INTRODUCTION

The Indian Diaspora has a powerful influence on the global community where Indians constitute a diverse and a heterogeneous group that shares Indian origin and intrinsic values. Earlier migration was associated with the exodus of low-skilled labourers whereas it now relates more to the emigration of highly skilled workers, professionals, students, etc. The migration of skilled labour in pursuit of better career prospects and living standards started after Indian Independence and gathered momentum with the emigration of IT professionals in the 1990s. The concept of the brain drain has always been widely discussed, but recent trends show a movement in the opposite direction! Many professionals are returning to their homeland leading to a brain gain.

Madeleine Sumption, a policy analyst at the Migration Policy Institute, recently stated that ‘“a growing population of highly educated Americans and foreign nationals educated in the States are less committed to living and working in the U.S., preferring to return to their homelands, many of which are emerging economies”’. She also suggests that this trend is strong in China, India and Brazil where dramatic economic growth over the last decade has opened up opportunities for entrepreneurship and led U.S. multinationals to hire overseas employees with Western education.1

GLOBAL CRISIS TO INDIA SHINING

While cross-connectivity made possible by advances in transportation and communication technologies, propelled migration from countries such as India a few decades ago, the establishment of off-shore companies in India and booming economy is making the return possible and real to the same country that has witnessed out-migration on a large scale.2 Moreover, as more workers across the professional ladder are migrating overseas in the quest for better economic opportunities, employers are hiring and placing their employees across national borders, especially in newer destinations such as India for economic reasons. On the other hand, Indian professionals abroad, especially in the IT sector, prefer and accept their company’s offer to return to India, especially when the intra-company transfer lands them in management position similar to the nature of professionals working within India (Upadhya, 2010: 309).

With a record of the largest remittance receiving country in the world, India received remittances of US $ 64 billion in 2011.3 Notwithstanding the recent fluctuations in the global economy, the fall in Global GDP and growing unemployment levels in the advanced countries, India GDP level has grown rapidly and the country has been witnessing significant technological advancements. This has changed the scenario with educated and ambitious individuals turning back and migrating to the India that is showing its development potential. In order to support this welcome trend, the Government of India has been implementing various policies such as

2 The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs’ annual report (2010) estimates Indian Diaspora to be 25 million across 189 countries.
3 The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs’ annual report (2010) estimates Indian Diaspora to be 25 million across 189 countries.
providing Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) and Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cards, granting outstanding scholarships to Non Resident Indians (NRI) and PIOs, financial and other incentives, tax deductions and investment packages to encourage the return of highly skilled migrants, or in fact, to reverse the process of the brain drain.

Research studies indicate that return and circular migrations are characterized by emigrants returning to their country of origin. For example, India and China contribute largely to this emerging phenomenon of entrepreneurship boom (Wadhwa et al. 2011) and the effect of brain drain which earlier worked to the benefit of the country of destination has, in fact, reversed to work for a long-term benefit of the country of origin. A survey by Vivek Wadhwa and his team, of 153 skilled Indians and 111 Chinese returnees from the United States reveals that nearly half of the respondents wanted to start companies in their home country (Ibid.). The most significant factors drawing both Indians and Chinese home were economic opportunities, access to local markets, and family ties, with more than 60 per cent of Indian returnees saying that the availability of economic opportunities in their country was a major factor encouraging them to return.

Another survey by Heidrick & Struggles (2010) reflects that the Indian workforce is considered the ‘most mobile’ in the world followed by Mexicans, Chinese and Turks. While 82 per cent of the respondents conveyed their willingness to come back given a suitable opportunity, only 55 per cent of them are ‘actively considering opportunities to relocate to India’.

According to Kelly Services India, a global workforce solutions provider, around 300,000 Indian professionals are expected to migrate home over the next four years. Interestingly, it is not just the private sector that is attracting Indian returnees. The Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) has hundreds of NRI scientists keen to be part of India’s defense projects, with the Government also eager to attract Indian scientists currently abroad.

**FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY:**

The survey on returnee professionals was carried out by the Research Unit on International Migration at Centre for Development Studies (CDS), Thiruvananthapuram for the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA), Govt. of India.

