

Brown and Blue



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Independent Learning Assignment

8th July 2020

Department of Politics

Contents

<u>PREFACE</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>HISTORY OF BRITISH INDIAN IMMIGRATION:</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>CASE STUDY: HARROW EAST</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>POLITICAL PARTIES</u>	<u>16</u>
<u>OTHER FACTORS</u>	<u>24</u>
<u>RECCOMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE</u>	<u>32</u>
<u>CONCLUSION:</u>	<u>37</u>

Preface

This paper explores the changes which have taken place to British Indian Voting behaviour over the past decade. British Indians and the changes to their voting behaviour are explored in-depth whilst considering a variety of key factors. These include economics, societal evolution, historical experience and religious teachings. Each factor is unique and has a distinct influence on how British Indians vote. However, most significantly they all combine to create the British Indian identity. The study uses Harrow East as an example of where specific changes have taken place. Whilst it is a local example, it holds relevance on a national scale. It is also crucial to show examples and evidence of electoral changes. Factors are also explained in the context of party policy. Specifically, how parties, directly or indirectly, have adapted the policies to fit the requirements of the British Indian population. The impact of the generational divide is also referenced within the context of historical immigration. As a result, it gives recommendations on how political parties can further engage with British Indians.

This project was inspired by my own political identity. I am a second-generation British Indian and actively campaign for the Conservative Party. The purpose of my project is to explore how my culture and political identity are related. Elections are the evidence of change, but this project explores sociological, historical and political entities. These combine to answer the question of why British Indians have changed in their voting behaviour. Further to this, I wanted to identify my own political factors that drive my decision-making process.

The project aims to show why British Indians are a crucial minority for elections and how complex they are. By presenting what motivates a British Indian's political choices it will also educate on how to win the vote of a British Indian.

Introduction

Behind the turbulence of the most surprising and unstable political decade ever there was a fundamental psephology change taking place. British Indians are the most populous and significant ethnic minority in Britain¹ and play a major role in defining our unique society. There are 1,451,862 British Indians² all of whom have their own unique story. Whilst British Indians are a limited percentage of the whole population they are concentrated in certain areas. This concentration means that in many urban constituencies they are a high percentage of voters. Individual constituencies are most affected by British Indians. British Indians have emigrated at different times, from different regions around the world and have different experiences; however, these experiences often define an individual's political identity. I am a British Indian and seeing the changes which have taken to place within my community have inspired me to explore our political identities. My father, mother, uncles, aunties and grandparents have all shown changing political opinion and thoughts. These changes are important to my family but also important in British politics. Politics in the United Kingdom will be affected by these changes. The voting behaviour of this populous minority has changed rapidly with a swing from the Labour Party towards a modern Conservative Party. However, the pervading question is why have these changes occurred?

Before embarking upon a forensic look at why we have seen voting behaviour change, it is vital to define some key ideas and terminology. A British Indian is a citizen of the United Kingdom who has significant Indian heritage. This heritage is incredibly diverse, with British Indians having emigrated over the past 400 years. This inevitably leads to different experiences of Britain and politics; voting behaviour is also affected by an individual's experiences of political, social, cultural and economic life in Britain. However, there are often misconceptions that British Indians are all Hindu. Only 44% of the British Indian population are practicing Hindus. Hence it is important to acknowledge that any surveys or references to British Hindus may refer to a minority of British Indians. The other 56% have a significant proportion of Sikhs and Muslims who generally come from specific regions within India. British Indian is a diverse and widespread term for a variety of different cultural, religious and political groups which cannot be taken as a single block vote. Individuals in this ethnic minority have all evolved differently; it is vital to understand that environmental factors are crucial when considering voting behaviour. Understandably, British Indians all have differing environmental factors and hence vote differently.

Ethnic minorities have generally favoured the Labour Party throughout electoral history. Labour recently claimed 77% of the ethnic minority vote in 2017³. Hence this has been an area in which Labour has relied upon. Labour internally and externally have faced criticisms for taking the ethnic minority vote for granted. They have shown a distinct lack of sensitivity when considering how policies will affect the ethnic minority communities. Often their specific policies have lost them support across all ethnic minorities. Chuka Umunna, a former Labour, Change UK and Liberal Democrat MP, accused his party of taking the vote "for granted."⁴ This stark acknowledgement of

¹ "Population of England and Wales by Ethnicity-Key Findings." Office for National Statistics, August 1, 2018 Accessed April 30th, 2020 <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/national-and-regional-populations/population-of-england-and-wales/latest#download-the-data>

² "Population of England and Wales by Ethnicity- Key Data." Office for National Statistics, August 1, 2018 Accessed April 30th, 2020 <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/national-and-regional-populations/population-of-england-and-wales/latest#download-the-data>

³ "Runnymede Election Briefing," Runnymede Trust, February 2012, Accessed 11th April 2020, <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/EMBESbriefingFINALx.pdf>

⁴ "Chuka Umunna: Labour shedding the support of ethnic minorities, warns MP," The Independent, January, 2016 Accessed April 14th 2020,

the party failing to understand the interests and requirements of these voters is a damning account of their behaviour. It is also important to acknowledge the failure of the Labour Party to promote ethnic minority candidates especially Indians. They chose no British Indian candidates for any key swing seats in 2019. Representation for British Indians across the Labour Party is limited; expanding this will help draw in voters. This failure to recognise the minority on a parliamentary level and a policy level is a disappointing failure. However generally, the Conservative party have made efforts with ethnic minorities. Whilst they are haunted by the racist history of Enoch Powell, who gave the infamous Rivers of Blood speech, they have shed this image by engagement with ethnic minorities. The importance of this cannot be understated; put simply no ethnic minority voter will vote for a party linked to open racism.

Before embarking upon the reasons why we have voting behaviour change it is important to provide evidence to exemplify the changes taking place. Whilst polling specifically for British Indians is severely limited- there are a few examples of polls which have been focused on British Indians and Hindus. The primary source is the Runnymede Trust which specialise in examining the electoral behaviour of ethnic minorities during elections. They acknowledged in their report on recent elections that there was a “noticeable change”⁵ in the voting behaviour of British Indians. Being the specialists in this area, they should be regarded as a trusted source of information. They show a significant narrowing of the gap between the Conservative Party and the Labour. The Conservative Party won 30% of the British Indian vote in 2010, a significant increase, however they won 40% in 2017. This is an increase of 140,000 votes. Increasingly, this has contributed to the significant improvement for the Conservative Party in the British Indian majority seats. These seats include Harrow East (used as a case study), Harrow West, Hendon, Watford, Finchley, Leicester South, Leicester North, Leicester East and Brent Central. In all these seats British Indians have caused either the Labour incumbents to be unseated or have a decreased majority in the last decade. The Runnymede Trust also argues that this is an “increased trend,”⁶ within the British Indian electorate; put simply more British Indians are voting Conservative. Hence, whilst we do not have exact statistics for 2019, we can expect British Indians to generally favour the Conservatives. The Runnymede Trust also use the largest data groups out of all the companies undertaking polls. They used 2,000 respondents which is a large sample. This increases the degree of accuracy by reducing the margin of error. However, there have also been other significant polls. The most recent is the You Gov and Optimus poll in 2019⁷. This poll was commissioned by Optimus, an Indian company and they teamed up with YouGov. They recorded a gap of only 4% between the two major parties; however, they found that the support was at the lowest levels of any polls. This is due to the “undecided” option which was placed. 18% chose this option and hence this support is likely to distribute between the major parties. Whilst it is the most recent poll and shows major declines to the Labour support and smaller declines to the Conservative support it is unlikely to be accurate. They only had 800 respondents which reduces the level of accuracy and is less representative. It is also widely accepted that the Conservative Party undertook a wide variety of new initiatives after this poll in November 2019. This is likely to have pushed more voters towards the Conservative Party. I will be referring to these initiatives later. The final poll to acknowledge is that of British

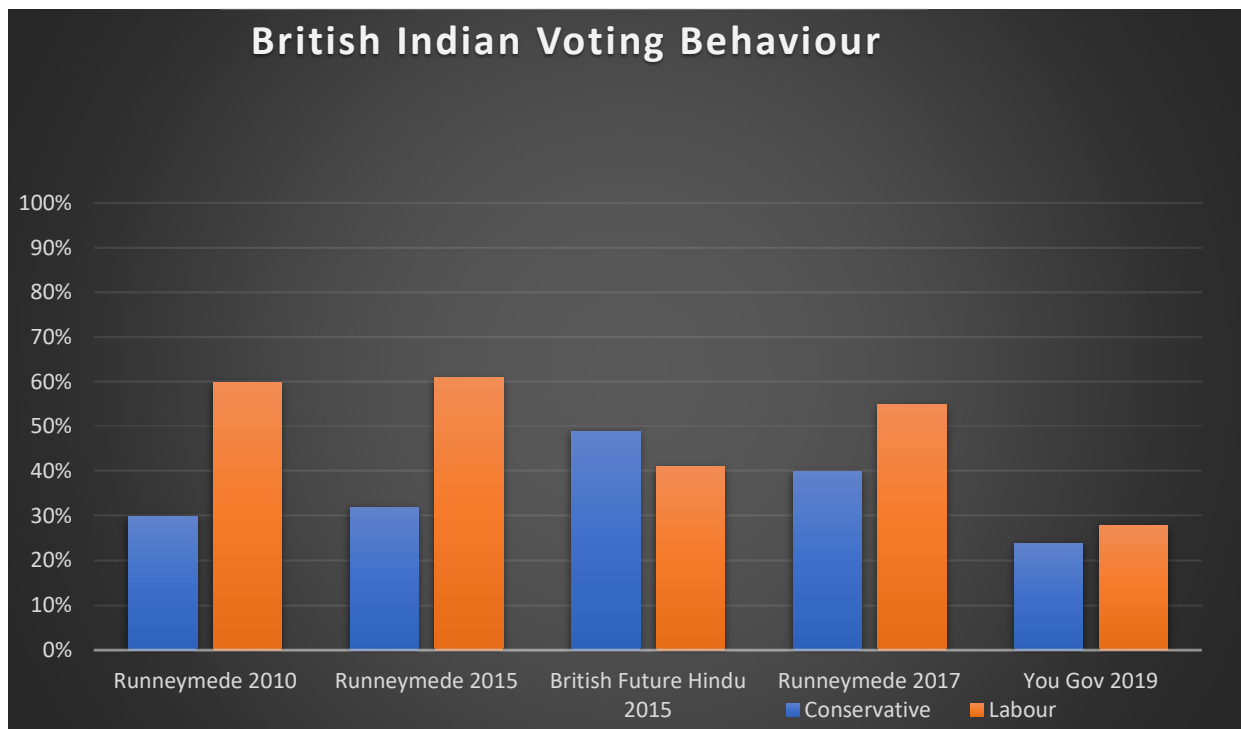
⁵ “Runnymede Trust 2017 Election Review”- Ethnic Minorities, February 2019 Accessed April 1st 2020, <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/2017%20Election%20Briefing.pdf>

⁶ “Runnymede Trust 2017 Election Review”- Ethnic Minorities, February 2019 Accessed April 1st 2020, <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/2017%20Election%20Briefing.pdf>

⁷ “First ever poll of British Indian voters reveals major decline in support for Labour”, October 2019, Accessed May 5th 2020, <https://indiaingroup.com/first-ever-poll-of-british-indian-voters-reveals-major-decline-in-support-for-labour-significant-swing-vote-up-for-grabs/>

Brown and Blue: An Assessment of British Indian Voting Behaviour

Future in 2015⁸. Whilst this poll only surveyed British Hindu's who, as I alluded to earlier, are only a small proportion of British Indians, it does provide useful insight. It shows an 8-point lead for the Conservatives amongst the British Hindus. This is significant as it is the only poll which shows a section of British Indians having a clear lead and could be evidence of the religious diversions within the British Indian community. Furthermore, a poll by the same company of British Sikhs, many of whom are British Indians as well, came out with a lead of 8% for the Conservatives again (despite being a small sample). Whilst the British Hindu poll is more significant as it was a large sample size of over 700 Hindus it shows that the two major ethnic religious groups are tending to the Conservatives. In conclusion, regardless of which poll you prefer or choose to believe the trend is that British Indians are voting more for the Conservatives. Whilst we can accept this the more interesting research is to find out why. Ultimately it is for a variety of political, social, economic, cultural and historical reasons which will not only shape the past but also the future of British society. However, this section demonstrates the stark changes which have taken place.



