



IMMIGRANTS, REFUGEES, OR BOTH? MIGRATION THEORY AND THE ANGLO-INDIAN EXODUS TO GREAT BRITAIN

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The mass voluntary movement of India's Anglo-Indians to the UK in the years between 1947 and 1964 (loosely spoken of as an 'exodus') under the provisions of the British Nationality Act (1948) is common knowledge. In *Domicile and Diaspora: Anglo-Indian Women and the Spatial Politics of Home*, Alison Blunt states: "In 1947, there were roughly 300,000 Anglo-Indians in India and, against the advice of Anglo-Indian leaders, at least 50,000 had migrated by 1970, half of whom settled in Great Britain in the late 1940s and 1950s" (2005, p. 3).¹ This essay attempts to examine the ways in which the mass-movement of India's Anglo-Indians to Britain following Independence pertains to or deviates from popular theories propounded by E.G. Ravenstein, Everett S. Lee and Robin Cook regarding human mobility across the globe. In focusing on those Anglo-Indians between the ages of 16-30 at the time of Independence in 1947, my ethnographic inquiry, conducted in the UK in 2008-2009 and through several following summers, involved extensive interviews with members of a community that I term 'First Wave' immigrants in order to ascertain whether they might be classified as 'immigrants', 'refugees' or both. Now in their 70s and 80s, most of them have spent over half a century in the UK and, therefore, qualify as 'settlers'.

In particular, this essay traces the development of the group in Great Britain from refugee migrants, escaping the impact of an indigenous Indian government after years of privilege under the British Raj, into a culturally vibrant—if invisible—settler community in their host nation, through the use of popular theoretical positions concerning relocation. In examining theoretical concepts relating to transnational mass-movement, this essay attempts to ascertain whether First Wave Anglo-Indians who left India in the decades immediately

following Independence, traditionally classified as ‘immigrants’, might also be categorized as ‘refugees’.

Those approximately 50,000 Anglo-Indians who left India to emigrate to England in what I term the ‘First Wave’, give credence to Lionel Caplan’s findings from his research carried out among Anglo-Indians in Madras (now Chennai). Caplan states that Anglo-Indians could be seen as ‘transnationals’—“not by virtue of migration across political boundaries, but through experiencing profound displacement in terms of belonging: by residing in one location but adjudging themselves only at home in another” (2001, p.129). In espousing close affinity to Great Britain, Anglo-Indians were affirming Benedict Anderson’s assertion that “nation” and “nationality” are largely cultural constructs. Anderson advocated the position that “nation” and “identity” start with one’s affiliation to one’s family and closest friends that form the center of human belonging. From this core, one’s consciousness moves outward (1983). Since their sense of identity came from family bonds comprising mixed descent, Anglo-Indian sense of nationality was associated with Europe in general and Great Britain in particular. Indeed, being classified as an Anglo-Indian provided employment in British-run institutions in India irrespective of the European nationality of one’s paternal lineage. (This explains why vast numbers of Anglo-Indians in South India were employed on the Railway network even where their antecedents were clearly Portuguese.) Thus, although it is true that the mixed racial heritage of India’s Anglo-Indians stems from Portuguese, Dutch, French and British presence in India, the provisions of the British National Act, 1948, were perceived by large numbers of the community as offering an opportunity to *all* of India’s Anglo-Indians to attempt to re-locate to Great Britain. That Britain as an avenue for immigration was seized by Anglo-Indians in India who did not descend from a paternal British line was borne out by interviews I conducted in the UK in 2008-2009 when many respondents revealed the near-impossibility of emigrating to Britain precisely because as progeny of the Portuguese, Dutch or French in India, they were unable to produce documents confirming British paternal descent. This, however, did not stop them from trying to enter—and indeed making it into--Britain as settlers.

This attachment to Europe was facilitated by the idea of hegemony as postulated by Antonio Gramsci who explored the concept of subordination as it had existed in former

colonies (1971). Gramsci asserted that colonizers would have found it impossible to maintain control over the colonized had it not been for the implicit, if unconscious, permission of the colonized subject. Subordination over long periods entailed the participation of those subordinated, he argued. Indeed, this was true of people of mixed racial descent on the Indian sub-continent whose general co-operation with the colonizer consolidated British imperial presence in India. As Ania Loomba points out in *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, "Gramsci argued that the ruling classes achieve domination not by force or coercion alone, but also by creating subjects who 'willingly' submit to being ruled" (1998, p. 29). Anglo-Indians were 'created' subjects in every sense of the term—indeed, as progeny of European colonials in India, they largely conformed to the will of their imperial masters to whom they felt connected by blood ties. Decolonization created anxiety about future security in India because it threatened the privilege they had enjoyed under their departing imperial masters. Not surprisingly, the opportunity for immigration to the UK was greeted with elation. For most Anglo-Indians it represented, in tangible terms, the possibility of finally going "Home" to the psychological 'protection' of cultural identity one could expect from a parental figure. In some cases, however, escape from India meant more than a desire for a sense of belonging with the host nation. In occasional cases, after Indian Independence, Anglo-Indians faced physical threats from their Indian co-workers or became victims of periodic incidents of violence that broke out among strikers at engineering firms in which they worked. These realities are borne out by information shared with me during interviews in the UK. For example, an 81 year old retired mechanical engineer from South Norwood who emigrated from Calcutta in 1955, stated:

At the Calcutta Tramway Company where I was employed, there was a massive protest at the gates when I applied for promotion from Apprentice to Supervisor. The general opinion among the staff was that as a Sahib's son who spoke English, I'd be favored. After the British left, Indians expected promotions, regardless of whether or not they were qualified for them. When I arrived at work one morning, I had no idea that the workers had struck because of my job prospects. The situation got hairy that day as trade unions became very aggressive after Independence. I was actually fearful they would turn against me and become physically violent. That evening, I made the decision to emigrate.

