MEDIASCAPE AND IDENTITY REPRODUCTION AND SUSTENANCE: A CASE OF INDIAN GUEST-WORKERS IN GERMANY

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the socio-cultural experiences of exclusion and inclusion for Indian guest workers in Germany facilitated by media, within the discourses of economic globalization and international migration of labour. It draws directly from Arjun Appadurai’s concept of ‘scapes’ coming together to constitute ‘disjuncture of flows’. Here ‘guest-worker’ is not the quintessential ‘gastarbeiter’ rather a league of Elite Migrants. They comprise mostly of IT, Banking and Finance professionals and are a part of the global economy due to neoliberalism and transnational network. The salient focus of this paper is to explore the extent to which media acts as an agent of identity reproduction and sustenance for Indian guest workers in the host society and how that informs the overall interconnectedness of ‘scapes’.

Keywords: Indian guest-workers in Germany, Arjun Appadurai, Mediascape, Identity, Stereotype, Ethnoscape.

INTRODUCTION

The experiences of socio-cultural and ethnic exclusion for a migrant population in a host society cannot be captured in its entirety without identifying the agents of reinforcing social identity. One of the biggest agents of identity reproduction and sustenance is media. Through its mediated images it augments the construction of simulated spaces and ‘worlds’ for the people. Media, in its various forms like print, electronic and digital (internet) heavily influences the way we see the world around us including ourselves. Also, media-people interface in a globalized world i.e. mediascape entails concepts of universalism and particularism as well as media through its various forms of communication universalizes particularism and vice versa. In the study under review, Indian diaspora in general and Indian guest workers in Germany in particular were observed to be consistently negotiating with such simulated images of India and of Germany. These images are not only fed upon by Indian media from India, also

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1 This paper is a part of the doctoral thesis titled ‘Disjuncture of Flows: Experiences of Exclusion and Inclusion for Indian Guest-workers in Germany’ (2017)

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Indian media in Germany and global media as well. In that light, the mediated images that the subjects here are implicated with are not just country-specific but transnational and at some level global as well.

In that light, the issues relevant in this paper include how media portrays Germany and Germans to Indians, how media portrays India to Indian guest workers in Germany and how media portrays India and Indians to Germans. Concomitantly, the locational specificity of media includes Indian media in India, Indian media in Germany, German media in Germany and global media.

The content of the paper comprises of field notes and observations from the field based on primary sources of data together with occasional reference to similar kinds of existing research work of other scholars. Before engaging with the issue of ethnoscape-mediascape interface, it is important to look at the social composition of the subjects on whom the study is based in Germany.

Social Composition of the Guest-workers in Germany

Among the 120 respondents that I engaged with during field work, 90 were men and 30 were women. Out of the 90 men, 53 were single and 37 were married; out of 30 women 14 were single, 12 were married and 4 were single parents. Majority of the respondents hailed from Eastern and Southern part of India. Most of them received their school education in their home towns and higher education in the big cities. I found a balanced composition of men and women having regional and urban backgrounds i.e. whilst a big section was found to have semi-urban backgrounds in India, a visible number of respondents also came with quintessentially urban backgrounds of English medium school education followed by Indian Institute of technology (IIT) or equivalent engineering degrees and MBA’s from elite management institutes. Those with semi-urban/regional backgrounds also migrated to big cities for engineering and specialized degrees. This trend was observed more in men than women i.e. more men with regional backgrounds migrated to big cities in India for higher education in comparison to women. As for the women, the majority had urban backgrounds and received all their professional degrees from big cities. This differential trend accounts for the fact that men are more encouraged and have more access to opportunities than women in India, especially in terms of education and career building.