⁸ "New Research shows ethnic minority vote increasingly up for grabs," May 25th 2015, Accessed March 21st 2020, <http://www.britishfuture.org/articles/ethnic-minority-votes-up-for-grabs/>

History of British Indian Immigration:

Indians from all around the world have emigrated to Britain during the past 500 years; this emigration has occurred ever since the British set foot in India. Colonialism brought legal and cultural rights to Indians. At the time, these rights were a revolutionary idea; that the “savage world,” could be attributed as British. The meaning of being an Indian changed with the actions of the East Indian Company and later the British Monarchy and Government. This section will show the diversity, value, and understanding that British Indians brought to this country and how their experiences have shaped their unparalleled political identity. It is vital to acknowledge the history of immigration. It is a history which at points has been turbulent, difficult, and traumatic. Much of the immigration has affected the British Indian voting behaviour today; especially that of the older generation. It will also show the wider integration and challenges faced by the modern British Indian community.

The East Indian company kicked off immigration to Britain through its requirement to have “lascars.” These are men from the subcontinent who replaced British crewmen who passed away on the journey. Ultimately, they are Indian sailors who were picked up and brought over to Britain. Generally, the men came from the vital port cities of Goa and Bombay. Being South Indians, they had very different lifestyles to those of the North; they at the time were better suited to the industrial and naval lifestyle of Britain. The skills they picked up from the hustling ports in the area were easily transferred over to Britain. However, on the other side were the Indian servants who were brought back with their wealthy owners. They included nannies, cooks, and gardeners. These wealthy families who went out to the new subcontinent and wanted the continuity for their children but also the undeniably delicious food only the cooks from India could make. However, there is unsurprisingly a list of horror stories; British soldiers committed atrocities like rape, murder, and sexual assault. Often, there was a child born out of those horrors who was sent back to Britain to live as a mixed-race child. Whilst regularly they were told they were not Indian and forced to hide it, there was the occasional success story, such as an individual setting up an Indian home here in Britain. Many children also came from marriages, soldiers had with women from the subcontinent and sent children and wives back to England. These were the original Indians living in Britain sometimes by force sometimes, by choice. Many of the families today can credit these amazing men and women with their origin. However, politically they were never involved as voting at the time was severely limited and hence, they never got the political opportunities. Many also lost their Indian identity with children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren marrying British partners due to the lack of Indians in the country. Many lost their heritage and it is now estimated thousands of Britain’s are unaware of this heritage. One of the key reasons why these sailors were required to settle down was the Navigation Act of 1660. It restricted the number of non-English sailors when traveling as a crew, and hence many Indians were required to stay, live, and settle in Britain.

However, another significant factor during this period was the scholarly immigration. The first recorded scholar of Indian origin to make the journey was: I’tisam-ud-din. He was a Bengali Muslim who in 1765 made the journey to Europe as a cleric, diplomat, and employee of the East Indian company. He famously wrote the Treaty of Allahabad. He returned to Asia after three years of living in Europe, as did many of the scholars at this time. The scholars took back culturally British Ideas to Indians but rarely laid down roots in Europe and established families.

In the 19th century, thousands of lascars, servants, and scholars came over to Britain in search of work and a better life. It is estimated 8,000 lascar sailors⁹ came over to Britain in this period. They

⁹ Vibram (2002), *Asians in Britain* pp. 254-269

lived and worked throughout Britain due to the East Indian Company and wealthy aristocratic families giving them the opportunity. Before World War II the Indian Congress conducted a survey and estimated there were 7,128 British Indians in 1931¹⁰. This is a number that rapidly increased after World War II. Ultimately the conclusion on the immigrants who came to Britain post-WW1 is that they have often integrated into British Culture and statistics. Boris Johnson's great-grandfather was a Muslim who most likely came from India- yet he today is classed as a White British voter. Many of these immigrants are now in 6th and 7th generations in Britain and have hence lost their heritage. For those who retain, it is a very small proportion and hence they are generally described as "Anglo-Indians." This is a term to describe someone whose prevailing heritage is British but does have some minor Indian routes. Normally these voters are classed as "White" under surveys and hence for this piece I will do the same.

It is also important to acknowledge another significant, but indirect migration caused by imperialism. The British were very active in Africa; especially in areas such as Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania. Thousands of Indians were encouraged to travel to Africa to work and live there. These African Asians often ended up in Britain after some horrific events.

Post-WW2 the major development in this period was the British Nationality Act 1948. Established under the governments of Clement Atlee it enabled 800,000 Commonwealth migrants to come, live and work in Britain visa-free. It was a historic step in acknowledging the remnants of the empire. It allowed these migrants to be citizens of the United Kingdom. Whilst being a historic act, it did not intend for there to be general mass migration. Selfishly, they wanted to fill the gaps in the NHS, textile industry, and manual labour industry. The first instance of mass migration was in 1947 when partition took place in India. This was a bloody separation between Pakistan and India. It was the beginning truly of the Muslim and Hindu divide. Indians from throughout the country, but mainly Punjab, came over to Britain and settled in the Northern counties such as Lancashire and Yorkshire. In an interview I had with Lord M Desai he spoke in length about the nature of these immigrants. He stressed they were "factory workers, allocated council homes, and joined the working class." These immigrants are the core Indian Labour voters. As I will continue to stress, they joined the traditional workers party as they were manual workers when they came to Britain. They came and were part of generally lower and working classes. They did not become professional. Generally, they remained in the underprivileged north. What is also crucial to note about these immigrants in the 1950s is that they suffered greatly from racism. They suffered from riots such as those in Notting Hill in 1958 and were battle-hardened. This continued to push towards Labour who were more sympathetic to these workers. I also had the privilege of speaking to Cllr. Reena Ranger who, in an interview with me, stressed that many of these workers came "heavily unionised industry and hence inevitably affected experiences." Working in an unionised job they were exposed to Labour ideas and philosophy. They have passed this down through generations and hence this where Labour picks up many of the votes. The final important thing to note is the loyalty of this group to "the person who let them in." Clement Atlee and his Labour Government gave them safe passage and hence they vote for his party out of sheer loyalty. British Indians are proud to have had the opportunity to come to this country and work. Many of them could only dream of this so it has enabled them to flourish. In modern times these Indians often reside in Manchester, Birmingham, Leicester, and Derby. Indians generally are very urbanised with 97% of Indians living in urban¹¹ settings, hence it unsurprising to see this statistic. This has also contributed to the voting behaviour, as Labour famously control urban areas

¹⁰ Hutton, J.H, ed. (1931). *Census of India*. Government of India. p. 78.

¹¹ "A Portrait of Modern Britain" Policy Exchange, 2014, Accessed April 30th, 2020, <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/a-portrait-of-modern-britain.pdf>

with them winning all the Birmingham seats, Derby seats, and Manchester seats in 2019. Leicester, for example, has 28% British Indians. The majority living there as they were the 1940s and 1950s immigrants and still vote Labour. Overall, this is the band that Labour find they can rely, unlike the later Indian immigrants who are more flexible voters.

There was a period of immigration in the early 1960s and these were generally specialised workers. Gujarati's from the Gujrat region came over to Britain to work in textile industries. These regional workers specialised with this kind of skill. Hence, they came over here to utilise those skills in the booming textiles market. They were generally based in Bolton, Blackburn, Manchester, and Lancaster. They again fitted in with the working-class motive described by Lord M Desai, and they retained themselves as a Labour's stronghold.

However, British Indian immigration is a complex beast with there being multiple waves. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, there were two repulsive acts in former colonies that violently removed all Asian Africans. The first of these was in Kenya, where Jomo Kenyatta began a policy of Africanisation in 1963. This involved forcing Asians to surrender British Citizenship and claim Kenyan Citizenship. However out of 180,000 British Asians fewer than 20,000¹² submitted these applications. Some Africans now began to turn on the Asians, brutally enforcing Africanisation. They would favour Black Africans for jobs and fire Asians. The Kenyan Immigration Act 1967 forced Asians to get work permits and they began to suffer as a community. At this point they were still able to emigrate to Britain and they did rapidly. Kenyan Asians, like my grandparents raced to make it to Britain. Life at this time had become dangerous in Kenya. Jomo Kenyatta had begun to rapidly expand Africanisation and these Asians often suffered greatly. Kenyan Asians settled across the country, however many settled in the areas surrounding Heathrow Airport. This where they either flew into and hence it was natural to settle around here. It explains how areas like Hounslow, Brent, and Harrow have become so populous with Indians. However, whilst London was the central base, Manchester and Cardiff also saw high populations. These communities often spread out quite heavily; they maintained smaller familial units rather than whole communities. Kenyan Asians were generally professionals however often had to take lower-skilled jobs. The desire they had to prosper has seen this generation rise through the cracks and grow in society. They now often have higher-skilled jobs and are economically prosperous. There were limitations and difficulties on immigration during this period- the Commonwealth Immigration Act 1962 was introduced by the Conservative Party as a response to growing public pressure over mass migration. It said that employment vouchers would be required for entry- however it failed to regulate effectively. The lack of enforcement meant it was still relatively easy for Kenyan Asians to make it to Britain. The Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1968 went further to restrict immigration however again failed to do so fully due to a lack of clarity on how to handle illegal immigrants. The Act passed Parliament in three days out of direct fear that these Kenyan Asians- all 200,000- would enter Britain. Many had made it before the Act however it did prevent immigration from Kenya until 1971. This caused many Kenyan Asians to become apathetic to the Labour government at the time and suffer severely in Kenya. These experiences explain why this cross-section of British Indians generally moves towards voting Conservative especially those in the south. Those in the North are swing voters who vote on individual concerns. Ultimately this group of Kenyan Asians is our intermediaries between the early Labour Indians and the later East African Indians. They are swinging voters who generally determine where much of the British Indian vote goes.

¹² Daniel Rothchild, *Racial Bargaining in Independent Kenya* (London, 1973) p.188

However, the next and final significant wave of immigration was that of Ugandan Asians. Uganda was a former British colony which saw a violent dictator in Idi Amin spring up in 1971. He was torn by the idea Africans were being neglected for the more prosperous Asians at the time and felt that he, like Jomo Kenyatta, had to take on a policy of Africanization. This policy was incredibly brutal and began by physically taking possession of these Asians and often ended in rape or sexual assault. However, his Africanization policy was based under the pretext of economic rebalancing- Ugandan Asians were the most prosperous ethnic group and owned many large-scale businesses. On August 8th, 1972 Idi Amin issued a decree giving the 60,000 Asians 90 days to leave the country. This rapid explosion caused 30,000 British Asians with British citizenship to flee to Britain. The dangerous story of the route is told by Lord Dolar Popat in his book – A British subject¹³. He describes making it through four checkpoints in order to get to the airport, he was searched and had belongings stolen. This is the very real story for 30,000 Uganda Asians who made it to the country. These Ugandan Asians were aided by Ted Heath and the British governments who gave them safe passage out of Uganda by commissioning special planes. Then they worked hard to find areas like Harrow, Hounslow, Hendon, and Southall for them reside and gave them jobs and protections. These Ugandan Asians have been supported by the Conservative party on every step of their journey and hence many of them hold these loyalties true today. They also began in jobs that were lower paid but the desire to reach the standard of living which they had in Uganda encouraged them further. They had been the wealthiest society in Uganda and have tried to replicate this in the United Kingdom. Their skills as business owners and entrepreneurs shone through as they rose through British society.

