

# Indian Students In Canada Facing Myriad Challenges

Issues Include Cultural Adjustment, Cash Crunch, Food, Peer Relationships, Weather, Discrimination

Dr. Nivedita Das Kundu\*

Canada has become one of the most favored destinations for higher education for Indian students.

Presently, number of Indian students who are opting for higher education in Canada is on the rise. Recently, Canada has introduced faster and easier visa processing mechanisms for the Indian students.

United States of America's stance on immigration and concerns over racist incidents are bringing Indian students more to Canadian campuses. Now even the study permits for Canada are given faster than before under the "Student Direct Stream" program.

Three major Canadian cities i.e. Vancouver, Toronto and Calgary are mostly preferred by the Indian students to enroll in the universities and colleges.

Most popular fields of study for full-time international students from India are in the stream of engineering and related technologies, business management and public administration, mathematics, computer and information technologies and in physical and life sciences.

Indian students come to study in Canada with high hopes, when they enroll in a Canadian college or university for higher education. Many chose Canada because of the quality of education system and opportunities offered, but tuition fees become difficult to manage. The international students' tuition fee is on an average more than three times that of domestic students.

Besides tuition, once international students join the university or college, they face a number of



Indian Students - away from home in the hope of getting an advanced Western education and later settling in the country. Pic on left: Courtesy - Ruby Dhalla (Twitter); File pic on right - Courtesy - Conestoga College Blog/2016.

adversity and challenges.

### Adversity & Challenges

Indian students often experience adjustment challenges with the new culture, new atmosphere. Different food habits, attitudes, lifestyle, way of dressing and peer relationships become problematic to understand and it takes time to adjust.

Also, to understand different value systems, signs and symbols becomes difficult to acclimatize. Many times Indian students' faces prejudices and discrimination from their foreign counterparts in their social and academic lives.

They often suffer from exclusion. Although social discrimination is not encouraged in universities or colleges in Canada, but many times Indian students feel humiliated, neglected and ignored. Harsh climatic conditions are another problem that Indian students face initially as winter in Canada is much severe and longer than in India.

In communication also, they

face many problems. Initially, it becomes difficult to understand the local accents as well as, students feel shy to talk in their own accent.

It becomes even difficult for students to understand what their teachers are saying. Sometimes this affects their academic performances, and they feel depressed as well as discouraged.

Though Indian students are mostly well versed in English language, and they also clear TOEFEL or IELTS (test of English as a Foreign Language) before getting enrolled into the Canadian universities or colleges, but many times they face the problem as English words and phrases used are different.

Matching with the pace, accent and the tone of the language becomes problematic too. Home sickness is another major concern that Indian students often face while they come alone to study in Canada leaving their families and friends back home.

It becomes difficult for them to manage cooking, cleaning, washing along with the studies. A lot of time they feel stressed and lonely. Keeping up with the finances, become another major issue for the young students, as pursuing higher education in Canada is very expensive itself over and above, they have to take care of the accommodation cost, living expenses, books, cost of travel, etc. Many study programs does not even allow students to work.

### Trend

Most of the universities and colleges in Canada offer a variety of services and resources to help international students to succeed during their study period.

These services include student associations, the on-campus counseling center, recreational clubs, etc. Canada's express entry system, in fact, creates a pathway for skilled Indians to get fast-track Permanent Resident (PR) status and then citizenship.

For Indian students with degrees from Canadian institutions, the road to PR becomes faster under the Canadian experience entry system. Also, Canadian higher educational Institutions realized that attracting Indian students to Canada for higher education can become a good source for revenue generation.

Nonetheless, many Indian students return to India after finishing their studies due to hardship in getting suitable job with good pay package. While many Indian students are moving away from India to far away country like Canada, certain reality checks needs be done before taking such decisions.

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## The Funny Side

By Nury Vittachi

Five years ago I lived in a housing estate that was so safe that I didn't even own a front door key. Our only line of defence against evil was a confused dog which barked at family members and gave strangers a friendly licking.

(My wife tells me to be kind, since dogs have brains the size of walnuts, but I argue that a walnut would be cheaper and more effective, since you can throw it at people and it never needs its poop picked up. But whatever.)

Safe places to live were on my mind after a reader sent in a news report about what is being called

"the safest place in the world". Eibenthal is a village with a little church in the mountains of Romania. Inhabitants hang money in bags on lampposts. The baker passes by, takes the money and leaves food behind.

But there are super-safe places everywhere, if you know where to look. India has Shani Shingnapur, a low-crime town of 3,000 people in Maharashtra where houses don't even have doors, let alone locks.

This columnist wrote about it a few years ago when a bank was built there. Townsfolk ordered executives at UCO Bank to follow tradition and have no locks on its doors. The bankers thought

this was a bit unusual for a bank, but were willing to cooperate. You could imagine the discussion:

Townsfolk: "You must follow our tradition and not lock the doors of your bank."

Bankers: "Well, okay. It's your money."

Townsfolk: "Wait. Maybe we need to talk about this a bit more."

The only grumble came from local police, but they could have taken inspiration from Sark, an island near England which maintained a tiny security presence. In the 1970s it was invaded by France. The invasion fleet consisted of one Frenchman. The defending army consisted of a part-time policeman,

who arrested the Frenchman. As wars go, it was rather sweet. (You can't say that about a lot of wars.)

Even the US, which the media paints as a land of guns, has super-safe places. Wikipedia says top of the list is Irvine, California, which had 0.8 of a murder in the most recent year counted. How can you have 0.8 of a murder? Did the guy's hair survive or something?

Now here's the thing: You can create individual safe spots. Over the years, this column has received dozens of news reports about armed robbers who failed because their would-be crimes didn't fit the ambience.

Example: In 2012, a masked man

entered a bar in the Netherlands and levelled a gun at people inside. Lost in the usual fog of drink and chatter you find in European bars, they ignored him. The whole thing is on YouTube, including the deflated robber's sad exit.

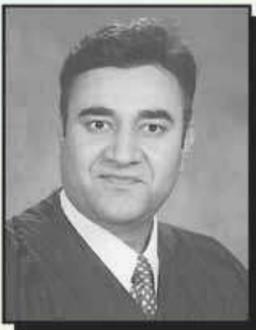
At a bank in Kowloon, Hong Kong, staff told a raider than they were far too busy to be robbed. He nodded and left the counter. The whole thing was marvellously civil.

Now I am not saying that our generation is creating a crime-free world. Given the propensity of snacks to disappear in this columnist's house, I can't even create a crime-free apartment. Who took my walnut?

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