groups are conducted and a theoretical saturation, equivalent to statistical generalization, is achieved (Morgan, 1996). For the present study, due to the time and resource limitations, only a minimal quantitative investigation was done after the focus group. The data for this stage was gathered in the form of a short, researcher administered questionnaire.

Participants for the focus group study were identified from the audience of a Christmas-New Year celebration event conducted by the overseas Indian community in San Francisco. These initial informal interactions served to identify some of the potential questions to be raised during the focus group discussion as well. Sixteen participants were selected on a first come first served basis and were divided into two groups of eight participants in each. Excluding the time taken for warming up and partying, each of the two focus groups lasted for around one hour. With no professional sophistication like one way mirrors and recording devises, there remained a warm and cordial informality all around. The researcher himself acted as the facilitator. These two focus groups were conducted with relatively less facilitator intervention to allow free flow of ideas.

Both the focus groups were organized independently of each other and the topics discussed or ideas generated during the first focus group were not brought into the second one. The questions raised elicited a great deal of respondent interest and many interesting conjectures were emerged.

It was decided that participants for the third focus group would be individuals selected on a quota sampling basis from the first two focus groups: five participants from each. Due to the inconvenience factor, a couple of participants dropped out and in the end three participants from the first group and four participants from the second group finally agreed to participate in the third focus group. The two-stage focus group is an incremental methodological innovation and was conceived with a view to minimize the first degree "groupthink". Groupthink occurs when a group makes faulty decisions because group pressures lead to a deterioration of mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment". Individuals affected by groupthink ignore alternatives and tend to agree for irrational decisions (Janis, 1982). In the present research design, the third focus group is aimed at reducing the net groupthink effect since the groupthink effects associated with the first two focus groups work in the third focus group to create a dynamics of dialectics. Ideally, the groupthink can be entirely eliminated only by an infinitely large sequence of focus groups, which is impractical. However, moving from the first degree groupthink to the second degree groupthink alone is sufficient to minimize the idea losses due to groupthink to a very great extent. In addition, by the end of the first two focus groups, the facilitator is likely to gain a great deal of clarity about the issues being discussed and hence can pre-script the proceedings of the third group. And this really happened in course of the present study.

In between the focus groups, prolonged informal interactions took place between the researcher and a few interested participants: this helped to unravel some interesting aspects of the life history of Indian immigrants to the United States. The focus groups, the informal interactions, and a review of popular literature taken together yielded a number of variables that potentially represented the important reasons to migrate and counter-migrate. Later, the importance of these variables in the propensity to migrate or counter-migrate was assessed using a questionnaire. The questionnaire also contained a question to measure the influence of touristic images in the migration/counter-migration decisions.

Tourism and Migration: The Inter-relationships

Since most technical definitions of migration stipulate that boarder crossings should be for a minimum period of at least six months, strictly speaking, tourism does not fall under the category of migration (Castles, 2000). Yet, for a pragmatic observer, international tourism constitutes the most major form of temporary migration in the present times (Gustafson, 2002). Resettlement of labor and capital to provide products and services to tourists in the destination countries is a related form of migration. Entrepreneurial migration takes place motivated by the desire of entrepreneurs to capitalize upon the potential opportunities provided by a destination. In addition, tourism flows may lead to the creation of consumption oriented systems like second homes in the destination countries. It has been noted that such systems more often than not lead to the permanent migration of tourists to the destination countries (Rodriguez, 2001). Tourism attractiveness of a destination country may trigger non-touristic permanent migration: destination attractiveness is sometimes taken as a proxy for the quality of life at a place. Such migration in turn results in the development of other industries in or near to the destination areas wherein these industries thrive on the new-found migrant settlers. Again, the permanent migration of workforce may boost VFR (Visiting Friends and Relatives) tourism (Yuan *et al.,* 1995). The migrants themselves may travel back to their country of origin for VFR or other purposes (Feng and Page, 2000).

Tourism attractiveness of a destination results in retirement migration as well. These changes have the power to metamorphose the traditional image of a tourism destination: say, from the image of a laid-back backpacker haven to a booming business destination. Sometimes, tourism acts as an anti-migration influence: tourism creates jobs in the destination countries and the same acts as a compelling reason for the residents not to migrate elsewhere (Ferreira, 2007). The triadic forces of liberalization, privatization, and globalization in the recent times have amplified multiple times the scale and scope of these changes. The definition of migration itself is becoming more and more complicated than ever before: an Asian in the US can simultaneously be a student, worker, a tourist, and a likely "permanent resident" in the near future. Tourism related migration has yielded a range of socio-cultural, economic, and political issues for the migrants, for the

destination communities, and for governments, many of which have been under-researched (O'Reilly, 2003).

