

Title—Global South Asians: Introducing the Modern Diaspora

Author—Judith Brown

Year—2006

Categories: Migration, Diaspora, Ethnography, Politics, Culture

Place: The World (esp UK)

Time: 1800-Present

Argument Synopsis:

Brown seeks to introduce the history and experience of one of the largest movements of people in the modern world: South Asians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Her book is a general survey of South Asian migration, with a focus on the experience of migrants in the United Kingdom. There is no discussion of the precolonial migration of South Asians. Brown's book is divided into five chapters. The first chapter starts with the device academic descriptions of the image of a rural stable subcontinent that was slowly incorporated into a larger British imperial system. The second chapter covers the origins of migration from the subcontinent. The third chapter focused on the creation of new homes and communities abroad and describes how migrants recreate South Asian culture abroad. The fourth chapter highlights how these communities relate to their new states and societies. The final chapter questions the often-ambivalent relations with the homeland, India or Pakistan. The bulk of the book is focused on the post-1945 period of South Asian migration. Brown argues that the volume of out-migration in South Asia increased considerably after the Second World War and the United Kingdom was the main recipient. Brown suggests that the total number of South Asian migrants worldwide might be around nine million.

Brown relies on evidence from the South Asian experience in the United Kingdom to assess the state of the modern South Asian diaspora. She underscores how many South Asians suffer from ethnic discrimination, institutionalized racism, and harassment in Britain as they are perceived as a threat to British national identity. In terms of integration, Brown posits that there are no indications that religious differences cause any hurdles to integration. To put another way, it remains unclear whether Muslim faith makes a difference, as there is no evidence that Muslims from India do any less well than their fellow migrants from the same country. Within the diasporic community itself, she finds that religious networks can be a source of both linkage and division. Brown finds that many Indians are "good" immigrants in the sense that they earn more, create more jobs, and are less dependent on social welfare than the average immigrant. However, Brown notes that integration remains a difficulty in large part because of the tendency among South Asian migrants not to mix marriages—this isolates South Asian immigrants from the rest of their host societies. There is a tendency amongst South Asian immigrants to construct diasporic networks and communities which often lead to the establishment of ethnic enclaves. Brown reveals that the problematic relationship between ethnicity and national identity among South Asians can be traced back to the British colonial era.

Key Themes and Concepts:

- Three tasks to form a lasting diasporic community: establish new homes, social networks, and communities within the host country; relate to the public space and life of the new homeland; and define and reestablish connections with old homeland
- Total number of South Asian migrants globally may be around 9 million
- Three variables that help determine potential economic success of diasporic migration: the nature of the host economy (agricultural, industrial, post-industrial); the education and skills of the migrants; their initial socio-economic status