

## **‘Hindus on a Rock’: A socio-geographical analysis of the Sindhi community of Gibraltar and its diaspora from modern-day Pakistan**

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### **Abstract**

The Sindhis of Gibraltar derive their traditions from being part of the global Sindhi sect that originates from the Sindh region of Pakistan. Theologically associated with Hinduism and Sikhism, Sindhis held many important jobs before and during British colonial rule of the Sindh region especially as merchants trading across the British Empire. In new locales across the world, Sindhi communities were established that had social, economic and spiritual connections to their family and cultural roots in the Sindh. These communities have expanded in size since many Sindhis left modern-day Pakistan for these locales during the Partition of India in 1947. Primary research was conducted in Gibraltar to understand how its Sindhi community has integrated into this state’s national social and economic fabric. The data collected from semi-structured interviews suggests that the Sindhis of Gibraltar have taken full advantage of the job prospects and good quality of life available. These findings also suggest, however, that their cultural and religious beliefs and traditions are being undermined by these same positive outcomes. The Sindhi community of Gibraltar has attempted to reduce the risk of total cultural homogenization into Gibraltarian society by increasing their reverence for their spiritual and historical origins and an appreciation for what makes their culture unique. The diaspora (the emigration of people from their country) of Sindhis to Gibraltar has provided both people and cultural products which this community has utilized to create an emphasized Sindhi identity that will guide its future prospects.

### **Key Words**

Gibraltar, Diaspora, Focus Groups, Sindhiyat, Identity, Homeland.

## **Introduction**

The Hindu community of Gibraltar, which predominantly consists of ethnic Sindhis, have had a recorded presence in this state since approximately the mid-1800's. Census data taken in 2001 indicated that 1.8% of the population identified themselves as Hindu (H.M. Government of Gibraltar, 2013: 14). Many of these Sindhis derive their ancestral roots from what is now the Sindh region of modern-day Pakistan (Haller, 2003: 80). The cities of Hyderydad and Shikarpur had significant populations of Sindhis and many of their business headquarters for Sindwork firms were located here up until the Partition of India in 1947 (Markovits, 2000: 277) The majority of these Sindhis in Gibraltar were male merchants whose families gradually emigrated from colonial India to this British colony, especially after the partition of India. Sindhis have not always easily integrated into Gibraltarian society as merchants could not legally settle for a given number of years and so lacked full citizenship (Francisco, 2000: 15). Influenced by this, before the British National Act of 1981 was passed in Gibraltar, this community engaged in complex systems of 'patronage and clientship' where Sindhis immigrated to Gibraltar to fill vacancies for outbound Sindhis workers (Sojourners) whose work permits had expired in order to maintain the functioning of Sindwork businesses (Haller, 2005: 169; Markovits, 2000: 16 & 23). These organizations were engaged in the selling of goods that they had a comparative advantage in such as in trading jutes, cotton, carpets and other associated Asian commodities (ibid).As such, Sindhi migration flows were defined by the "phenomena of circulation rather than migration proper" which would help to shape the future demographics and commercial activities of Sindhis of the nations they settled in (Markovits, 2000: 17). This proposition to permanently reside in Gibraltar was made simpler by factors such as established family networks in Gibraltar as well as the economic prospects that this British Overseas Territory provided. The Sindhi community of Gibraltar has continued to expand and today its population of 491 members (as recorded in the latest census taken in 2001 but this is estimated to increased to over 500 as of 2015) holds a variety of positions within Gibraltar, mostly as local traders, as well as being permanent residents in Gibraltar (HM Government of Gibraltar, 2013: 14). The cultural presence of the Sindhi community was further emphasised in Gibraltar with the opening of the Hindu temple (Mandir) in 2000.

There is little acknowledgement of the presence of a Sindhi community in Gibraltar in academic literature and the reasons for it being so far from its 'homeland' of the Sindh (some exceptions in academic literature include Haller, 2003 & 2005; Francisco, 2000). Along with analysing the current literature on the global Sindhi community and the process of diaspora, this article will attempt to fill this intellectual 'gap' by providing primary qualitative data on the Hindu/Sindhi community of Gibraltar in an attempt to understand the effect of diaspora and the local social, political and economic conditions of Gibraltar on this diasporic community's cultural identity. This will allow for the discussion of efforts that have been made to retain this community's Sindhi traditions but also allow this Sindhi community to successfully integrate into Gibraltarian society, in spite of various external and internal influences threatening to destabilize their culture.

