

Chapter 10

Transferring Skills upon Return: Matching Aspirations in the Host Countries with the Reality Back in India

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Abstract¹

This chapter discusses the factors that influence the development aspirations of skilled Indians living in Europe and of those who have returned to India. While India is seen as a country that benefits from the positive effects of skilled migration, we have yet to develop a comprehensive understanding of the individual motivations that cause skilled Indians to apply their foreign-earned knowledge and skills to the development of the home country. There is also a shortage of evidence about whether these motivations actually materialise after return. Our analysis is an effort to uncover the factors that encourage motivated skilled returnees and diaspora members to effectively share their experience and knowledge for the broad-based development of India. Using a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the perceptions and expectations of skilled Indians, we identify the individual and home-country factors that influence both their development aspirations and the changes to their social position after they return to India. While skilled Indians in Europe link their development aspirations to their return plans and believe that Indian society can benefit from their accrued expertise, they face several obstacles during the process of transferring knowledge to the local context. We observe that the desire to contribute to development is associated with disadvantageous identities and that socially underprivileged people register the greatest positive effects in terms of social position and influential role in society as a result of their foreign exposure. The findings point to important policy implications at an organisational and a country level i.e. for India and the European countries. At an organisational level we suggest changes to the local work culture and structures to allow the skills and experience of the returnees to be recognised and harnessed effectively. At a country level, our analysis shows the need of policies and environments that facilitate the transfer of knowledge by returnees so that it can be used to promote balanced development in India.

1. Introduction

The link between migration and development has emerged as an important focus of scholarship in recent years, with studies showing that skilled migrants can assume an agency role, act as important bridges and help to promote the transfer of knowledge and skills between countries. In specific terms, skilled migrants in destination countries often undertake activities through scientific and academic collaboration as well as

¹ The authors are grateful to Professor Uttam Bhattacharya for his valuable comments to this chapter. Any shortcomings remain the responsibility of the authors alone.

through entrepreneurial and investment projects that benefit their home country from a distance. If they decide to return to their home country, their foreign exposure may bring improved levels of knowledge, technical skills and further accumulation of human capital, thereby providing them with the potential to assume a leadership role within society and in their place of work. Return migration can also generate employment and raise productivity and might be viewed as a feedback effect of skilled migration.

Return migration operates within a particular context and, consequently, the social and institutional factors in the home country have a crucial role to play in enabling or hindering its positive effects. Evidence has shown that various determinants at a personal level, such as the nature of the skills flowing in and the length of the stay abroad (Cerase 1974) (Gmelch 1980) (King 1986) as well as those at a structural level, such as the type of opportunities available, can influence the potential of migrants to bring about innovation on their return and boost their chances of acting as carriers of social change in the home country (Black et al. 2003) (Saxenian 2006) (Chacko 2007). Studies suggest that thriving returnees successfully combine access to productive employment and an enabling environment, with the resulting possibility of influencing the home country.

This chapter looks at Indian skilled migration from a two-fold perspective: countries of destination and country of origin. It examines two proximate determinants of migrants' behaviour towards the development of their home country; firstly, the aspirations of skilled Indians abroad towards the development of India based on an analysis of their perceptions and expectations with regard to the potential impact of their current activities in destination countries (diaspora); and secondly, the incidence of their international exposure on their professional and social position after their return to India, and the difficulties they face in the dynamics of transferring the skills they have gained abroad (returnees). Evidence from past research into skilled Indians points to the contributions they make at an individual or community level by transferring their knowledge, skills and ideas either from abroad or upon their return. However, there is a lack of comprehensive understanding of both the development aspirations of skilled Indians abroad and whether these materialise after they return, and of the significance of different determinants, including the perception of opportunities that influence both their aims and their potential contributions. This chapter attempts to fill these gaps by offering new empirical evidence.

2. Conceptual discussions on return migration

Recent developments in conceptual discussions calling for new approaches to international migration have been mainly based on two points. The first of these is the growing acknowledgment of current migration dynamics and patterns as being very diverse, complex and context specific (Özden et al. 2011) (Collinson 2009) (Wickramasekara 2002), while the second is the growing interest in the migration and development nexus. There is an increasingly common understanding that the extent to which migrants can positively impact their home country hinges on broad structural conditions, and this has swayed the change in key theoretical trends from a rather micro-level approach of individual behaviours to an understanding of migrants' decisions, strategies and consequences as influenced by broader transformation and development processes (de Haas 2008) (de Haas 2012). Consequently, different approaches emphasise both the agency role of individuals, validating the spill-over effects of emigration benefits at the micro level (Taylor 1999), and the structures that influence the actions of migrants and migration patterns in the broader sense (Cassarino 2004).

The study of return migration, which has gained prominence in both scholarly research and policy discussions as a consequence of the growing number of migrants who have returned to their home countries in recent years, also follows this conceptual trend. An attempt has been made to find the right balance

between the agency role of migrants and the structural context that influences mobility decisions. The structural approach to return migration sees return as something influenced by the context, and it proposes moving the analysis beyond the experiences of individual migrants in order to take the socioeconomic conditions and policies of both the host and the home countries into consideration (Cassarino 2004) (de Haas 2008). Adopting this perspective, recent studies have also examined the influence of particular situational and structural factors on migrants' strategies for transferring their skills and resources upon return, as well as on how these are used in the home countries, showing a combination of both migrant profiles and migration patterns on the one hand, and the socioeconomic conditions and policies in the home country on the other (Iredale et al. 2003).

Evidence shows that the main impact of return is at the micro (personal and household) and meso (community) levels, with a lesser impact at a macro (country) level. At a personal level, the international exposure of migrants is associated with self-improvement relative to their circumstances prior to emigrating. This may be reflected in higher living standards as well as educational and professional benefits, which can be expected to influence their position in society and within their family and community upon their return. The leadership role that return migrants often play in their community, which involves behaviour and attitudes in the work place and during social interaction and which is acquired by the migrants while abroad, is seen as a significant socio-cultural impact of return migrants (Cerese 1974) (Black et al. 2003) (Black & King 2004). The motives or intentions, the age and career stage at the time of return, the length of the stay abroad as well as the specific host countries where the migrants lived all influence the level and forms in which migrants can impact their household or community. The length of stay abroad is important because people who have spent a reasonable period of time in a foreign country may have accumulated more work experience, skills and social capital in the form of networks, contacts and linkages (Bourdieu 1986) than those with shorter stays. As King (1986) has stressed, a sufficient, not too short stay abroad is necessary if migrants are to be of any use in terms of fostering modernization in the homeland.

