

BOOK REVIEWS

DOI: 10.1355/ae29-3g

The Migration of Indian Human Capital: The Ebb and Flow of Indian Professionals in Southeast Asia. By Faizal bin Yahya and Arunajeet Kaur. London: Routledge, 2011. Pp. 304.

This book examines the motivations and experiences of Indian professionals who have migrated to four Southeast Asian countries: Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia. The authors have focused on arrivals from the 1990s onwards and present rich empirical data on Indian professionals working in industries such as ICT, finance and insurance, telecommunications and manufacturing. While the migration of Indian professionals to the United States and Europe is reasonably well covered in the literature, much less has been written about their recent experiences in Southeast Asia, where India has historically had a presence. To make up for this scarcity of recent research, the authors have made a formidable effort to conduct extensive interviews in four countries and review a large amount of media reports and government documents to produce a book which attempts to fill a gap in our understanding of this area of migration studies.

Transnationalism provides the overarching framework for the book and the major works in transnational studies from the mid-1990s to early 2000s are recalled at its outset. However, since studies in transnationalism have continued to develop, some of the more recent works should have been acknowledged. The authors propose

that the recent breed of Indian transnationals can be referred to as “Global Indians” and describe them as having loyalties and ties across borders as well as enduring connections to India. The book is organized into eight chapters with four core chapters presenting the interview material collected in each of the countries under review. The mobility motivations of individuals and their expectations from employment abroad as presented in those chapters are based on complex considerations that reflect employment opportunities at home and abroad, personal, family, and lifestyle factors.

The context for the interviews is set out in two initial chapters where strategies for attracting, selecting and retaining Indian professionals in India and for exporting Indian talent abroad are described by representatives of Indian businesses, recruitment companies and educational institutions. For readers who are unfamiliar with the domestic situation in India, this part of the book offers a fascinating flavour of intra-India differences in education quality, employment opportunities, business strategies for replenishing talent that has emigrated, criteria for entry into skilled jobs domestically and abroad, comparisons of Indian and international salaries, and so forth. This information makes an invaluable contribution to the book. Another somewhat minor thread woven into these first two chapters and one which perhaps deserved a separate section, are motivations for returning to India and the professional and personal adjustment required of returning Indian professionals. On the whole, as much less is

known about highly skilled returnees than about highly skilled immigrants, a section dedicated to Indian professional returnees could have been a useful feature of this volume. The discussion of all these topics is set against the global demand for Indian professionals and the lifestyles that they can obtain overseas and at home.

Each of the core interview chapters commences with a useful discussion of the historical, cultural and economic relations between India and the country in question and reviews the policies of their respective governments in relation to regulating flows and residency of foreign skilled labour. The authors present a vast array of topics in the four core chapters, including economic motivations for migration, employment experience, the nature and role of transnational networks in facilitating this migration, social and professional connections with India, family life in the country of residence, engagement with the local Indian community and the local peoples, presence and perceptions of India in their country of residence, their overall satisfaction with lifestyles and their further mobility intentions including return to India. Some interviewees were asked for their understanding of and opinions on the phenomenon of “Global Indians”.

All of this rich material could have been presented in a more reader-friendly way. In each core chapter (and the two initial chapters), the authors have chosen to present material from numerous interviews with italicized interview questions that often blend in with the text. As a result, each page appears very crowded. Each interview covers most of the above topics, though each in a different order. Some other topics are also covered depending on the interviewee and their industry of employment hence interviews, and not topics, structure those chapters. On these very crowded pages, there is typically no visual distinction between material used *ad verbatim* and paraphrases, making it difficult to make sense of the material. While this style reflects the personal sentiments of the interviewees and the course of their interviews, some readers may tire of going through more than a hundred pages of data presented this way. Moreover, a reader who

hopes to find out how the authors themselves interpret this voluminous amount of material will be disappointed. This analysis is presented in short summaries ranging from one to three paragraphs at the end of each core chapter, leaving the reader to wonder why more details had not been teased out and the rich interview material fully critiqued. Further, in the Conclusion, the concept of “Global Indians” is simply re-stated and briefly illustrated based on the interviews rather than argued for.

If the authors had used the data they have amassed not only to illustrate but also develop the transnational concepts introduced at the beginning of the book, this would elevate their work from an assembly of original interview material to a critical contribution to the field of transnational studies. Given their intimate understanding of the migration of Indian professionals to Southeast Asia, it would seem they were highly capable of doing so. As it stands, the book presents extensive original research material but misses an opportunity to provide a more in-depth critique. Instead, readers are left to form their own views on this phenomenon.

KATE GOLEBIOWSKA
The Northern Institute
Charles Darwin University
Australia

DOI: 10.1355/ae29-3h

***Challenges to the Global Trading System: Adjustment to Globalization in the Asia-Pacific Region.* Edited by Peter A. Petri and Sumner J. La Croix. New York: Routledge, 2011.**

The opportunities and challenges of international trade has been an Achilles’ heel amongst policy-makers, academicians, and business practitioners of the contemporary world. Countries aim to maximize the gains and opportunities from trade by opening up their borders to international exchange. Weighty challenges as they are, added with the ongoing economic and financial deterioration of the global economy, this book offers a good array