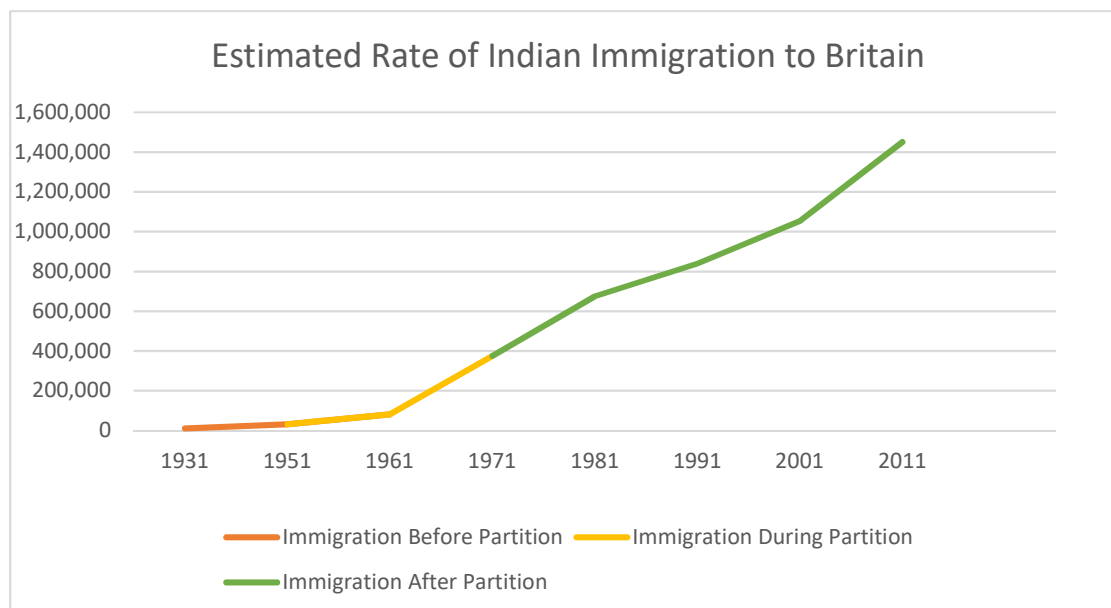
During this time there were also large numbers of illegal immigrants and undocumented immigrants. Throughout the late 60s and early 70s, those from Africa who were unable to come into Britain under the 1968 Commonwealth Immigration Act often tried to enter anyway. This was due to the limited provisions for deporting illegal immigrants. One such person who tried this is my maternal grandfather. In 1970 he travelled from Uganda to Britain amid fears Uganda would not provide the best home for his family. Whilst he came with seven friends and was detained illegally, his wife and two children headed to Kenya to be with family. He was at first detained at Harmondsworth Immigration Centre after landing at Heathrow Airport. After a process of interview and application, he was finally given the right to stay in the United Kingdom under the Conservative Government. He and his group of friends split up, some remained in London, others like my uncle went to Cardiff but he went to Manchester as he had wider relations there. For a year he grafted at manual labour and finally in 1971 he was able to legally bring his wife and kids. This is a true story and provides an example of the torture these families went through. As his grandchild, I am proud of his history and respect the suffering he went through to get his family the better life they deserved. Politically, he has always respected the idea the conservatives gave him the chance to enter Britain. However inevitably Enoch Powell and other influences have come into play and hindered his vote. How could he justify voting for a party which was openly racist...?

So, the story of the Ugandan and Kenyan immigrants comes together to give us the African Asians of the 60s and 70s who have integrated into our society. They are now the generally more Conservative voting because of who provided the opportunities. It is also important to acknowledge that the voters I describe here are the older generation- those grandfathers and grandmothers who now vote and live in Britain. They still remember these ties and base loyalties accordingly. Hence it is justified that these older voters of their generation see the wholly important factor in voting as the history.

¹³ Lord Dolar Popat (2019), A Very British Subject- How to Make it as an immigrant in the best country in the world.

Therefore, the next conclusion to make is that it is virtually impossible to change these voter preferences. You can't change history simply and this is what matters to these voters.

¹⁴The next phase in British Indian immigration is in more recent times- those who have come to Britain in the past 30 or 40 years. Here has been no such "flood" of Asian migration at one sustained time but individuals or groups joining their families. One such was my dad, who came to Britain in 1983 as a 10-year old boy without his parents. He joined his uncles and aunts from Tanzania where his family moved to escape the terror of Idi Amin. His parents were unable to come but they wanted a better future and education for their children. Education is an important theme amongst British Indians and one I will refer to later. He experienced Britain during the Thatcherite Era of aspiration; this influenced his future as he tried to set up a better life for his family. I am proud of the links between my party and my heritage; it strongly supports my personal conservative belief in meritocracy and aspiration. Aspiration is a key theme throughout British India history and has inevitably influenced political choice. Many of this generation to come are now still working with children and many are professionals. Whilst my father, a Gujarati Indian, works in finance, many modern dentists are Gujarati's and have been encouraged down this path. Hence, they are professionals, earning good money. They are politically very much swinging voters who look at the parties based on merits. Whilst history is important to them, they examine the facts which policies benefit them, which parties align with them, and most importantly where will they get the best result. British Indian population figures have been growing in the past two decades. However, this is more significant down to the generation now having children rather than immigration. These 2nd and 3rd generation Indians like myself will politically decide for themselves. They might have influences from lifestyle and status but primarily base decisions upon their experiences.



Indian immigration to Britain has an overarching effect on voting behaviour and is simply down to the generational change. Generally, those immigrants who came before independence have integrated so effectively into British Culture, they do not appear statistically Indian. On the graph on the next page they are represented by the red line and hence represent a small percentage of the

¹⁴ Hutton, J.H, ed. (1931). *Census of India*. Government of India. p. 78.

total ever Indian immigration into Britain. Hence, for the purposes of this project are not part of the voting behaviour I have explored.

However, there is some immigration that occurred during the partition years which has affected British Indian voting behaviour significantly. The line graph below which is highlighted in yellow shows the immigrants from India who have begun to settle and work out lives. Hence, they can be counted as British Indians statically. Their heritage has pushed them towards voting Labour through the work of Clement Atlee. However, it is only those directly affected by allowance into the country who are truly guided by this. Children and grandchildren in some instances have moved away from the Labour Party in recent elections. Labour, however, have secured the older Indian vote as part of this generation. Their actions over the partition and the value of unionised jobs has won them the older voter but not the younger in Indian vote. It is also important to remember the majority of British Indians are younger (younger British Indians are also more likely to be politically active) and hence they have more significant electoral effects.

Finally, there are the East African and later migrants. They are shown by the green line and are the most significant group out of all the migrants. They are over 70% of the total Indian Immigration¹⁵ and hence are the significant part of the voters. The elder generation who immediately managed to make it to Britain during the reigns of terror in Africa must thank Ted Heath and the Conservatives for allowing them in and hence are loyal to that party. However, the actions of Enoch Powell did reduce this loyalty by simple logic. As an outright racist in the Conservative Party he was unlikely draw in ethnic minority votes. On the other hand, anyone who is second, third, fourth generations have generally gained independence from this historical voting tendency. They vote based on other factors that I will further explore in this project. Indian Immigration is something which Britain should be proud of- we have allowed a new community to foster into British culture and politics. They play a significant part in our multicultural and diverse democracy. As an influence they are begun to grow economically and politically; this will continue to be explored throughout the project.

¹⁵ Hutton, J.H, ed. (1931). *Census of India*. Government of India. p. 78.

Case Study: Harrow East

Harrow East is a constituency based in North London which is a prime example of where the Conservatives have won the British Indian vote. As a constituency Harrow East was formed in 1945, due to the boundary changes of Hendon and Harrow which combined to create this seat. It is important to acknowledge this seat is linked with Harrow West and they both are linked to Harrow Borough Council. It is a seat with a heavy British Indian population. As you can see from the table below, 6 out of 9 wards have a majority British Indians population with an average percentage of 40.42% and a total number of 35,137 British Indians. Hence it is a prime example to show what has happened at a local council level but also the general change on a national level.

Ward Area	Number of British Indians ¹⁶	Percentage of Local Population	Majority of British Indians	Number of Conservative Councillors
Belmont	5,292	46.65%	YES	3
Cannons	4,354	34.91%	NO	3
Harrow Weald	3,548	31.19%	NO	3
Kenton East	6,755	60.65%	YES	2
Kenton West	6,745	60.37%	YES	2
Queensbury	7,489	62.49%	YES	0
Stanmore Park	3,259	29.02%	NO	3
Wealdstone	4,420	38.79%	YES	0

What the census shows is that British Indians are the most prominent minority in the constituency, and they will inevitably shape the political landscape. Many have emigrated to Britain in the 1960s and 1970s and Harrow was a place where many settled. However, through relationships, we have seen children and second and third-generation Indians drive these numbers up. Hence this explains the earlier rise in the British Indian population.

On a local level, the council in Harrow is made up of Harrow East and Harrow West. The overall council is narrowly in favour of the Labour party overall however if you consider just Harrow East wards the Conservatives have 16/27 seats. However, whilst Labour holds the council by 35 to 28 in the specific Harrow East wards there is a Conservative majority; the Labour majority comes from Harrow West. However, on the local level, I have spoken to Cllr Ameet Jogia who is a Conservative in the Cannons Ward. He stressed that in the recent by-election in the Kenton East Ward during April 2017, Nitesh Hirani (the Conservative candidate) gained the seat from Labour. He stressed the importance of this swing towards the Conservative Party and the fact there was a 19.5% swing. On a local level, this is an example of the major movement towards the Conservative party and representative of British Indians moving towards the Conservative Party. Kenton East is 60% British Indian and hence any swing is most likely to be based around this minority. Therefore, the evidence shows the radical changes in this swing constituency; these changes have been instigated by British Indian behaviour.

The council results show that in areas like Kenton East, Kenton West and Belmont all with Indian majority they have majority Conservative Councillors. Hence there is a correlation in this area between the number of Indians and the number of Conservative Councillors. Considering this council

¹⁶ "Population of England and Wales by Ethnicity-Key Findings." Office for National Statistics, August 1, 2018 Accessed April 30th, 2020 <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/national-and-regional-populations/population-of-england-and-wales/latest#download-the-data>

Brown and Blue: An Assessment of British Indian Voting Behaviour

overall is Labour it is further evidence that British Indians in Harrow East have started voting Conservative overall.

