



Exploring The Cultural Influence Of Indian Students On Major Cities: A Comparative Study Between London, Toronto And Melbourne

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Abstract

The number of Indian students studying abroad continues to increase with every passing year, in their journey of pursuing advanced studies in specialized subjects in these countries, the students have been successful in creating an impact and influencing the local culture and practices. Internationalization of higher education has been a driving force behind the increase in immigration, the rising middle-class population of India have also contributed to the movement as the ability to study in foreign university programmes has also increased in the process. Culture continues to be predominant among the majority that migrates to different countries, migration for better job prospects and education leads to the people carrying over their traditions, the influence of Indians globally can be seen through their involvement in cultural practices that set India apart from other Asian country immigrants. The present research has aimed at carrying out research on the impacts which Indian students had on London, Melbourne and Toronto.

Keywords: Culture, Western Countries, London, Melbourne, Toronto, India, Higher Education, Religion

1. Introduction

India is one of the most densely populated countries in the world with a rich culture and heritage, the high competition leads to many Indian students moving to other countries for better opportunities and better career prospects. With the large influx of Indian students in these foreign lands, many cultural practices get exchanged and in a way they are seen to influence the host country. In the study carried out by Statista (2023), it has been found that over 750 thousand Indian students have emigrated to study abroad. Among the countries with the highest number of Indian students, Australia, Canada and the United States of America ranks the highest. UAE, Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom also rank high among the preferred countries of study

by the Indian students. As Indian families are closely knit, the migrating students carry over their traditions (Malhotra & Gaur, 2022). Indians are generally family-oriented while Western countries are goal-oriented, the hierarchical structure which the Indian families follow makes it easier for the students to look after themselves in these regions.

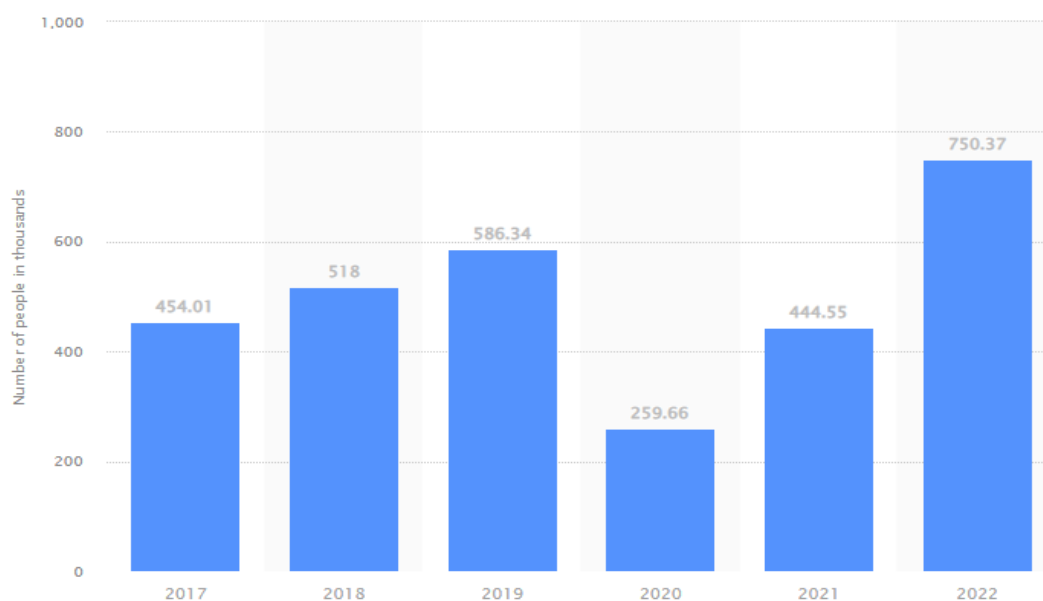


Figure 1: Number of Indian Students studying Abroad

(Source: Statista, 2023)

The cultural family continues to play an important role in Indian students choosing Western countries as their study destination. The West also provides diverse environments which are also inclusive, making it easier for the migrating students to fit in. The availability of scholarships and financial aid from foreign universities further makes it easier for Indian students to go abroad. All of this collectively contributes to the cultural influence on the other countries. The students carry with them good work ethics, food, meditation and yoga among other factors. Indian music is also highly popular in these Western countries, Indian music has gained inspiration from classical, folk and Hindustani music. The beauty, grace and unique phrasing of the song have been observed to captivate many people. The impact of Bollywood is also huge, the colourful and action-filled movies have started to become more and more popular among the Western countries where Indian students travel.