Some Anglo-Indians, such as the engineer above, might be labelled 'refugees' in their attempt to escape from India to migrate to Great Britain on grounds of being afraid for their

lives. In such cases, the decision to migrate was as much a matter of ensuring their personal safety as it was to find a better, more comfortable, quality of life in what they believed would be a more welcoming environment.

In most cases, however, emotional affiliation, i.e. a sense of 'belonging' to the UK and a profound yearning for immediate contact with the nation made the decision to leave India easier for most Anglo-Indians who found the option open to them in the middle of the twentieth century. In conducting field-surveys among First Wave immigrant Anglo-Indians in Britain, now in their 70s and 80s, my objectives had been to discover the reasons for migration as well as the process through which people escaping mid-twentieth century political tension and nationalist strife evolved from 'refugees' to settlers. Several times during the interviews I conducted in the UK, elderly Anglo-Indians, articulated the sense that, as young professionals in India, their Westernized upbringing had made them feel culturally uneasy when the British left. That this perception was prevalent among Anglo-Indian males of the generation that attained adulthood as the British exited India, was corroborated in a personal interview granted to me by an 80 year retired IT professional from Essex who arrived in the UK in 1961 from Bombay. He said: "We were Westernized in our outlook and habits. So, culturally, we chose to come here. We felt that life here would be an extension of our lives in India."

Blunt quotes sociologist Avtar Brah who claims that, in the case of most human beings, it is the 'homing desire' that primarily draws individuals away from their country of origin to form a diaspora (2005, p. 10 from Brah, 1996). And Shinder S. Thandi (2007, p. 159) refers to the "homing desire" that drove *all* South Asians to Great Britain². However, while I would agree with Brah and Thandi that a homing desire is responsible for the creation of all diasporic communities, I advocate Blunt's assertion that it was most pronounced among Anglo-Indians for whom psychological, emotional and cultural intimacy with England were the main motivating factors that drove migration.

However, whether they arrived in Great Britain as refugees to escape the reality of racial discrimination in a post-Raj world or as immigrants seeking a sense of cultural belonging in Britain and to ensure a better standard of living for themselves and future generations,

Anglo-Indians were brought into a new crisis of identification—a concept not unfamiliar to them as they had been victimized by it while still resident in India. John Rex, a British sociologist on race and ethnicity defined racial discrimination as “any action that subordinates a person or a group because of his or their racial characteristics” (1970, p. 159). Rex went on to explain that “Racial discrimination is the translation of doctrines and prejudices in terms of action and policy” (1970, p. 159). Although they did not expect it, Anglo-Indians who made the decision to emigrate soon steeled themselves, in the UK, to the reality of racial discrimination—that is, to the possibility of being subjected to positions of subordination based only on their physical appearance. Given that they could face tough social conditions, why did they make their way to Britain? And in what manner did their mass entry differ from that of their latter-day South Asian counterparts such as Hindu Gujaratis from East Africa driven to the UK from General Idi Amin’s Uganda in 1972 or Sri Lankan Tamils who fled the Tamil-Sinhala Civil War of 2009? While these persons of South Asian heritage were refugees in a far more defined manner than were the Anglo-Indians (in that they fled the possibility of jail sentences and war respectively to seek refuge in Britain), could the reality of wishing to flee from the dangers of Indian ire or professional jealousy in the post-Raj era classify some Anglo-Indians not merely as immigrants but also as refugees? I would argue that the need to seek refuge from an India increasingly plagued by trade unionism that often threatened their personal freedom and job security, motivated Anglo-Indians to leave India on sudden impulses and to deal with the possible indignity of racial discrimination in post-War Britain after they arrived there.

ROLE OF INDENTURED AND POST-WAR LABOR NEEDS IN CREATING SOUTH ASIAN DIASPORA IN THE UK

Colonial policies had been conducive, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, prior to Indian Independence, to the immigrant intentions of South Asian diaspora that preceded Anglo-Indians to the UK. In particular, the system of indentured labor that had long existed in the colonial era worked in favor of prospective immigrants as it eliminated the need to raise money in India to facilitate departure (Thandi, 2007). Thousands of Indians had left the sub-continent when sugarcane plantations in British colonies in the West Indies, Fiji and Guyana required urgent unskilled labor. As ‘girmits’, i.e. indentured laborers, they bartered their services to astute British landlords who offered sea passages to the

Caribbean islands or Britain's East African colonies in exchange for specified periods of hard manual labor. According to Thandi (2007), there is evidence that Punjabi Hindu and Sikhs who congregated around Birmingham in the early twentieth century eventually arrived in Britain from the Caribbean islands where they were initially taken as 'girmits'. Although there is sporadic evidence of Anglo-Indian presence in the UK prior to the declaration of Indian Independence, Anglo-Indians, as a community, never left India as girmits.