Among the 37 married male respondents, 31 of them were accompanied by their wives, 4 of them were expecting their wives to join them once the spouse's visa process had been completed and the remaining two respondents informed me that their wives would not join them since they have their independent careers in India. Among 53 single men, 19 of them were engaged to be married to women in India chosen by their parents, 6 of them had their girlfriends working in India and they expressed their desire to marry them in near future, whilst. 12 of them said that their parents were looking for a match for them, back in India. 8 respondents said that they would not prefer arranged marriages, but would however like to choose Indian girls for marriage over a foreigner and the rest of the 7 respondents said that marriage was not a priority for them at the time of the interview. Among those accompanied by their wives, 13 had children, out of which 10 went to school in Germany. The rest of the male respondents did not have children, either in Germany or in India.
Among the 14 single women, 4 of them were engaged to be married once they finish their on-site term and go back to India, the rest of the 10 opined that they did not have immediate marriage plans, though they have family pressure to marry and more specifically not to marry foreigners. Among the 12 married female respondents, 7 of them also had their husbands in the host society with 4 of the husbands also pursuing similar kind of jobs and 1 husband still trying to have full employment in Germany. The remaining 5 women had husbands residing in India in full time employment. Among the 4 single mothers, 3 of them had their children living with them in Germany and 1 had left her children in India with her parents as she was not confident of raising them on her own in the host society.

The majority of women were found to be in the banking and IT sector, while finance was dominated largely by men. Among 53 men, 7 of them expressed a desire to stay back in Germany, 9 of them said that they would not mind going to another country after completing their on-site tenure in Germany, and the rest of them opined that they would definitely prefer to go back to India and continue working there. Among the women, those who had their husbands in Germany opined that they would stay back in the host society if their husbands would, all 4 of the single mothers said that they would prefer staying in Germany with their children than going back to India, and 4 out of the 14 single women said that they would like to stay in Germany.

**Mediascape**

Mediascape\(^2\) and Simulation\(^3\): Relevance in Context

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\(^2\) Mediascape (Appadurai, 1997) refers both to the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations, and film-production studios), which are now available to a growing number of private and public interests throughout the world, and to the images of the world created by these media. These images involve many complicated inflections, depending on their mode (documentary or entertainment), their hardware (electronic or pre-electronic), their audiences (local, national, or transnational), and the interests of those who own and control them. What is most important about these mediascapes is that they provide (especially in their television, film, and cassette forms) large and complex repertoires of images, narratives, and ethnoscapes to viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of news and politics are profoundly mixed. What this means is that many audiences around the world experience the media themselves as a complicated and interconnected repertoire of print, celluloid, electronic screens, and billboards. The lines between the realistic and the fictional landscapes they see are blurred, so that the farther away these audiences are from the direct experiences of metropolitan life, the more likely they are to construct imagined worlds that are chimerical, aesthetic, even fantastic objects, particularly if assessed by the criteria of some other perspective, some other imagined world. Mediascapes, whether produced by private or state interests, tend to be image-centered, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality, and what they offer to those who experience and transform them is a series of elements (such as characters, plots, and textual forms) out of which scripts can be formed of imagined lives, their own as well as those of others living in other places.

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\(^3\) Mediascape not only feeds the ethnoscapes with imagery, it also constructs new ethnoscapes for the communities involved. While doing so, mediascape actually introduces the community to a myriad of simulated images. What they view as reality and attempt at participating in that reality, is a simulated reality. Baudrillard (1983) in his book Simulacra and Simulation defined
Within the above context in the paper, mediascape and its relation to ethnoscape can be identified as one of perpetually undergoing the process of simulacrum and creating simulated images of representation. Media, by its images, reports and virtually created spaces throws multiple pictures of constructed reality to the Indian guest workers in Germany vis-à-vis what constitutes India and the Indian on one hand and what constitutes Germany and the German on the other.

There are largely three kinds of media to be dealt with – print, electronic and social media. Indian guest workers in Germany in particular and Indian diaspora in the host society in general regularly feed upon images of India from media in India, media in Germany and global media. Similarly, they are constantly receiving mediated images regarding Germany from German and global media. As a result, Indian guest workers in Germany can keep identifying themselves as ‘Indians’ even if they are in living in another country, and also often regulate their own behavior in response to the mediated mages of Germany and the Germans. In view of identity reproduction and sustenance, no other agency of identity politics facilitates the process as much as media and the entire discourse of mediascape laid down by the forces of globalization.

Electronic and social media, through their dissemination of simulated images, augment identity intensification much more than print media. For example, Indian diaspora in Germany diligently follows the television commercials from India. These sitcoms help them remain connected to the Indian ways of existence primarily in terms of clothes, food, family lives and social behavior. On the other hand, as will be discussed later in the chapter, Indian characters in German sitcoms, produced by German television channels also influence the Indians socially. Moreover, such sitcoms inform to a significant extent the Germans about what to expect from the Indians. Lastly, global media engages in representation what is essentially ‘Indian’ and what is essentially ‘German’ in typical fashions which also impact upon the ways in which the Indian guest workers and the host society perceive each other. These factored taken together come to facilitate the process of reproduction and sustenance of ethnic identity for the Indian guest workers in Germany.

