The north and south indians binary in singapore history essay

Being an immense country with a large population, it is unsurprising that India has a rich diversity of people scattered across the country. This heterogeneity stems from numerous factors such as historical, geographical and cultural experiences of the different groups of people. However, for classification, administrative and study purposes, the country was seemingly categorized into two broad groups, namely the North and South Indians. This eventually led to the formation of a binary consisting of North and South Indians.

As these Indians migrated to Singapore, they brought along their differences with them. The majority of migrants to Singapore were South Indians, namely the Tamils from Tamil Nadu (Rai, 2006), though there were also South Indians that came from Karnataka, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. As for the North Indians, there were the Sikhs from Punjab (Rai, 2004) and the Hindustanis from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar (Rai, 2006). However, the occupations that they were employed for in Singapore differed greatly and this was a significant factor in forming a divide between the North and South Indians. The South Indians (mainly the Tamils) usually worked for low wages as contract labourers whereas the majority of North Indians were traders, security personnel and mostly did not involve themselves in menial jobs. This led to the creation of stereotypes of North and South Indians in Singapore, where the North Indians were seen as ' respectable' whereas the South Indians were seen as ' menials' (Rai, 2004, p. 254); this further segregated the North and South Indians since they were seen as separate entities (Rai, 2004). Thus, it was a combination of the differences they had back home in India and additional factors in Singapore that eventually led to the formation

of a North-South divide in Singapore that is similar yet different to that in India. Through the examination of various factors in multiple sections, this paper aims to analyse various aspects of Indian life in Singapore in which the North-South divide seemingly manifests and contributes to its own construction, thus determining through this analysis whether this divide truly exists.

The first section discusses how people from the two regions are different in their economic conditions. In Singapore, the majority of South Indians belong to the " old diaspora" whereas the North Indians are mainly people of the " new diaspora". Although sharing the same Indian homeland and currently living in the same host country Singapore, the two groups do not share the same economic characteristics. The section will examine differences between the two groups and discuss how the groups can interact and affect each other.

Within the second section, we will look at the evolution of economic status from the colonial till the contemporary times. Specifically, we will concentrate on the discussion of the economic status and standard of living between the North and South Indians. Although the migrants bring along with them their economic status and caste into Singapore, the differences in the cultural setting and political scene compared to India have led to changes within the original binary between the North and South Indians. However, towards the contemporary times, it can be argued that the economic binary has re-emerged between the old and new professional migrants.

In the third section, we will discuss the binary between South Asian groups in Singapore that arose from language differences. The binary between groups speaking North Indian Indo-Aryan languages and South Indian Dravidian languages existed since the colonial period. After independence, one can argue that there have been varying effects on the divisions between the two groups due to several policies and events before and after 1964. Yet, there are also reasons why the usage of different mother tongues does not lead to the creation of binaries in Singapore.

As for the fourth section, it aims to examine how the differences between the North and South Indians in the ways they practise their religions have contributed to the North-South divide in Singapore and thus establish as to whether this divide is perceived. These differences may be seen in the designs of their temples, the gods they worship or the attitudes they have towards their religions. In particular, the section will focus on Hinduism and Islam, as the majority of the Indians in Singapore practise either of these two religions.

The final section takes a historical view of the Indian Classical Music and aims to analyse what caused the division of the art into Hindustani and Carnatic forms, which aligned themselves along the North-South divide and emerged as a binary. The section dwells into exploring the commonalities and differences between the two forms and goes on to analyse the drive for learning Indian Classical Music. As significant periods in the history of Indian Classical Music are those of medieval times, this section focuses more on the Indian than the Singaporean context.

Economic Differences between Old and New Diaspora

Hoang Gia An

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One aspect of the gulf between the North Indians and South Indians resides in the economic difference between the " old diaspora" and the " new diaspora". (The migrant labours will be excluded since these unskilled workers are only allowed to stay and work in Singapore up to two years). Indian Singaporeans and Permanent Residents (PRs) comprise two main groups: the " old diaspora" community whose ancestors were mainly from South India, migrated and settled in Singapore from late 19th century to about 1940s, and the " new diaspora" of new professionals, who are mainly from North India and have migrated from 1990s onwards (Kaur, 2009).