Later, during the twentieth century's post-war years, when, as Thandi explains, "the main pull factor was the increased demand for labor in war-devastated Britain," (2007, p. 162) thousands of young men from Independent India and newly-formed Pakistan gravitated towards England in search of jobs. Thandi continues:

Insufficient supplies of home workers meant that many manufacturing industries, especially those requiring unskilled labor, and public services such as the newly created National Health Service and the public transport system, needed 'ready-made' labor. To fill such vacancies quickly, government departments actively promoted immigration. (2007, p. 162)

ANGLO-INDIANS VERSUS OTHER SOUTH ASIAN IMMIGRANTS

South Asians who had left India for other British colonies to avail of opportunities as indentured agricultural laborers initially, and for the UK as unskilled factory hands subsequently, were by and large, non-Christian, non-English speaking men, usually uneducated, poorly paid and exploited. Of those who arrived to work in the UK's industrial belts, Thandi writes:

Most of these post-war pioneer migrants were relatively young men in their early twenties, illiterate or semi-illiterate, with predominantly farming or rural backgrounds. Although it would be true to say that they were relatively poor, by no means were they 'pushed' out of their homelands due to poverty. They were, in fact, economic migrants *par excellence*, with aspirations to better themselves. (2007, p. 163)

In contrast to Northern Indian peasants who left the Indian sub-continent for the UK in search of improved financial prospects as individuals, Anglo-Indians as a community were motivated to relocate *en masse*, i.e. not singly but in family groupings, by a combination of what Robin Cook (1996, p. xii) calls Push-Pull factors, primarily political. Unlike North Indian peasants, most Anglo-Indian interviewees repeatedly stated that they did feel 'pushed out'

of post-colonial India by the acquisition of Indian Independence and the transfer of power to an indigenous (meaning non-British) administration. Unlike North India's rural Hindu migrants, they were neither illiterate nor unskilled. Based on their excellent education, they expected to be welcomed in Britain and to integrate easily and rapidly. The majority of them belonged to India's lower middle class and where they did not work for the Railways or the British defense services in India (as had been the norm), had been respectably employed in corporate offices. As English-speaking Christians with blood ties to Europeans, many considered themselves a racial cut above other South Asians migrants in the UK just as some had looked upon themselves as racially superior to Indians while in India.

In what might be interpreted as a rare reference to a section of South Asian migrants that could include Anglo-Indians, Thandi's essay speaks of "retired soldiers of the British Empire who, since the First World War, had been given special dispensation—vouchers—to enter Britain" (2007, p. 163).³ Thandi concludes that as a result of the demand for particular kinds of labor in the post-World War II era, South Asian migrants

...ended up in three economic areas of the UK in urgent need of extra manpower: the textile mills in northern cities in Lancashire and Yorkshire, the metal-bashing foundries and hosiery industries in the West and East Midlands and the light manufacturing industry and transportation systems in the greater London area, particularly Southall and Hounslow, which are close to Heathrow airport. (2007, p. 162)

Thandi's first two categories of job availability did not interest Anglo-Indians who, being essentially an urbanized people, were reluctant to venture outside London and who considered themselves qualified for office positions rather than factory ones, i.e. white collar jobs as opposed to blue collar placement. Furthermore, having garnered valuable experience on the Great Indian Peninsula Railway, which they practically ran single-handedly as a community in India, they gravitated instinctively towards Thandi's third category--"transportation systems in the greater London area" (2007, p. 162). Since they never moved away from these localities, it is where they are to be found even today, more than half a century after their arrival.

In the next few pages, I shall examine significant elements of Migration Theory that have provided the basis for an analysis of human global mass-movement and consider their

applicability to First Wave Anglo-Indian immigration to determine whether or not some members, if not the entire community, might qualify not just as ‘immigrants’ but also as ‘refugees’ in Great Britain.

MIGRATION THEORY AND ITS APPLICABILITY TO FIRST WAVE ANGLO-INDIAN MIGRATION IN THE UK—E.G. RAVENSTEIN’S LAWS OF MIGRATION

It is interesting to note the manner in which Anglo-Indian mass-movement and settlement to the UK in the mid-twentieth century is reflected in the theories of migration circulating in that era. One of the earliest writers to capture the phenomenon of massive population shifts was E.G. Ravenstein who, in two lengthy papers (I and II) delivered to the Royal Statistical Society in 1885 and 1889, set out to describe the ‘laws’ of migration (1885, pp. 167-227; 1889, pp. 242-301). While Ravenstein’s papers deal primarily with “internal migration” (meaning migration from one part of a country to another, usually the rural to the urban), it is equally possible to apply his theory to transnational migration, i.e. immigrants who cross national boundaries in the process of relocation.

Everett S. Lee (1996) has presented a fine summary and commentary on Ravenstein’s theory, some aspects of which bear direct resemblance to Anglo-Indian resettlement in the UK.⁴ For example, while Ravenstein’s Law 1(a) which refers to *Migration and Distance* does not apply to Anglo-Indians as it states that “The great body of our migrants only proceed a short distance”, Law 1(b) is directly applicable to them for it states that “Migrants proceeding long distance generally go by preference to one of the great centers of commerce and industry” (Cohen, 1996, p. 15). First Wave Anglo-Indians settled mainly in London, then the heart of the British Empire and the location in which the greatest employment opportunities were available in the post-World War II era. However, their financial circumstances confined them to London’s suburbia where housing was more affordable and accessible.