Next, social media especially various websites initiated by Indians in Germany and also few started by German federal Government in few of possible integration of the Indian workers in the host society have emerged as crucial virtual spaces where Indians interact with each other and concomitantly construct simulated images themselves about how to survive and live in Germany as ‘Indians’. These web portals often bombard newly arrived Indian guest workers in Germany with information about details of major ‘Indian’ (largely Hindu) festivals in Germany, how to participate in those festivals, where to find Indian groceries, contact details of Indian ‘friends’ to be found in Germany, addresses of major religious institutions (mostly Hindu) in Germany and alike. While such information often helps Indians who are arriving in the host

the concept in all its details. He suggests that a simulation as a process blurs the line between real and the constructed and engages with signs and images that, though originating from the actual, gains an independent status built completely around imagination. These images dominated our perceptions and understanding much more than what actually is, so much so that we start relating with them much more than images created by ourselves in everyday life.
society for the first time and does not speak German, it also introduces to a territory of identity – a demarcated space with the exclusivity of cultural identification. On the other hand, German Federal Government through its various social integration initiatives, have started virtual spaces that narrate encouraging stories of how Indian guest workers in Germany are socially, culturally and professionally integrated. Websites like www.make-it-in-germany.in are aimed at facilitating the newly arrived Indian guest workers into joining mainstream German life with the final goal of integrating them in the host society. However, whether that works as a facilitator for integration is something to find out. Nevertheless, such spaces, intensified by their virtuality, and therefore, volatility, are constantly produces simulated images that not just help the Indian guest workers in Germany relate with and reaffirm their ethnic identity, also augment reproduction and renewal of the latter in the host society.

**Indian Stereotype in Germany**

At the beginning, it is mention worthy that mediascape-ethnoscape interface for Indian guest workers in Germany if often merged with that of the larger Indian diaspora in the host society. In other words, People of Indian Origin have outlived Indian guest workers in Germany. Therefore, the way media (German and global) showcase Indians is mostly conditioned by the existing image constructed around Asians in general and Indians in particular. Indian guest workers started migrating to Germany only from the turn of the new millennium; however, Indians of other profiles have existed in the host society from long before. In that light, mediated images creating a simulated world for Indian guest workers in Germany are largely due to pre-existing images of the larger Indian diaspora in Germany and at the global level.

Media in Germany as well as global media often define Indians as the quintessential Asians who are largely implicated in militant activities around the world. The way global media disseminates political news reports heavily underscored by Indian subcontinent as politically vulnerable and hub of militantism which is often termed as ‘terrorism’, lays the foundation based on which general perception of them is created for the Germans. This air of negativity not only influences and affects the way Indian guest workers, who are living in Germany for a comparatively short period and generally do not enough time to prove their social significance in the host society, are viewed by the Germans, also the parameters within which Indians themselves judge their social position in the host society. In majority of the cases, xenophobic attacks against the Indians are largely products of media perception of the former by the Germans.

**Numerical Shortcoming**

In general, the Indian community in Germany is too small to play a major role in the German media. According to Census 2011, there around one lakh people of Indian origin in Germany of which around 40,000 hold Indian passport. In the political front, Sebastian Edathy is the only person representing Social Democratic Party. There are few eminent journalists including Nandini Mitra, Ranga Jogeshwar and Collien Fernandes; few singers like Sandeep Bhagwati, Shweta Shetty and Besly Demetz. In other words, representation of India in German media is extremely restricted to only few names and no strong Indian platform has emerged till now in German media.
As a matter of fact, the first decade of the new millennium marked the beginning for the Indian diaspora in Germany to start gaining media exposure and visibility. The federal government strongly felt that notwithstanding their numerical under-representation as a migrant community, especially when compared with the Turkish and Polish migrants, Indians have historically been engaged with relatively middle and upper ranking jobs in Germany (architects, engineers, teachers and nurses). This trend had only been growing, at a more systematized fashion since the turn of the 21st century with Germany introducing Green Card Initiative. In that, it was becoming increasingly important to expose the German society to the active presence of the Indian diaspora. It was felt that this would serve two purposes – firstly, it would introduce the Germans to the Indian diaspora and decrease concomitant chances of xenophobic attacks (the believe that the more one knows something the less one feels uncomfortable with that) and secondly, which is also linked to the first reason, it would make the Indian diaspora more at home in the host society and help them integrate.