The magnitude of the contributions is also mentioned when the development impact is being assessed. For example, Wiesbrock (2008) shows that investments made by Indian and Chinese returnees, and the transfer of the expertise and specialised knowledge that they have accumulated abroad upon their return, do not occur on a massive scale and, therefore, she concludes that the impact on economic development for their countries is not all that substantial.

A question that has often been raised in recent research on return migration is whether returnees impact the home country by introducing new technical skills, knowledge, ideas, attitudes and working experience that are necessary for its socioeconomic development. Gmelch (1980) says that it is conceivable that in a society in which people are receptive to new ideas, returnees might play a significant role in bringing about change. However, various empirical studies highlight the difficulties that arise within the process of transferring knowledge and expertise acquired abroad after return to the home countries (Cerese 1974) (King 1986) (Ghosh 2000) (Ammassari 2003) (Black et al. 2003) (Müller 2005) (Wiesbrock 2008). One of the main observations of such studies underlines the significance of structural issues in the home country for enabling or hindering the transfer of skills and knowledge.

The contributions of return migrants are varied and depend on the nature of the environments to which migrants have returned. Going beyond the profiles and skills of the returnees, the impact of return migration is shown to be context specific. Iredale et al. (2003) show that the economic, social and political environment of the receiving home countries determines the potential contributions. The lack of an enabling institutional framework, which prevents return migrants from using the accumulated resources and skills gained abroad to their full potential, is also studied in the literature (King 1986). Diverse examples have shown that benefitting from the return of skilled migrants is only possible when the home countries offer both an

adequate infrastructure and suitable socioeconomic and political conditions (Gow & Iredale 2003) (Saxenian 2006; 2011). In her studies on India and China, Saxenian (2011) argues that doing business upon return in large enough numbers is necessary to develop cross-regional networks in the home country and this requires political stability, economic openness and a certain level of economic development. There is a need to develop a local skills base and an entrepreneurship-supported infrastructure without any institutional obstacles to entrepreneurship-led growth. In other words, the way returnees act and how they see success are influenced by the constraints and enablers of the situation they have come back to.

Diverse empirical studies have offered evidence of specific obstacles. For example, in his study on Italian returnees from the USA, Cerase (1974) showed that local power structures together with scarce and limited material resources in the context of the home country significantly hinder the returnees' actions. He sees return as something innovative and influential only if the returnee's actions affect the economic structure and power relations of the community. Restrictive policies might also represent an obstacle to change; for example, studies of Chinese returnees have shown the need for institutional change and policies to enable entrepreneurial activities upon return (Müller 2005). In a similar vein, Khadria (2004) highlights the value of the knowledge, experiences and contact networks of skilled Indian returnees and laments the insufficiency of official efforts to tap into these resources.

The literature cites four main issues as influencing the possibility of applying specialised knowledge that has been acquired abroad: the sector of activity; the type of professional engagement (whether returnees go into paid employment or start their own business); the match between qualifications and labour market requirements; and the specific location that migrants return to. A recent empirical study on Indian returnee entrepreneurs concludes that while they are able to transfer the technical and specialised expertise acquired abroad to establish their businesses, they find it difficult to transfer the soft skills they have accumulated abroad, such as managerial expertise and professional culture (Biswas Chapter 12 in this volume). An open mind to change among work colleagues, an adequate infrastructure and a good business and entrepreneurial climate are important enablers of the capacity of migrants to apply the skills and resources gained overseas (Black et al. 2003) (Ammassari 2003). Wiesbrock (2008) examines Indian returnees' experiences and shows that they are unable to apply their expertise in a satisfactory manner after their return because the home country lacks the capacity to process and take advantage of the technologies and specialised knowledge that they have acquired overseas.

A major concern when examining the transfer of skills upon return is the mismatch between the returnees' qualifications and the labour force requirements of the home country. Various studies show that some of the skills acquired abroad do not represent a higher productive capacity in the home country and therefore they are less useful within the local labour dynamic (Cobo 2008). Thomas-Hope's study (1999) on return migration to Jamaica in the late 1990s shows how that country's need for engineers and skilled professionals went unfilled by returnees, who were mostly engaged in service sector activities, small farming or other areas that were not of primary importance for development. The location that migrants return to is also important. Gmelch (1980) states that the technical or industrial skills acquired by migrants are often not applied upon return, especially in rural areas which lack the necessary infrastructure. Recent research (CODEV-EPFL et al. 2013) shows that while the available infrastructure and employment prospects of the urban context are important pull factors that influence the location preferences of returnees, the people who return might be able to exercise a greater influence on the local community in rural areas where these facilities are lacking.

Further studies shed light on the influence that migrants' perceptions of the comparative aspects of socioeconomic environments regarding job and career opportunities, wage competitiveness, working atmosphere, lifestyle and living environment, etc. in home and host countries have on their migration

projects in general, and on their return intentions to their home country in particular (Waldorf 1995) (De Jong 2000) (Iredale et al. 2003) (Güngör & Tansel 2006) (Soon 2008) (Hercog & Siddiqui Chapter 9 in this volume). Van Dalen & Henkens (2008) found that dissatisfaction with the public domain in the home country influences both emigration intentions and actual emigration itself. Other studies show that the behaviour of migrants in the host society and their professional advancement and accumulated knowledge and skills are intertwined with the planning of their migration project. A recent study on African immigrant groups in Spain and Italy along these lines undertaken by de Haas and Fokkema (2011) illustrates the positive effect of education on return migration intentions and shows how the propensity of migrants to accumulate valuable work experience and skills while abroad might be seen as a response to their interest to increase their human capital, and consequently their productivity, when they return to their home country.