### **Historical Background**

A significant number of Hindus in Gibraltar are Sindhis belonging to a specific sect of Hinduism. Sindhi culture is commonly referred to as Sindhiyat. It primarily incorporates the worship of important Hindu deities such as Shiva, The Mother Goddess (who takes many forms such as Adi Parashakti, the Divine Mother) but also deities associated with the Indus Valley where the Sindh region is located and where Sindhi culture primarily developed (Thakur, 1997: 71). Their belief system also incorporates elements of Sikhism (ibid).

It is documented that the Lohanas (the more well-to-do Sindhis of the Sindh) helped to proliferate common beliefs among the followers of their sect such as tolerance and inclusiveness to people of all faiths, castes and backgrounds (Thakur, 1997: 25). By extension, Sindhiyat is also noted for not having a specific low caste within its sect, in contrast to many other Hindu sects in the 'homeland'. This unique aspect of Sindhis who have entered the diaspora has helped make possible the formation and maintenance of a strong cohesive community (Devji, 2006). Indeed, Sindhi song and poetry is noted for including many accounts of their ancestors' struggles to establish themselves as a reputable social group in the Sindh and

only by achieving social cohesion through adaptability, determination and entrepreneurship, were they able to thrive in their new 'homeland' of the Sindh (Thankur, 1997: 26).

When the British colonized the Sindh region in the 19th century, many Sindhis embraced the English language and took up administrative posts in the Sindh (Thakur, 1997: 23). Wealthy and entrepreneurial Sindhi merchants, predominantly men, took advantage of the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 as well as access to other markets in the British Empire to bring wealth back to the Sindh (Jayaram, 2004: 20). Markovits (2000) describes how a complex 'network' was established by Sindhis where Sindwork operations would traditionally be situated in cities such as Shikarpur and Hyderabad in modern-day Pakistan. These would be connected through strong communications with Sindhi communities in locales such as Gibraltar in order to exchange money, information and labour, keep as much wealth as possible within their ethnic group and to remain competitive, mitigating the influence of labour controls on economic migrants in these foreign states, utilizing new trading opportunities and states with favourable tax rates (p. 25). This marked the beginning of diaspora for the Sindhi population away from the Sindh, in this case relating to colonial emigration (Jayaram, 2004: 18 & 19).

The Partition of India in 1947 was a crucial turning point in Sindhi history. Factors such as the political domination of the new state of Pakistan by the Muslim majority, and Mohajirs (Muslim immigrants from the rest of the South-Asian subcontinent who wished to live in this newly created Islamic state), as well as associated fears for their own safety and the survival of their culture, triggered a major emigration of Sindhis from the Sindh, with Mumbai, India being a prominent destination (Khan, 2002: 218). This dispersion from their homeland of the Sindh coincides with the period of Indian diaspora known as post-colonial emigration (Jayaram, 2005: 18 & 19). By the 1960's and 70's, this emigration was at its peak and this generation of Sindhis would provide the social foundations on which communities around the world, such as in Gibraltar, would be built (Jayaram, 2005: 22). It is important to note that the creation of the global Sindhi diaspora community was established as a consequence of both the processes of 'exile' or detachment from their 'homeland' as well as a conversion to overseas trade taking

place which subsequently allowed this community to leave behind its notion of 'menial castes' and allowed it to embrace and adapt to varying and often more fluid social structures, such as those present in the British Overseas Territories (Falzon, 2005; Devji, 2006).

### **Conceptualising diaspora**

The process of diaspora belongs to a broader range of theory on human migration. Diaspora describes the act of an ethnic group leaving their 'home territory' and dispersing to many separate locales, for economic, social or political reasons (Castree et al, 2013: 105). The process of human migration is not only the physical movement of people from one geographical location to another but could also be said to be the process of taking with one's self a great deal of 'socio-cultural baggage' (Jayaram, 1997: 16). The 'mental load' that migrants take with them can be put into categories such as, "a predefined social identity; a set of beliefs and practices; a framework of norms and values governing family organization [and] language" (ibid).