The study explored the reasons for the return and their post-return settlement. We interviewed 1106 highly skilled professionals (both in educational as well as occupational terms) who had returned spontaneously and voluntarily to reside in India during the period 2006-2011. We took samples from Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala), Cochin (Kerala), Hyderabad (Andhra Pradesh), Chennai (Tamil Nadu), Mumbai (Maharashtra), Ahmadabad (Gujarat), Pune (Maharashtra), Delhi and Bangalore (Karnataka). We followed Snowball Sampling to find out about the return and their resettlement issues faced by the returnee migrants.

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4 The study reached out to over 2600 senior executives of Indian origin currently based abroad from its global database of over 1.6 million executives.
Table 1 City-wise Sex Distribution of Samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thiruvananthapuram</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cochin</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyderabad</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chennai</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mumbai</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmadabad</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pune</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangalore</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>901</strong></td>
<td><strong>205</strong></td>
<td><strong>1106</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

About 81.46 per cent of the samples were men and 18.53 per cent were women (Table 1). While 24 respondents had PIO cards, only 42 possessed OCI cards issued by the Government of India. Many said that possession of these cards had made their mobility easier and that it particularly benefited the younger generation, especially children who wished to move for further studies. Some also felt this put them on par with Indian citizens. Kerala and Maharashtra seem to have fairly good number of migrants distributed all over the world, with Kerala having a higher ratio.

In Kerala, people prefer to migrate to the Gulf countries, closely followed by Canada, with the USA being given the least preference. Migrants from Tamil Nadu mostly prefer the Gulf and Other Asian countries in comparison to Europe or the USA, while a major proportion in Andhra Pradesh migrates to the USA. The Gulf countries are inhabited mostly by the migrants from the South Indian states, except Karnataka, which interestingly has no migrant in Gulf according to the data, and prefers the USA instead. People in the North Indian states of Delhi and Gujarat prefer the western countries as compared to the Gulf. Most of the migrants who return to their home towns are from Kerala, closely followed by migrants from Maharashtra while the lowest percentage of returnees is migrants from Gujarat. On an average, 23.68 per cent migrants returned from USA after 2006, 16.99 per cent from the UAE and 9.04 per cent from the UK, making these three countries the biggest hub for migrants. This also suggests that these developed countries have seen a greater outflow of Indian migrants when the global crisis hit. Though Oman and Saudi Arabia also has seen migrants returning (5.51 per cent and 6.6 per cent respectively), the impact or the outflow has been much lower than from the developed nations. The majority of the returnees in our sample were in the age group 30-39 (44.93 per cent). This is followed by youngsters who have returned at 29.56 per cent (below 29 years).
Figure 1 shows that there has been an increase in the return during 2006-2010. Most of the return migration took place the year 2010 and has significantly diminished in the following years reducing the number of migrants to a very low percentage after 2010, probably due to the aftermath of the recession and the subsequent global economic crisis. In the post-crisis period, the years 2009 and 2010 saw the maximum number of returnees to India with 18.89 per cent and 24.23 per cent respectively. The year 2010 also has seen a huge increase in return migrants (21.79 per cent). The major reason was the global economic crisis which led to job loss and fall salary in many countries. Besides this, there was hardly any job security, and family ties led to the return of skilled migrants to their homeland. Most of the returnees are professionals or people with high educational qualifications who clearly felt that the growing economy needed qualified individuals.

**Figure 1 Returnee’s Year of Return**

The significance of the emerging service sector in India is seen in the fact that 185 of the returnees were in the IT field. Silicon Valley gives these professionals an opportunity to showcase their talents. A typical response like ‘I wanted to challenge myself professionally and develop myself personally’ shows that returnees with higher qualifications see this as a potential trend. The ‘Other’ category constitutes economists, social workers, officers, president of an organization, industrial designer, job adviser, stock broker, pilot/captain, fashion designer, journalists, etc., which clearly shows the diversification of jobs and prospects in India. Many studied outside India, which shows that they want to put their brains to use for development of the home economy. Sectors which were earlier abandoned by the homeland have been revived by these migrants as they search for various job markets and self employment opportunities to build their entrepreneurial skills. Professionally, the major proportions of the returnees are administrators, IT professionals and engineers. Most of the women prefer to be nurses and
academicians; around 80 per cent of the nurses are females. Only the males prefer business and not many women have shown interest in taking up business ventures.