Firstly, historically this has been a swing seat. From 1945 to 1950 they had a Labour MP, then until 1966, they voted as a majority Conservative. However, at this time it was a majority British constituency because as the earlier story told there had not been any migration at this time! Evidently then it does not reflect British Indian voting behaviour. In 1966 Labour won and then in 1970- 1997 it was a Conservative seat. However, during this period, it is important to acknowledge the British Indian population was still small. There had been many immigrants settling in Harrow after the waves from East Africa, but they were still the minority ethnic group. It is difficult to get exact results, as the first census results which can be relied upon are in 1991. Hence, we can only make educated guesses which have been done via immigration numbers. During this period, the methods for recording immigration were not effective. Therefore, we do not know the exact number of migrants during this period; most figures are estimates. However, the Indians were still outnumbered by the British electorate in Harrow East. So, despite the immigration they did not have significant electoral effects. However, in the future years, as these Indian families grew, they have taken however the constituency. Hence, in 1997 the seat turned Labour and in 2010 back to the Conservatives. The seat has interestingly followed the national trend and generally except for 1974, has been representative of the government.

It is also interesting to understand that the Labour MP between 1997 and 2010 was Tony McNulty. I was lucky enough to have some significant comments from him in which he described his actions in the constituency. He recalls his actions in understanding what mattered to the community. His actions have set a precedent for good electoral practice in this community. In his comments to me he describes firstly getting involved in Navratri, Diwali and Aarti celebrations. His knowledge of local Hindu and Indian customs is impressive. By immersing himself within the community he does begin to gain the trust of British Indians. His understanding of their actions and mindset enables him to work with their holistic and social concerns. The immersion within the community and understanding of religious differences and significance is vital to his success as an MP. This is an idea I will touch on later in the report. He has done this further by understanding religious difference in the community. Lord Swaminarayan is a major differential within the wider Hindu movement. Some followers especially those with African backgrounds are very devout while other Hindus do not believe in this God. Tony McNulty acknowledges that in his work he has showed sensitivity to these differences. The precedent of his actions includes setting up the Labour Friends of India who aim to rally the British Indian vote. He is a primary example of excellent electoral practice within the British Indian community. While an MP he also tried to understand the Pujaris. These are the religious leaders within Hinduism and have culturally sensitive roles. He understood and reacted to these as an MP. It is impressive to see the engagement with the local community and they do return the favour! He also sets the stage for the future interaction by Bob Blackman on a local level and David Cameron on a national level.

The significance of British Indians has been seen since 1997. They were the largest group in that period and voted in the Labour candidate. Thus, it changed to Bob Blackman MP in 2010. Therefore, British Indians as the consensus showed have driven towards the Conservative party in 2010. It is important to examine the results in the past four general elections.

Brown and Blue: An Assessment of British Indian Voting Behaviour

Year of Election	Swing to the Conservatives
2010	+6.1%
2015	+5.7%
2017	-0.9%
2019	+5.0%

Except for 2017, there has always been a movement towards the Conservatives in the past 10 years and this is significantly down to British Indians. In an interview I had with Bob Blackman the local Conservative MP, he discussed the importance of the British Indian vote and the “incredibly hard” effort to gain these votes. He has valued the British Indian vote in winning him four consecutive elections in this constituency and puts a lot of the work by his British Indian community down to this. He describes his visits to Neasden temple and Diwali celebrations as a very important part of the engagement with the local community. It is important to acknowledge this as a local factor in swinging the vote in Harrow East. Many factors which Bob Blackman has exploited on a local level have been exploited on a national level by Theresa May, Boris Johnson and particularly David Cameron. So concludingly on a national level British Indians have voted for the Conservatives in recent years and switched from Labour. Excluding 2017, Bob Blackman has always increased his majority with a minimum of 5%. The British Indians have always been representative of the government of the day except in 1974; which whilst holding limited value is an interesting representation of them. However, why on a local and national level has this change happened?

It is firstly important to say the national factors I intend to explore over the later course of this research do apply to do this local area. They have often been very parallel to many of the sociological, political and economic factors which have drawn the voters towards the conservative party. However, there are a couple of key things I want to mention which especially apply to Harrow East:

Firstly, is the action of Bob Blackman the local MP in Harrow East has made huge efforts to engage with the Hindu communities. Harrow East is around 35% Hindu population and Bob Blackman has made numerous efforts to engage with these voters. By hosting the Hindu Forum of Britain 2018 he showed real engagement and understanding of integrating with the major electorate he faces. He worked and integrated with British Hindus to try and gain their votes; it is a very effective and clever tactic. By making this a public forum he learned and understood what was required and used this effectively locally and nationally. By learning the concerns, he created links that will become long term. However, it is not just this interaction in the forum but also the interaction at actual Diwali and temple-based events. As I mentioned earlier in his interview with me, he stressed the importance of this interaction with the community on their turf - he has been going to temples since the 1990s and this has been a clear local plan. He has actively engaged with his local community and deserves to represent them as their Member of Parliament.

There has been controversy over the Hindu events he hosted. In 2017 he hosted Tappan Gosh, an anti-Muslim nationalist. The Times heavily criticised him in an article critiquing Mr Gosh for supporting the Rohingya Genocide and Mr Blackman’s insensitivity. There is no justification for the comments Mr Gosh made and opinions which are simply disgusting. I feel it was misjudged to invite him to somewhere as significant as the House of Commons. My support for Mr Blackman and the superb actions he has generally undertaken does not change - but it is right to condemn this mistake. However, the condemnation over the Hindu Forum where another Hindu nationalist who was notably much less controversial spoke is redundant. They were representing the governing party in India and those views- which are legitimate in India- must be heard.

Finally, the other important issue to discuss is Caste Politics. This issue is a hotly debated topic in Harrow East as a political controversy. Uma Kumaran has wildly accused Bob Blackman in the 2015 election of playing this game. He has been accused of pitting castes against each other. Further to this, he is accused of telling British Hindus the election was based around the caste system. Lord Dolar Popat has also been implicated by this and accused of using similar tracts. She has widely sanctioned this as “gutter politics,”¹⁷ She has referenced the leaflet to the left which shows the level of caste distribution. This leaflet was distributed by Mukesh Narkar, a Conservative Party member, and a believer in caste discrimination. She argued this was a direct order of the Conservative party against her and others. She claimed the leaflet makes her fear the politics that was taking place in the area where she grew up.



Whilst any suggestions of caste politics are entirely unacceptable, and this leaflet is undeniably abhorrent. It is embarrassing that a Conservative Party member would do this. However, it is clear that this is not a directive from the party and not a directive from Mr Blackman. The suggestion from the Labour Party and Ms Kumaran is incorrect and unjustified. Cllr Ameet Jogia, in my interview with him, described it as “scaremongering.” From interviewing and researching this issue I strongly believe it is not a genuine problem. I am a Hindu and have no interest in the caste system and neither does much of my family. It is not an issue parties should be engaging with, and it is morally wrong. Individual actions ought to be condemned but it is incorrect to assume that it is automatically from the party.

In conclusion, Harrow East is an amazing example of British Indians turning the elections towards the Conservative party. Bob Blackman has a lot to be thankful for as these minorities have pushed them towards a victory. They are the central reason for his success as the majority group in Harrow East. Hence it is a great example. There is also the basis for ideas that have been implemented nationwide to try and gain this vote. The Conservative group here have worked closely to address the British Indian concerns and issues and respected them. It is a great example of the changes we see on a national level which will be explored in more detail. This example of skilful electioneering should be acknowledged by all parties. Harrow East has been a fascinating constituency for those exploring the actions of this minority.

¹⁷ “The Campaigns trying to turn British Indians against each other,” 10 December 2019, Accessed May 14th 2020, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/opendemocracyuk/campaigns-trying-turn-british-indians-against-each-other/>

Political Parties

WHY NOT LABOUR

As well as considering why voters move towards the Conservative Party we also need to look at why the voters have moved away from the Labour Party. British Indians, as I established earlier, have generally voted Labour over the majority of their history. However, something has drawn them to the Conservative Party and equally importantly away from Labour. Hence, it is vital to realise both sides of the debate. Primarily, Labour has changed key policies in areas like Kashmir, religious matters, economics and education; all these issues are significant to the British Indian community. All of these issues have pushed away British Indians in the past 10 years all at different times. This section will focus on the direct mistakes of Labour regarding religious and ethnic conflict. Other party policy will be discussed when exploring the policies which matter to British Indians in later sections. Hence, this section will identify simply what the Labour Party has done wrong.

The first and most important issue is that of Kashmir. Kashmir is a volatile situation in a region of India and Pakistan which has never been stabilised. India and Pakistan both claim the whole of the region despite it currently being split. Whilst India generally runs the region, it is a Muslim majority region so many do feel it is unjust control. The Indian Government on the 23rd of September 2019 led by Narendra Modi, revoked Kashmir's special status to the shock of the international world. However, India refuses to acknowledge that it is an international issue along with many British Indians. It is important to remember this issue is very significant to British Indians and Lord M Desai in his interview with me acknowledged this very strongly. Hence any developments on Kashmir can significantly affect how British Indians behave electorally.

The first significant development in the story of the Labour Party and Kashmir came in 2009 when David Miliband, foreign secretary under Gordon Brown, wrote an ill-informed article for the Guardian in which he discussed Kashmir. The fervent rule is that nobody should get involved in accordance with India's ideals. British Indians were inevitably disappointed when this interference occurred. In the prominent editorial, The Hindu, described it as an "ill-conceived foray."¹⁸ The Independent went even further to call it a "disaster."¹⁹ So immediately the mistake of Miliband, which he also made on his trip to India as foreign secretary, began the decline of the party's ill-fated policy.

Labour however, have always been active in the Kashmir issue as Lord M Desai acknowledged. As someone who was active at Labour Party Conference, he said that there were always "resolutions from constituencies, some pro-Pakistan, some Pro-Indian," submitted and then debated and a natural resolution proposed. It was a "minority issue." However in 2019 there was a significant yet alarming reaction.

The Kashmir Motion at the 2019 Labour Party Conference in Brighton was a significant area of frustration from British Indian voters when interacting with the Labour Party. As previously established, Kashmir is important to British Indians as many of them have strong feelings on the

¹⁸ "Ill-Conceived Foray," 2009, accessed May 8th 2020, <https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/ill-conceived-foray/article16354338.ece> -

¹⁹ "Milibands Trip to India a disaster after Kashmir Gaffe", 2019, accessed May 7th 2020, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/politics/milibands-trip-to-india-a-disaster-after-kashmir-gaffe-1418914.html>

subject. Hence as this motion was implicitly in support of Pakistan it inevitably angered the British Indian community. The motion, which appeared on the Tuesday of the Conference, particularly angered British Indians with comments including “self-determination,” and “international observers enter the region.” Kashmir is a Muslim majority so India votes against self-determination as it would lead to Pakistan taking over. Many Indians also feel the historical balance belongs to India and hence they were frustrated to hear this. However, significantly the second part was the most frustrating. Kashmir is an internal dispute in the eyes of India, and hence sending in international observers would disagree with this - it implies it is an international issue. This has caused many British Indians to move away from the Labour Party and the electoral statistics back this up. However Lord M Desai disagreed with this - he argued that “it got more coverage in India than the UK.” However, it may not have got mainstream media access in the UK but Indian communities have a “WhatsApp trend”. Many families use WhatsApp as key communicating methods and socially spread messages on the platform. There was a widely shared message with this, proclaiming the Labour Party as pro-Pakistan. As this circulated through the families and communities many voters moved towards the Conservative party. WhatsApp messages are significant in other areas later. I believe this did affect the voting patterns and behaviours of British Indians despite Lord M Desai arguing otherwise. It is a significant factor. This was topped off by Jeremy Corbyn tweeting “The rights of Kashmiri People need to be respected.” He again argued for self-determination and pushed Indians further away. I would also suggest here the official 2019 figures, when they are released, will clearly show British Indians being frustrated by this motion despite the desperate attempts of Ian Lavery. He sent British Indians a letter urging them to “not be alarmed,” by this movement. However, Kashmir will continue to show movement away from the Labour party.