3. Analytical strategy based on migrants' perceptions and expectations

This study offers a twofold analysis of both the Indian diaspora and returnees. Firstly, we explore the aspirations of skilled Indians abroad towards the development of their home country. Secondly, we examine the effect of the international exposure of skilled Indians on their professional and social position upon their return to India and the difficulties they face in the dynamics of transferring the accumulated skills they have gained abroad. We base our analysis on skilled Indians' perceptions and expectations, which are decisive factors in their behaviour. Migrants' expectations are a sum of both personal motivations and their subjective evaluation of the likelihood of achieving specific aims. Individuals' expectations regarding their goals determine their perceptions of the environment and their experiences. De Jong (2000) describes expectations as 'the act of looking forward in anticipation of the future' (p. 307) and sees expectations as a dynamic concept in migration decision-making in the sense that they capture the process of assessing the future outcomes of alternative choices. If expectations are fulfilled, migrants will feel satisfied. On the contrary they will feel disappointed if these expectations are not satisfied. Expectations could be influenced by the activity profile of migrants, their own professional and academic skills and their insights into available opportunities.

Some studies analyse the successful or failed experiences of returnees and consider the connection between migrants' expectations and the reality of the home country environment they are exposed to. The expectations 'lens' has been used as an analytical framework in the study of return migration to explain the linkage between migrant's perceptions of the environment and their expectations in terms of accomplishing their migration projects in such settings. The literature offers studies of migrants' expectations with regard to both the host countries - as part of their emigration plans - and the home countries - as part of their return plans. For example, an expectations-based approach was used some time back by Cerase (1974) to study the divergence between Italians immigrants' expectations and their actual life in the USA.

Similarly, Gmelch (1980) addresses the problem of transferring skills and resources gained abroad upon return from the perspective of the migrants' difficulties to readjust to the home country society because of the unrealistic expectations they often have of what the country will offer them. He argues that the process of readjustment upon return depends not only on the actual conditions and opportunities of the home country environment but also on the expectations of the migrants. Accordingly, he suggests addressing the issue of skills transfer upon return from two standpoints. Firstly, the socioeconomic conditions of returnees: whether they find a job that corresponds to their capacities, skills and expectations, which offers them the possibility of developing personal relationships and career prospects. From this viewpoint, re-adaptation is analysed and evaluated in terms of the satisfaction or dissatisfaction that the migrants express with regard to the previously mentioned objective criteria. Secondly, consideration is given to the migrant's own subjective perceptions of

their readjustment process and the extent to which the home country has fulfilled, or not, their expected self-defined needs and imagined prospects, providing a sense of satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

How migrants prepare themselves for their move is important. Cassarino (2004) argues that migrants' preparation for their return to their home country determines their tendency to influence social change there. He stresses that the migrants' higher level of preparedness – willingness and readiness- to return enables a greater ability to mobilise resources on their own and influences greater possibilities for a successful return and a propensity to make a stronger contribution to development. In a similar way, a study on return migration to Ghana highlights the influence that information can have on a migrant's expectations. Beyond the significance of the propensity of returnees to adapt and a concrete enabling setting, the migrant's access to information regulates the pace of such an adaptation (Sabates-Wheeler et al. 2009); keeping abreast of the situation and opportunities in the home country is necessary if false expectations are to be avoided. Portes (2001) points out that transnationalism and transnational linkages, such as the exchange of knowledge and ideas, regular visits and sending financial and social remittances, enable and facilitate migrants' reintegration in the local society upon their return.

4. Research methods and scope

This study draws on data collected simultaneously in the host and home countries between 2011 and 2012. On the one hand, we examined Indian scientists, students and skilled professionals residing in four European destination countries (France, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland). On the other hand, we studied Indian skilled returnees in the home country (India)². The operational definition of 'skilled Indian migrant' used for this study refers to Indian professionals or students residing in one of the four selected countries and who are specialised in ICT, finance and management, the biotechnology and pharmaceutical industry, academia and research, which were the four sectors chosen as a means of improving the representativeness of the sample. Respondents had to be first-generation migrants. The operational definition of 'Indian return migrant' used is a past or present Non-resident Indian (NRI) or Person of Indian Origin (PIO - either the migrant or his/her parents should have been born in India), who had stayed abroad for at least a total of 6 months before returning to India (the total duration may include multiple stays abroad), who holds present employment status in India and has at least a Bachelor's Degree.

The primary information was gathered in two complementary surveys. In the first survey, which was applied on-line, skilled Indians in the selected European destination countries were asked about their motivations for emigrating, their experiences in the host countries, their links with their home country, their future plans and their perceptions of their potential to contribute to the development of India. In the second survey, skilled Indian returnees were asked about their experience abroad, their motivations to return, their experiences upon return, the difficulties experienced when transferring the skills gained abroad, and their motivation to participate in the development process of India. This survey was applied face-to-face in six fieldwork locations: Kolkata, the National Capital Region (Delhi, Noida and Gurgaon), Hyderabad, Bangalore, Mumbai and Pune. These data were controlled with a group of skilled Indians without international exposure. The first survey was answered by 878 skilled Indians abroad³, and the second by 673 skilled Indians (527 returnees and 146 non-migrants)⁴.

In addition to the survey questionnaires, 30 in-depth interviews were conducted with professionals and post-graduate students of Indian origin residing in Europe; beneficiaries of scientific collaboration programmes

² This study is part of the project: "Migration, scientific diasporas and development: Impact of skilled return migration on development in India" on which this volume is based.

³ The total sample we used for the analysis included 835 individuals.

⁴ See chapter 6 of this volume for further details of the sample and methods.