**Figure 2: Occupational Profile of Return Migrants**

![Figure 2: Occupational Profile of Return Migrants]

**Table 2 Educational Qualification of Return Migrants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class 1 - Class 12</th>
<th>34</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Diploma</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Degree</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional PG</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.Phil, Ph.D</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITI, Certificate Courses</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma and others</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1106</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3 provides us with a clear understanding of the work status of the returnee professionals. A huge number of the returnees work in the private sectors, relatively more than the government
sectors. As per the earlier data, the majority with professional educational qualifications, return between the age of 26-30 and employ the learning skills that acquired abroad in India. As per the survey more than half of the returnee emigrants and majority of youngsters invest their skills and talents in the Indian private sector, clearly aiding the Indian economy.

**Figure 3: Present Working Status Professional Return Migrants in India**

![Diagram showing working status of professional return migrants in India]

On the basis of the collected data, we can say that 61 per cent of the returnee migrants are employed in the private sector. The majority of the returnees in the private sector belong to the age group of 26-40. Only 188 returnee professionals are employed in central/state government. We have also seen that some of the returnees (133) are self-employed. Among self-employed category, the majority consists of returnees belonging to the 26-30 age groups.

RETURN: THE NEW INDIAN TREND

Highly skilled professionals like IT professionals and health care workers have always found their place in the foreign market. Their migration on a temporary basis as well as permanent basis had increased with the advent of new technology and greater facilities for mobility provided by the destination countries.

The present Global Crisis has affected the outflow of migrants as well as increased migrant inflow to their homelands. According to Office for National Statistics, unemployment in the UK rose to 6.3 per cent towards the end of 2008, whereby many migrants were laid off there and in other developing countries as the slowdown affected all the sectors in the economy. India, on the other hand, had a very tight monetary policy which allowed the country to stand on its own even during the global recession. Many temporary migrants who have returned to India once they
have completed their short-term contracts invest their skills and their savings in business ventures. Also, many migrants eventually return to India, bringing back new skills and fresh approaches gained abroad, strengthening the economy.

According to the Migration Information Source (December 2011), developing nations that were once primarily migrant-sending states are now experiencing a boom that is beginning to increase their attractiveness for highly educated and highly skilled migrants and beckoning the diaspora home.\(^5\) India could be one of the world's largest trading nations, together with China, by 2030 as its economy continues to grow rapidly, if unevenly. The country is now successfully attracting entrepreneurs and the highly skilled from the diaspora and second generation, particularly to its booming IT industry.

A study by the OECD found that depending on the country of destination and the time frame considered, 20 to 50 per cent of immigrants go home or move on to a third country within 5 years of their arrival. Their main reasons found by this report have been categorized into nine points:

- One main reason has been ageing parents: Up to 234 respondents said that they returned because of their old parents. They also said that they wanted to contribute to the family by settling near their parents. Some even specified that Indian traditions have to be kept up by taking care of the older generation. For them, parents, family, and kinship ties play a greater role than any other reason.

- Contract got over/visa expired: Almost 208 people migrated under contracts which lasted a year. The host countries do not have enough opportunities to offer these professional workers. Sometimes their work gets completed much before the completion of their work period. In such cases, many of the professionals cannot continue or extend their jobs due to unavailability of work. There are reported instances where returnees return back just after the completion of their contract term which may be from six months to a year or two.

- Global recession: Though this has not got priority, it has been recorded as one of the main reasons for return migration. 171 respondents said that the recession had led either to job loss or fall in their salary level. In the present scenario, this had a negative impact on their living standards.

- Planned to set up own venture in India: 126 respondents had already decided to come back to India and set up their own business or take over the family business. They see the foreign experience as a positive point. Most research indicates that large-scale return migration corresponds more to political and economic conditions in the origin country. Migrants may be motivated to return by the prospect of new opportunities at home or they had achieved their financial goals. Up to 200 of the sampled respondents have

\(^5\) [http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?ID=865](http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?ID=865)
started a new venture. 71 out of the 116 who came up with new ventures have invested below Rs. 1,000,000 whereas 21 had made an investment of above Rs. 2,500,000.