There are many consequences of this in the religious field which I acknowledged in my introduction to this section. Whilst they are the same thing from a different angle they push Indians and the Labour Party away. Firstly, the Labour party can be seen as an “anti-Hindu” party. It is important to understand that this would be in direct opposition to the pro-Hindu government in India. Before continuing I will caveat this by saying that this applies to the 44% of Hindus who are British Hindus and practicing- evidently they will be significantly affected. The Hindu Council a significant body for British Indian Hindus and has openly called the Labour party under Jeremy Corbyn's “racist and anti-Hindu.” Evidently, if I am a Hindu and have been told that the Labour Party is against my religion, to the point of being racist, I would not vote for them. Even more significant I would tell others not to vote for them and this is the basis and the WhatsApp messages which are sent out amongst the community. Hence, they do not just lose one vote from this but multiple- this is the ripple effect within the community. The significance of Anil Bhanot, the Director of the Hindu Council, cannot be understated. He is well respected in the Hindu community and was the “Hindu representative” at the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. He is regarded by Buckingham Palace and the Government as the authority within the Hindu community and hence his comments will be taken in the utmost seriousness.

There is lingering frustration over the partition mistakes made by Britain and India as a whole. Generally, Governments and parties have avoided the India and Pakistan to avoid offending the memories of partition. Labour are the first party in years to interfere in the relationship. This also frustrated many British Indians.

Labour has also been accused of being Pro-Islamic and Pro-Pakistan. Whilst there is historical tension between Muslims and Hindus due to the atrocities which took place after partition, I believe that these in modern Britain have been pushed aside. In modern-day Britain, these tensions are at worst simmering below the surface but most likely to be non-existent. I do not condone the WhatsApp

messages widely spread in Hindu communities which are Islamophobic. There is a more pressing issue of accusing Jeremy Corbyn, as leader of the Labour Party, taking them to a pro-Islamic standpoint. I don't believe this to be the case despite sites like the Spectator, Daily Mail and Sun all shouting about it. Jeremy Corbyn does not favour Islamists over other religions - he has regularly condemned examples of Muslim and Hindu mistakes. I am not a Corbynite by any means but these claims have no basis- his Kashmir stance, whilst not aiding his electoral cause to any degree is not on a religious basis. Hence, this should be dismissed as scaremongering and fake news.

It is also important to acknowledge the indirect effect of Anti-Semitism on ethnic minorities in general. Labour and especially Jeremy Corbyn have faced significant difficulties over anti-semitism over the past 5 years. It stems from the culture of the constituency parties and has infiltrated the wider systems and structures. For British Indians who have faced significant amounts of racism during their lives they have the ability to empathise with those who have also faced racism. The Jewish faith are undeniably uncomfortable within the Labour Party. British Indians are uncomfortable voting for a party which in anyway is perceived of slightly racist. Hence, they are less likely to vote for anti-semitic Labour Party.

In conclusion, when it comes to religion Labour has made serious mistakes with the British Indian community. The Kashmir motion shot themselves in the foot by supporting it so vividly. They have alienated the British Indian community. However, they have argued that it is the same as the government stance. The government, however, do not call for an investigation, only peace and this is the vital difference. The interference inevitably caused disgust among British Indian Communities. However, to call Labour Pro-Islamic is a step too far. This simply fails as there is no evidence. Anti-Hindu has a more plausible argument and something for Labour to address. Keir Starmer will need to resolve this and I will explore this in the area about solutions!

WHY CONSERVATIVE:

The Labour Party made some inherent mistakes in managing the relationships with British Indian voters and I acknowledged this in the earlier section. However, in the Conservative Party, there has been a concerted effort with ethnic minorities in general and particularly the British Indians. In the party, many senior figures have worked consistently to make this happen; this campaign has been lead by Lord Dolar Popat and David Cameron. They tried to modernise the Conservative Party with strategies and political campaigning with British Indians. However, they have also forged a stronger relationship with the popular BJP in India and an especially personal relationship with Narendra Modi. He is undoubtedly popular among many of the British Indians who appreciate his good work. Some British Indians do view India as "home" and hence the politics of India is very important to them. However, I would argue the most significant result of these actions taken by the leaders and activists across the country is that they have finally shed the Enoch Powell image.

The first key area to explore is the work of Lord Dolar Popat in modernising the Conservative Party structures and actions when interacting with British Indians. He came from Uganda in the 1970s whilst fleeing the brutality of Idi Amin as a teenager. He did what would now be "A-Levels" in Britain and worked at a wimpy bar. He came from humble roots in Britain and is an example of an excellent businessman. He owned a variety of businesses but specialised in care homes including the first-ever care home which was specially designed for Indians in Britain. My grandmother is now lucky enough to reside there. He joined the Conservative party in 1980 under Margaret Thatcher. He says in his

book that “winning Asian voters to the Tories, has always been a major focus for me.”²⁰ Margaret Thatcher as MP for Finchley had a constituency with a significant British Indian population and she met them in the summer of 1980 in a crowded town hall! It is this kind of engagement that sets out the future for the Conservative Party. Lord Dolar Popat was personally asked to try to build relations between the Conservatives and British Indians in the 1980s. Lord Dolar Popat in the 1980s worked for the Anglo-Indian Conservative Association to begin creating events for the community to rally around. This was popular but ultimately failed to win many more votes for the party. However, the greatest change to Lord Dolar Popat, as he says in his book, is “The Labour Party dedicated Taskforce to keep in touch with members of the Hindu Community,”²¹ and Gordon Brown beginning to send Diwali cards to the community. It is here that the story really changed and the Conservative Party began to finally effectively engage with these voters. Lord Dolar Popat having the realisation lead to so many of the amazing events which were hosted and I will begin to introduce. He genuinely changed the face of British Indians and the Conservative by engagement. He made an effort with the community in areas where many other leaders failed to inspire or even engage people. He showed the community why David Cameron and the Conservatives were right for them.

The events which were held to show the engagement and the reasons why the Conservative Party was right for the British Community. However, I believe that British Indians felt embraced by the Conservative Party and the effort they were making. It is worth considering that British Indians by 2010 were becoming an even greater electoral force so it made logical sense for both parties to try and make an effort with them. The first events were small scale including David Cameron visiting Hare Krishna Temple in Hertsmere and then mentioned Diwali during PMQs. These minor but significant actions spurred the Conservative Party on to working even harder to engage British Indians across the country. However, when David Cameron gave a speech at a Hindu gathering in Leicester in this was the first major engagement. 5,000 British Hindus turned out to listen to him speak. It was a great moment for Cameron to begin to show British Indians why they should vote for him! However, this was all a plan worked up by Andrew Feldman (Conservative Party Chairman at the time) and Lord Dolar Popat to engage people. Engagement is the overriding strategy of this whole section and has proved a success electorally.

Since then the events came thick and fast, with the most significant being in 2009 when David Cameron held a Conservative Party Diwali Reception which drew in thousands of British Indians- they saw their own culture replicated by another party and felt welcome and wanted. Cllr Ameet Jogia (an aide to Lord Popat) in an interview with me strongly acknowledged the value of this and the time Lord Dolar Popat had put into his work. British Indians are proud of both their British and Indian cultures but they are proudest when they see them merged like in this scenario. Theresa May spoke at the Hindu Forum of Britain to show voters why the Conservative Party might be best for them and this engagement was a vital part of the process.

The reason these British Indians voted for the Conservative Party in much improved numbers after 2012 is simply down to this work. British Indians felt like they were being directly helped and accounted for- they were involved and accepted by the Conservative party. Generally, ethnic minorities need to feel welcomed within a party or the wider political scheme and this is what these actions achieved. The British Indians warmed to the efforts of the Conservative Party and ended up voting for them. I also think the skill of using urban locations such as London and Leicester should

²⁰ Lord Dolar Popat (2019), *A Very British Subject- How to Make it is an immigrant in the best country in the world.*

²¹ Lord Dolar Popat (2019), *A Very British Subject- How to Make it is an immigrant in the best country in the world.*

not be understated. Lord Dolar Popat stressed it as well- British Indians are generally in Urban locations and the report by policy exchange found the 97% of British Indians are urbanised²² and hence this was another effective strategy to target British Indians.

There has also been a continued effort since David Cameron established this trend of giving Diwali messages to the community. Theresa May did so in office but Boris Johnson gave a striking and impassioned message. He firstly, embraces the culture talking about “Lord Ram and Sita, the festival of light and Ravana.” These are characters and ideas vital to British Indians, who felt the UK Prime Minister is truly understanding and engaging with the culture. It gave me a warm and proud feeling to hear it spoken by the Prime Minister. His effort to understand the culture is appreciated by British Indians. However, his message continued to be poignant and reflective. He also discusses the value and importance of British Indians to the United Kingdom. The contributions they make to “business, science and public services,” are applauded. These all make the community feel welcome, valued and proud. It unites the two different cultures and to see the PM embrace British Indians is a great feeling. However, the most proud moment is the comment- “ Britain would be a lesser country without your contribution.” The conclusive remark is well placed, true and warming to British Indians. It was a superb message from Boris Johnson and something the British Indians truly appreciated. There was a superb community response to the video; it has become a great way to interact with minorities and in this example it resonated with the British Indians. In addition, this trend has set a good tone for British Indian and Conservative relationships.

Moving on Lord Dolar Popat and David Cameron established the CFI- Conservative Friends of India, of which I am now a member of and two people who I have interviewed- Cllr Reena Ranger and Cllr Ameet Jogia are co-chairmen. I have a great chance to get involved with Conservative Party Politics through this and I have been appointed a Regional Champion for my area by this group! Lord Dolar Popat set it up to link the Indian community, Indian Parliamentarians, and the Conservative Community. It was an exciting venture to continue this extremely important relationship. Cameron and Lord Popat continued the work by giving a speech to 1,200 key members and then a historic visit to Neasden Temple. This was a superb moment for this new group and showed the real and genuine impact they had. The CFI has held regular dinner and engagement events as well as policy forums that are fed directly back to the upper echelons of the party. It enables British Indians to have their voice heard through this mechanism and continues to draw people towards the Conservative party. It's work has definitely helped David Cameron gain a majority in the House of Commons in 2015. However, arguably the most significant part of the work as the song “Neela Hai Asman.” It is a song made specifically for the British Indian community. I was also somewhat shocked and confused as to why the party would do this, especially for Indian voters. It is a Hindi song meaning Blue Sky and was commissioned to encourage British Indians to vote David Cameron by directly engaging in their own language and culture. The video showed photos of David Cameron at temples and praying whilst also arguing policy points. British Indians had never had such engagement politically with them directly and the Hindi song hit a note with many in the community. It did not just resonate in the community but it went viral in the weeks leading the 2015 election. The British Indian community was engaged and proud of this song. It is a tradition in the party and something which the community adores.

Lord Dolar Popat is inspirational for the way he has led the Conservative Party into a new era with these voters. He ought to be praised undoubtedly for his work and skill in engaging the British

²² “A Portrait of Modern Britain” Policy Exchange, 2014, Accessed April 30th, 2020, <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/a-portrait-of-modern-britain.pdf>

Indians. His work has discovered how parties can work with the group effectively and both political parties should be taking note of this. These events have inevitably increased the vote share for the conservatives over the past decade. He has effectively worked with leadership to set up the CFI and left a lasting legacy. He is the greatest success of the Conservative Party for British Indians and his work has swung the voting towards the Conservatives.