SOLO AND PHASED MIGRATORY PATTERNS

Ravenstein’s Law 2 (a) of *Migration by Stages* in which he refers to “currents of migration” is also applicable to Anglo-Indians for, in a majority of cases, one member of the family arrived in the UK initially only to be followed by other family members as and when finances

permitted. Many First Wave Anglo-Indian immigrants were truly courageous pioneers who arrived alone with few hopes of being joined immediately by other family members. A 68 year old chiropodist from Oxted who arrived in the UK at age 18 from Lucknow, said, "I came alone and am still alone." A 56 year old corporate lawyer from Isleworth who left India at the age of 22 from Tamil Nadu's Nagercoil area, said, "After 24 years, I still have no family members here." Similarly, a 67 year old consultant engineer, formerly from Bombay who arrived in Kent at the age of 16 in 1963, said, "My father came here to prepare the way for us, but he went back to India when I arrived. I was left alone never expecting my brothers to get here as they were not interested in relocation at all." Oftentimes, plans for family unification in Great Britain did not work as intended. Many Anglo-Indian families faced a lifetime of heartache induced by separation from kith and kin. A 46 year old photographer from Richmond, Carol Barnes, who was born in the UK has remained single.⁵ As a posthumous child, she tells the poignant story of her two decade-long separation from her brother:

My mother came here (to England) first with my 2 older sisters. At the time, she was pregnant with me. My dad was supposed to follow with my older brother, then three years old, but my Dad never made it to the UK; he died in India just before he was supposed to leave and just before I was born. As there was no one left to bring my brother here, he remained in India where he grew up with my grandparents. I never knew my Dad...never even met him. Following my Dad's death, my brother simply lost heart. Even after he grew old enough to travel on his own to England, he had no interest in joining us here. He only came here when he was 24—when I met him for the first time. He knew and loved my grandparents more than he did my mother or me (as he simply did not know us). That's why he waited until they passed away before joining us here.

Apart from such unusual personal family constraints, being by no means an affluent community in India, "hard cash", said many Anglo-Indian interviewees, inhibited them from making the long and arduous immigrant journey. Raising money became almost obsessional as individuals struggled against British government-set deadlines for arriving in the UK in December 1964. Having kept doors open to the progeny of British male administrators on the Indian sub-continent for almost 2 decades, faced with the potential arrival of an influx of immigrants from newly-independent British colonies in Africa and the West Indies that also claimed settlement rights and as a reaction to the objections of Conservative Party leaders such as Enoch Powell who had stirred anti-immigrant sentiment, the UK decided to curb

immigration possibilities under the British Nationality Act 1948 by setting June 1964 as the ultimate deadline date for immigration under its provisions.⁶ Advised by their relatives who had preceded them in Britain to take the plunge after post-war labor shortage had made jobs plentiful, they were frustrated by lack of savings that inhibited immediate departure from India.

DESIRE FOR ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AS A MOTIVATOR

Ravenstein's Law 7 regarding *Dominance of the Economic Motive* is directly applicable to India's Anglo-Indians whose jobs in British-run institutions such as the Railways, Post and Telegraphs, Customs and Excise, Police, other law enforcement and defense services, granted them a living wage but few opportunities to become wealthy. Ravenstein states that while "bad or oppressive laws, heavy taxation, an unattractive climate, uncongenial social surroundings and even compulsion..." have produced currents of migration, none can compare in volume with that which arises from "the desire inherent in most men to 'better' themselves in material respects" (Quoted by Lee, 1996, p. 15 from Ravenstein II, 1889, p. 286). Reunions with family members already settled in Britain were fueled by accounts of their sudden financial prosperity—although it is dubious how many of those narratives were truthful or devoid of exaggeration. For the majority of Anglo-Indians—even those with steady jobs in British-run institutions—life in India was characterized by financial hardship. They almost always lived frugally between paychecks, unable to save. Letters from relatives in London contained tantalizing glimpses of new acquisitions and motivated those for whom the purchase of big-ticket items was impossible in India. A retired 79-year old finance and accounting specialist from Wembley who emigrated from Nagpur at the age of 21 after acquiring a college degree, admitted that the motivating factor driving him towards England was the desire for enhanced wealth and material possessions:

I was young and easily influenced. My cousins in the UK who had come here before me would write and say that they had just bought a new motorbike or that they had a radiogram. And I thought I could never possibly have such things in India despite being a college graduate. If I went to the UK, I would do much better financially, I thought.

Anglo-Indians in Britain such as this individual would fall under the category of 'immigrant' rather than 'refugee'. Since the time Ravenstein presented his laws, migration studies have advanced but, as Lee points out, "few studies have considered the reasons for migration or

the assimilation of the migrant at destination” (Cohen, 1996, p. 15). Even by the 1930s, so slightly developed was the field that Dorothy Thomas Swaine and her associates concluded that the only generalization that could be made in regard to differentials was that “migrants tended to be young adults or persons in their late teens” (1938). This was certainly true of First Wave Anglo-Indian immigrants who were 25 years old on average at the time of relocation with some interviewees having entered the UK as early as age 13.

EVERETT S. LEE’S FACTORS GOVERNING THE PROCESS OF MIGRATION

Everett S. Lee states that no matter how easy or difficult, every act of migration involves an origin, a destination and an intervening set of obstacles (Cohen, 1996, p. 16). Attempting to justify mass transcontinental human movement, Lee provided his own migration theory (Cohen, 1996) and pointed out that, generally speaking, the factors that impact on migration decisions and processes may be summarized under four major headings: Factors Associated with the Area of Origin, Factors Associated with Area of Destination, Intervening Obstacles and Personal Factors. Lee makes it clear that since we can never specify “the exact set of factors that impel or prohibit migration for a given person, we can, in general, only set forth a few which seem of special importance and note the general or average reaction of a considerable group” (Cohen, 1996, p. 17).