**Media Reports of Poverty and Lack of Safety for Women in India**

However, media representation of Indians by both German and global media has traditionally been one of poverty ridden. Media’s obsession with world poverty is not unknown, and Indian diaspora in Germany is often viewed in similar lines of being poor, uneducated and malnourished which is definitely always not the case. Although India has always been regarded as culturally, philosophically, and particularly spiritually superior to Germany, the main perception of the South Asian country in Germany was the extreme poverty in India. Media reporting and coverage almost always focused on the terrible living conditions of the underprivileged sections of Indian society, including the suppression of women. Skewed gender relation is another stereotype that is often fed upon by India media, German media and global media alike. One of my respondents shared that once a German couple friend of her and her husband would often tell them about how it shows in the Indian movies that men never enter the kitchen and are quite dominating. While, and quite unfortunately though, many of such mediated images are often real and even simulate the reality to have Indian men and women living outside India believe that they should oblige such ‘traditions’, there are Indians of other kinds as well. Oftentimes, especially with reference to the infamous rape incident of 2011 in India which received extensive media attention everywhere in the world including Germany, the host society has gradually evolved its opinion about Indian men and come to see them largely as potential rapists. Not to argue that rape is not a menace in India at the moment, such negative stereotypes are largely created through mediated and also simulated images within the mediascape in which the receiver of the images, here both Indian diaspora and the host society are programmed to believe that these images are the only reality, independent of its point of origin. Majority of the male respondents who are single, yet to have their wives in Germany or have their wives in India for some reasons have opined that they feel awkward at such gender stereotypes and often feel hesitant in talking to people of other genders in the fear of being misunderstood. Such image construction often perpetuates negative identity construction and sustenance for the parties involved e.g. Indian men who are subject to such negative stereotypes would unconsciously accept his image of being a potential threat to other genders which will
eventually condition his behaviour either in his secluding himself from social interaction with other genders in the fear of being mis-communicated, or attempt at overbearing social participation to prove that he is not a threat. Either way, such mediated images producing simulated realities disturb the balance of social interaction between the migrant population and the host society.

**Stereotype of Indian Character in German Sitcoms**

Sitcoms or television series are crucial ingredients of mediascape. Unlike news reports which largely follow the structure of ‘facts’ and not imagination, sitcoms epitomize an imagined world; right from the plot to the characters to the dialogues and the twist and turns of the story and the ending – everything is imagined. These television series provide simulated spaces with simulated images that are completely bereft of reality. They involve both self-identification and othering, all at the same time. Moreover, the fact that these sitcoms run daily at a stipulated time during the day indicates towards the structural implication of the imagined space (created by the sitcom) to inform the viewers with simulated images in a systemic fashion without any disruption.

Common clichés about Indians include certain character traits that are somehow inherent in what is often called the “Asian nature”: They are perceived as being passive, humble, shy, and generally submissive. Media reflections, particularly in TV shows, tend to reinforce these and other stereotypes. However, given the numerical scarcity of the Indian diaspora in Germany, such television characters are not in plenty. Unlike American television where typical Indian characters like Rajesh Koothrappali from Big Bang Theory are immensely popular, German televisions offer lesser number of such stereotypes. This does not mean that Indians are less subject to stereotypes in Germany, rather there are far less number of Indians in Germnay than in America. One of the very few recurring fictional Indian characters on German TV has been the figure of “Ranjid” from the popular comedy show “Was guckst du?!” (“What you are looking at?!”), which was broadcasted from 2001 until 2005. Ranjid, an immigrant from India, is portrayed in a very stereotypical way. In his home, he is surrounded by pictures of Hindu deities and frequently uses incense sticks. Ranjid is a devout admirer of his cow Benytha, which lives with him in his apartment and frequently accompanies him on his ways around. Furthermore, he is shown as being very superstitious and as an overall rather simple minded, naïve, and shy person. He usually works in lower skilled professions, for instance as a cleaner or as an office worker, and oftentimes misunderstands orders and work assignments, thereby causing trouble. In all, the character of Ranjid rather represents the cliché picture of a worker in India than an accurate depiction of Indian immigrants in Germany. In fact, it has very little connection to the reality of NRI life in Germany (Keding and Struppert 2006).