**Figure 4: Reasons for Return**

- **Better opportunities in India:** 100 returnees felt that India is an emerging place where there are lots of new prospects for highly skilled professionals. One returnee has even specified that there are greater opportunities due to opening of multinational hotels. Some have even got Government Sector jobs which ensure job security. A scientist replied that there has been an increase in investment opportunities in research. Many come with the hope of opening up new ventures in India. Another common assertion was that they found challenging opportunities in India because of the emergence of new industries, such as retail and media, and subsequent lack of skilled talent. Indeed, numerous business journals confirm that despite the booming economy and vast population, India faces a looming shortage of skilled talent. About 609 respondents think that there are opportunities for professional growth on a general basis.

- **Others:** These reasons include no job security, job transfer, war, harassment from foreign employer, education, and still looking for jobs in foreign countries. Out of the 97 returnees in this category, some came back to India to further their education. One respondent said that he returned because he had earned enough for himself and his family to live well for quite some years. There were others who also said that they had come back to India to enjoy the rest of their life after working hard for several years in the foreign country. Another significant reason for return was the hostility towards Indians. Though they had been in a professional job, they have been discriminated against and
made to stand aside because of either competition in the field or prejudice. Many also stated that while away they missed their favourite festivals and family gatherings.

- Family problems: Some cited factors such as differences in culture, spouse’s health condition, and change of job of spouse, etc., as reasons for their return. Some returned because they wanted to renew their married life. Some cases of divorce and illegitimate affairs were reported that resulted from the separation of married couples. A few returned because they had several health issues and could not continue staying in another country for some more time. In addition, many among them want to learn more about their parental homeland, ethnicity and heritage.

- Not satisfied with jobs: Many of the returnees had faced difficult working conditions and environmental issues, and did not like the work abroad, but had to remain there for some time. More than environmental factors, a feeling of alienation led to the reason for not liking the job in the foreign country. This clearly specifies that they felt alienated towards the work environment overseas. Many claimed that they had stressed themselves out to keep their job. The monotonous working environment and the lack of a sense of togetherness also contributed to the aversion towards their job.

- Marriage: 37 respondents returned because of marriage and these respondents were mainly those aged 29 and below. More men migrated before marriage than women. Men tend to take their family with them usually after the marriage, but recent trends show that they prefer coming back and settling in India rather than staying away after the marriage.

Many returnees had not planned on returning, but said it was a spontaneous and voluntary return. About 179 of the returnees had been thinking of returning home for about a year because of the economical difficulties caused by the recession. The recession made them think seriously about the various options in their homeland. Return is a matter of choice between materialistic and emotional lives abroad. Many, especially those who migrated with their family, had a feeling of insecurity after the 9/11 incident and did not wish to settle abroad. Decisive reasons were always there for those who wanted to return though they sometimes waited for a trigger which initiated the return, and the Global Economic Crisis was one of the factors that gave migrants a valid reason to return to their homeland. When asked whether their job status in their home country is the same as that overseas, 328 responded they got the same job and were in the same profession, while 131 claimed that they got ‘lower status jobs’. Some of the return professionals have started their own business. 194 said that they got a ‘higher status job’ in a metro city as they were recognized for the extra skills obtained from their overseas stay and job. Others said they did not experience any change and felt the job status to be same as that they had abroad. We came across 453 returnees who did not feel comfortable discussing anything related to their job status.

The average growth rate of nine per cent during this slump season has been an attraction for foreign investors as well as those who want to make it big in the city. The healthy environment
in India as well as in other developing countries encourages many MNCs to come here for their growth and sustainability.\(^6\) According to a Senior Management Executive who returned after a decade from Canada to Pune, ‘“the economy in India is healthier than that of North America and more growth focused for the next 10-20 years”’ Dharmakirti Joshi, Chief Economist, CRISIL Ltd, elaborates: ‘“Over the last few years India’s growth rate has gone up significantly. Between 2004 and 2011, average annual GDP growth has been 8.5 per cent. Additionally, India’s growth potential was not dented by the global financial crisis of 2008 and it quickly returned to the eight per cent growth path within a year.”’\(^7\) According to him, this is in contrast to the economic developments in the West. GDP growth came down sharply following the crisis in both Europe and the United States, where recovery and growth prospects have been weak, and employment has taken a big hit. Since India suffers from skill shortages, particularly at the high end of the job market, those returning can easily get absorbed. ‘“The push factor has been shrinking job opportunities in the West and the pull factor has been opportunities for these professions in the fast-growing Indian economy. India has seen finance, information technology and medical professionals returning. This is a win-win situation for both. India stands to gain from the return of these professionals due to fast-emerging skill shortages in India,”’ explains Joshi. Overall, a number of factors affect the development potential of returning migrants. These include their absolute numbers, motivation for return, relevance of their acquired skills to the country's development priorities, legislative, economic, and social conditions in the country of origin, and the ways that government and informal networks help returnees reintegrate into society.