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE AREA OF ORIGIN

Based on Lee’s recommendation, the question might be posed: what conclusions can we draw based on factors pertinent to the Anglo-Indian community’s Area of Origin, namely the Indian sub-continent, in relation to resettlement decisions and patterns of migration into the UK? Broadly speaking, they include ‘Anglocentric’ affiliation with England, post-Independence political unrest in India, termination of employment reservation schemes, fear of stagnation in professional fields of endeavor, desire for family reunification, focus on future generations, escape from racism, sexism and ostracism, Indianization of school syllabi and, in some case, the possession of British passports or the possibility of obtaining them through the submission of documents proving British paternity. These ‘Push’ factors (Cohen, 1996) were primarily responsible for the decision to migrate.⁷

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH AREA OF DESTINATION

In enumerating factors associated with area of destination, Lee rightly points out that while people who have lived long-term in a certain area can be expected to provide an accurate account of the conditions that prevail there, they cannot be expected to have a realistic image of their destination. As Lee puts it, "Knowledge of the area of destination is seldom exact, and indeed some of the advantages and disadvantages of an area can only be perceived by living there. Thus, there is always an element of ignorance or even mystery about the area of destination, and there must always be some uncertainty with regard to the reception of the migrant in a new area" (Cohen, 1996, p. 17). As distance lends enchantment to the view, Anglo-Indians based in India had been raised to look upon England, in the words of the song, as the "Land of Hope and Glory." Misconceptions about promised wealth and respectability flourished and spurred decisions to migrate.

INTERVENING OBSTACLES

In explaining what he means by Intervening Obstacles, Lee refers to physical factors such as the Berlin Wall that may pose actual obstacles to inhibit immigration. He also refers to the cost of transporting personal possessions that might prove prohibitive to some immigrants but easily affordable to those with greater financial resources.

The single biggest obstacle impeding Anglo-Indian immigration to the UK was the British Nationality Act of 1948. Its provisions were a boon to some and an impediment to others. While it permitted Anglo-Indian immigration to Britain, it required intending immigrants to produce specific documentation proving British paternity. This was an insurmountable intervening obstacle for large numbers of potential immigrants whose ancestors had not maintained meticulous baptismal records. Where these were unavailable because they were no longer held in their possession, Anglo-Indians encountered challenging obstacles in trying to acquire them from the UK. While genealogical data might more easily be obtained, in this age of the internet and of commercial establishments that source such information for a reasonable fee, in the mid-twentieth century they simply did not exist. Anglo-Indians unable to produce official documents entitling them to British passports were deeply frustrated by their inability to fight bureaucratic requirements and tedious red tape.

PERSONAL FACTORS

Finally, Lee states that there are many Personal Factors that facilitate or retard migration and the ability to deal with them depends entirely on individual resilience. For departing Anglo-Indians entering the UK between 1947 and 1964, as revealed to me during field-interviews in the UK, personal factors took the form of reluctance to leave behind elderly or infirm family members in India, lack of funds to purchase steamer passages or pending law suits related to real estate matters in Indian civil courts. These conditions functioned as obstacles that served to make Anglo-Indians feel encumbered. However, with the passage of time, when these obstacles were eliminated, many interviewees made their way to the UK while other members of their families simply made the decision to continue to remain in India.

Lee hastens to add that while the four factors he identifies are part and parcel of the process of migration, much depends on individuals, their personalities and their ability to rationalize their decisions. Thus, while some people resist change, others welcome it and tend to acclimatize faster to their new environment. Lee also adds that, for all of the factors mentioned above, the decision to migrate is never completely rational. He states, "We must expect, therefore, to find many exceptions to our generalizations, since transient emotions, mental disorder and accidental occurrences account for a considerable proportion of total migrations" (Cohen, 1996, p. 18). However, Lee's delineation of factors affecting migration provides a framework for much of what Anglo-Indians revealed through the process of my investigation.

From the interviews I conducted in the UK among First Wave Anglo-Indians and the information revealed to me, it became evident that only a few could be classified as 'refugees', i.e. individuals or families who left India suddenly and in haste. While the majority of respondents stated that they would have liked more time to settle their affairs in India and leave under less stressful circumstances, they had the leisure to plan their move carefully (over a few months, in most cases), get their Indian business affairs in order (i.e. close bank accounts, claim retirement benefits from the Railway and other employers, return keys to landlords for their rental accommodation, etc.) and even throw farewell parties, before they left India. In such cases, departing Anglo-Indians could not be classified

as 'refugees' even if extenuating circumstances such as fears of repercussion from Indian colleagues for occupying prime positions had motivated their exit.

THE NINE DYADS OF ROBIN COHEN—APPLICABILITY TO ANGLO-INDIAN MIGRATION

In his Introduction to *Theories of Migration* (1996), Robin Cohen presented what he termed the Nine Dyads of Theory Construction, each of which shall be explained below. While they alert a student of migration to crucial theoretical problems, he wondered whether scholars of migration are capable of evolving a single comprehensive theory by which to account for the apparently diverse set of phenomena implied by his Dyads.