Apart from Ranjith, the character of Rajesh Koothrappali, as mentioned earlier is also quite popular in Germany. One of the respondents shared that he was asked by a German colleague after arriving in Germany if he was also shy of talking to women like Rajesh. Rajesh is a quintessential ‘good’ boy from an educated, upper-middle class family from the southern part of India who is a successful engineer in the USA but cannot talk to women unless drunk, daily talks to his parents via skype who often warn him against his ‘American’ friends being bad cultural influence. This is said specifically in terms of his parents’ fear that he might find an American girl and get involved
whereas they would earnest wish for an Indian ‘bahu’ (bride). Moreover, when Rajesh fails to woo a girl, courtesy his inability to speak to women when sober, his parents suspect him of being gay, which according to them, is the worst possibility. Given this character sketch of a professionally successful Indian young man in a foreign country who is immensely popular across continents, it is no surprise that Indian guest workers in Germany, a large portion of whom match with Rajesh’s basic professional profile, are often subject to stereotypical representations due to mediated images generated by these sitcoms.

Also, it generalizes all profiles of Indians in Germany, whereas in reality, there have been a significant number of white collar workers in Germany apart from the blue-collar ones. As a matter of fact, due to no history of colonial relation with Germany, Indians have hardly visualized Germany as a primary country for mass labour migration, barring few political situations like 1984 Sikh Riot and alike. In that light, while it is no surprise that Sikhs form a composite part of the Indian diaspora in Germany and a fictional character emerging out of such stereotype is no arbitrary choice, it is also important to note that there are many other communities in Germany from India apart from the Sikhs and they are all not the same. Such cultural generalization through simulated image construction of the Indian diaspora in Germany hinders the former’s process and initiative towards social integration in the host society on one hand, and distorts the perception of Indians within the host society.

**Shifting of Stereotype towards Indian ‘Elite Migrants’**

With the arrival of the Indian guest workers in Germany engaged in IT, finance and banking sectors and strictly representing a high-skilled white collar working profile, these stereotypes started shifting towards that of ‘Elite Migrants’. These Indian white-collar workers started migrating in Germany as a part of the Green Card Initiative that began in 2000 which also opened doors for trans and multinational companies to send their onsite Indian professionals to German cities. The arrival of IT specialists, computer, finance and banking experts from India after the introduction of the German Green Card in 2000 has led to a new perspective emphasizing the technological advances of India (Goel 2007). Here, however, new stereotypes have been established. It is now not uncommon in the media to regard all immigrants from South Asia as “computer Indians” and “technology wizards”.

This entails certain kinds of reproduction of stereotypes vis-à-vis shifting of focus from poverty to knowledge economy. India as a part of the emerging economy is undoubtedly one of the most significant partners in Asia today. India is an integral part of BRICS and IBSA; moreover, it is only next to China in its economic advancement in recent years. In that light, India has already ‘arrived’ in global market. This changing image of India as an economy has had its concomitant effects on the way India and the Indians are now perceived globally. Here, reproduction of identity through mediated images, even if creating new stereotypes, are contributing towards a positive perception towards the Indian diaspora in general and Indian guest workers in Germany in particular, through socially and economically empowered attributes.
In a certain way, this image of a well-educated and highly skilled community that works in good, high paid jobs compares favorably to other minority groups, especially to Turkish immigrants who in parts of the media are frequently portrayed as not contributing much to the German society and unwilling to integrate. In the end, however, the technologically advanced “computer Indian” remains another mere cliché, albeit a rather positive one.

**Indian Television Channels in Germany**

Indian IT-professionals are in many ways privileged as migrants in Germany as a result of company benefits packages. However, their experiences are coloured by their imaginations of Germany such as those created through by the (Indian) media (most notably the perceived threat of rightwing extremist groups) and the migrants’ family, and by their own expectations of Germany. Such imaginations and the de-facto culture clash lead to a conflictuous role of the Indian migrants in the host society. Many migrants live their lives simultaneously across different nation-states, being both ‘here’ and ‘there’, crossing geographical and political boundaries (Riccio, 2001). Both economic and symbolic resources play an important part in establishing the migrants ‘transnational livelihood’ (Salih, 2001).