The Conservative Party has also forged stronger relationships with India as a country. India is currently lead by Narendra Modi who was formerly governor of Gujrat- a state where many British Indians, including my family, hail from. Firstly, David Cameron and his foreign secretaries William Hague and Phillip Hammond have worked very hard to develop a relationship with India. India is currently lead by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and they have control of the Lok Sabha. The party itself is a broadchurch right wing-party with a strong Hindu nationalistic viewpoint. Hence, generally, they marry up well with the conservative party. In the book, *Indian Conservative* by Jaithirth Rao discusses the “synchronicity between Anglo Saxon and Indian Conservatism.”²³ In reality, it is evident that Anglo-Saxon Conservatism has inspired the Indian Consitution after partition to an extent. Hence, it is natural that there is a good relationship between these nations. However, the relationship went a step further under David Cameron.

In 2014 David Cameron hosted Narendra Modi in Britain. His memoirs detail the value of this relationship but he implies that he wasthe only other foreign leader to get the same treatment as Obama. However, there was a significant event in which David Cameron served as a warm-up act for Narendra Modi. In 2015, Wembley Stadium was packed out with British Indians who all came out to hear the both of them speak. In this speech, David Cameron praised British Indians for the work they do for the country and the party. However, Narendra Modi spoke about the beauty of the relationship between the countries whilst under the Conservative Party. Inevitably British Indians want their home country and resident country to have a strong relationship; this is evident here! The event turned into a celebration of all things to do with British Indians and how they were central to the future. As I alluded to earlier British Indians loved the sense that their two identities were joining together under the Conservative Party. The event was widely shared in India and Britain and showed the relationship between the parties in policy and ideology. Narendra Modi is a hugely popular figure among British Indians for the work he has done in India and hence many do feel that a relationship with him would be good for them. Further to that there have also been visits by William Hague, Phillip Hammond, George Osborne, Priti Patel, Lord Dolar Popat, and David Cameron himself in an attempt to forge good trade relations. In fact, British Indian trade has improved and increased- they are a big “post-Brexit partner.” There have also been reports of free trade agreemnt between the countries which would further strengthen the relationships. Whilst debate will loom large it is unarguable that Britain and India have grown in friendship and hence British Indians and the Conservative party, who have lead this movement have grown even closer.

The final key idea which almost draws all of this together is the removal of the Enoch Powell imagery. It is astonishing to think his former party got one million ethnic minority voters in the 2015 general election. Enoch Powell is famed for his “Rivers of Blood Speech,” which he made to the Conservative Party Centre in Birmingham. His ideas of “madness” for the “50,000 dependants,” almost pushed all ethnic minorities, including the British Indians, over towards Labour. Logically, the British Indian and other ethnic minority community at the time were unlikely to remain in party where they suffer from racial abuse.

²³ “Indian Conservatism” (2012), J Rao

Despite Powell defecting to the Ulster Unionists 6 years after this speech, the Conservatives have never really managed to shed this notion of being the upper class and racist party. Lord M Desai was very firm in suggesting that “John Major, the working class Brixton boy,” was vital in removing this image. The Conservative party did have the working class leader in the early to mid-90s with John Major as Lord M Desai correctly stated leading the party from a working-class background. Brixton is an area in London with large numbers of ethnic minorities however the central basis for the population is the Caribbean. It is important in my opinion to acknowledge that this did a lot to refute the upper-class and posher image with the ethnic minorities who saw the Conservative Party negatively. However, I again disagree with the importance he places upon the value of John Major. Whilst he may have changed the image he did not manage to translate this to electoral success. In 1997 Blair achieved a huge win with the ethnic minorities, almost entirely voting Blair. From discussions with my family, I have found that they all voted for Blair and hence whilst John Major changed imagery he failed to truly translate it into electoral success. Further to this, I would also argue that that whilst the image was more reputable, the Conservatives were still seen as less friendly to ethnic minorities. As Theresa May acknowledged when she gave a speech as a Conservative party chairwoman they were the “nasty party.”

Hence, Cameron has not just gained votes but been forced to change this aspect. He has used more friendly approaches with the public aiming to show the Conservatives are not nasty. He has been seen on his religious temple visits and making an effort with all ethnic minority groups. However, what is most important is that change in tone and rhetoric. Rather than being critical of reforms of Blair which were hugely popular- which leaders like Ian Duncan Smith and Michael Howard might have done- he focussed on critiquing reforms who were not popular. It sounds entirely logical but he played the “pragmatic Conservative” role. He was hard on the Iraq War and fiscal mistakes. The public did not see the party as nasty because Cameron spoke about the value of everyday life and the NHS. Shedding this image of nasty to being slightly more friendly has opened the ability to win electorally. He has changed the party for ethnic minority voters.

It is also important to understand that the Conservatives have been forced to undertake a cultural revolution within the party. To win Indian voters they need to make the party more accessible for British Indians. Whilst Lord Dolar Popat is the traditional example there is another interesting story. Before he rose to prominence Shailesh Vara lead the charge by British Indians in the Conservative Party. He was a prominent Conservative Party member in the 1990s by leading Party Conference debates against significant members like David Cameron. He competed as the lead speaker on the debate in law and order whilst being one of very few BAME members at the time. The Conservative Party can be seen as backward with a distinct lack of BAME support. During the Black Lives Matter movement, they have come under intense scrutiny over this perceived lack of diversity. As a Conservative Party member, I can definitively say that there is no widespread racist issue within the Conservative Party. There are individuals who hold unacceptable views and they will be disciplined fully. However, they are not inherent racist now. Shailesh Vara tells a depressing story of how the Conservative Party has modernised its approach specifically to British Indians. In 1997 he stood in the constituency of Birmingham Ladywood which is a safe Labour seat. He was elected the Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Party after this. He inevitable was a senior figure within the party operations and clearly aimed to make it into Parliament. However, he was regularly faced with barriers because he was an immigrant, in an interview to me he described the depressive picture of being told he would never be getting a safe seat. In 2001 he was advising Michael Howard and the media spokesperson. He again was given the seat of Northampton South. As one of the most senior Conservatives who was not in Parliament you would expect him to take a safe seat. He was bluntly not given one and forced to take a marginal. He lost by 85 votes. The inherent issue was that he was

an ethnic minority and not seen as a safe part of the party. As Deputy Chairman you would not expect this to be the case. He eventually managed to almost singlehandedly change attitudes. His story which he told to me in an interview shows how the conservative party could not target British Indians externally without addressing the internal issue.

In conclusion, the concerted effort lead by the Conservative Party is very much noticeable. They have worked tirelessly to improve their standing with ethnic minority voters and used generally effective techniques. The direct engagement and image shedding is crucial in showing voters they can vote Conservative. The relationship with India formed out of policy, has been a great success. Whilst they have managed to gain electoral success it is interesting that arguably in 2015 there was the greatest swing. This implies the relationship with India might be the most valuable of all the factors. Events like the great Wembley stadium speech should be replicated because British Indians responded amazingly to it. I will discuss this more in the recommendations sections but for now, this is a huge path forward. Lord Dolar Popat is the main character for the party and his tireless work has been of great success to the party nationally and the key reason why they were able to return to Government.

Other Factors

ECONOMICS

As acknowledged earlier, the second and third generation Indians are overwhelmingly rational rather than emotional when it comes to picking a political party. They will consider the level of engagement of the party with the community, but primarily they will vote on self-interest. They will vote for the party which will best serve their interests sociologically, economically, culturally, and politically. The Conservatives have already been engaging with the community on a number of levels but this is not enough they need a policy to match up with the needs of the community. A significant area where this has happened is in the economic sector.

Indians have progressed economically over the past decade leading the charge in professional services especially business and law. Hence we have seen that Indians are wealthier than they were years ago. The statistics back this up- British Indians have the highest median wealth out of everyone at the country standing at £178,980²⁴ which obviously shows they are one of the wealthier groups in society. However, they also the most likely ethnic group to have weekly earnings of over £1,000²⁵. This shows they are the top end of the spectrum whilst also being the second least likely to earn below the minimum wage²⁶. They also have the second-lowest unemployment rate at 8%²⁷ with only White British having it lower at 5%. Hence British Indians are among the wealthiest and most privileged groups in our society.

Whilst I am by no means suggesting that just because they are wealthy they will vote Conservative, there is an undeniable electoral link. Conservatives generally tend to pick up the most votes in the “A and B” classes. British Indians came to this country as poor immigrants but have worked their way up the social classes. This is something I have seen my parents, my wider family, and Indian mentors such as Lord Dolar Popat achieve. The changing circumstances are an explanation of why they have recently begun to vote Conservative and not historically done so.

Hence we need to address, why do the Conservatives appeal economically? I think the first answer is in the low tax policies. In the 2019 General Election, the Labour Party came out and gave rapid tax increases. Jeremy Corbyn in his manifesto, wanted to raise taxes on income (over £80,0000), VAT, and National Insurance. Inevitably, this would affect everyone but especially the higher earners and hence British Indians would not want to give away more money. They have worked hard for money do not want more taken- that is just simple logic. This is where party policy from the Labour Party has not reflected the interests of many British Indians. This is not to say all British Indians are rich and against high taxation but generally I would argue this is the case. Hence the Labour Party policy turned them away. Many British Indians also felt that the tax money taken would not be effectively used. On average each person would pay £2,400 more per year under Labour. This general feeling amongst the community hampered Jeremy Corbyn’s bid for No10.

²⁴ “A Portrait of Modern Britain” Policy Exchange, 2014, Accessed April 30th, 2020, <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/a-portrait-of-modern-britain.pdf>

²⁵ “A Portrait of Modern Britain” Policy Exchange, 2014, Accessed April 30th, 2020, <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/a-portrait-of-modern-britain.pdf>

²⁶ “A Portrait of Modern Britain” Policy Exchange, 2014, Accessed April 30th, 2020, <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/a-portrait-of-modern-britain.pdf>

²⁷ “A Portrait of Modern Britain” Policy Exchange, 2014, Accessed April 30th, 2020, <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/a-portrait-of-modern-britain.pdf>

However, Boris Johnson and his Conservative Party came out on a completely different strand. He came out with a “Triple Tax Lock.” This vowed to not raise Income Tax, National Insurance, and VAT in stark contrast with the Labour Party. Hence British Indians also were drawn into this policy. However, his rhetoric of the Conservatives being the “Party of Business”, which again contrasted with Corbyn who focussed on workers and employees, was popular with British Indians. Many British Indians own businesses or work in high-level businesses and the promise to review business rates and at some point cut corporation tax were popular. Hence they would vote on what would directly affect them. Historically British Indians, when they emigrated, did set up wholesale businesses in East London and they have grown today. However I think culturally British Indians have the “entrepreneurial spirit,” and to have this stymied by the Labour party would be frustrating. Especially the Ugandan Asians who were businessmen when they lived in Uganda. Hence the Conservatives economically have naturally had tax policy appeal for the British Indian community.