**RESETTLEMENT ISSUES**

In this section, we will analyze the challenges encountered by the return migrants while settling down in India. Many have come back and settled in the metro cities as it is easier for them to look for jobs or start their new ventures with easily available materials and infrastructure. These kinds of ventures can either be self-owned or started as a partnership or joint family venture. Since their international experience plays an important role in investing and building a new empire in the emerging nation, most of these individuals prefer to work in a private organization.

Respondents have foreseen some problems that might arise due to sudden return to their homeland. Initial change of work can be stressful. Those who had a government sector job back in India did not feel the stress because of the job security they were assured before migrating, but they complained that they have lost seniority because of the priority given to OBC’s, ST’s, SC’s. Still, they were deeply disturbed by problems of corruption and by the failure to get various services in time. Self-employed individuals found that there was a delay in getting sanctions and governance was really slow as no administrative support was provided as in the U.S. Many felt that though India is an emerging nation, there were greater problems like pollution and environmental degradation. Even though returning to India has been anticipated or dreamt of,
they also thought about problems like sanitation, health conditions, and lower living standards. Those in the private sector had faced problems related to competition and politics from the higher management. One of our respondents who is an IT engineer says ‘“employers did not account MBA done from UK as a qualification. I got this job because of prior experience.”’

As per their responses, we have found that their first and foremost work-related problem after return is to re-establish their network in a new working environment. The situation is worse when they are IT professionals and have to work according to US or UK timings where they have to attend calls and service their customers in the middle of the night. Those who were in the government sector and had taken long leave to work abroad felt the transition was smooth, but that there was a slight difference in the working culture or nature. Some women respondents complained that Indian working conditions are not friendly.

The returnees cited a new trend that they noticed in India – the ‘impressing the boss’ culture which has been creating quite some problems among the professionals. Also, on a greater note, poor local governance has been another problem they faced.

Networking: In the survey, we found that those who migrated and returned used to keep in touch with the families and friends (53 per cent) as well as their profession relations (54.5 per cent). So they did not show much interest in maintaining ties in various religious groups.

**GOVERNMENT POLICIES**

For those who migrated, the Government of India introduced the PIO Card in 1999 and the OCI in 2005. Both cards grant practical parity with Indian citizens but do not permit voting, standing for election or government employment. PIO cards are available to former Indian citizens and their non-Indian born descendents (up to four generations) while OCI is limited to those whose parents or grandparents once had or were eligible for Indian citizenship on January 26, 1950. Also, OCI grants a lifelong visa and does not require reporting to the police for stays longer than 180 days.

In addition to these, state governments such as Kerala have set up their own policies and administration agencies to promote economic, cultural ties with the migrants in specific regions – these network policies aim at least in part to promote and facilitate remittance, investments and other values resources.

In 2005, the Indian Ministry of Science and Technology (DST) set up a program called the Ramanujan Fellowship to attract high calibre scientists and engineers of Indian origin to take up research positions in India. It aims to involve many members of the overseas India S&T communities in harnessing human capital development in India, enhancing Indian high-tech entrepreneurship, promoting Indian participation in mega-science projects and promoting India as the location for R&D outsourcing (MOIA : 2006).

**SUGGESTIONS**
• The Government should encourage the reverse brain drain as it will help India in its present capital building ventures as a developing nation. The respondents made various suggestions:

• The Government of India should provide various types of administrative assistance for those considering re-migration to India because they are not familiar with the working process in the public sector.

• They would like to see less delay in formalities and procedures so that they do not face many challenges when resettling.

• Favorable tax regimes should be provided to returnee professionals.

• Green card policies which allow naturalized returnees to keep their foreign nationality is another suggestion which needs to be taken by the officials.

• Returnees can be attracted by setting up high-tech parks in which they can settle and start business under favorable conditions such as a few years of free office space, tax exemption for their business, etc.

• Better working conditions should be provided in the country especially for women.

REFERENCES