The migration drivers can be classified into push and pull factors: push factors are motivations that make one to think that he has to migrate and are socio-psychological; pull factors are the country attractions that 'pull' the individual to it. For example, motivation to get a better paid job is a push factor. It 'pushes' the individual to search for different country alternatives to migrate; information is sought and presented; many competing country alternatives enter the individual's choice set as potential migration destinations. Out of them, he chooses the one alternative that pulls him the most. Tourism images of a country constitute an important medium through which the information about a potential country for migration is passed on to individuals. Touristic images are intensely perpetuated, widely held, and are attested by many seemingly independent agencies: these characteristics make them trustworthy (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999) and may heavily influence one's migration related decisions.

One of the chief attractions for migrants in the United States is its promise of improved quality of life. Millions have sold their property in other countries and have left their friends and relatives in search of a better quality of life that they believe is available in the US. Apart from the globally pervasive influence of the mass media, international inbound tourism to the United States is one of the vital communicators of this widely held image. International tourism has become one of the the dominant faces of our times and the markers that once used to separate tourism from the rest of routine life have thinned down to a negligible level (Medlik and Lockwood, 2002). The present investigation on the influence of touristic images held by Indians about the US upon their migration and settlement plans in the US as well as in their decision to counter-migrate to India is to be seen in the light of the above.

The Social Construction of Work versus Tourism

Work and tourism has traditionally been defined in diametrically opposite terms: it has been an *a priori* assumption that work and leisure compete with each other for time that is scarce (Adler and Adler, 1999). This view continued largely unchanged despite the information and communication technology revolution in

the recent past that enabled people to free work from its spatio-temporal boundedness and gain more autonomy and flexibility.

Lawson (2000) notes that migrants' experiences are socially constructed and are situated in particular political-economic and cultural contexts in meaningful ways. The complex interplay of desires, identities and subjectivities determine belonging, exclusion, and affiliation felt by the migrants. According to world systems theory (Chase-Dunn and Grimes, 1995), master-slave structuration of the international system accounts for economic, political, and cultural relationships between core and peripheral nations and these relationships manifest as ideological infiltration of the peripheral nations by those of the core. A common result of this is the 'Edenization' of the core countries, leading to the intellectual elites gazing at them with a touristic awe. But, these elites are not economically capable enough to visit and live in the developed core countries as tourists and they rather seek employment opportunities in these countries. Another advantage of being a resident rather than a tourist is the images of belongingness that it communicates: For instance, if one is a tourist to USA from India, he is still an Indian; but, if one is a resident in the USA, he becomes more a part of the host society, which is seen as an important elevation in the peripheral countries like India.

Manrai and Manrai (2003) suggest that time usage patterns for work versus leisure activities differ across individuals originating from low and high context cultures. This study revealed that, in any particular work-leisure situation, respondents from high context cultures perceived the work time to be higher and their counterparts from low context cultures perceived the leisure time to be higher. The saying quoted by Buttler (1995) that Americans are workaholics than any other population because they do not have a clue on how to live makes real sense in this context. If this is the case, immigrant workers from the East, conditioned by the added influence of their prior touristic experience in the US, are much more likely to be dissatisfied in any work-leisure situation the US than the natives. Even otherwise, individuals informed in their decision to become migrants in a country by the touristic images of that country may continue to hold touristic attitudes towards everything even after migration, which is unlikely to be sustainable in the longer course. Their attitude towards work is likely to be 'negative' (or they may take work as 'fun') given that tourism is conceived in terms of its dialectical opposition to work. As noted by Uriely (2001), work is strictly

scripted with its dos and don'ts where as the activities of tourists involve playfulness that gives them escape from work and hence loosely defined. In addition, if prior touristic expectations are not met, this may further their chances of returning back to the home country.

Another study by Uriely and Reichel (2000) shows that those who perceive their work situation as a means to continue their travel are less likely to have positive attitudes about their hosts than others who grasp their work situation as part of their touristic experience. These authors suggest that while the touristic orientation of the latter induced them to develop social exchange with their hosts, the mercenary approach of the former limited their encounter with hosts to economic exchange only. This could mean that those migrants influenced by the touristic images of a country and engage in jobs that they consider as constituting their touristic experience may remain favorable in their perception about the host country than others.