According to Rai (2006), Indians have immigrated to Singapore for almost two centuries. The earliest Indian immigrants were a group of 120 sepoys brought to Singapore by Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles in 1819. They worked as washer-men, milkmen, tea-makers and domestic servants. Next was the migrant traders led by Naraina Pillai, the most powerful Indian merchant at that time in Singapore. In 19th – early 20th century, many Indian immigrants were in indenture/kangani system where they worked with low wages on short-term contracts. When these systems were stopped in 1938, Indians immigrating to Singapore were free immigrants, mainly from Tamil Nadu, who left India to escape from poverty and to seek a better life in Singapore. After World War II and the Japanese Occupation (1942 – 1945), some Indian immigrants returned to their homeland but the majority stayed in Singapore

due to their financial constraints. The people who had settled in Singapore up to this period and their descendants formed a community which we call " old Indian diaspora". Immigrants from India declined in 1950s – 1960s due to Singapore stricter immigration ordinance. From 1990s onwards, realizing that the nation was getting aged and needed talents to maintain the pace of development, Singapore government recruited and employed foreign professionals from Asia, mainly from China and India. This policy led to an increase in the number of Indians, mainly from North India, relocated to Singapore and created a new group of Indian immigrants, which is often referred to as " new Indian diaspora".

The first difference between the old and the new diaspora is their occupation. Partially due to the low-caste origin of their ancestors, the majority of the old diaspora currently are small-shop owners, money lenders and blue-collar workers. Only the minority work as professional workers, managers or admin staffs. On the other hand, from the 1990s onwards, the new diaspora comprises the new immigrants who came in response to the government's talent recruitment policies. The new diaspora are skilled personnel who work in Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Education, Business and Finance, etc. This group increases the percentage of professional jobs among Indian Singaporeans/ PRs. Currently professionals, technicians and managers account for more than 57% of total Indian Singaporeans and PRs working adults (Singapore Cencus, 2010).

The second difference lies in the household income level, which is mainly due to the occupation. Before 1990s, Indian Singaporeans average household income was below nation average. When the new professionals

come, their high earnings make the average household income of Indians increase substantially and even surpass the national average (In 2010, Indian average was $7, 664 compared to national average at $7, 214 (Department of Statistics Singapore, 2010)). In addition, they often send back money to India to support their relatives, which is also a different pattern from the old diaspora. The old diaspora do not usually contact to India as almost their entire relatives are in Singapore, so they also do not need to send money abroad.

The third difference is the educational level. A large proportion of the old diaspora community does not obtain high-education degree. The younger generations also did not perform well at school compared to the other ethnic groups in certain subjects. This underperformance led to the establishment of Singapore Indian Development Association (SINDA) in 1991 (SINDA, 2012). The association has conducted a wide range of measure and does improve the results of Indian students. In contrast, most of the new professional immigrants are tertiary degree holders and above. Additional differences between the two diasporas include language (the old group are mainly Tamil-speakers while the majority of the new group are not), settlement (the old group consider Singapore as their homeland; the new group plan to return to India after retirement) and other patterns.

It is clear that those differences create the boundary between the old and the new

diaspora. Due to government's favourable treatment for foreign talents, the new professional immigrants generally live in better conditions compared to

the old-diaspora local Indian Singaporeans. This makes the old diaspora thinks that the new immigrants reduces their opportunities to develop (Temasek Review, 2010). They also claim that the new diaspora people are arrogant, greedy and not loyal to Singapore. On the other hand, the new diaspora thinks that the old group is jealous with their success and unfriendly (Rai, 2006). Thus, there have been limited connections between the two groups in the past and also up to now. Nevertheless, we believe that the gulf of the two diasporas might be resolved by initiatives from both groups. For instance, by working together and inviting other for dinners, the two groups will understand each other better, resulting in a decrease gulf.