These mental and physical 'mementos' of their 'homeland' that they retain subsequently create 'a myth of return' (ibid). The exile of Jews from Babylon in 586 BC and from Palestine (Israel) over subsequent years is considered to be the archetypal case study of the process of Diaspora (Jayaram, 2005: 16). These types of understandings could be considered to be part of the 'first phase' of thinking on diaspora (Cohen, 2008: 1). Safen (1991) provides an account of how understandings of diaspora from the 1980's onwards then transitioned into a 'second phase' where the focus of attention was on diaspora being used as a metaphor for categorizing and isolating the culture and nature of different groups of people to highlight their unique qualities and their contributions ( p. 83). The third phase of Diaspora was proposed by social constructionists in the 1990s who argued that complex social processes taking place at various spatial levels helped construct the identities of each diasporic community and their citizens (Cohen, 2008: 1&2). The final, and most recent, understanding of diaspora is marked by critiques of social constructivists removing all "analytical and descriptive power" from the concept of 'homeland' and terms relating to diaspora and suggested that migrant communities did create interesting social constructs and behaviours that they brought with them that should be studied for their own sake (Cohen, 2008: 2).

This article will analyse the primary data collected from members of the Hindu community of Gibraltar taking this fourth interpretation of diaspora as its point of departure. The diaspora of the Sindhis from modern-day Pakistan to other nations is worthy of investigation as they were both incentivised and coerced into a global, seafaring lifestyle and associated patronage system and ultimately were threatened and forced out of their 'homeland' of the Sindh by riots and hostility from a dominant Muslim population and government (Markovits, 2000: 277-279). The research will help to understand how the ramifications of these events have manifested and impacted the composition and the scope of activities that the Sindhis of Gibraltar

#### utilize.**Methods**

The social, economic and cultural development and evolution of diasporic Sindhi communities, particularly in a specific context such as the British Overseas Territory of Gibraltar, remains poorly understood. The literature is particularly sparse on post-Partition Sindhi communities, and the specific economic, political and socio-economic factors that have influenced the culture and world outlook of such communities. In light of these gaps in knowledge and understanding, the following broad research questions were devised:

1. What is the social structure of the Sindhi/Hindu community in Gibraltar and how has this been influenced by spatial and temporal factors?
2. What are the most pressing issues in relations between this community and other Gibraltarians?
3. What push and pull factors (economic, social, political) have been and will be the most influential for the Sindhi/Hindu community of Gibraltar?

The above questions provided a starting point for an ethnographic study, based on an inductive epistemology, The research explored potential explanations for past, current and future actions and collective behaviours of this community , especially the important influences of this ethnic group's history in Gibraltar and in the homeland, its cultural hybridity and the spiritual association with a Sindhi homeland (Babbie, 2010: 22).

This research project was also concerned with “deviant case analysis” whereby individuals can express personal opinions that may corroborate or stand against other commonly held opinions which qualitative data analysis can then use to highlight the full range of cultural practices and discourses present in a given sample (in this case the Sindhi community of Gibraltar), which may allow one to deduce how past and future actions have been or could be influenced (Kitzinger, 1995: 301).

Focus groups were conducted in order to collect qualitative data on the culture and social processes affecting the Sindhi community of Gibraltar. The focus group method can be defined as a “carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined environment” (Kreuger, 1998: 88, cited in Smithson, 2010: 104). This approach was chosen, as opposed to utilizing, for instance, one-on-one interviews, as it best facilitates a more informed and in-depth debate and discussion as a wide range of opinions can be expressed by participants who are then able to corroborate or object to points of discussion made by the other participants leading to a more enlightening experience for both the participants and the researchers (Cinoğlu, n.d.: 2).

16 participants from the Sindhi community in Gibraltar put themselves forward as volunteers for this research project and these were subsequently arranged into one of 3 focus groups - a mixed group of 3 men and 3 women aged 50 and over, a group of 5 women aged 20 to 30, and a group of 2 men and 3 women aged 20 to 50. These were grouped into their appropriate age groups in order to minimize the impact of peer pressure of the older participants on the responses of the younger respondents from this community. This did however have the analytical ‘trade-off’ of rendering the role and impact that gender and the varying socio-economic statuses of the volunteers had on the responses they gave more difficult to identify. As the researchers were not able to obtain prior information on the backgrounds and roles of the Sindhi participants involved, we were not able to group participants into specific focus groups based on who would be least likely to influence others in the focus group hence influencing some of the comments produced (see Krueger, 1994). This is one of a number of

well-acknowledged issues that can occur in carrying out focus groups but there are others such as the influence that a moderator might have in hindering the production of insightful ideas and arguments if participants feel under pressure to speak and conform to the current questions being asked, the trend for respondents to tend to act in a polarized manner (speaking with either a very optimistic or pessimistic mindset) and skewing a researcher's perception of what major trends can be deduced from these discussions (Morgan, 1997: 139-140). We attempted to mitigate the impact of some of these issues during the course of the focus groups by the moderator inviting more of the reserved participants into the ongoing discussions in order to ensure all participants were able to contribute equally as well as provide the opportunity for them to elaborate on points of interest to them that were raised.