Yet, most often than not, tourist spaces are artificially organized for authentic experiences (MacCannell, 1973). Without their knowledge, what tourists get is an assemblage of frames creatively staged with a view to satisfy their desires. But, when an individual becomes a migrant later, there will not be a tourist agency in his service to continue to serve him with the staged touristic realities. This leads to something like cognitive dissonance, the feeling of an uncomfortable tension coming from holding two conflicting thoughts in the mind at the same time (Festinger, 1957; Oshikawa, 1972). They expected touristic comforts and pleasures in the country to which they migrate but meet with harsher situations. The resultant uncertainty and the need to cope up with the unexpected create strains in them.

Discussion

The focus groups helped to generate a number of subjective decision bases for people to continue to work in the US or to counter-migrate: These are listed in tables 2 and 3. Many of these reasons were anticipated and have already appeared in the extant literature (Narayanan, 2007) and are referred in the previous sections. Some reasons were found to be more important for some migrant segments than others. Material comforts provided by the US emerged as the highest rated reason for migrants to stay, followed by career opportunities,

110

international exposure to kids, and an increased purchasing power. However, there exist profession-wise differences in perception. For instance, IT workers did not give much rating for 'exciting work place' as a motivator; nevertheless, this was a great motivator for those in the academics as well as those who perform managerial jobs. Likewise, those who do academic-research jobs love the individualistic orientation and multi-culturalism prevalent in the US, which, however, is not a significant motivator for any other class. This may have something to do with the elitist-idealistic orientation of those who are into these professions. This may be contrasted with the attitude of the manufacturing workers: their 'practical' attitude towards life may be envisaged from the higher ratings that they have given for items like material comforts and international exposure for kids.

Everyone agreed that higher purchasing power is a motivator: but, given that most of the migrants spend at least a half of their earnings to maintain a family or infrastructure in India and given that dollar is weakening against the Indian rupee as a currency, this may not continue to remain as a major motivator. Many focus group participants compared the purchasing power that they had a decade back and the same now, both within the US and in India, and lamented that they are loosing out in both fronts. In addition, the increasing purchasing power of the Indian rupee and the current trend among many Indian companies to give salaries with global parity has been cited as attractions to go back to the homeland. Also, note that, in table 3, the low cost of living in India is highlighted as the most important motivator for going back to India.

One striking aspect across all the classes of respondents is the value they give for family. For instance, giving an international exposure to their kids has been rated as an important item by all classes of respondents, irrespective of whether they believed in the idea of multi-culturalism. Likewise, it can be seen from table-3 that the need for parents to be taken care of has been cited as a major reason favoring the decision to go back. Also, many the respondents participated in the focus groups lamented that they would have a better family life if they were in India. Many were concerned that their family name might cease to exist soon in India if they do not go back and root the next generation there. In fact, this is one of the recurring themes that emerged in all the three focus groups. The survey outcome fortifies this. However, this preference is unlikely to be rooted in the macro-cultural preferences: quite contrary to the popular perceptions and

highlighting a gap in the theoretical rhetoric, the motivation to imbue the values of the East in the kids got only an average preference rating. Also, in many Indian families, grand parents are the ones who look after the kids until they go to school and give them the preliminary introduction to culture and heritage; but, re-connecting kids to grand parent is not a significant motivator enough to go back home. Close to this, again contrary to what appears constantly in the populist media most do not think that they want to go back to give something back to their motherland or to make their kids to love India. This is a motivation for a few philanthropists, but not to the larger segments of mainstream migrants. Or, are these because the so-called self oriented American values have influenced the Indian migrants to that extent? More study is required for an answer.

