

## Identity formation of ‘1.5 generation’ Indians in Japan

The case of children living in Nishikasai and Funabori areas, Tokyo

Tokyo University of Foreign Studies Tomohiro Kurita

This presentation looks into how Indian children who came to Japan after reaching school age have been constructing and transforming their ethnic identities, based on the example of the children attending Indian schools in Nishikasai and Funabori, Tokyo. Although there are a few studies focusing on the formation of networks and identities among Indian newcomers living in Tokyo (Zhou and Fujita 2007; Sawa 2011), how children form their identities has not been discussed much. Many of these children belong to the so-called ‘1.5 generation’ who were born chiefly in India, and there is a possibility of them leaving Japan in the future due to their parents’ jobs. Regarding the term ‘1.5 generation’ (Rumbaut 1991), although some researchers have questioned the validity of its grouping (Myers et al. 2009: 224), considering the fact that the growing number of foreign-born Indian children in Tokyo is a recent phenomenon it can be said that ‘1.5 generation’ is still an effective concept to examine the differences from the second generation who were born and raised in host countries.

Nishikasai and Funabori areas in Tokyo are famous as Indian residential areas, especially for IT engineers. Many of them work in Japan on project-based employment contracts, and when the contract finishes they return to India or re-migrate to other countries. Due to the duration of their visa, it is said that their average period of residence in Japan is three years. As a consequence, although Nishikasai and Funabori have high concentrations of Indian households, it is noted that online communication (mailing lists, Facebook groups, etc.) is developing owing to the fact that there is great mobility of people, and as such a visualized ‘India Town’ has not been formed so far.

On the other hand, as the Indian population grows children’s education has become an issue, and consequently two Indian schools opened in this area in 2004 and 2005. As many children tend to leave Japan after several years due to their parents’ jobs, English education in international schools is preferred over Japanese education in public schools. Because of this, there are some children whose Japanese proficiency is not very high, and it is speculated that interaction with local Japanese society is not easy in such a living environment. Then, how are such situations perceived by those Indian children, and how do they affect the construction of their ethnic identities as they grow? To investigate this question, I examine the result of interviews mainly with the Indian children attending these Indian schools and their teachers.

From this field research, it is indicated that the children actively give meanings to the current situations they are in and acquire global awareness in the process of studying with Japanese and other foreign children whilst developing identities as ‘Indians’. In the presentation I would like to give a more detailed analysis on how they acquire adaptive strategies to flexibly deal with their experiences of international migration.