These focus group discussions were conducted in the evenings in the Gibraltar Hindu Temple (Mandir). 9 questions were asked to the participants in order for them to collect their knowledge and their experiences of themselves and of their community residing in Gibraltar that touched upon important issues such as their social life, economy and their future prospects<sup>1</sup>. Accepted ethical procedures for consent and confidentiality were adhered to and needed to be emphasized to the participants to ensure all understood the purposes of this research exercise and the confidence to participate fully (Barbour, 2007: 2). Additionally, participants were able to ask myself and my fellow research colleagues about our own backgrounds and future ambitions, helping to create a sense of reciprocity and rapport. The focus group discussions were electronically recorded and subsequently transcribed.

Transcripts were then qualitatively analysed using the following coding 'themes':

- Spatial/Geographical Movements
- Social Life (Culture)
- Education
- Community Interactions
- Jobs and Opportunities (Economy)
- Future Prospects.

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<sup>1</sup> The transcripts for the focus groups upon which this table is based on are available from the author for review upon request.



In keeping with the inductive nature of this research project, these particular codes were created upon fully analysing the qualitative data collected and allowed one to categorize and highlighted the most prominent topics and issues discussed in the focus groups (Catterall & Maclaran, 1997).

	Mixed Gender Group (Aged >50)	Women (Aged 20-30)	Mixed Gender Group (Aged 20-50)
Spatial/Geographical Movements	<p>Diaspora from India and Pakistan to ports likes Tangiers, Gibraltar and others where relatives or friends had already settled.</p> <p>Gibraltar is a small country so everything is easily accessible.</p> <p>Younger members of the community would leave Gibraltar if it meant 'finding love' or for work.</p>	<p>Families originally moved to Gibraltar as there were family connections and jobs present.</p>	<p>Gibraltar was seen as attractive to the Sindhi community because of family links already in place here.</p> <p>Sindhis had to leave the Sindh region in modern-day Pakistan due to India's Partition.</p>
Social Life (Culture)	<p>There are many different clubs available such as</p>	<p>The participants stated that there was no division between</p>	<p>All of the Hindu children go to the same schools as</p>

	<p>Chess and Karate clubs, among others. Particular emphasis was placed on the different types of clubs available to residents.</p>	<p>the social lives of the Hindus and other Gibraltarians - they all participated in the same events.</p> <p>Many Sindhis have experiences of going to UK universities where they made friends and acquainted themselves with other Hindus with different beliefs to their own.</p>	<p>people from other faith groups. Jewish children go to separate schools.</p>
<p>Community Interaction</p>	<p>The Sindhi community is part of an inter-faith group with other religious groups such as Christians and Jews. They have each gone to each other's festivals.</p>	<p>The Sindhi community is very integrated with everyone in Gibraltar and members have friends from other faiths. They most commonly interact among themselves and with local Christians. The Jewish community is less open however.</p>	<p>The Hindu community is integrated with the Jewish and Christian communities.</p>

Education	Education emphasized as getting a good job would be difficult otherwise.	Not as many options for subjects or teachers as they would like. They have to travel to the UK for tertiary education.	There is strict parenting and family pressure to do well in schools among Hindus. Many people have gone to university.
Jobs/Opportunities (Economy)	A number of professions available (shopkeepers, lawyers, accountants). Science jobs not available.  Gibraltar now more in competition with other countries' economies. They interact with 10,000 workers from across the Spanish/Gibraltarian frontier.	Moving away from Gibraltar was spoken of as sometimes being the only option as there may be no industry that suits their specific qualifications.	Many jobs in legal and accounting sectors. Job market in Gibraltar is saturated.
Future Prospects	Sindhis have run Sindhi culture and language classes, often by using	The participants were not optimistic about the future of the community. They still	The loss of Sindhi culture and language was seen as a threat to their community

	information from the internet to keep their heritage alive. Young people have not always engaged fully with these endeavours.	wanted to keep their Sindhi culture and traditions alive. At the same time, these participants were more interested in contemporary trends than the survival of their religion and culture.	and their collective identity and heritage. However, the younger generation were now more interested to not lose historical links.
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Table 1: Summary of Focus Group Responses categorized by Coding ‘Themes’ and Age Groups