In popular discourses on the life of migrants in the US, a topic that appears so often is the issue of racial discrimination (Schuman *et al.,* 1997; Tonry, 1995). However, the participants of the survey do not seem like perturbed by the same at all. In fact, it came as the least important variable in their counter-migration decision. Those who work in the medical profession and those who are into academics or research did not even consider it as a problem worth mentioning. This variable was included in the survey since during the focus groups some raised it as a significant issue. However, the survey implies that, if at all some groups are concerned about it to some extent, they are the manufacturing workers and those who do miscellaneous jobs. To probe into why this happens so, we need to examine the demographics of these two segments. Most of the manufacturing/industrial workers whom the researcher interviewed are un/semi-skilled personnel who reached the US as dependents of their spouses on green cards and are employed mostly as school teachers or as nursing/para-medical staff. Likewise, the respondents who fell under the category 'others' are mostly part-time workers or self-employed for a living. Does this mean that racial discrimination is still prevalent in the lower echelons of the society? In a post-focus group follow up, this question was raised: many seemed to believe that, given the magnificent economic progress of India and that many Indians are working in top organizational capacities of many US MNCs, the Indian migrants have got an increasingly higher respect in the US in the recent times. Also, many believed that since Indians are neither black nor white, they escape from the direct effect of discrimination, if any.

Eastern societies are known for forming thick relationship networks (Hofstede, 2005). And most Indian families in the US are parts of strong community

networks that help to nurture continuation of the home culture through frequent cultural activities, events, newsletters, and so on. Most Indian migrants are parts of online social networking communities, too. In addition, by the time kids begin to go to school they develop a different set of cultural ties with their pals in the school. During the focus groups, many highlighted these community ties that they formed here as a maintenance factor for them to continue to live in the US. Some narrated the stories of families that counter migrated: the feeling of isolation at the homeland due to protracted years of separation; adjustment problems for kids in an entirely different educational system; expectation of kith and kin to continue to get gifts they way they used to get before counter migration; difference in job orientation; and so on. But, the survey implies that the networks formed while the migrants are in the USA are not a strong motivator enough to hold them here, *ceteris paribus*, other things are favorable for counter-migration. Taking part in the community activities here in the US may be a compromise out of necessity, with a feeling of 'something is better than nothing'.

The only entrepreneur participant in the focus groups highlighted the positive changes in the entrepreneurial climate of India: business friendly governments, decreasing corruption, fast track and single window clearances, improved access to capital and labor, world class infrastructure, and so on. He said that he is slowly moving his business back to the home country. According to him, he is the last among his group of friends who came to the "land of opportunities" around two decades back and that he saddened by the stagnation that he perceives everywhere in the US economic sphere.

In response to the question of why there are thousands of migration applicants waiting for the favorable consideration of appropriate US authorities, a lot of discussions were taken place. This is an issue that emerged from both the first two groups. It is true that people have to wait for months even to get a Visa appointment and the H1 quota available under various categories is getting filled at the beginning of the year. One set of participants responded to this by noting that those who show craze to land in the US do not understand the changed ground realities. A louder voice, however, was that even these days a few years of US experience is a great addition to one's resume. Based on personally known instances, these participants explained that the salary and perks offered to a US returnee is at least a half more than those offered to someone who spent his entire career even in the IT hot spots of India like Bangalore and Hyderabad. Also,

most US returnees directly fetch managerial positions once they are back. Academic assignments are another hot area: US returned professors attract huge salary from a bourgeoning number of private schools and universities in India that plan to replicate the American model in India. Likewise, US returned school teachers are quickly absorbed by the private international schools in India that follow international curriculum. However, these incentives are not available for all classes of employees or across all industries: one noted example is the medical profession. The United States continue to be a great attraction for those trained in the medical, nursing, and para-medical professions: the salary and perks offered in India for them, except for a small segment of outstanding doctors, is menial compared to the US rates. An added incentive for them is the ease with which they can grab a green card.

Table 2: Reasons for Indian migrants to continue to stay in the US (7 point scale; Rounded off to the nearest whole number)

Reason to Stay in the United States	Information Technology Employees N=25	Medical/Para Medical Employees N=28	Administrative/Managerial Staff N=17	Manufacturing Workers N=16	Academic/Research Staff N=11	Others N=14	Average importance N=111
Career Opportunities	7	6	5	5	7	4	6
Meritocracy	7	5	4	4	7	3	5
Exciting Workplace	4	6	7	4	7	4	5
Multiculturalism	4	2	2	2	6	2	3
International Exposure for Kids	7	7	5	6	7	4	6
Individualistic Orientation	2	2	2	1	7	2	3
Material Comforts	7	7	7	7	6	6	7
Efficient							