There is also more cultural economics to explore. In recent years the policy of austerity has been pushed through by George Osborne and David Cameron. Whilst a controversial policy across the country which has many critics it did appeal to British Indians. British Indians are not expansive monetarily they believe in saving not spending. This is not an economic but cultural decision. They are against short term high-interest loans and tend to save money. The common idea is – “staying within your means.” They spend what they have and what they earn. This is not all British Indians but a common theme. Hence, they did buy into this idea on the wider economic scale. Austerity was sold about saving our deficit and slowing down borrowing which was something the British Indians bought into. My father and wider family have also been talking about the value of “saving,” and as earlier acknowledged British Indians have the highest levels of savings. This frugal nature was linked to the Conservative policies and was another reason they voted with the Conservative's economic policy. In comparison to the Labour party where Gordon Brown and Ed Miliband wanted to spend excessively and borrow heavily. These Keynesian economics were rejected by the British Indians because they disliked the spending and risk which came with borrowing. Stimulus is a valid economic idea but it did not follow the cultural British Indians. Whilst it is not the party's direct fault, it did not ring the right message with British Indians.

In conclusion, British Indians have managed to climb through the economic classes over the past few years. They have managed to earn higher wages and reduce poverty among the group. This drew them to the “natural party” of the rich which is the Conservative Party. Levels of taxations have been a huge issue for British Indians and the Conservative Party has won this debate. Finally the cultural attitude of “saving overspending,” has been applied on a national level by the group. Hence the party policy has naturally been drawn to the Conservative policy and they have naturally gained this vote.

EDUCATION

Tony Blair's famous slogan of “Education, Education, Education,” certainly rang true to the British Indian community. When Indian's emigrated to Britain 19% of immigrants came to be students²⁸ directly showing how greatly they valued the education system. However, a further 48% came for a better life which was largely based around the desire to provide a better education²⁹. The overriding

²⁸ “A Portrait of Modern Britain” Policy Exchange, 2014, Accessed April 30th, 2020, <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/a-portrait-of-modern-britain.pdf>

²⁹ “A Portrait of Modern Britain” Policy Exchange, 2014, Accessed April 30th, 2020, <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/a-portrait-of-modern-britain.pdf>

reason Indians came to Britain is to give their children and families a better education and future. Hence in the years in which they have been here, there has been a concerted effort to achieve this.

My dad came to Britain in 1983 as I mentioned earlier. His parents sent him so he could be educated and get the best life possible. He was able to go to university, obtain a first in accounting, and follow his passion. My parents have always instilled into me the value of an education and secure a future. Many Indian parents go to extremes of not allowing children to do anything of their choice. I am lucky to not be in this position but my parents have always said to me how important education is in my life. Then it is unsurprising education is a key policy area studied by British Indians when making decisions about their children's future.

In the current day, British Indians do still place this focus on good education and excellent exam grades. 91% of British Indians achieve at least 5 passed GCSE examinations³⁰ and send the most pupils out of any ethnicity to higher education³¹. British Indians send 14% of their pupils to Russell Group Universities which is the highest percentage out of any ethnic group by 5%³². All of this data points towards British Indians achieving highly in the education sector. They are also the most likely to go to grammar schools and second-most for private schools. British Indians are willing to spend money on quality education and it something which they value hugely.

Whilst Tony Blair was a strong supporter of quality education along with his education secretaries David Blunkett, Estelle Morris, Charles Clarke, Ruth Kelly, Alan Johnson, and Ed Balls. He often used big names in this department as it somewhere with much freedom of policy. Blair and his Secerateries of State were heavily opposed to selective grammar schools and wanted to ensure equality of oppurtunity. Whilst this may seem appealing to ethnic minorities who could have the opportunity to stand on equal footing it was not to British Indians. Lord M Desai and Cllr Ameet Jogia both agreed that this action by Labour failed to gain support in British Indian communities. Lord Desai also notes that the removals of "scholarships for private schools were not liked." Hence this action was unpopular with the British Indians as it removed opportunity. This theme of opportunity is key among the British Indian community as it is the reason so many of our families came to this country.

Education policy by the Conservative party has been centrally based around academies. These schools are often well maintained and aim to work in inner-city areas and remove the poor quality comprehensives. However, it did not reduce the value of grammar schools. Whilst Blair disliked Grammar Schools and private schools Cameron, May, and Johnson did not. This was the key difference as they allowed these to operate without the issues that Blair had caused. Hence British Indians still retained the option to send their child to a private school. Michael Gove worked hard to makes these academies in the city of higher standards which many were. British Indians are generally urban-based where the majority of academies are and hence this change was felt directly by this group. However, it is again the rhetoric of the best education possible and the opportunities for success that were felt heavily by the British Indian community. It links into so many other key ideas. I think it is also important to stress the importance of Grammar Schools to Theresa May who

³⁰ "A Portrait of Modern Britain" Policy Exchange, 2014, Accessed April 30th, 2020, <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/a-portrait-of-modern-britain.pdf>

³¹ "A Portrait of Modern Britain" Policy Exchange, 2014, Accessed April 30th, 2020, <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/a-portrait-of-modern-britain.pdf>

³² "A Portrait of Modern Britain" Policy Exchange, 2014, Accessed April 30th, 2020, <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/a-portrait-of-modern-britain.pdf>

Brown and Blue: An Assessment of British Indian Voting Behaviour

strongly believed in them. She was a firm advocate for maintaining them and further expanding them and hence this was popular with the British Indian community.

In conclusion, education was very much an important area for the British Indians throughout their society. They value it as a reason they came to this country and often fall for the rhetoric on education. They like the Conservative policy simply because of the freedom it gave to private and grammar schools. These schools are capitalised upon by British Indians and Blair harmed his chances with them by hindering their existence. A Conservative Government wanting these votes must be careful around this area.

SOCIAL

When British Indians emigrated to Britain they aspired to have a better life. Aspiration is something which was central to the community when they made the journey. Ugandan Asians particularly aspired to have a better life as they were the professional classes in Uganda. They wanted to rise to the same level in Britain despite beginning at the bottom. Hence, the British Indian community see aspiration as a key value in their political identity. The language of “climbing the ladder,” is important to them.

When considering which political party they naturally side with you need to look at the ideological roots. David Cameron brought in the One Nation Conservatism to the Conservative Party. Ideologically this involves being able to rise through the social and economic classes. It gave opportunities to aspire. Hence British Indians were drawn to this idea of being aspirational. In 2012 at the Conservative Party Conference in Birmingham David Cameron stressed the idea of the “aspiration nation.” This idea that anyone can aspire to be anything, in an almost Disney like way, was so appealing to the British Indian community. It is also evident in the roots of One Nation Conservatism are in someone who at the time was part of a minority. Benjamin Disraeli was a Jewish man of humble backgrounds but created a wholly new ideology. His idea was that anyone can aspire to be where he is and David Cameron replicated this. Margaret Thatcher, arguably the most famous Conservative, was also heavy on the rhetoric about aspiration. She again believed anyone could make it to the top and that was the basis of neoliberalism for her. Conservatism is a complex word containing so many different schools of thought, from Neoliberals to One Nation to Hard-Liners but what is most important is the common theme of aspiration with the group. They allowed people to aspire to be something greater and make a success of their lives. This is exactly what the British Indians wanted to do.

I think it is also crucial to link the concept of meritocracy in here. Meritocracy is the idea that the best person for the job gets it. It is a very simple concept. Whilst it has not always fitted in with the Conservative Party due to its penchant for the elite, I believe it forms the cornerstone of the party. Theresa May, Margaret Thatcher, John Major and Benjamin Disraeli are some examples of Conservative Prime Ministers from humble backgrounds. They have all been products of the meritocracy in the party; their skills not contacts won them the top job. British Indians feel the same way. They want to be able show their skills and show they are the best for a reason. Hence, meritocracy in the Conservative Party supports this. The ideology of Conservatism is based around this key idea of “equality of opportunity.” This is another key part of meritocracy.

On the flip side, Labour has not always embraced this idea. New Labour under Blair and to an extent Brown was much more Neo-Liberal in many ways and hence did have the idea of aspiration. This aided them to retain the ethnic minority vote in the elections they faced. However, in the last 2000s, Brown lurched towards the left and alienated many of the Indian voters by further embracing

Brown and Blue: An Assessment of British Indian Voting Behaviour

socialism. Socialism ideologically believes in “equality of outcomes,” which is less focussed on social climbing. It is about redistribution of wealth and high taxation which earlier was acknowledged as something British Indians dislike. Hence, they stopped voting for the Labour party economically. There was never the aspiration messages and rhetoric after Blair into the Labour party and the Brownites were unable to ignite this. It is also worth mentioning Jeremy Corbyn who focussed on “social mobility.” Social mobility is not the same aspiration- social mobility is about leveling the class playing field. Richard Burgon and other prominent Labour Party politicians use this as a solution to “class warfare,” not to give aspiration in the way British Indians interpret it.

Another way in which aspiration has been used is the increase in prominent Conservative and British Indian politicians. Priti Patel, Rishi Sunak, and Alok Sharma are all senior members of the government and act as role models. Cllr Ameet Jogia and the Office of Steve Baker MP both stressed the value of these role models which many British Indians aspire to be. Aspiration is not just social or economics but political in this example.

The politicians have also shown the party to be a warmer and comfortable place for British Indians to be within the party. They have shown the Conservative party to be a place where British Indians are welcomed and this does contribute to the earlier Enoch Powell imagery being removed. It is more significant than that. British Indians culturally are inclined to “trust their own.” Many see Priti Patel, Alok Sharma, and Rishi Sunak as their own and feel that if they vote Conservative they are voting securely for them. It is an obscure idea but it does happen and I have seen it in my family. This idea of security does translate into electoral success at the ballot box.

The value of having Indian candidates cannot be understated. The Labour Party has been widely criticised for having no Indian candidates in safe or marginal seats. They had an under representation of British Indians in their party and many British Indians felt scorned by this. It was like they felt they were unwelcome at the party as they didn't have any candidates. The only prominent Labour MP who comes from a British Indian background is Seema Malhotra. Despite Labour holding the upper ground by having first-ever prominent British Indian- Keith Vaz, they have now fallen behind. However, he has been disgraced and removed from the party in recent years; this inevitably affected the image presented. However, they could be seen as the original party ushering through British Indians into politics but have lost this image. Further to this on a local level in constituencies with majority British Indian communities, they are not choosing British Indian candidates. As I mentioned earlier this culture of voting for your own exists among British Indians but this has been ignored by Labour. By picking British Indian candidates in these seats they have a greater chance of winning. I will come onto this more in the recommendations section.

Whilst on a national level the party has used British Indians as a key weapon. They were visible in the election campaign and visited many of the key seats. They had Rishi Sunak compete in the debates for the Conservative Party against the other parties. They have raised the profile of the British Indians to good effect. They did have MPs of Indian origin in key swing seats however they have not analyzed the local perspective. They need to use British Indian candidates in places where there is a majority population. It feeds into this idea of idolisation in the community.

Both of these have effectively managed to win the Conservative Party more votes. The idolization is a simple and natural idea but has been the most effective of them all! It is natural and there is work to be done but I can see from my own family it has worked. My mum regularly sends me Whatsapp messages in which people are praising the work of the three British Indians in Cabinet and further to that are discussing their backgrounds. Many can relate to the journey Priti Patel's parents took or Rishi Sunak's anecdotes of his parent's racial suffering. They feel connected to them and vote for

them. On the other side aspiration and meritocracy as general themes have become a key part of the messaging. They have been promoted by the Conservative Party and neglected by the Labour Party. Hence, the votes have gone away. Idolisation is a specific example of aspiration.

However, the changes to the geography and demographics of the British Indian community has also played a significant part in changing the voting behavior of British Indians. Firstly, British Indians are generally based in urban areas however, many families have now begun to move away from each other. My father and his family were all based in Hounslow growing up but now they live in a variety of areas from Amersham to Woking to Uxbridge. Ultimately they have spread out and lost some of the close family and community values which were maintained when they lived in areas densely populated by British Indians. Whilst the family might have voted Labour as a block, moving away has exposed them to new ideas. They have often chased middle-class dreams and ambitions and found these supported best by the Conservative Party. The vote is not unified but people think freely and as individuals. Also, being exposed to different areas where conservatism is the norm has also affected the voting behaviour significantly. They have seen maybe the options and reality of other changes.