**Results**

The quality and length of responses to the questions asked to all three focus groups had similarities but also occasionally differed from group to group<sup>2</sup>. Key points raised in the focus group discussions are summarised thematically in Table 1. An overview of the responses given to a number of these questions follows.

Question 1, which was, “Can you describe some of the stories you have heard from relatives about how or why the Hindu community or some of you individually came to be in Gibraltar”, was responded to well and in a similar way by all three focus groups. They all told a similar narrative about their ethnic group originating from colonial India and the Sindh and their families emigrating to Gibraltar due to business and family connections already present in this state. The older members of the focus groups were more knowledgeable about the locales from which they emigrated from such as other ports in the Mediterranean Sea, including Tangiers, Morocco.

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<sup>2</sup> The full list of questions asked to all three of the focus groups is available from the author for review upon request.

The responses to Question 4, “How have you combined Gibraltarian ideas and values with Hindu values?”, were largely positive in all three focus groups, reflective of their ethnic group’s successful integration into Gibraltarian society. This was exemplified by the inter-faith group present in Gibraltar where Hindus, including Sindhis, have been invited by the Jewish community of Gibraltar to a ceremony to mark Hanukkah among other religious events. Despite the respondents being mostly open to this process of integration as well as marriage into other ethnic groups, it was noted that there was some resistance to this social process from older members of the community. This may reflect the strong emotions that they feel by being part of the diasporic, global Sindhi community and concerns that further culture integration into Gibraltarian society may cause these ‘connections’ to disintegrate.

Question 6, “Would you ever leave Gibraltar?”, was a question that produced some expected but also unexpected responses. The older respondents in the focus groups were resistant to this idea as they had become accustomed to the Gibraltarian life and they did not want to impact their social and economic circumstances. The younger respondents, however, despite appreciating Gibraltar for its close-knit society and its Mediterranean climate, were more open to emigrating as some had not yet settled down with family and were encouraged to move abroad by their parents if this would ultimately improve their prospects. This reflects dominant attitudes among Sindhis that being successful in one’s life is an important goal to reach, even if that meant setting some of their Sindhi traditions aside or moving away from their birthplace – a common thread that appears to run throughout the history of the global Sindhi community.

## **Discussion of Results**

One observation that can be inferred from the responses of the first focus group (mixed gender, aged >50) was their struggle to keep Sindhi traditions alive for the younger generations in the Sindhi community through language and culture classes as they clashed with their modern Gibraltarian lifestyle (Table 1: 9). They feared that their Sindhi language, traditions and identity would be diminished if knowledge was not passed onto future generations. This determination to reconnect with the culture of the Sindhi homeland is significant and relates to

ideas of a 'mobile connection' and shared origin that Sindhis groups around the world have tried to maintain to ground the beliefs and traditions of their sect (Kumar, 2013, p.4).

Another point that was raised by this group's discussion was the fact that Gibraltar is now affected by information from much further afield than before. This is characteristic of globalization, which can be understood as the increasing speed, extent and impact of information flows (Held, 1999: 16). The participants mentioned how the internet has given them greater access to websites and films on Indian and Sindhi culture to educate younger members of the community (Table 1: 9). As a consequence, their culture and its beliefs have been given more tangible meaning and context.

Despite efforts to adapt to the more westernized lifestyle of Gibraltar, the men of this focus group, more so than the others, directed most of the discussion and sometimes spoke, often out of habit, over the female participants. These behaviours could be possibly explained by the influence of Hindu scripts such as the Manusmriti, which state that women should obey and respect their husbands and other men (Knott, 2000: p. 82). As such, patriarchal values may still, if not fully acknowledged, influence some of the conscious and subconscious decisions and practices of this community. The influence of Gibraltar's Sindhi community historically consisting almost exclusively of male traders cannot be overlooked as the majority of their kin remained in the Sindh to administer the finances and global operations of the Sindhi firms but also to keep their families spiritually clean by not committing the taboo of 'Kala Pani' or that of a Hindu crossing open waters for extended distances and periods of time far from the spiritual influence of the River Ganges (Markovits, 2011: 83-4).