Perpetuation of identity for the Indian guest workers in Germany also happen significantly through the television channels in India. Unlike UK where direct transmission of these channels is possible, Indian guest workers in Germany have to access the channels via UK. Lebara is the primary telecommunications company through which they subscribe these Indian television channels. Keeping in mind the regional preferences of the Indians, Lebara Community, as the term suggests also provides television channels with linguistic specificities like Tamil Lebara, Oriya Lebara and alike. Hindi television channels are also quite popular. Channels like Colors, Zee TV and Aaj Tak are the most watched ones. Majority of the male respondents opined that they mostly follow news and sports channels. On the other hand, majority of the female respondents, especially the spouses of the Indian guest workers shared that they prefer the daily sitcoms and reality shows. According to them, it primarily keeps them connected to the daily lives in India, and also, gives them some common topics to talk about when they call their families in India. Moreover, it was observed that within the Indian diaspora, Indian television channels are subscribed and watched more by the Indian guest workers than other Indian migrants. Those who are living in Germany for a long time and have largely naturalized into the social fabric of the host society are not as eager and regular with the Indian television sitcoms as that of the Indian guest worker families. This can be accounted for the fact that these profile of migrants (and their spouses) do not want to outgrow the habit of watching Indian television on a regular basis, may be as they would do in India, since they know that they will not live in Germany for long and as a result do not need to adapt themselves with German television.

While interviewing the Indian guest worker families in their domestic set ups, it was often found that they regulate their meal times and other domestic chores according to the sitcoms. The content of these sitcoms would typically include large Indian families and their domestic lives scattered among laughter, tears, weddings, family property dispute, joint family system, breakdown of marriage, extra-marital affairs, child birth, old age and death. In other words, these sitcoms bear overtone of morality
and never lets the viewers forget that as Indians, they are also a part of the collective existence. This way, collective living is kept alive in the heart of the Indians who are away from the immediate physical space of the country. These simulated images, as already mentioned earlier, are the repertoires of reproduction and sustenance of ethnic identities which are often fraught with multiplicity due to regional specificities. It was observed that Indian guest workers in Germany not only watch television channels from the state they come from but also Hindi television channels as well. However, those from the southern parts of India are less prone to watch Hindi channels transmitted from India than others, courtesy the ongoing linguistic politics in the country. Nevertheless, those who watch both regional and national television channels and the sitcoms are thereby subject to bi-lingual imageries, apart from English language news channels from India. What is interesting is, this bi-lingual exposure does not differentiate much between the contents of the sitcoms; more often than not, the sitcoms show similar kind of stories, irrespective of the languages. In that light, social messages that the simulated imageries in Hindi could not communicate to a Marathi is always filled in by that of generated through exposure to his or her regional language sitcoms namely Marathi.

Next, reality shows in both national and regional television channels in India are also gaining popularity among Indian guest workers in Germany. Talent shows like SaReGaMaPa and alike function as the missing links between the culture that they have temporarily left behind and themselves. Those with children, often feel encouraged to have their kids continue with Indian classical music and dance as they are constantly reminded of the value associated with such ‘skills’ in India through these real-time competitions broadcasted in Indian television. on the other hand, shows like Big Boss which is fashioned after popular reality show from UK, Big Brother, help the young Indian guest workers and their spouses to remain connected to the larger ‘global’ culture nevertheless within their familiar ‘local’ context. Lastly, Indian news channels are biggest sources for political identification for the Indian guest workers in Germany. Incidentally, the interviews happened few months before Narendra Modi was contesting as the prime ministerial candidate from the BJP in General Election 2014 in India. It was observed that majority of the Indian guest workers were following diligently the election updates and although they could not cast their vote since India is yet to begin online voting system, majority of them had distinct political opinion and were quite vocal about it. Their interest in politics in their own country in fact often made them inquisitive about German politics although they have no active role to play there having no voting right. This often, however, discourages the Indian guest workers to take further interest in the political developments in Germany barring those affecting them economically.