Despite their recent immigration, the new diaspora does contribute to the Indian community in Singapore as a whole and as a result, the old diaspora also enjoys the benefits. In term of education, with the prevailing of non-Tamil professional immigrants, more non-Tamil languages such as Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali, Urdu and Gujarati have been added to the curriculum as secondary languages for students. This will also cater to the needs of the non-Tamil members of the old diaspora (Rai, 2006). In term of awareness and knowledge, the new diaspora people are the founders of India Se, a magazine for highly educated reader, which discusses global Indian business, education, and culture (India Se eMagazine From Singapore , 2012). The magazine creates a common Indian space and perhaps helps connect the old diaspora high-caste group with the new professional Indians. Finally, in term of entertainment, the new diaspora also brings the Bollywood radio station to the MediaCorp, one of the two main entertainment channels of Singapore (Anjum, 2009). This radio station caters not only to the fast-

growing Hindi expatriate community in Singapore but also to other

Bollywood fans, which include certain groups of the old diaspora community.

In summary, the two Indian diasporas are quite economically different: The

new diaspora are having a better life than the old diaspora in general. In

fact, this has been the main source of conflicts between the two groups since

the immigration of the new diaspora in 1990s. Nevertheless, the new

diaspora contributes substantially to the Indian community in Singapore and

more importantly, helps improve the perception of other ethnicities about

Indian Singaporeans as a whole. It is necessary to reduce the conflicts

between the two groups so that this multiracial country becomes more

integrated and harmonized.

Evolution of the Standard of Living and Economic Status enjoyed by the North and South Indians

Yeo Xin Yi

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Situated within the South Asian continent is one of the world's economic

powerhouse – India (Rautava, 2005). Housing a majority within the continent,

India has been able to tap on its consumer demands to drive the growth of

the economy (Iyengar, 1960). In addition, with the review of its economic

policies, India is opening up its economy to welcome investments which

supports and strengthens the growth of its economy (Basu, 2007). However,

if we look specifically at the Northern states of India, the benefits of a

growing economy have not benefited their local economy fully compared to

the South (FP Economy, 2012). Due to the under-development of infrastructure and situated within an unfavorable geographic location, the Northern States are not able to fully utilise technology and alternative economic routes to strengthen the growth of their economy (Limao, 2001). These factors have resulted in a lower economic achievement and standard of living experienced among the North compared to the South Indians in India (FE Economy, 2012), and is easily employed as the general perception of Indians by the global community.

As we bring our attention back to the Indians, in contemporary Singapore, it is not hard to see that the gulf in the standard of living and economic status between the North and South Indians does not exist, at least on the surface. Comparatively, the actual division between the North and South Indians here has been diluted as it evolved along with state policies and local culture, which were also responsible for shaping the Indian experience in Singapore.

During the colonial times, the colonial powers have turned to the Indians to satisfy their great demand for laborers in private and colonial projects (Rai, 2006), due to a lack of trust they have for the Chinese community (Turnbull, 1958). This has resulted in a massive influx of Indian laborers, mediated by the indenture and Kangany system (Rai, 2006), which is in turn promoted by the colonial powers. Even though it is currently recognized that these systems are highly oppressive and manipulative of the rights of the laborers (Satyanarayana, 2001), it is undeniably the major source of human labor, from the late 1890s up till the 1940s (Rai, 2006). Thus, the Indian policies, along with the Singapore context have effectively created a pool of poor

South Indian, which make up the majority of colonial Indian labor population (Periasamy, 2007).

The lack in heterogeneity of the Indian population in Singapore can be explained by the legislation, which restricts hiring of laborers from the Madras states (Arasaratnam, 1979), passed by the Indian government. At the same time, it is prominent that the South Indians have suffered, as much as the North Indians would have in their native land, given the harsh conditions they were forced to face under the " slavery" system. As they constitute a significant portion of the colonial Indian population (Rai, 2006), they have portrayed an opposite case of the original gulf that we see in India, refuting the perceptions the global population have about the Indian community.