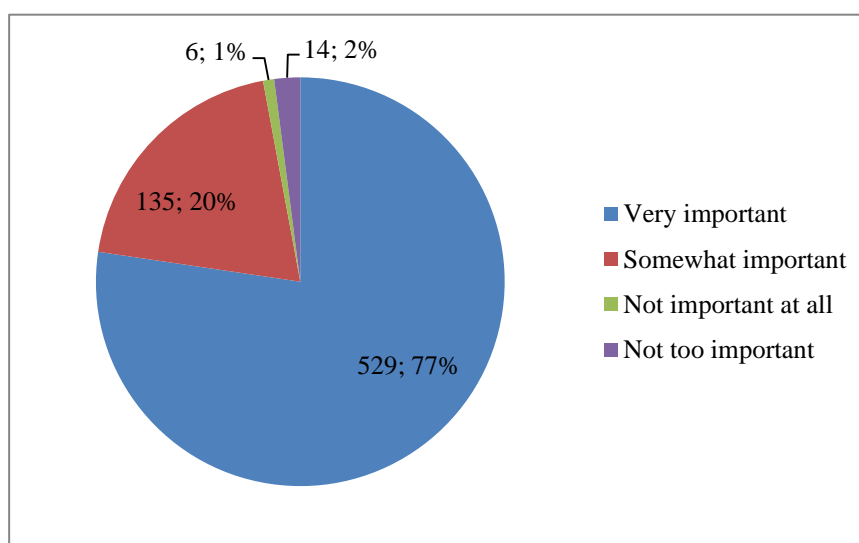
with India; and some representatives of the embassies and consulates in India of France, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

5. Empirical evidence from Europe: Diaspora

5.1 Development aspirations from the host countries

Skilled Indians abroad show a high level of interest in India's regional and national development. Nearly 77 per cent of all respondents (or 529 people) consider it to be very important and 20 per cent (or 135 people) regard it as somewhat important (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Skilled Indians interest in home country development
“How important is the regional and national development of India to you?”



Source: European survey, 2011-12

Considering this high level of interest, we aim to assess the development aspirations of skilled Indians by examining their perceptions as to whether the activity they are carrying out in the host country could influence the socioeconomic development of India. The basic question guiding the analysis is: « *Do you think your present activity could have an impact on the socioeconomic development of India?* ». We can observe that the vast majority of respondents (70.3 per cent) say that their present activity could have an impact on the socioeconomic development of India. In order to understand the aspects that influence their motivations, we analyse three factors: the skilled Indians' length of stay in the host country, their activity profile, and their perceptions of the opportunities offered by India.

We can see that the length of stay and the main activity in the host country are two key determinants that influence skilled Indians' aspirations towards India's development. We see that the great majority of those Indians who had stayed in the destination country for between 1 and 6 years by the time of the survey are more likely to think that the activity they do can positively influence India. This also corresponds to more recent Indian migrants with stays of less than 1 year abroad. However, this all changes when we consider respondents with longer stays (more than 6 years). While the majority of these cohorts still feel that their present activity can have an impact, they do not feel so strongly about the possibility of influencing development in India. This shows that once the period of stay goes beyond 6 years, there is a significant fall in the ratio of people who think strongly that their current activity will benefit their home country (see Table 1).

Table 1: Skilled Indians' interest in home country development by the length of their stay abroad

Length of stay abroad	Not interested (in %)	Interested (in%)	Total (persons in sample)
Arrived in 1990 or earlier	40.91	59.09	22
Between 1991 and 2000	46.67	53.33	15
Between 2001 and 2005	43.75	56.25	48
Between 2006 and 2010	27.35	72.65	446
In 2011 or after	27.19	72.81	114
Total	29.46	70.54	645

Source: European survey, 2011-12

Our results are in line with the outcomes of other research, supporting the idea that living abroad for longer tends to result in migrants integrating better into the local society, thus weakening their ties with the home country. Similarly, those who have been abroad for longer periods may be alienated from their social network in the home country. However, the literature has shown that being able to determine whether migrants' transnationalism and their interest in home country development is concurrent with their integration in the host country (Itzigsohn & Giorguli-Saucedo 2002) or whether it works along a different pathway (Portes et al. 2002) remains an empirical question that is still pending clarification.

The activity profile shows interesting qualitative differences between students and professionals with regard to the influence that the main activity of such skilled Indians in the host country has on their aspirations towards home country development. We can see that skilled Indians in training and education have a higher percentage of positive feelings about the possibility of impacting India's development through their present activity than professionals in paid employment (see Table 2). This may be due to the fact that students believe that the education and skills gained abroad can easily have a direct socioeconomic influence in India because they are still strongly rooted in their home country for social and emotional wellbeing. However, their real contribution might not be so significant because they lack the support of a social and intellectual network and also lack physical capital, while employed people can count on such support. Therefore, even if students are very concerned about India's development, this may not translate into real action, whereas a smaller percentage of concerned employed people can have a greater impact on development since they have the necessary infrastructure and the resources to back their intentions.

Table 2: Distribution of the perceptions of one's current activity having an impact effect on the development of India

Activity	Not interested (in %)	Interested (in %)	Total (persons in sample)
Employed	65.2	34.8	221
In training and education*	75.1	24.9	413
Other**	55.4	44.6	56
Total	70.3	29.7	690

Source: European survey, 2011-12

* *In training and education* includes persons on internships, MBA and PhD students as well as students with jobs. ***Other* includes people involved in housework, self-employed, retired and unemployed people.

If we examine employed Indian skilled professionals only, we can observe that those working in academic and research institutions have more positive feelings about the possibility of impacting India (70.6 per cent) than those employed in the private sector (either in a multinational company not originating from India, a local company or as self-employed), whose feelings are less positive (53.2 per cent). Only Indians working in multinational companies originating from India have more positive feelings (90 per cent) about the possibility of impacting India (see Table 3).

Table 3: Activity profile of skilled Indians employed and aspirations towards home country development

Categories of employment	No answer (in %)	Not interested (in %)	Interested (in%)	Total number of respondents
MNC originating elsewhere	11.9	40.48	47.62	42
MNC originating from NL/CH/FR/DE	6.49	38.96	54.55	77
MNC originating from India	0	10	90	10
Academia and research	4.41	25	70.59	68
Self-employed.	23.81	23.81	52.38	21
Local company / institution	9.68	32.26	58.06	31
Total	21.5	23.32	55.18	249

Source: European survey, 2011-12

An observation of the testimonies of our respondents indicates that skilled Indians who are academic and research professionals believe in the impact of science on society and they feel an attachment to their home country through their scientific activity. Since Indian scientists and researchers believe Indian society can absorb direct benefits from their activities, it is not surprising to see them address issues of significant importance in their research within areas that affect people both socially and economically. This is clear from the statement of one Indian scientist who said:

'I am currently researching renewable energy development in India. All my research in the Netherlands has been focused on development issues in India.'