Internet and Social Media of and for Indians in Germany

A host of web portal emerged since the turn of the century to address the growing engagement of young India with internet. This also includes the Indians guest workers in Germany largely because most of them fall within the age group of 27-40 and also since they are all engaged in IT, finance and banking sectors that need heavy usage of the web. In that light, these Indian guest workers are internet savvy and often use it for connecting with the Indian diaspora in Germany. Websites like www.theinder.net,
www.expat-blog.com and www.migreat.com gained popularity among the Indian youth diaspora in general and Indian guest workers in Germany in particular.

Since year 2000, the Internet (www.theinder.net), also known as, Indian online community, a German language cyber network has been working to clarify issues about India to the new generations in the internet space. India has been defined in two ways; firstly, political, geographical and the present status of India in South Asia and secondly, cultural, including religions, cultures, philosophies, languages and traditions, showing Indian cultural continuation from past to present time. The first part is meant to define the country by putting out a factual report of India, "the discovery of India" on the theinder.net. The second part is based on interviews, questions posed by young viewers and answers by the editor. The image of India by Germans and the Indian young generation has often been questioned for its authenticity. The explanation to the Indian identity is given by family members, friends, religious preachers and narratives by the association leaders.

These websites often serve as the entry-point for new arrivals from India in Germany and help them remain connected to the Indian diaspora in the host society. More than Indian migrants of other profiles in Germany, Indian guest workers are observed to be using these websites. This is primarily due to the fact that a significant number of them live alone in Germany and feel the need to socially remain connected to other fellow Indians more than those who there with spouses and families. Secondly, the spouses of the Indian guest workers in Germany, especially those who stay at home, feel lonely and these websites serve as a convenient option for them to gain familiarity in the host society particularly in terms of finding other Indian spouses in different parts of the country and creating a social connect with them. This facilitates reproduction and sustenance of their ethnic identity through the construction of virtual community of socio-cultural continuity in the host society.

Indians have established a solid infra-structure consisting of shops, weekly markets, religious centres, sport clubs, cultural program shows, film shows, Hindu temples, Sikh Gurudwaras, mosques, and meeting centres. These websites keep updated information regarding the upcoming events in such associations including details of celebrating religious festivals. Unlike other profiles of Indian migrants who mostly invest their weekends on family and social gatherings, Indian guest workers in Germany are often found to be working even on weekends. In such situations, they do not have as much time to visit the religious organizations and social associations for updates on annual events; rather, rely on these websites for these details. Also, these websites serve as a personal space for them to share their first-hand experiences of living in Germany with each other, thereby constructing yet another kind of virtuality of their actual shared experiences.

**END NOTE**

Within the terrain of ethnoscape-mediascape interface, this paper brings together the universalistic value of global economy and particularistic value of ethnic identity. Universalistic value of the global economy is epitomized in the principle of capitalism while particularistic value of ethnicity is already suggested in the term 'ethnoscape'. In that light, Indian guest workers in Germany are subject to multiple 'scapes' within a typical context of globalization, as defined by Appadurai (1998). Interestingly, also as Appadurai suggests, each of the scapes influences the subjects with equal forces and
condition them. In other words, while Indian guest workers in Germany are negotiating with economic globalization and its implications as a part of the labour market, it is on another hand having to deal with the experience of migration and adaptation at a socio-cultural and ethnic level because they are not just a part of the labour force but social beings as well. While negotiating within these two forces, they are also subject to multiple images and simulated hyper-realities that not just inform them about potential adaptive mechanisms in the host society, this multiplicity of the realities are active agents of their actual experiences of migration as well.

Ethnicization of media, in its pursuit of reproduction of ethnic identities, is directly contributing to the corporate capitalist mode of production, being a part of global media market – the same production system that perpetuates international migration of labour. This process brings the three major attributes of globalization namely ethnoscape, financescape and mediascape as they construct an unique mechanism of responding to the logic and demands of global economic exchange (of labour) on one hand and ensuring restoration of their loyalty towards ethnic and cultural ancestry on the other. In other words, mediascape plays the dual role of reproduction and sustenance of ethnic identity of labour migrants while being a part of the global market economy. In that light, mediascape is a unique space that responds to locality through its globalized system of operation. To conclude, media indeed emerges as one of the most crucial agents of identity reproduction and sustenance for Indian guest workers in Germany that in turn shapes both their experiences and perception of socio-cultural exclusion and inclusion in the host society.
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