

Indian and Nepalese Women Living in Finland

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Background

- Tuomas Martikainen and Lalita Gola (2007): Women from the Indian Subcontinent in Finland: Patterns of Integration, Family Life, Employment and Transnationalism among Marriage Migrants. Publications of the Population Research Institute, the Family Federation of Finland.
- Part of MONIKKO subproject "Equality and Multiculturalism at Workplace" conducted at the Population Research Institute of the Family Federation of Finland

Background

- *How do the life situations of migrants from outside of EU/ETA countries look like?*
- Research on immigrant families has been small until now
- Is an elementary part of **work related migration**
- Is part of the **government strategy** to attract immigrant families to Finland
- Lalita Gola, partner of an ICT professional, schooling in anthropology

Aims

- Indian and Nepalese women in the context of immigration in Finland
- Background information of the women based on statistics
- Women's experiences in Finland

Migrants and refugees Finland

- Finland used to be a country of emigration
- Largest groups Russians, Estonians, Swedes, Somalis, former Yugoslavians
- Finland officially promotes multicultural policies
- Government Migration Policy Programme in 2006: the promotion of work-related immigration
- Diversity is growing in regard to reason of migration, migrant generations, ethnic and national origin

Migrants from India and Nepal

- Migration from the Indian subcontinent to Finland has been a small phenomenon until now
- 2006: 4764 people born in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in Finland
- 64% of them were male
- Recent increase in numbers: recruitment of ICT professionals from India (Nokia)
- Most males probably arrived to Finland to work, women for family reasons, including marriage
- Majority of Indians and Nepalese in Finland live close to Metropolitan Helsinki, others around big cities of Tampere, Turku and Oulu

Migrants from India and Nepal

- Among Indians, Nepalese and Sri Lankans in Finland marriage is usually performed within the same national group (slightly more common for women than for men, 78% - 64%)
- Single mothers are uncommon (7%)
- Several cultural, ethnic and religious organizations providing services for the Indian (and to a lesser extent to Nepalese) communities in Finland

Interview data

- 20 semistructured thematic interviews in Metropolitan Helsinki, 2006: 14 Indian, 2 Nepalese women, 4 organizations
- Interviews were done by Lalita Gola in English and Hindi

Interviewees

- had lived at least one year in Finland (mostly migrated 1995-2005), were 25-45 years old
- were married, had 0-2 children
- had mainly college or university education
- worked (11) or were house-wives (5)
- had migrated to Finland due to husband's work (9), marriage (6)
- 1 Sikh, other Hindus

Interview data

- Two different groups were identified
 - 1) the wives of ICT professionals (10)
 - 2) the wives of ethnic restaurant workers and entrepreneurs (6)
- differences in e.g. the timing, route and reason of migration, educational background, employment, knowledge of Finnish language, future prospects
- diversity within the same ethnic group!

Experiences in Finland

Over half of the women had none or little prior knowledge of Finland:

”Before coming to Finland I never knew that Finland is a country. I did not know anything.”

”Nothing, we have one of our friends, who told us that Finland is very cold. We did not think anything else.”

”I read about Finland but as such it was not helpful... There is a different way of saying ”yes”, there is a different way of expressing ”no” and there is a different way of being neutral. It is something that you will come to know when you meet people.”

Socializing with Finns

”As in India, the people who live nearby come to visit and talk, and it happened a lot of times, I mean, this is very important in India. Here the neighbourhood is definitely not important. I mean, people who live nearby don’t come to visit others... Who are the neighbours? Here, nobody is interested of the life style of others.”

”With Finns, we interact everyday. Our business depends mainly on Finns. I have many Finnish friends but out of them only 2-3 are very close friends... Actually Finns have a different type (of interaction). They have a style of calling up for a cup of coffee.”

Some experiences of discrimination

"I think 80% of Finns are racist... I mean their first question, which I could not understand for many years was that whosoever comes, why that person asks, "why you have come here?" First question is here, "why did you come here, what is the reason?" and "are you going to live here permanently?" I mean it took me many years to understand these questions."

Good things in Finland

”There is honesty in this society that is something I would like to take to India... People are helpful. People are very helpful, very honest. Just this drinking and smoking is bad here, otherwise nothing else.”

”I have learnt punctuality here. In India, if a bus or a train is 5 minutes, 30 minutes late it does not bother us. But here if it is 30 seconds late we start to look at our watches.”

”Sauna is good, because in India sweating is usual, but here the weather is cold round the year so it is good to have sauna here.”

Comparisions to a Finnish woman

”Our culture and their culture are entirely different. I cannot dress up like them, I cannot drink like them, I cannot smoke like them, there are many differences. Their cooking, our cooking, all these things are different so I cannot be a Finnish lady. I am entirely different.”

”They are dominating. They are more independent, even for taking decisions they are more independent, we are not so.”

” ...Earlier I used to live at home, there was a protected environment. When I got married then I lived with my in-laws. In that situation you can take help of elders in decision-making and things like that. That has changed that now we two, husband and wife take decisions.”

Comparisions to a Finnish woman

”I have felt personally that these (Finnish) women are far more depressed than us. If you can see deep inside their hearts, you will see they are sad. One is the habit of suspicion, they keep a close eye on their husbands: I mean they cannot trust their husbands as they also do not do such things (trustworthy things). They themselves do wrong things, so they do not trust their husbands.”

”Our role is better than theirs. I have seen many Finnish families here, which are very good and take care of their children. But most of the time I have seen when they go out in the night, even I have seen that one lady left her 2 years old son with her 6-7 years old son alone at home to have some alcoholic drink outside.”

Identity

”I think I am international (outside), but Indian at heart, that we do not want to leave our values.”

”Of course to some extent we have really become Finnish. We cannot even maintain our culture. Diwali and Holi are just a formality now; we cook and eat something good on those days, that’s all. Otherwise, when it is Christmas we feel livelier and enjoy more as it is in the surroundings so...”

The future?

”We have not made any decision about it, but sometimes we think people and culture of Finland is good, we will live here as long as we can.”

”We are okay here. Now we need not see our interests, now we need to see our children’s interests. I accept that India is quite forward, but there is a lot of competition in India.”

”I think in old age, if we are going to live here till old age, i.e. till we get 50 years old. After that we will go back. In old age one wishes to live with his/her family, close to own brother and sister...”

Helsinki, 15/6/2007

Dear Tuomas,

How are you? I want to inform you that **my husband has got a good career move in England, so we will be moving to England in a month's time.**

Best regards,

Lalita