Neuroscience, health, nutrition, agriculture, biotechnology, energy systems, epidemiology and labour and economics are some of the areas in which skilled Indians promote research collaborations with Indian scientists and encourage technology transfer and knowledge sharing. Furthermore, through their collaborations with India, they expect to potentially help students within their research fields to take advantage of international networks and exposure, especially those talented students who cannot afford to go abroad. They believe that they can contribute to the development of science in India, strengthen educational and research policies and reinforce India's scientific presence in the world. Enhancing economic opportunities was also mentioned as an important objective of Indian students. One said:

'Since I am pursuing my MBA, I can make a difference to the economy of India by creating opportunities, generating employment and business flows, and improving the quality of life of the masses'.

Other Indians believe that being part of a well-educated work force with enhanced skills and world-class managerial training is an asset for the development of the Indian economy; and their knowledge of Western cultures and environments would be useful for Indian companies seeking an ever-increasing share of foreign

markets. Entrepreneurial ventures and business investments leading to employment opportunities is another way in which skilled Indians see themselves contributing, and indeed some of them have concrete plans to start their own businesses once they return. This is important for the home country - assuming these skilled Indians do actually return and have the capacity to establish formal business ventures - as they will create jobs and deliver income to the national authorities in the form of taxes.

We can observe that many Indians based in the European countries of the study imagine the possibility of impacting India through their return to the home country. Their specific return plans to accomplish their migration project back in India arise as a crucial motivation for their positive feelings regarding their potential contribution to development. The idea of giving something back to the motherland through their return is clearly visible in the testimonies of Indians in training and education, who are enthusiastic and feel committed to helping to build capacities and improve both research and education prospects there through the transfer of skills, specialised technical expertise and knowledge gained abroad. One of them said:

'Yes, I would like to contribute to my country by going back and taking up a teaching position at a public institution'.

Another stated:

'I want to go back to India after my Postdoc and play a part in creating a big and productive mathematics research group'.

We can see also how skilled Indians are aware of the importance of preparing themselves for their return. A researcher based in Switzerland referred to this by saying:

'I was getting used to the idea of relocating to Bangalore. I am the type who wants to be professionally active, to be comfortable and to feel to fit in. I surely wanted to work and that's how I kind of plan to start my professional integration and I started to contact institutes and build a little professional network.'

A prepared return increases the migrants' possibility of reintegrating successfully in the local context and raises their propensity to contribute to it (Portes 2001) (Cassarino 2004).

5.2 Perception of opportunities in India

Considering that available opportunities and perceptions of the environment determine migration projects, analysing the perceptions of living conditions in the home country can provide insights into return potential. As other empirical studies have shown, mobility plans are mostly based on a combination of both professional and family factors and our study of skilled Indians in the European countries examined confirms this trend. The return plans of skilled Indians are a reaction to a positive evaluation of the economic and professional prospects that India has to offer and are also a response to family ties. Therefore, we can state that the intentions of skilled Indians to return, and those who actually do return, may increase if they believe their home country can really provide them with an enabling socioeconomic environment setting with specific career and future prospects as well as being socially safe and trustful for living.

Skilled Indians were asked to rank five factors prevailing in India on a five-point Likert scale, indicating the evaluation they ascribe to each of them⁵ (see Table 4). Observing their evaluations for each factor, we can see that the environment for work, education, business and investment opportunities are stronger attractions

⁵ Indian migrants were asked to rank their level of satisfaction with several social, economic and political factors that currently prevail in India. The participants were told to rate the satisfaction they ascribe to each factor using a five-point Likert scale which ranged from 1 (very bad) to 5 (very good).

for skilled Indians than the social security and political situation. This is important insofar as it shows that they perceive the signal from the government that the economic, educational and business environment is improving, notwithstanding the fact that skilled Indians abroad may not be fully aware of specific government incentive programs. This is also supported by India's recent GDP growth rate in the overall context of global economic slowdown. However, this is not the reason for their evaluation of the social security and political situation, which they think is rather bad, and for which they suggest improvements in order to ensure a more secure and less corrupt setting that can properly cover their governance and environment needs. While their expectations in these issues may have increased after experiencing the social security systems and governance of European countries, there is also a general resentment, even within India, of the pervasive corruption and the unbalanced development.

Surprisingly, we found that the opportunities they feel India offers them in terms of jobs, education, business and investments and an adequate social and political environment do not influence their feelings with regard to their possibilities of impacting India's development. Accordingly, the discussion of our observations leads us to the conclusion that skilled Indians' aspirations to contribute to development of India are an emotional notion, based on a feeling of patriotism towards their motherland, and they are not formed on the basis of a factual evaluation of the opportunities that are currently available.

Table 4: Perceptions of skilled Indian migrants about various factors currently prevailing in India

Ranking	Perceptions about various factors prevailing in India (in %)				
	Jobs	Education	Business	Social security	Political situation
Very good	18.44	12.15	19.7	3.11	1.63
Good	42.77	44.89	49.09	15.24	10.07
Neither good nor bad	27.14	30.37	24.24	31.51	29.78
Bad	8.55	8.89	5.15	34.17	31.7
Very bad	3.1	3.7	1.82	15.98	26.81
Total number of respondents	678	675	660	676	675

Source: European survey - 2011-12

The skilled migrants' length of stay abroad, their activity profile and their perception of opportunities are three factors that are associated with the skilled migrants' aspirations towards their home country. An analysis of these determinants provides a picture of the different range of feelings of skilled migrants with regard to their conviction that their current activity in the host country could impact socioeconomic development in India. A larger proportion of skilled migrants with shorter lengths of stay abroad, those in training and education and those active in the research and academic sectors have positive feelings about the possibility of impacting socioeconomic development in India, which seems to make them feel confident of the knowledge and skills sets they possess and are willing to offer. These feelings may be rooted in an emotional well-being they associate with their home country rather than actual tangible actions and the possibility of exerting their accumulated knowledge and skills. Furthermore, skilled migrants' subjective perceptions of the return environment offered by India do not determine their motivation and predisposition to influence India in one way or another. We can therefore say that in this case Indian skilled migrants' expectations are not necessarily influenced by their insights of the prospects available in the home country.