Even a cursory glance at Cohen's Dyads would find them a tenable point of departure for analyzing Anglo-Indian migration to the UK. But while in most instances, First Wave Anglo-Indian mass movement fits within Cohen's categorization of contradictions in a clear-cut fashion which would render the majority of them as 'Immigrants', in a few instances, some members of the departing population could be identified as 'refugees' as well as 'immigrants'.

In dealing with the first Dyad — i.e. *Individual vs. Contextual Reasons to Migrate*, Cohen explains that one can find reasons for migration simply by asking people why they have chosen to migrate — as I did, during my field-surveys among Anglo-Indian settlers in the UK. But, as Cohen found out, "the limitations of a subjectivist starting point soon become apparent" (1996, p. xii) as "the theorist has to make the untenable assumption that the individuals concerned operate with a rational, calculative model of the world in which they weigh options and possibilities in an environment of free choice" (1996, p. xii). When Cohen states that opportunities for migration "are tightly constrained and structured by such factors as...employment and housing prospects, transport costs, international law, migration policies (of sending and receiving States), the recruitment practices of agencies and employers and the need for documentation like passports, visas and work certificates," (1996, p. xii) he could well be talking specifically about Anglo-Indians who formed the core of my target group of interviewees since all of the above factors affected their departure from India and their living conditions during their early years in the UK.

When discussing the second Dyad, i.e. *Rate vs. Incidence of Migration*, Cohen refers to the specific reasons why individuals or households either make themselves part of a general movement or resist the choice of migration. This second Dyad affects the order of movement (i.e. some Anglo-Indians migrated as individuals, others as nuclear family units, and yet others as entire joint families with two to three generations migrating simultaneously). The unique set of circumstances that induced a particular individual to migrate constitutes an explanation for the 'Incidence of migration'.

The 'Rate of migration', however, states Cohen, alludes to the underlying set of factors that determine the volume, trends and patterns of migration from a given source to a given destination over a specified period of time. In the case of my inquiry, diverse aspects of Anglo-Indian migration concerning volume (i.e. number of First Wave immigrants that departed from India), trends (i.e. the manner in which immigration occurred through imitating examples set by other community or family members) and patterns (i.e. an assessment of departing 'waves' of migrants, for instance, to determine how quickly after Independence Anglo-Indians left and whether the volume grew or diminished as time passed by) were revealed. In most cases, the conclusions I reached was that while some departing Anglo-Indians could be classified as 'refugees', the majority were 'immigrants'.

With regards to *Internal Vs International Migration*, Anglo-Indian migration to the UK from India fell, of course, into the latter category. However, as the exodus began, as Cohen points out, "the assertion of state power over the freedom of movement strongly influence(d) the rates and character of migration" (1996, p. xiii) and made post-war pioneering entry into the UK "a highly controversial and sensitive area of study" (1996, p. xiii). India's Anglo-Indians felt state power asserted over both their departure from India as well as their entry into the UK in that India's Foreign Exchange Control restrictions imposed by the Reserve Bank of India severely limited the amount of monetary assets they could take away to Britain while the provisions of the British Nationality Act, 1948, strictly governed terms of legal entry into Britain.

As for *Temporary vs. Permanent Migration*, the UK's diasporic Anglo-Indians clearly fall into the latter category for they left India with no intention of ever returning to India as

residents again. Furthermore, they could not be classified as contract labor, indentured labor or guest workers in the UK. In employing the terms and conditions of the British Nationality Act of 1948 to relocate, they did so with the intention of starting new lives for themselves by making a permanent home in Great Britain. In interviews, Anglo-Indians revealed that they were leaving India “for good” (meaning, with no intentions of returning). Indeed, permanent settlement was so much of a priority for First Wave Anglo-Indians that, as an 82 year old former accountant from Kharagpur who settled down in Croydon in 1955, stated, “We had two immediate and major goals in England: to find a job and to find a place in which to live. We came here for the long haul and there was simply no going back.” In this respect, Anglo-Indians were ‘immigrants’ for they did not leave India as short-term or temporary migrants. They did not possess the mindset of ‘refugees’ who traditionally flee a land in the hope of returning to it as soon as circumstances that motivated their escape are lifted. During the bloodbath that accompanied the Partition of India, for instance, Muslims who left India for Pakistan or Hindus and Sikhs who left Pakistan for India have repeatedly stated that they fled at short notice with only the clothes on their backs fully certain that they would return as soon as the sudden eruption of inter-communal violence ended. Political developments that subsequently closed borders between India and East and West Pakistan converted such ‘refugees’ into ‘settlers’.

When it comes to categorizing the UK’s First Wave Anglo-Indians as *either Settler or Labor Migrants* (Cohen’s fifth Dyad), one runs into a grey area, for they could be defined simultaneously as both. Indeed, a few could even be defined as ‘refugees’. They were Settlers in that they did not wish to return to India; but they were also Labor Migrants in that they took advantage of the need in Britain for increased labor forces in the post-World War II period. During my field-surveys, several interviewees revealed that the possibility of finding jobs easily in post-War Britain was a strong motivator in initiating their decision to emigrate. They were certain that the termination of employment reservation policies for Anglo-Indians in India would severely curtail their chances of promotion as well as make it impossible for their children to procure desirable jobs in post-colonial India. In finding jobs that satisfied the host country’s requirements at a particular phase in its mid-twentieth century history, Anglo-Indians can be classified as Labor Migrants. However, after more than half a century as settlers, they have been able, as Cohen puts it, “to achieve independent

proprietorship, assets and property” (1996, p. xiv) in the UK. Whether they arrived as refugees or otherwise, they can no longer, therefore, strictly speaking, be classified as Labor Migrants for they have evolved into settlers.