2. Methodology

The purpose of the present study is to understand how Indian students have been impacting cultures around the world. A secondary qualitative form of data collection and analysis method has been chosen within the research to collect detailed information on how these students have impacted the individual countries followed by a discussion comparing the impact across multiple levels. The secondary data in this context has been collected from different articles, peer-reviewed journals, newspaper articles and official websites to present cohesive research that details the positive impact Indian students started having on foreign countries. The information collected on the countries has been presented with the help of thematic analysis to showcase the relationship between the variables.

3. Findings

3.1 London

Indian students have a long tradition of migrating to the United Kingdom to study since the 1840s, this has helped strengthen the cultural and historical ties between both Indian and the UK. London has the highest population of Indians in all of the UK, the impact of Indians on the country can be witnessed through the vibrant cultural scene which has been created within the country. Indian students have a positive economic impact on the UK as recent reports have revealed that Indian students in the UK bring almost 10 times more into the economy than what they take out (ET, 2023). The students undergo world-class teaching and research which significantly help in growing the economy of the UK. Indian students in UK universities also have to pay a higher cost therefore contributing to the growth of the local and national economy of the country.

The cultural differences between Indian and Western students are one of the primary reasons behind their success, while western pedagogy focuses on critical thinking and discussion, students belonging to India and other Asian countries find it disrespectful. Students from India have learned to respect their elders from an early age, they believe the teachers to be in a position of power and authority, and this allows them to learn meaningfully. Indian students would avoid any form of disagreement with their teachers. The closely knitted social structure of the Indian communities leads to higher social support which also causes lesser accumulation of stress (Taylor & Ali, 2017). The docs on culture allow the Indian students to have a shared identity as they modify the environment around them to create a macro system. Through the development of social relationships within the host country, the students are able to exhort their influence on society.

In navigating their way across the UK, the Indian students have faced many obstacles which has led to them establishing their own culture within the country. Music and dance are some of the most popular ways through which people are able to connect with each other. Research has shown that many Indian students use Indian Classical Dance (ICD) as a way to maintain their cultural continuity (Varma & Siromahov, 2023). The rhetorical strategy which is used by these students is the shared history both countries experienced under the British Empire. The years of colonialism and families migrating to the UK for more opportunities have raised diversity while improving the Indian identity. Unlike the other countries studied in this research, the UK already had a deeply rooted Indian culture present which helps in forming historical bonds and makes it easier for the students to interact.

The students living in London have been found to exhibit both Indian and British cultural values, which helps in reducing tension and establishing healthy relationships. Being a former British colony there have already been many cultural changes between both countries, the colonial history has led to Indians having a firm grasp of the English Language. The Indians living in the UK have not only adapted to their food but have contributed their own, identification with the cultural context has helped in defining the exposition of cultural dualism. India is a scholar country, therefore students migrating do not generally struggle while facing the multicultural conditions of the UK (Dey et al. 2017). Through the shared identity, Indians have been able to become a powerful force within the UK society. The energy and talent of young Indians have helped grow the business and influenced the country in terms of food, art, sports and politics. Indian cuisine has revolutionized the

eating habits of the people, and various forums, organisations and institutions across the UK have helped preserve the richness of the Indian culture and led to its prospering further.