6. Empirical evidence from India: Returnees

This section presents some observations that skilled Indian returnees made on the survey. These observations are related to their development aspirations for their home country and the determining factors at a personal level and in terms of their social and professional position that influence their motivation to use the accumulated knowledge and technical skills gained abroad for the benefit of India. We also examine the impact of their return on society. Return is commonly thought of as a strong development factor when returnees are able to exert the resources, skills and knowledge gained abroad in the local context, and to take advantage of their transnational networks and contacts for the benefit of the home country. By studying the dynamics of knowledge transfer by skilled migrants upon their return and the difficulties that they face, we observe the terms in which they perceive that their international exposure has affected their professional and social position as well as their propensity to influence the people around them. In line with the notion of the expectations lens as a critical framework (Gmelch 1980), our analysis is based on the skilled migrants' own subjective perceptions of their readjustment process and their own assessment of their situation compared to the prospects that they had previously imagined.

6.1 Development aspirations upon return

The respondents to our survey were asked if they had ever thought of participating in the development of India in a specific way (*«Have you ever thought of taking part in the development of India?»*). As we can see from the responses, a majority of the skilled Indian returnees surveyed (325 out of 527 i.e. about 70 per cent) had already thought about taking an active part in the development process of India by applying the accumulated knowledge and technical skills they gained abroad through research, academic training, social services, business and job creation. While this majority is to be found in all selected sectors of activity of the sample, there was a higher incidence among skilled Indians in academic and research positions where 87 per cent and 75.3 per cent (77 and 154 persons) respectively had already considered taking part in home country development (see Table 5).

Table 5: Interest of returnees in home country development by type of position held
“Have you ever thought of taking part in the development of India?”

Type of position held	Yes (%)	No (%)	No answer (%)	Total number of respondent
Managerial	61.11	37.3	1.59	126
Technical	60.78	37.91	1.31	153
Researcher	75.32	9.74	14.94	154
Academic	87.01	10.39	2.6	77
Others	70.59	23.53	5.88	17
Total	69.26	25.05	5.69	527

Source: Indian survey, 2011-12

We can also see that those returnees with a length of stay abroad of more than 2 years (75.5 per cent or 245 persons) have a higher incidence of considering taking an active part in India's development (see Table 6).

Table 6: Interest of returnees in home country development by length of stay abroad
“Have you ever thought of taking part in the development of India?”

Length of stay abroad	Yes (in %)	No (in %)	No answer (in %)	Total number of respondents
Less than 6 months	63.16	35.53	1.32	76

From 6 months to 1 year	60.16	33.33	6.5	123
Between 1 and 2 years	69.88	26.51	3.61	83
More than 2 years	75.51	17.14	7.35	245
Total	69.26	25.05	5.69	527

Source: Indian survey, 2011-12

By analysing the influence of individual attributes on development aspirations, we can observe that the skilled Indians who have higher aspirations to contribute to India's development tend to be associated with disadvantaged identities in terms of gender, caste, religion and medium of elementary education. For example, 85 per cent of the female respondents to our survey have considered taking part in India's development while only 68 per cent of their male counterparts have felt the same. Similarly, 83 per cent of Indians belonging to a lower social category (reserved) feel strongly about contributing to India's development against 70 per cent of those who said they belonged to a higher social category (general), while the figure is 89 per cent for Muslims and 70 per cent for Hindus. We can also observe that Indians who received their schooling through a vernacular medium have stronger thoughts about taking part in home country development than those whose schooling was in English (76 per cent against 67 per cent). The fact that socially disadvantaged people such as women, dalits and Muslims feel more strongly about contributing to development might be a result of the contrast between the situation of inequality and deprivation that they faced in the home country and the freedom and rights they enjoyed in the host countries.

We found a positive association for development aspirations with education and age. The higher the education level and age of the skilled Indians, the greater their interest in home country development. This might be the result of an increase in people's consciousness about society at large, with higher accumulated experience and knowledge acquired through age and further education. We also observed that skilled Indians working in science, research and academia, which are sectors of activity that typically offer environments with a high level of freedom to participate in creative thinking, feel more strongly about contributing to India's development than people in managerial and technical positions, probably because they are more closely related to the local population and believe that society can absorb direct benefits from their actions. They might also be more willing to address issues of critical importance to the development of India in their scientific and research accomplishments.

6.2 Changes in skilled migrants' position in society and their influence on people around them

A question raised by our research is whether returnees impact home country development at a social level and in specific terms through the introduction of new skills, knowledge and ideas. We are interested in the effects that the international exposure of skilled migrants has on their position in society and on the people around them once they return to the home country. Skilled Indians gave their own perceptions of the changes they have been able to introduce, firstly to their own position in society, and secondly, to the people around them.⁶ We observed that the foreign exposure of skilled Indians enables them to accumulate knowledge and skills, thus providing them with the possibility of influencing changes in their position in society. While 71 per cent of the skilled Indian returnees surveyed feel that their position in society has been positively or very positively affected by their overseas exposure, we can see interesting qualitative differences in the perception of such changes according to individual profile, activity profile (type of firm/institution, sector of activity, level of seniority), age, level of education and length of stay abroad.

6.2.1 Social Position

⁶ The two questions referring to these points put to skilled Indian returnees were: "In what way has your position in society been affected by your overseas exposure?" and "In your opinion, how much influence do your ideas and opinions have on people around you?"

A larger proportion of people from a rural background (74 per cent) than their urban counterparts (71 per cent) feel that their social position was positively influenced by their overseas exposure. In addition, a higher share of women (77 per cent) than men (70 per cent) feel their foreign exposure has improved their position in society. Likewise, a larger proportion of Muslims (78 per cent) than Hindus (72 per cent) feel their social position improved as a result of their overseas exposure. The fact that women and people from religious minorities perceive a greater change in their social position is partially explained by the fact that they think they have been empowered against the discrimination and disadvantages they face in India. Surprisingly, a marginally higher proportion of respondents from the upper castes feel a positive change in their position in society compared to respondents from lower castes (71 and 66 per cent respectively). This is partly because many people in the sample did not reveal their social category, and for those people the feeling of positive change in their social position was very high (84 per cent).