The second focus group (Females, aged 20-30) spoke of how their community insisted on them working hard for personal achievement, even if it ran counter to the traditions of their sect. For example, a view held by a significant number of people in this community, but usually not those belonging to older generations, was that the younger generations would be allowed to have a 'white wedding' with non-Hindus or emigrate from Gibraltar if they felt it gave them the best chance of a 'happy' future, but they were still encouraged to hold onto their Sindhi traditions (Table 1: 7). This is in contrast to established Sindhi thought where Sindhi parents would go to

great lengths for their children to meet other Sindhis by sending them to Sindhi events such as the Sammelan in the U.S.A. (Falzon, 2010: 672). This group also mentioned that they could leave Gibraltar if it meant finding work due to the narrow scope of the Gibraltarian labour market (Table 1: 8 & 9). Though these beliefs may appear to be counter-productive for the continuation of the Sindhi community in Gibraltar as it could cause the decline of its support network, this adaptability may explain why this community has done well economically in Gibraltar, especially after significant emigration from Pakistan after 1947.

The third focus group (Mixed, aged 20-50) stated that many younger members of the community went to foreign universities where they met other Hindus from different sects who had slightly different belief systems and therefore world-views (Table 1: 8). This highlights how the Hindu identity is not universal and is mediated by local conditions. The global diaspora of Hindus, including Sindhis, around the world has created communities which have become diverse in their social compositions, akin to the concept of the 'Mosaic of Discontinuity' (Frykenburg, 1989: p. 41, cited in Vertovec, 2000: p. 8). As a consequence, the Hindus of Gibraltar are better educated in what makes them similar and different to other Hindus and why this has occurred.

This focus group also explained that though they identified themselves as being both Hindu and Gibraltarian, they could act more Gibraltarian with those outside the Sindhi community and be more 'Hindu-like' when with family and at ceremonies. One participant described this by stating that, "I play different roles for different people". These Sindhis have not only adapted their religious identity to meet the social standards required of them in Gibraltar but the degree that they 'perform' their Sindhi identity is both socially-receptive but also individually constructed. This reflects the success that Sindhis have had in adapting their Sindhi culture to new social, economic and political environments they find themselves in. At the same time, incorporating new customs and behaviours from their new 'home' of Gibraltar also presents specific threats to their culture and their connection with their homeland of the Sindh as more Sindhis prefer to seek meaning and pleasure from the local culture they now find themselves in. As such, the sense of urgency from the older generations to reconnect this community with their

'homeland' and to hold it in high regard through educational activities has been one specific response to this challenge.

A continuity that ran through all three of the focus group discussions was that, despite the attraction with the homeland of the Sind and what it means for their own Sindhi culture socially and spiritually, there was no mention made to physically return the community to the Sindh. The lack of social and political infrastructure to support and protect their culture and current lifestyles in the much less developed and predominantly Islamic state of Pakistan have been some of the reasons commonly given by Sindhis around the world, including those who live in Mumbai (Bombay), India (Falzon, 2010: 665 & 669). The subject of how the Sindhis of Gibraltar should preserve and pay homage to their cultural heritage was an emotive one with all of the participants believing that their community had a responsibility to revere the homeland and their ancestors of the Sindh for what may be lost spiritually and culturally otherwise. With this in mind, one could say that the Sindhis of Gibraltar have endeavoured to ensure that this small nation state becomes their 'new' Sindh and in order to protect and sustain their culture and ethnic identity in this state, they have arguably *over* emphasized their traditions and 'Sindhiness' and become *more* patriotic and Sindhi-like than the original Sindhis of the Sindh, leading to recent efforts to reaffirm their connection to the Sindh and their position within Gibraltarian society.