As we move forward in time, to the era of Japanese occupation (1942-1945), suffering, oppression and the lack of job opportunities are the general experiences of Singaporeans. Even though there are numerous arguments that the Indians have remained relatively unaffected throughout this period of time, this is true only to a small extent and especially so during the formation of the second INA. The rich were greatly affected by this arrangement, as many of them are forced to surrender their fortunes (Rai, 2012), while the poor, being economically disadvantage to begin with, are not as affected compared to the rich. In addition, the Indian individuals who have refused to join the INA, are faced with a constant threat of their safety from the colonial powers (Rai, 2012). Thus, this period can be considered a turning point in the economic status of the Indians and the other communities alike, as they are forced to rebuild the economic status they have before the war. Furthermore, there is no difference in the standard of

living enjoyed by anyone under the rule of the Japanese. The Japanese have essentially created a group of homogenous (economic) individuals before any further stratification can evolve to divide the Indian community, completely.

Towards the immediate post-independence period, government policies have played a major role in creating equal opportunities for the various ethnic groups to rise up the economic ranks. This is carried out by improving education standards, introducing meritocracy, and strengthening the economic infrastructure within the nation (Lim, 1983). Gradually, these changes have brought about the rise in the educational status of the general population, which have in turn lead to a rise in competitiveness of Singaporeans compared to people in the other countries (Chian, 2004). Moreover, the presence of world class economic infrastructure attracted investments of potential business partners from all over the world (Yeung, 2010), increasing job opportunities available to Singaporeans. These changes are especially important in resolving the class stratification between the high and low income group, into a large middle income group, as poverty and a low standard of living can now be resolved through hard work and determination to succeed. Poverty and low standard of living are no longer factors that will accompany one throughout his life. In the end, we see a similar standard of living enjoyed by the Indians (and Singaporeans) created by a high quality of education, along with the rise of income among the lower income groups and increase in job opportunities, within a mere 50 years.

Going into the contemporary times, it is undeniable that the standard of living among the general population has increased greatly. However, the

difference in emphasis, have resulted in the disparity in growth, of the various different economic sectors (MTI, 2012). The result is the return of economic stratification within the Indian community, who are now widely employed in the various economic sectors and are directly affected by the fluctuations of the various sectors they are residing in. As a response, the government has created the Singapore Indian Development Association (SINDA) to address the socio-economic issues the Indian community faced (SINDA, 2012). Throughout the years, SINDA is relatively successful in raising the income and standard of living within the Indian community (OECD, 2010). Disparity among the standard of living and economic status of the Indian community have returned in today's society, but is capped and suppressed through the government's effort in resolving the rising binary within the community.

While the Indian population struggles to catch up with the development of the economy, there is a rise in income among the Indian population, along with the influx of the new professional migrants, as depicted by the census. It can be argued, however that the growth is only reflective of the recent professional migrants while the general income of the old population has remained relatively the same (or worse).

In conclusion, the binary in economic terms have evolved along with the Singapore landscape. Even though the binary have been diluted and is close to resolution throughout the years, it has currently returned in a form that involves the old and new migrants, which is brought about by the competition in economic opportunities within Singapore. As far as we are concern, it is apparent that the new economic binary has been built onto the

dilemma of the need of having enough professionals to support the economy, as Singapore finds itself embedded within an aging population with a decreasing birth rate. This is vaguely similar to the situation faced by the British during the colonial era. Nonetheless, the final outcome is debatable. Is Singapore going to evolve into a second India, divided among ourselves based on economic grounds, even as the binary in India is gradually resolved.