A higher proportion of respondents in research, academia and technical positions (76, 74 and 72 per cent respectively) feel their social situation was positively affected by their foreign exposure, compared to respondents in managerial positions (65 per cent). This might be because of the fact that their profession allows them relatively more freedom to think and act. This is especially the case of those in research and academia, who have an opportunity to influence society more directly through their activities and are grateful for the fact that they can do so. As far as the type of institution in which skilled Indians work is concerned, we can see that a higher proportion of people working in academic and research institutions and national companies feel they have experienced positive personal development (84 and 87 per cent respectively) than those working in multinational companies or those who are self-employed (65 and 67 per cent respectively). This might be down to two things; firstly, working conditions in multinational companies are often very similar in India and abroad, and consequently the feeling of positive change might not be so apparent to Indian professionals; secondly, self-employed people face specific difficulties to transfer their managerial expertise and professional culture back to India as shown by Biswas (Chapter 12 in this volume), and these particular constraints have a negative effect on their feelings of personal development.

We observe that a higher proportion of middle-aged Indians (between the ages of 36 and 50) (76 per cent) experienced positive changes due to their foreign exposure in comparison to the younger (between the ages of 22 and 35) (67 per cent) and older age cohorts (between the ages of 50 and 99) (70 per cent). We also found a positive association between the level of education and personal development. A higher proportion of skilled Indians holding a PhD (75 per cent) experienced positive changes in their position in society compared to those with a Bachelor's (64 per cent) or a Master's degree (70). This might be the result of an increase in people's professional opportunities and social recognition with higher accumulated experience and knowledge acquired through age and further education. Furthermore, we can see a positive association between the level of seniority within the professional activity of skilled Indians and their personal development. A higher share of people at a senior level (72 per cent) experienced positive changes in their position in society compared to those in mid-level and mostly to those in entry level positions (71 and 66 per cent respectively). This shows that the higher the level of seniority, the greater the accumulated experience, and this in turn has an impact on personal development.

We found a positive association between the length of stay abroad and one's position in society. A higher proportion of those skilled Indians with a length of stay of 2 years or longer (75 per cent) experienced positive changes in their position in society in comparison to those with stays of 1-2 years (70 per cent) and those with even shorter stays (63 per cent). Migrants who have been abroad for a short period of time might not have experienced enough of the culture and new working methods in the host countries to have much of an influence in the home country. As King (1986) says, during short stays abroad, migrants only gain a little experience that is of any use in fostering modernization in the home country. This shows that the longer skilled Indians stay abroad, the higher the accumulated experience they gain, and this in turn will make them experience personal development.

6.2.2 Influencing people around

A further part of our research shows that the overseas exposure of skilled Indians grants them the possibility of influencing people around them as a result of the leadership role they might acquire, introducing changes to attitudes in the work place and in society at large through their social interaction. Here we also observed that the individual profile of migrants, their length of stay abroad, their activity profile and their social and professional position, including gender, determine the returnees' perceptions of the effect they have on people around them.

We saw that women are more likely to influence their surrounding community, as a larger proportion of them (61 per cent) compared to men (47 per cent) feel that they have a lot of influence on the people around them. We also observed how age is very strongly related to the effect that respondents will have on others; 63 per cent of people from the oldest age cohorts (between the ages 51 and 99) think they have a lot of influence on people around them compared to younger cohorts (49 per cent for the 36-50 age group, and 41 per cent for those in the 22-35 age group). A larger proportion of people from rural backgrounds (60 per cent) than their urban counterparts (46 per cent) feel they have a lot of inspiration on the surrounding community and a higher share of respondents from the lower casts (58 per cent) than from the upper casts (46 per cent) also feel that they have a lot of influence on people around them.

Length of stay abroad is positively related to the possibility of exerting social influence. Accordingly, as the length of stay abroad increases, the influence that skilled Indian returnees have on people around them rises correspondingly. A higher proportion of those skilled Indians with a length of stay of 2 years or longer (53 per cent) feel they have a lot of inspiration on people near them in comparison to those with stays of 1 to 2 years (51 per cent), and those with even shorter stays (see Table 7).

Table 7: Returnees' length of stay abroad and their influence on people around them

	Less than 6 months	Between 6 months and 1 year	Between 1 and 2 years	More than 2 years	Total
No influence at all	12.16	6.61	4.94	2.95	5.46
Little influence	52.7	42.98	40.74	36.29	40.94
A lot of influence	32.43	47.93	50.62	53.16	48.54
No answer/ Missing value	2.7	2.48	3.7	7.59	5.07
Total	74	121	81	237	513

Source: Indian survey, 2011-12

We can observe that more people in academic and research positions (64 and 52 per cent respectively) than those working in managerial and technical positions (50 and 36 per cent respectively) feel they have a lot of inspiration on the surrounding community. About 60 per cent of people employed in senior positions reported that they have a lot of influence on people around them compared to 39 per cent of those in mid-level positions and 45 per cent of those at entry level.

6.3 Application of skills gained abroad

Following our interest in identifying specific ways in which skilled Indians transfer their skills after their return through diverse and specific activities carried out in the home country, in an open question of the survey the respondents in our study were asked to give examples of how they have used the skills, experience, knowledge and ideas they gained overseas to contribute to their company, institute or business. While compelling proof of the transfer of knowledge is to be found in the regular communication between European and Indian professionals on issues that are important for development in India, our research does indeed show some of the more specific ways in which skilled Indians apply the skills they have gained abroad (see Table 8).

Table 8: Examples of the application of foreign-earned skills by returnees in India

Examples	Number of respondents	(%)
Research and development	87	16.51
Teaching and training	89	16.89
Development of work culture and environment	82	15.56
Providing better services to the organisation	54	10.25
Consultancy services and development of own business	4	0.76
Sharing/transferring knowledge or expertise	57	10.82
Others	16	3.04
No answer / Missing value	138	26.19
Total	527	100

Source: Indian survey, 2011-12

Skilled Indians in research and academic positions and those working in the academic sector mentioned exerting their skills gained abroad mostly in research and development activities and in teaching and training, whilst those in technical positions said that they mostly applied the skills gained overseas in the development of a work culture and environment and in providing better services to their organisation, and sharing and transferring their knowledge or expertise in their work place. Even in the case of multinational companies, we observed that skilled Indians use the skills, experience, knowledge and ideas they have gained overseas to contribute to the development of a work culture and environment and to provide better services to their organisations and share and transfer their knowledge or expertise in the work place. We can also see that skilled Indians professionals at a senior and middle level are those with the highest propensity of exerting the specialised skills and knowledge gained abroad to contribute to their institute, company or business. A majority of the returnees (73.6 per cent) felt that they effectively use their foreign-earned experience and knowledge in their current job. A small portion of our respondent returnees faced difficulties related to work culture (12 per cent) and infrastructure (12 per cent) in their current organization, implying that the organization would gain more if infrastructure and work culture issues could be resolved. Moreover, a few found it difficult to deal with the bureaucratic system of India (12 per cent) and this would have definitely affected their efficiency at work. Consequently, we can say that some individuals do face genuine hindrances in sharing and transferring the knowledge and skills they have gained abroad after they return to India.