In positioning Anglo-Indians within Cohen’s sixth Dyad, *Planned Vs. Flight Migration*, one encounters similar ambiguities of categorization. In this context, Cohen argues that an individual’s resolve to migrate cannot be separated from the local, institutional and global context in which that decision is reached (1996, p. xiv). This is certainly true of First Wave Anglo-Indian migration where the acquisition of Indian Independence and the departure of British officialdom from India provided the global context, termination of employment reservation policies provided the institutional context and intolerant backlash from Indian nationalists was the local context that pushed them out of India. To the extent that Anglo-Indians assessed their prospects in Independent India as bleak, their decision to migrate was definitely a ‘flight’—which could categorize them as ‘refugees’. Yet, whereas Flight migration is customarily interpreted as that which occurs suddenly and unexpectedly, i.e. without prior planning, Anglo-Indian mass movement—except in rare cases—was carefully calculated and plotted. Anglo-Indians were neither victims of ‘ethnic cleansing’, pogroms or natural disasters—typical reasons for Flight migration—nor were they war victims. They could, therefore, not be considered Flight migrants in the strictest sense. But, insofar as some of them claim to have run away from racist slurs and some imagined, some real anti-Anglo-Indian sentiment following Independence, they could well be construed as having left in a hurry—and could, therefore, be defined as refugees.

As far as Cohen’s next Dyad is concerned, i.e. *Economic migrants vs Political refugees*, First Wave Anglo-Indians who departed for the UK defy facile identification. As has been made clear earlier in this essay, several admitted that they left India in search of greener economic pastures, i.e. with the expectation of gaining enhanced prosperity in England. To that extent, they were economic migrants. However, inasmuch as they were affected as a community by the political events that transpired after World War II in India such as the termination of the British Raj, the Partition of the sub-continent into India and Pakistan and the rise of nationalist zeal that, because they were perceived as having colluded with the British in keeping Indians subservient, singled their community out for harassment, (as they

stated repeatedly to me during interviews), it might be argued that they could be categorized as political 'refugees'.

In speaking of political refugees, Cohen states, "People move because they fear political persecution and because their means of livelihood and dignity have been stripped away from them" (1996, p. xiv). A number of Anglo-Indian interviewees stated precisely such reasons for migrating—namely, the anxiety of being picked out in India for maltreatment after the British left, the threat to job security following the end of guaranteed reservation policies and thus, the prospective culmination of a lifestyle that had granted them enhanced status in India. For these reasons, it might be more accurate, therefore, to categorize them as both economic migrants and political migrants (as opposed to refugees). Cohen does state, however, that "For most of the last two centuries, Europe had been the source of refugee and mass movement, not the destination of these flows. Moreover, Cohen continues, most current refugees have been absorbed by neighboring poor countries, not the rich countries" (1996, p. xiv). In the case of mid-twentieth century Anglo-Indian flight from India, the opposite is true—for Europe (i.e. the UK) was the destination of choice and it was a far richer country, in that era, than any of India's neighbors.

Cohen enumerates *Illegal vs. Legal Migration* as his next Dyad and states that "The demand for entry to favored countries certainly outstrips the number of settlement visas countries are prepared to supply" (1996, p. xiv). This was certainly true for Anglo-Indians seeking entry rights into the UK after World War II. Those potential settlers able to produce official documentation that granted them immigrant status in the UK considered themselves fortunate. Irregular or illegal immigration was simply not an option in their case as the boarding of steamers that would carry them to the UK necessitated the production of valid travel documents—both passports and visas. Nor did Anglo-Indians consider as feasible the idea of arriving in the UK as stowaways or undocumented workers in the way that vast numbers of people from the Indian sub-continent did, in their determination to reach the developed world, in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

Few accounts of Anglo-Indian entry into the UK or living conditions upon first arrival are dramatic or desperate. Indeed, it would be safe to say that few if any Anglo-Indians arrived

in the UK as illegal entrants. Certainly none of the scores of interviewees I spoke with admitted any such experience. Where they did have difficulties acquiring bonafide travel and entry permits, they grappled long and hard against prevailing bureaucratic regulations to obtain legal entry into the country. As a retired Selhurst-based, 77 year old IT professional originally from Hyderabad who arrived in the UK in 1972 (i.e. long after most First Wave Anglo-Indians) revealed in an interview:

I had a UK passport which had been issued to me when I worked in Aden. This did not make me welcome in the UK. I was, therefore, considered to be illegal in the UK, but I fought the British Government for years. I started to work for Goldman Sachs but they did not want to take on the British Government. Just when I thought I would be deported, the authorities suddenly agreed to allow me to stay in the country. So my case was pretty darn complicated; but I am here now and this is where I had wanted to be.