Language : Tamil versus minority languages
Wu Si Hui Fiona

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India has many different communities, with many distinct languages. Indo-Aryan groups consist of the most languages and accounts for around 74% of the population, followed by the Dravidian group, accounting for 24% of India's population. In North India, along the Uttar Pradesh belt, the Indo-Aryan languages are the most frequently used languages, while in the South, along Tamil Nadu region, Dravidian languages are often used (Das Gupta, 1970). These two linguistic groups are dissimilar, resulting in difficulties for them to comprehend the other language. In addition, language loyalty can also lead to discrimination and conflicts especially when politics are involved. The majority of the Indian population speaks Hindi, an Indo-Aryan language and is the official languages of government. (Otterheimer, 2008)

In Singapore, despite a smaller community, there are still six recognised Indian languages here (Lewis, 2009). While with so many distinct languages

in India, the South and North Indians were known to be divided over linguistic conflict. We have to explore if that is truly the case in Singapore. We will be looking into two groups, the Southern Tamil speaking community and Northern non-Tamil speaking community. This section will discuss several possible issues which could be the cause or exacerbate the formation of divisions amongst South Asian groups since the colonial period to present day. We will touch on if the aforementioned binaries are true or perceived in the Singapore context during contemporize period.

During colonial period, Tamil labourers made up a majority of Indian migrants who came to Singapore as a result of British colonial expansion. The administrative language is the colonial language, English. However, Malay is used to communicate between different South Asian groups and other races while their individual mother tongues were only used within their own community (Kuo, 1980). Schools offered education in various medium, where younger generation learn in their own mother tongue. Though there exists a common language of different origins and a certain level of bilingualism existed in the society then, South Asian communities are largely divided according to their language groups. Individuals at that time still regarded India as their homeland and would have remained close to those who speak the same language as they do or their kinsmen, forming binaries within the ' Indian' communities.

During the 1950s, the Dravidian Movement in India spread to Singapore through the Tamil school masters, pushing for a Tamil-speaking population. The Movement was successful in Singapore due to popularity in the

politically-dominant Tamil population. It led to the decision of using Tamil instead of Hindi as official language (Rai, 2004).

After independence, the Singapore government's management policy of " disciplining differences" (PuruShotam, 2000) resulted in four race categories, namely Chinese, Malay, Indian and Eurasians. This categorisation was criticised for sweepingly classifying the heterogeneous mix of different people from various background into one of the ' races'. Anyone who came from a South Asian background became part of the ' Indian race'. Tamil was adopted as one of the official languages, representing the Indian race, despite its minority status back in India. It was supposed to serve as common and unifying language amongst the ' Indians' in Singapore, but disregarded the fact there were also non-Tamil Indians in the population.

After such decision was made, the 4 official languages were widely used in all media. Tamil was heavily emphasised and acknowledged to be the official language of Indian race in Singapore while little attention is given to the other south Asian languages. They are thus regarded as less important and little socio-economic value by the younger generation who are not interested to learn their ' mother tongue'. Furthermore, maintenance and learning of these languages depended heavily on individual community efforts (Rai, 2004). Though the intention of a common language was to united the local ' Indian' community, official use of Tamil instead divided the community into Tamil-speaking and non-Tamil speaking, especially for the monolinguals.

Bilingual education policy of Singapore government requires all students in local schools to learn English as first language and a second language which

is socially identified with a particular ' racial group' (PuruShotam, 2000). Thus, children from non-Tamil speaking families of Indian ' race' had to learn either Tamil or Malay as second language. This policy gives an unfair disadvantage for them as they have to learn two foreign languages (Rai, 2004). These students usually did worse than their peers from Tamil-speaking families. The Singapore Action Committee on Indian Education (1991) concluded from their investigations that non-Tamil students are especially weak in their second language, negatively impacting their overall results.

This starting disadvantage costed non-Tamils in education and causing binary due to language amongst South Asian students.