7. Conclusions

This chapter looks at the perceptions and expectations of both diaspora members and returnees and it examines the individual and home-country factors that influence their actions towards the development of their home country. It observes the impact of the international exposure of Indian skilled migrants on their professional and social position upon their return to India.

Our study shows that the individual profile of Indian skilled migrants, their social identity, professional position and activity and their length of stay abroad determine their level of motivation and their aspirations to use their foreign-acquired knowledge and skills for the benefit of India. We found that education, age and length of stay are positively associated with development aspirations: the higher the level of education and the age of the skilled Indians and the longer the length of stay abroad, the greater their interest in taking part in home-country development. This might be the result of an increase in people's awareness of society at large, with higher accumulated experience and knowledge acquired through age and further education.

Significant qualitative differences were found among the activity profiles of the skilled Indians with regard to the influence that their main activity in the host country has on their development aspirations. Skilled Indians working in research and academia feel a stronger commitment to India's development than people in managerial and technical positions do. This could be because they feel closer to the local population and believe that Indian society could absorb direct benefits from their scientific and research activities, or else this might be due to the high level of freedom to participate in creative thinking offered in those areas. Furthermore, a larger proportion of skilled Indians in training and education than professionals in paid employment have positive feelings about the possibility of contributing through their current activity. The discussions indicate that these feelings originate because of their emotional links to the homeland and their aspirations might not necessarily turn into tangible actions, whereas professionals in paid employment have stronger social and intellectual capital, providing them with a higher propensity to put their intentions into effect. By examining the influence that skilled Indians' perceptions of the local context in India has on their development aspirations, we found that the ambitions of migrants are not shaped by a real assessment of the opportunities and local environment offered by the home country, but rather they are an emotional construct grounded on a sense of loyalty towards the homeland.

Beyond development aspirations, our study also examined skilled Indian migrants' perceptions of how their accumulated knowledge and skills from their overseas exposure affect both their social position and their influence on Indian society after their return to India. At an individual level, qualitative differences in their perceptions of such changes arose according to their personal characteristics, social identity (including gender), professional position, level of education and length of stay abroad. For example, we found that women, people from religious minorities and people from a rural background perceive a greater change in their social position. Moreover, a higher proportion of respondents in research and academia feel their social situation was positively affected by their foreign exposure, compared to respondents in managerial positions. At a meso level we found that returnees' perceptions of the influence they have on people around them also differ according to their individual profiles, social identity, professional position and length of stay abroad. We found that length of stay abroad and age are positively associated with the returnees' level of influence on the people around them, and that more women than men feel their international exposure has a higher impact on the society.

We also found that skilled Indians in Europe - mostly students and researchers - link their development aspirations to their return plans and they believe that Indian society can benefit from their accumulated knowledge, skills and academic and scientific networks. However, the results of the Indian data show that they face a number of obstacles within the local system once they return to India. These are related to differences in work culture, resistance to change, the lengthy bureaucratic process and the lack of a suitable

infrastructure, and these all hinder the transfer of the skills and knowledge they have accumulated abroad. Such obstacles have implications for both employers and policymakers.

A key finding of this study is that the desire to participate in development is associated with disadvantageous identities. By analysing the influence of individual attributes on development aspirations from both skilled Indians abroad and from returnees, we can see that those who have higher aspirations to participate in India's development tend to be associated with disadvantaged identities related to gender, caste, religion and the medium of elementary education. The fact that socially disadvantaged people such as women, dalits and Muslims feel more strongly about contributing might be the result of the contrast they experienced between a situation of deprivation and social inequality in the home country, and the freedom and rights they enjoyed in the host countries, and it might be that they would like to work for greater social equality. This suggests important policy implications, given that the knowledge transferred by these people would directly affect development among the deprived communities since they are intimately connected to the disadvantaged social groups of India. Enabling conditions at work and in the communities that support their engagement in social and professional activities upon their return and facilitate the transfer of their skills would help promote balanced development in India.

These findings invite us to a further discussion that should be contextualised in a broader and more complex problem related to deficiencies in the Indian education system and the country's broad social divisions. Drèze and Sen's (2013) argument stating that the Indian educational system ensures that only a few young Indians 'out of a huge pool' manage to attain an excellent education (including the possibility of going abroad) is in line with the general division between 'the privileged and the rest' in Indian society. According to the authors, this separation is not driven by specific purposes, but rather by 'economic and social inequality related to class, caste, gender, location and social privilege' (p. 128).

Our results also suggest that immigration policy in Europe should be friendlier to disadvantaged communities in the country of origin. Since the members of the disadvantaged community feel a strong commitment to home-country development and intimately associate or socially connect with people who are worse off, their transfer of knowledge and their physical return are likely to impact where it is most needed. In other words, the marginal impact on India's development of a returnee or a diaspora member from a disadvantaged community would be far greater than a returnee who does not belong to such a community. This can be achieved through targeted scholarships for international students and by adapting already existing equal opportunity policies for admissions to universities and academic institutions and for hiring immigrants in the private and government sector in destination countries so that they correspond to patterns of discrimination prevalent in countries of origin rather than the destination countries.

Finally, since this study only focused on the private individual development perceptions and aspirations of skilled Indian migrants and did not include those who are actually affected, our research would benefit from further studies that examine the insights of other actors, from the immediate circles of the migrants and from society at large, who are influenced by skilled migration.

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