Systems and Procedures	3	3	4	3	5	2	3
Less Corruption	4	4	4	4	4	5	4
Higher Purchasing Power	6	5	6	5	6	6	6
Tourism Opportunities	5	4	5	2	5	2	4
Enjoyable Life	5	4	5	5	7	5	5
Less Pollution	2	4	1	1	4	2	2
Medical Care	3	3	2	2	4	2	3
Established a Network in the US	6	2	2	1	1	7	3

Table 3: Reasons for Indian migrants to counter-migrate to India (7 point scale; Rounded off to the nearest whole number)

Reason to Leave Back to India	Information Technology Employees N=25	Medical/Para Medical Employees N=28	Admini strative/ Manage rial Staff N=17	Manufacturing Workers N=16	Academic /Research Staff N=11	Others N=14	Average Importance N=111
Take Care of the Parents	5	6	5	6	5	5	5
Imbue Eastern Values in Kids	3	5	3	5	2	4	4
Reconne cting Kinds with their rand	3	4	2	4	2	3	3

Parents							
Give Back Something to India	4	3	2	1	7	3	3
Overcome Homesickness	2	2	2	4	4	2	3
Family Life a Casualty in the US	6	5	5	5	3	6	5
High Level of Crime in the US	3	4	2	2	3	2	3
American Culture is Immoral	2	6	2	3	1	4	3
Continue the Family Lineage in India	5	7	5	6	5	7	6
Make Kids to Love India	3	4	3	3	4	3	3
Low Cost of Living in India	6	7	7	7	6	7	7
Career Opportunities in India	7	2	6	2	6	3	4
Racism in the US	2	1	2	3	1	3	2

116

To the central question of the importance of touristic images and experiences in determining the decision to migrate, a variety of responses came out from the focus groups. For many, the influence of touristic images began from their childhood: they began to hear the glory of the United States from their primary school teachers which got fortified through years of higher schooling and exposure to the international media. Some revealed that, as kids, they found their migrant neighbors coming back to home once in a year or so with a lot of foreign goods and enviously gazed at the extravagant and pompous way they lived their lives. For many, these images were important; they agreed that the tourism attractions available in the US are an important add-on to the motivating factors. Yet the more important pull factors that the US provided were the opportunity to realize their intellectual potential; merit based rewards; higher income; superior quality of life; a range of career opportunities, and so on. Of course, touristic images provide one of the vital-most clues to the subjective evaluation of factors like quality of life. Towards the middle of the first focus group, there was a consensus that touristic images, although important, were not a motivating factor. The discussions sounded like an empirical substantiation of the famous two factor theory involving motivating and hygiene factors (Herzberg, 1959). Touristic images form a hygiene factor which cannot increase the motivation or satisfaction of a migrant although a lowering the same may lead to dissatisfaction.

Some members of the first group commented that the widely prevalent touristic image of the US in India as a highly promiscuous society in fact work against the decision to migrate. In many traditional aristocratic family settings, elders prohibit the youth from migrating to the States. The hardcore Hindu families, likewise, do not allow the young generation to visit the US even for a short while since people in he US consume beef, which is anathema for Hindus. Even now, women of many aristocratic Hindu families will not be given in marriage to a US employed, how much so ever educated or wealthy the groom may be. Tourism promotional materials have caused another unfounded perception: the perception that sex and drugs are freely available in the US. Due to this, some participants complained that whenever they go back home to India for a holiday, they hear rumors around them like "that girl is with another guy", "he has got four wives there", "he is a drug addict", and so on.

Members of the second focus group expressed that they had some sort of cognitive dissonance after reaching the States. The images of the United States that

they knew were far different from what they saw when they landed here. It was difficult for most to believe that there were poor people in America. Many recent migrants quipped that some of the cities in India like Bangalore and Pune were much better in terms of amenities than the places in the US they stay and work and for them their presence in the US provided a vantage point for making informed contrasts. The Utopian image of the United States seamlessly propagated by the international tourism industry creates a lot of unrealistic expectations in the Indian migrants is something that emerged very clearly from the focus groups.

Respondents across all the focus groups agreed that the wonderful tourism attractions that US has got across the country and a highly affordable air transportation system make them to vacation more. For them, this is a great stress reliever and rejuvenator, too. Many said that they rarely took a long distance tour in India but after coming to the US they go at least two times year for a long distance tour. The esteem ascribed by the host society for travelling is another reason for this, according to some. In addition to long distance vacationing, many Indian migrants go to nearby vacation spots for spending the week-ends. In both cases, they take a lot of photos and videos and share them with their friends and relatives back in India. This constitutes a large chunk of personal collection of the Indian migrants in online sites such as Flicker and You Tube.