## **Conclusion**

The qualitative research conducted in Gibraltar has indicated that its Hindus, predominantly of Sindhi descent, have derived some of their cultural characteristics from migration flows between Gibraltar and colonial India such as an entrepreneurial spirit and a willingness to adapt and integrate into local cultures. Their assimilation into Gibraltarian culture has also meant they have acquired an element of cultural hybridity where they now have similar interests to and behave like other Gibraltarians. This argument can be taken one step further by utilizing Bhabha's understandings of Hybridity in which he has argued that when two cultures interact (in this case the Sindhis of the Sindh and the British colonizers of this region and subsequently



the Sindhis of Gibraltar and its other inhabitants), there is a process of cultural mediation where their practices are selected and exchanged and both of their identities are permanently reconstituted to some degree as a consequence (see Bhabha, 1994). By the Sindhis of Gibraltar being forced to leave their 'homeland' of the Sindh, they have constructed an identity for themselves in what Bhabha refers to as 'Thirdspace' that facilitates their ability to embrace difference, different ways of living and consequently negotiate a better life for themselves in Gibraltar (Bhabha, 1994: 211). In practical terms, their 'exile' from the Sindh means that this ethnic minority has a degree of autonomy and agency that it can utilize to incorporate local practices that it believes will enhance their cultural wellbeing whilst at the same time disassociating themselves from those practices that they may deem to be disadvantageous such as a social structure based on caste.

Research from this project has also shown that the cultural practices and beliefs of Gibraltarian Sindhis and their reverence for the 'homeland' of the Sindh correlates with research conducted with other Sindhi communities around the world (see Falzon, 2010). The strength of the historical connection that had existed between the Sindhi colonies and their 'homeland' of the Sindh cannot be underestimated as this has provided Sindhis in states such as Gibraltar with an overarching economic existence and purpose as well as a shared Sindhi identity (Markovits, 2000: 282-3). Sindhi communities around the world have needed to create new identities upon which to base their future practices and livelihoods as the 'homeland' could no longer be physically returned to (*ibid*). I would also argue that this need for the Sindhi community of Gibraltar to establish a unique identity from 1947 onwards also came at a time when the world was rapidly globalizing, leading to this ethnic community being particularly responsive to being shaped and informed by the local Gibraltarian culture as well as a new global 'Sindhiyat' cultural movement. It appears that the one of the most pressing issues currently being faced by Sindhis in Gibraltar is the task of mediating and bringing their Gibraltarian and Sindhi identities together harmoniously to create a unified Sindhi identity that best serves their future economic, social and political interests.

Another noteworthy insight from this research was that, despite being Gibraltarians, the Sindhis studied still held religious practices, beliefs and traditions that have been shaped by being part of the global Sindhi diaspora, formed from a collective 'memory' of the 'homeland' of the Sindh. These have given them foundations for this community's spirituality and culture to grow upon. It could be argued that, unlike many people in the post-modern world, the Sindhis of Gibraltar have attempted to, and succeeded in, appreciating the "spatial and temporal coordinates for their historicity, for a consciousness of their own collective and personal past" (Rutherford, 1990: 24). For instance, while it could be argued that the Gibraltarian Hindu Temple's construction could have been reflective of the growing size and local influence of the Sindhis of Gibraltar, it may also represent the Sindhi community attempting to create a focal point for this religious community and align its spiritual identity closer to that of Hinduism, emphasizing its own locally-held cultural identity, its religious connection to other Sindhis around the world and to the spiritual 'homeland' of the Sindh (Markovitz, 2000:285). For the Sindhis of Gibraltar, it has also recently become necessary for them to more strongly acknowledge their shared cultural heritage and 'narrative' that unites its members. By establishing such a collective spiritual and cultural foundation, this community wishes to create a sense of belonging, security and stability among its followers that they can rely upon and can fall back upon if need be as they become more integrated into an increasingly globalized, multicultural and, arguably, culturally homogenous world.

The Sindhis of Gibraltar continue to utilize the imagery of being part of the global 'imagined' Sindhi community that defies state boundaries and distances to unite the members of its sect by a common origin, language, practices and a sense of kinship (Anderson, 2006: 6&7). The act of remembering the 'homeland' of the Sindh that they feel is no longer physically 'there' for Sindhis and portraying the Gibraltarian Sindhi community as being part of a displaced global movement has meant that this Sindhi community has brought it upon itself to instead bring the 'homeland' to Gibraltar by making themselves economically, socially, and spiritually successful as their ancestors in the Sindh would have been (Haller, 2005: 167). This has consequently given the Sindhi community of Gibraltar an added layer of cultural resilience and purpose,

which one can assume will serve to unite its members for generations to come, regardless of the circumstances they face.

### **Author Profile**

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