3.2 Toronto

Toronto is a multicultural hub known for its vibrancy competitive tuition and academic reputation, as a result, many Indian students migrate to the country every year. The Indian culture which has been brought in by the Indian students have positively impacted Canada's largest city, while the Indian students have successfully integrated into Canadian society they continue to maintain their cultural roots and celebrate their unique festival, art, food and fashion in the country. Indians are globally known for their indomitable spirit and entrepreneurial skills alongside their rich culture, all of which have been successfully carried to Canada with them. Indians have impacted Toronto both culturally and economically, the Indians have provided unwavering support to Canada with a diverse range of skill sets and proficiency (Indian Expats in Canada, 2023). Indian students are at the forefront of the IT revolution taking place in Canada, they occupy key positions in both startups as well as established tech firms. Indian doctors and nurses are also in high demand across the medical facilities of the country.

Common values which the Indian students carry have helped in raising their engagement level on every level of their lives, studies suggest that the discourse of integration into national values also depends on the homogenised essence of cultural practices. The common values which prevail in Western countries such as Canada have helped shape the colonial and imperialist discourse within the country (Ahmadi, 2018). The beliefs and culture of the Indians have helped diversify and institutionalise different practices across Canada. The multicultural nation which already exists in Canada helps the students uniformly share their values with others and improve their understanding of the cultural differences among them. The cultural impact of India on the Canadian subcontinent shows the deeper cultural structure which exists between the two countries, it has helped highlight the hidden habitus and constitutive convention between the culture and ethnicity of the people (Sondhi & King, 2017). Research suggests that the closely linked Indian societies have been successful in penetrating Canadian societies through meaningful intervention and behavioural exchanges between the cultures.

Demand for skilled Indian workers has created a global pathway for the Indian diaspora to take place across Canada. Unlike the melting pot of culture in the United States, Canada is a multicultural state which is known for supporting and encouraging the people to celebrate their own culture and religious practices. Many parts of Canada have strong Indian influences, and the younger generations of the country are also less likely to discriminate against people based on their skin colour or race. The impact of Indians can be seen in the food and musical tastes of Canadians, the Canadian schools also show Indian movies in schools which further gains the attention of the younger audience and teaches them to be more tolerant of other cultures.

The highly tolerant Canadian culture has helped ensure that the people living within the city are able to express themselves through their language, dress, food and religion. The Indian diaspora is closely related to the students migrating to Canada every year, formal citizenships, return visits and interests in the political events in India allows the students in Canada to maintain a connection with the motherland (Ashutosh, 2019). While

there are challenges, the connection which the students have been able to harness has helped to find a shared identity that goes beyond simplistic appeals of where they hail from in India. Researchers have further suggested that the economic liberation of India has allowed people belonging to the country to create new dynamics that allow them to value their traditions both in and outside the nation. The Indian diaspora culture brought in by the young students is not just a mere shadow of the homeland but vibrant through the intermixing of different cultural practices. Canadians are seen to actively participate in Indian festivals and ceremonies, Durga Puja and Navaratri in particular, through shared interests the families are able to immerse themselves in emotion and joyful tides (New Canadian Media, 2021). Canada stands true to its multicultural roots and allows people to experience feelings of harmony and belongingness, which are the primary motivators behind the success accumulated by the people.

3.3 Melbourne

Indian students are drawn to Melbourne due to its strong cultural scene, the economic opportunities that it provides and its wide range of courses. The government of Australia actively supports this influx of Indians in Melbourne, in 2021 the government sanctioned the first Indian cultural centre in Melbourne. A fund of \$2.5 million was granted to help the Indian people living in the city improve their education and involvement in cultural activities (NRI Nation, 2022). The international students living in Melbourne are further supported by the Melbourne Chapter of ICAI (Institute of Chartered Accountants of India) which is a nonprofit organisation aimed at providing opportunities to people and allowing them to grow. Bengali Society of Melbourne (BSM) and Melbourne Malayalee Federation Inc. are other non-profit organisations that allow Indian immigrants to find shared value and explore their culture outside of India