In his ninth and final Dyad, Cohen names *Push vs. Pull factors* but he hastens to add that “push-pull theory is exactly wrong” (1996, p. xv). In his opinion, the model is “rather mechanical and leaves little room for the study of intervening obstacles or the institutional, structural and interactional considerations that make the study of migration so subtle and so rewarding” (1996, p. xv). In other portions of this essay I have tackled push-pull contradictions and combinations of circumstances as they affected Britain’s Anglo-Indian diaspora. Suffice it to say that they played a significant part in the desire to emigrate from India as well as in the process of assimilation into the UK.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this essay was to examine the circumstances under which Anglo-Indians emigrated *en masse* to the UK when the British Raj ended as well as to scrutinize popular theoretical terminology pertaining to relocation in relation to its applicability to the community. As might be seen from evidence available above, after Independence, a few Anglo-Indians claimed to have faced extreme positions of resentment in India that subjected them to the threat of physical harm. For such individuals, the decision to emigrate was made impulsively and emigration to Britain was perceived as an escape from imminent danger in an India dominated by communal violence. Such individuals might be characterized as ‘refugees’ and the fact that they have stayed on in the UK as ‘settlers’ also characterizes them as ‘immigrants’. For the most part, however, Anglo-Indian mass-

movement to the UK was carefully calculated, well-planned and systematically undertaken. Individuals and families that relocated after deep deliberation were aware of the risks involved in attempting to create new lives for themselves in a foreign land. They, therefore, prepared for the move—psychologically and financially—as best they could, and arrived in the UK as immigrants bent upon becoming successful settlers. But despite conscious efforts to circumscribe and challenge the prevailing ethos of bigotry and ostracism against them in the UK, they were thwarted. As Homi Bhabha puts it, in *The Location of Culture*, in “the ambivalent world of the not quite/not white, they would forever stay on the margins” (1994, p. 89) of mainstream English society. They would remain branded, as “individuals of mixed race who taken all round resemble white men but who betray their coloured descent by some striking feature or other...” (1994, p. 89).

Sixty years after India’s Independence, most Anglo-Indians in Britain would disagree with Bhabha’s assertion. They would state that they have assimilated sufficiently into the UK as to no longer feel like social misfits forever staying on the margins. Indeed, it might be argued that their assimilation is so complete that they have disappeared into the ‘melting pot’ of mainstream Britain and attained virtual ‘invisibility’. It is also true that from the 1980s onwards, immigrant nations, such as the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Great Britain, have tackled racism assertively and attempted to eradicate it by celebrating difference and embracing a multi-cultural national identity. Thus, the psychological sense of belonging that Anglo-Indian immigrants now feel as ‘settlers’ in the UK has a lot to do with their own efforts at assimilation as much as it has to do with Britain’s social and cultural assimilation of immigrants. However, paradoxically, in the process of blending into Britain while yet remaining distinguishable from their South Asian brethren, Anglo-Indians elude inclusion within the Indian diaspora. At the same time, they have created a hybrid sub-culture that distinguishes them from their Anglo-Indian counterparts in Australia or Canada—they have acquired what I term “British Anglo-Indianness.” But whether they left India hastily as refugees or with the deliberate determination to succeed in the UK as immigrant-settlers, it cannot be assumed that Anglo-Indian initiation into British culture was either easy or that it was any easier for them than it was for their South Asian counterparts who followed them into the UK.

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Note: The author is grateful to the Liberal Studies Program at New York University that provided funding for extended stays in the UK which permitted field research.

NOTES:

¹ Blunt states that this estimate is from the Anglo-Indian leader Frank Anthony and quoted in M.de Mellow, *Petals on the Ganga*. In *The Review* (1970) September/October. However, some estimates are higher with Roy Dean Wright (1970) stating (Marginal man in transition: a study of the Anglo-Indian community of India, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Missouri, Columbia) that some Anglo-Indians estimated that half of the community had migrated.

² It is pertinent to note that although this book closely examines South Asian communities in the UK, it does not include Anglo-Indian presence in its assessment.

³ Thandi explains 'vouchers' as such: "Labor vouchers fell into different categories. These were issued by the Ministry of Labour under the Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1962 and 1969. The vouchers were issued in three categories: *Category A* for applications by employers in this country who have a specific job offer to a particular Commonwealth citizen; *Category B* for applications by Commonwealth citizens without a specific job to come to, but with certain special qualifications (such as nurses, teachers, medical doctors) and *Category C* for all others." (2007, p. 240). First Wave Anglo-Indian respondents who formed the bulk of my field-survey in the UK arrived in England prior to 1962. Thus, vouchers, and the provisions of Acts associated with vouchers, were largely irrelevant to them. However, the Acts did benefit later waves of Anglo-Indian immigrants, particularly those who could not produce adequate documentation to prove British paternity but could use their skills—particularly nursing ones—to obtain vouchers because they fell under Category B, i.e. they did not have jobs awaiting them in the UK but were aware that their experience as trained nurses in India would easily procure them positions in the newly-created British National Health Service.

⁴ All page numbers in this essay refer to Lee's essay, pp. 14-25. In *Theories of Migration* (1996). Robin Cohen (Ed.) UK and US:Edward Elgar Publishing.

⁵ Since this interviewee was born in the UK, I have classified her as 'second generation' and given her a pseudonym. First-generation interviewees have not been given pseudonyms.

⁶ For more information on the British Nationality Act 1948 and the terms that governed its implementation and termination, see Hansen, Randall. "The Politics of Citizenship in 1940s Britain: The British Nationality Act" .In *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (1999), pp. 67-95. Retrieved August 2015 from <http://tcbh.oxfordjournals.org/content/10/1/67.abstract>

⁷ For a more detailed analysis of Factors Associated with Area of Origin, see this author's essay in Almeida, Rochelle. (2012) "Going 'Home': Britain's Anglo-Indians and the Anxiety of Arrival" pp. 169-177. In *More Voices on the Verandah: An Anglo-Indian Anthology*. Lionel Lumb (Ed). New Jersey, CTR Publishing,

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