Also, since some third generation ' Indians' would rather take Malay, due to its perceived economic benefits, it could even cause division within own families. For example, in an Indian family, the parents and child could have different second languages (The Straits Times, 1997). They usually turn to English for communication, rather their original mother tongue (Rai, 2004). This further weaken their link to their community. The points above will result in " language death" (Atchison, 1981) of the other minority South Asian languages in Singapore.

Education policies towards number of offered second language became more opened. By 1994, five non-Tamil languages are recognised at PSLE to ' AO' levels. The changes were made in order to ensure that non-Tamil students will not continue to suffer from disadvantage in education due to limitations

in policies. Additionally, this helped in the revival of minority South Asian languages and preserving differences.

In the 1980s, when the government was considering the addition of several North Indian languages into curriculum, there were oppositions from the Tamil-speaking community, who have concerns that status of Tamil language as an official language might diminish. The recognition of five other Indian languages in education has contributed to the revival of minority languages in Singapore. However, we can also interpret it as a sign of further division amongst South Asian groups as each group will be more culturally distinct with their own language. Binary in Indian community might deepen as the people became more aware of the differences present between different groups when they use different languages.

As the number of South Asian languages offered is limited, some students will take up other languages as their second language. For example, especially before 1989, many students from non-Tamil took up Malay as second language instead of Tamil. In 1990s, when the five non-Tamil Indian languages were offered, some took up Hindi despite it not being their actual mother tongue. This could be a cause of division within their own community, as they might be unable to communicate well with the monolingual elder generation.

From 1980 onwards, migration policies were relaxed, attracting many migrants from India. This new group of migrants are termed " diaspora of late capitalism" by Vijay Mishra (2001). They are of more diverse background, different from the older diaspora, who were mainly Tamil

labourers; they are educated techno-professionals and have less attachment to Singapore. These new diaspora will prefer their children to learn either English or Hindi, which are much more useful if they are going back to India or other countries (Rai, 2004). This point gives us another example of binary due to language difference.

While the idea of binary in South Asian groups are not perceived based on the above points, I believe the extent of division in Singapore due to languages is minimal. According to Singapore Census 2010, 94. 7% of literate Indian population in Singapore speaks English. In our current society, language barriers are rapidly eroded through the use of a common language English. Moreover, ' Singlish' can be an alternative common identity amongst communities. The binary caused by one's mother tongue has a limited impact in the South Asian community.

In conclusion, while within a community, common mother tongue can be a unifying identity, making one feel close to home, it can also cause divisions in society when various distinct linguistic groups are present. The management policies need to change over the course of time to accommodate changes in the various groups. In addition, rather than forcefully homogenising a community, I feel that the idea of ' Unity in Diversity" will be more effective in creating a harmonious society. Thus, certain level of binaries in South Asian groups should be encouraged to preserved ethnic and cultural diversity.

Religion : Hinduism & Islam in the Indian Community

See Xiaowei

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Overview

In Singapore, there exists a variety of religions practised by the Indians. Since religion is a significant aspect of their lives, it is unsurprising that this has contributed to the construction of the North-South divide. This could be in an obvious way, when a certain religion is exclusive to either North or South Indians. An example of this would be Sikhism, which is mainly practised by Punjabis (North Indians) (Dusenbery, 1996). Nevertheless, Sikhism is a minority religion and the majority religions are usually practised by both North and South Indians. Despite them practising the same religion, rifts can still be formed between the North and South Indians; in this section, we will be examining the two religions most commonly practised by Indians in Singapore – Hinduism and Islam.

Hinduism

There exists a strict distinction between the North and South Indians in the ways they practise Hinduism (Babb, 1976).

First and foremost, their religious institutions, the Hindu temples, are segregated along regional lines, such that they are labelled as North or South Indian. The temple architecture of a North or South Indian temple is very distinctive from each other and this can clearly be seen from the pictures below:

Figure 1: Shree Lakshminarayan Temple (North Indian temple on the left) and Sri Mariamman Temple (South Indian temple on the right)

Due to the regional character of each temple, the North Indian temples will usually be visited exclusively by the North I