The welcoming nature of the people of Melbourne has been a driving factor behind Indians migrating to the country, the students are faced with a sense of reassurance and understanding, and the cultural similarity has allowed the students to find new levels of comfort and confidence in the foreign lands. India itself is a multicultural society and as a result, students coming to Melbourne find themselves in a similar place to other international students. Intercultural communication competence is another important factor that helps students build relationships and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships with others from the country (Belford, 2017). The students have revealed that they become more familiar with the cultural practices through social expectations. The Indian students are able to share their culture with others through cultural immersion and fluency in the language of the host country. The Indian communities of Melbourne are incredibly diverse as they come from different parts of the country and represent diverse cultural practices. However, through events and festivities, the different groups are able to come together and create a support network.

In the research carried out by Sancho (2017), the researcher argued that the Indian overseas migration of students to Australia is due to the complex relationship between class formation and the migration process of the country. The Indian community of Melbourne is vibrant, accounting for almost 3% of the entire population, living in the city has provided the students with safe and accessible transport facilities and good education (Live in Melbourne, 2023). Several Indian organisations that reside in Australia have extended their activities to help women seeking help from domestic violence and many other activities. The Indian people

collectively celebrate many different Indian festivities which promotes Indian art and culture and allows the people to experience the joy which they usually experienced in their home country. Indian students have been seen to be taking many different courses that improve their vocational training and increase their range across the curriculum.

In comparison to the other migrants from different South Asian countries, the Indians have remained in their regions and have helped the economy of the country by proving skilled migrants. The prevalence of a wide range of Indians in Melbourne makes it particularly easier for the students to fit in (Consulate General of India, 2023). The increase in immigration has led to many Indian traditions being incorporated in Melbourne, festivities such as Durga Puja, Diwali and Holi are celebrated by the people of Melbourne. The city also hosts Melbourne's Indian Film Festival annually which brings together Indians belonging to different regions. Indian cooking techniques, regional variations and the ingredients that are used are also used widely across the content causing a greater Indian influence. Many Indian students go on to become professional chefs and run their own places which provides affordable and accessible meals making Indian cuisine highly valued in the Australian culture (Billu's, 2023). Overall as it can be seen, Melbourne is one of the top choices for Indian students due to the supportive environment of the city.

4. Discussion

The study conducted so far has provided a brief account of the impact of Indians in London, Toronto and Melbourne, it has been found that the presence of Indians in all three cities is increasingly evident. The migration of Indians to Melbourne and Toronto is relatively recent than London as both the UK and India had a long history of colonization which has led to migration for over two centuries. Despite Melbourne and Toronto being relatively new, they have embraced Indians and their culture with open arms. The research has highlighted how both cities have dedicated Indian communities which host cultural festivals and gatherings to let the Indians experience their roots. Indian food and species have an appeal globally, leading to the intermingling of cultures and emitting impact on the other local cultures. Indians also have different sets of values which teach them to respect their elders and family, strong family ties in particular have been a leading force behind Indians being resilient and able to adapt to different cities and their cultures.

While Indian immigrants living in Western countries have a certain level of influence, it has mostly blended with the long-held Indian tradition, resulting in a fusion of culture and practices. It has been found that the Indian students possess the ability to fit in a multicultural society, through collaboration and participation they are able to share their traditions and beliefs with others and allow the culture to further grow and influence others. In all of these locations, the demographic of migrants has a substantial influence on creating identities for themselves and finding common grounds. The study finds people belonging to these diverse Indian cultural backgrounds establish a rich cultural life in the host country and continue to impact the place in a positive way.

5. Conclusion

As concluding remarks for the present research, it can be seen that India is a diverse country with people having different religions, languages and castes. The multicultural background that the Indian students have experienced growing up helps them to adapt themselves to those foreign lands. The study has captured the fascinating aspect of Indian culture and the way it impacts the outside world. The diversity and ease of participation have led many people belonging to host countries to appreciate Indian culture, the food, songs and movies gain the interests of thousands of people and lead to the culture being shared. All three cities studied in this section are welcoming towards Indians and continue to take initiatives to support their culture and create value.

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