Thanks to these colorful touristic imageries, many did not think that workers would be required to do manual labor in the US. The expectation was that, since "everything in the US is computerized", there would be no need to physically exert oneself as an employee. This was one of the most disconfirmed expectations for most of industrial workers whom we interviewed. A couple of construction workers who participated in the focus group said that the physical strain for a similar job back in India was much less compared to the same in the US. Even though not in the matter of physical toil, similar expectations were held by most Indians migrants. The cut-throat competition and the rampant hire and fire policy prevalent in the employment scenario in the US were difficult to grapple with for many who have enjoyed highly protected jobs. Many glorified the successes they achieved through trade union mediated negotiations and employment strikes. However, some of the focus group participants who had a stint of work experience in Middle-East before coming to the US intervened and commented that the job situation in the US is far superior than in the Middle East and that they felt relieved. Any how, rather than lamenting over it and deciding to go back,

migrants quickly learn to live up to the new set of circumstances. Some members responded that they began to respect work irrespective of the "class of work" only after reaching the US.

Conclusion

The United States accepts more legal immigrants as permanent residents every year than any other country in the world and immigration has been a major source of cultural and institutional change throughout much of US history (YIS, 2006). Yet, the economic, social, and political aspects of migration have always remained an issue of hot debates due to its controversial impacts upon economic growth, settlement patterns, environmental and aesthetic deterioration, social change, criminality, moral values, political loyalties, and so on (Suárez-Orozco *et al.,* 2005).

The present study has explored the complex set of motivations that are held by the Indian migrants in the United States in the matter of their migration and counter migration related decisions. While a large number of migrations related studies can be cited in the literature, not many India-US specific migration studies are available, which is shocking given the specific nuances associated it. The Indian migrants in the US form a highly influential group and the recent trend of their counter migration back to India may have far reaching consequence for the US and Indian economies. It is said that the US software industry remains largely in the hands of India born IT experts and the information technology edifice may need fundamental redesign if the exodus of top brains continue. A weakening dollar and the lure offered by the new generation India based companies may amplify the trend and cause the US to loose a significant part of the software business to India. Returning high skill migrants bring with them knowledge, expertise, access to global networks and capital, but also a international sensibility that influences where they work, live and their expectations and vision of life in the Indian cities in which they settle. If this trend is to be arrested, large scale changes may be required in the US immigration and citizenship regulations. Of course, this is an important topic worthy of a separate discussion. Counter migration is an issue of importance to the policy makers of countries like India too, given that the same may exacerbate the inequalities in the society. NASSCOM, the premier organization that represents and sets the tone for public policy for the Indian software industry

has put in its recent strategic review a detailed road map on how to integrate the US returnees and help to maximize their contribution to the Indian software trade (NASSCOM, 2008).

When counter migration becomes a massive trend governments may need to bring in counter migration policy frameworks, just as they have had migration policy frameworks so far. Counter migration can affect the lives of not only the ones who do it but also the lives of residents, firms, and the industries as well. It is high time national governments think about this issue seriously. The US government is yet to have a strategy or plan of action to follow in case the migrants decide to leave the country massively. Likewise, despite the motivational rhetoric taken by the government of India in welcoming back the migrants, it is yet to have a clear vision on how best to accommodate them into the mainstream fabric of the society or how best to utilize their learning and experience.

With regard to the role of tourism in the migrants' decision framework, the study revealed that tourism imagery is very much part of the subaltern minds of migrants and sway some influence in the migration decision. However, their dominant role comes as hygiene factors: tourism images enhance the ego satisfaction of the migrants; they act as tension busters; and they enrich the lives of migrants. Migrants who reach the US conditioned by the tourist imagery do go through a stage of disconfirmation of expectations, but, rather than continuing to lament about the gaps in perception, they quickly learn to live with the newly encountered reality.

A study built upon a few focus groups and an elementary survey conducted among just above a hundred respondents cannot become a solid base for generalization. Also, the geographical bias of the study towards the California region is very likely to have biased the results. The researchers could have collected data on other pertinent variables and could have conducted more sophisticated analyses, which was not possible within the time resource constraints for the present study. However, this preliminary investigation is sure to have thrown light upon some of the important factors that determine the propensity of migration and counter migration and future researchers may take leads from this.

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