There is also this generational change. British Indians are overwhelmingly a younger group of people who are now voting more freely and I acknowledged this earlier in the research. However, their identity has changed significantly. The original British Indians I would describe as "Indians living in Britain." Many British Indians now see themselves as overwhelmingly British when it comes to identity before they are seen as Indian. This has a very interesting effect on voting behaviour. Cllr Ameet Jogia discussed the value of being "British Born." These people only know life and home in Britain and hence are more likely to identify with the British Identity. 60% of British Indians identify³³ with the "British Only" identity. Voting statistics show those identify as overwhelmingly British are more likely to vote Conservative and hence the rise in this identity, in part caused by the geographical changes is another factor in the British Indian Community voting Conservative.

In conclusion, these two social factors have had an electoral result and effect by moving people towards the Conservative Party. They have been naturally taken to the Conservative Party through identity and geographical changes. This is nothing to do with political parties but social changes within the group which have naturally occurred. They have luckily favored the Conservatives. This sets a dangerous precedent for the Labour Party as they are losing votes as communities split up; something which is undeniably on the rise.

POLITICAL

British Indians have not just aligned socially, economically, culturally, or historically but politically too. Many of the modern British Indian political concerns are topics which align with the Conservative Party. Hence, this is another factor that influences people moving towards conservatives.

The first key political idea is that of Brexit. This was the controversy of the past three years and the British Indians are unique in this standing. Whilst those from a Caucasian background are likely to

³³ "A Portrait of Modern Britain" Policy Exchange, 2014, Accessed April 30th, 2020, <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/a-portrait-of-modern-britain.pdf>

vote for Brexit but generally ethnic minorities are not. A Manchester University paper³⁴ found that British Indians are 1.6 to 2 times more likely to vote for Brexit than any other ethnic minorities. Hence the Conservative Party, being the strongest party on Brexit, are going to gain the votes of the Brexit supporting British Indians. The Conservative Party went into the election with the slogan “Get Brexit Done,” and for those British Indians who voted for Brexit supported this heavily. It was at 30% for British Hindus and 35% for British Asians. Hence there are 30% of the British Indian population immediately attracted to the Conservative Party. Whilst the Brexit Party may seem like an even more natural avenue they were not prominent enough to take voters away.

Brexit generally appealed to the British Indians for a pair of reasons. Firstly, British Indians do not like to waste money. The Leave campaign argued that the EU was a waste of money and British Indians understood and responded to these claims. Further to this the immigration issue was also very important. I will explain this in more depth below. Both of these ideas are important in the Brexit argument but also the wider political argument.

Another key and relevant political theme is immigration. There is an immediate irony in immigrants wanting tighter control but as you delve into the Australian Immigration System you see that it does not limit immigration but create a level playing field. This has been exemplified by the Brexit revolution. David Cameron came to power promising immigration controls and quotas. Whilst this was possibly not something British Indians consciously liked they did find it appealing. Boris Johnson presented the Australian Style immigration system as a solution; this is now Conservative Party policy and appeals to the British Indian community. This was also stressed by Cllr Ameet Jogia who said this was a “prominent” issue on the doorsteps. He found this to be a key concern of many British Indians and something they wanted to implement.

Another recent point was Priti Patel’s speech in Parliament on racism. She was candid in her response to Labour MPs over racism describing her time being called a “paki.” A disgusting and abhorrent word but something which myself, my family and almost every British India has been called. Her rhetoric and the Conservative party rhetoric has been more sympathetic to the British Indian community; naturally this appeals to the group.

Both of these ideas fit naturally into the Conservative Party, not the Labour Party. They are more pro-Europe and pro-immigration and this is something the British Indians generally do not favour.

Whilst these key political issues do not always dominate the landscape they have in recent years. Immigration since 2010 and Brexit since 2015 are crucial items which the Conservative Party policy aligns with the opinions of British Indians. These issues have affected the vote share in constituencies such as Harrow East. These ideas are not always at the forefront of the minds of British Indians, but they do force the voting behaviour to move towards the Conservative Party.

CULTURAL

Many of the cultural values that are important to British Indians are also values that are embodied in the Conservative Party. Values which are the part of Hindu culture and Indian culture play a significant part in the social and political values of the Conservative Party. Values like this should not be understated as linking to the Conservative Party to the British Indian and Hindu community.

³⁴ “Left out the left behind,” Manchester University, January 25th 2019, Accessed 3rd May 2020, [https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/en/publications/left-out-of-the-left-behind\(3bb32f04-1b5a-45b4-a8ec-f6f5dfdf2a07\).html](https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/en/publications/left-out-of-the-left-behind(3bb32f04-1b5a-45b4-a8ec-f6f5dfdf2a07).html)

The first value is that of family. When I interviewed Jonathon Lord MP he stressed that “family values are central to the community.” The idea of stable family culture is something that is key to British Indians. Indian culture is generally very backward with the idea of homosexuality, blended families, and co-habitation being strongly complained against. It is seen as immoral and wrong in many ways by the elders in our society. They believe in simple nuclear families. This is similar to the values of the Conservative party. Ideologically the party does value tradition as the ideal. Tradition is a flexible term but many British Indians have customary family and religious traditions which they follow intensely. Hence the marriage of conservatism and British Indian culture is natural.

The other key area of culture in which there is agreement is that of law and order. The Conservative party is also famed for having a strong belief in a tough justice system but also retaining high levels of law and order. In 2019 they introduced many policies including longer punishments for a variety of crimes and more prisons which aimed to achieve a tougher justice system. The Conservative Party belief in firm punishment and justice. This is echoed by the beliefs of the many Indians and Hindus around the country. The belief in karma informs much of the British Indian view. Karma is a cosmic principle of equality and justice. It states that whatever one does upon another will be received upon them; put colloquially- what goes around comes around. This links into justice and equality in punishment. Hence, many believe that prisoners get easy punishments and feel they should be harsher. Whilst it may sound cliché Indian parents are often strict with children. This belief in firm punishment is reflected on a wider political scale.

They are more naturally drawn to the Conservative Party than the Labour party who are more focussed on restorative justice. Hence this is another way in which cultural values marry up.

In conclusion, culturally the Conservative Party and British Indian are natural together and it is down to the party to show and prove this.

Reccomendations for the Future

WHERE NEXT LABOUR

British Indians are a complex ethnic group with a myriad of different interests. The overwhelming theme is a movement towards the Conservative Party and the data and political evidence show this. Whether it is in the social, cultural, political, economic, or historic factors British Indians are being pulled towards the Conservative Party. It is undeniable Labour has some areas which appeal to British Indians but these have diminished, especially as the party has embraced radical socialism under Jeremy Corbyn. However, the Labour Party and Sir Keir Starmer have acknowledged these issues very early in his leadership. He has tried valiantly to understand and work with the British Indian voters as far as possible. The Labour Friends of India are the central British Indian organisation within the Labour Party who are driving for the representation of the Labour party. They are trying to further their interests in the Labour Party. Keir Starmer has also worked to expel racism in all of its forms from the party; it is another way to retain ethnic minority support on a broader scale.

Inevitably the move over Kashmir, which was outlined in-depth earlier, was a frustrating moment for British Indians across the country. However, this was felt heavily by the Labour Friends of India; they had been marginalised by a divisive issue. However, Keir Starmer has held a zoom meeting and changed Labour's stance on Kashmir in the past few weeks. He said that it was a "bilateral issue," on April 30th after meeting with Labour Friends of India and Angela Rayner. Corbyn alienated British Indian voters with his harsh words over Kashmir as I explained earlier. However, Starmer has tried to recognize that this minority is the most populous and important in his bid to regain power. It is a minority that has cost Labour power in the last decade. He has quoted the issue as "constitutional," which is exactly what is maintained by the Indian community. With this being his first move in this area it highlights the significance he places upon the issue. Evidently, he sees it as something which is a "turning point." However, there has already been a major issue. Pakistani groups within the Labour Party are arguably more important and there are more Pakistani origin MPs. MPs like Tariq Ali have been critical of Keir Starmer in the press and have tried to force a "U-Turn" over this position. They feel that it is a moral issue. Starmer, despite his comments on April 30th regarding this issue, has made a largely unnoticed U-Turn. He has proclaimed to the Muslim Council of Britain that "Our Position on Kashmir has not changed." He further commented that "India and Pakistan need to work together with the people of Kashmir." This is a subtle call for self-determination. Whilst being less brazen he has not officially changed the position. This position cannot be maintained of appeasing both Indian and Pakistani calls within his party. A number of Labour MPs of Pakistani origin have been angry about this move despite no official change. I suspect his backbenchers force him to retain this position; it is unlikely he will be able to withdraw himself from this issue. Kim Johnson, MP for Liverpool, spoke to me and said that her constituents are "highly concerned." It is surely impossible for Keir Starmer to maintain this intermediate position on a contentious issue. Labour needs to find a way to kill the issue and stop the media storm it has created. By moving away from the issue and using a softer language he will be able to try and please everyone. Ultimately they have to be on one side of the barrier and that will be one of self-determination. However, the right way to resolve this could be caveating it. Suggesting the wishes of the Indian Government and history will be equally respected rather than focussing on the rights of Kashmiri people entirely. By balancing their approach and giving candidates a form of defence by suggesting it is a trifold idea they will be able to appease the British Indians. By respecting both the issues on either side, combining them and possibly using the United Nations as an intermediary could prove an effective tactic. Hence, this is my first suggestion for Labour is to come up with a

balanced Kashmir stance which rightfully respects both sides of the debate- history, politics, and human rights. He can still condemn what he considers as atrocities but maintaining a balanced approach is vital. The most important takeaway is to acknowledge both sides of the argument then try to balance them accordingly.

However, there are obviously other areas in which British Indians and the Labour party have moved away. I think the primary issue is to build a relationship with Narendra Modi. Starmer has already begun this process by calling India a major “post-Brexit trading partner.” He has recognised David Cameron won a significant proportion of the vote from British Indians after hosting Modi in 2015 and he would like to use the same thing. Indians are proud of their homeland and having a good relationship makes them very proud of a party. Modi’s endorsement was also vital for Cameron and Starmer hopes that he can compete with Boris Johnson for the crucial endorsement. He does have a complex job with the Labour Party having many critics of this policy. I am not naive to the fact it will be difficult but the suggestions will make his relationship with British Indians stronger.

Starmer does also have the “professional image,” needed to win the British Indian vote. Professionalism is something which British Indians look for in politicians- they want them to be educated, intellectual, and professional politicians. Whilst Johnson may not always appear like this he does have an Oxford background, and is by no means incompetent intellectually. Starmer also has the same and his background will support his image. Competence is something that is evident in Keir Starmer. He must maintain this image to help to gain votes. Corbyn did not manage to give this professional image which is vital to winning the British Indian vote. Many of them are professionals and will vote for the same. However, Starmer can also use his background in law to appeal to the British Indian desire for law order. He can appeal to this social element of their being to try and draw them in through this work. He was Director of Public Prosecutions and using this experience to suggest he will be able to handle crime would be an effective strategy.

The direct political policy should not be driven by the desire to please a single ethnic group as he would be pulled in all sorts of directions. He would not be able to appease every single group because ultimately they all want entirely different things. However, rhetoric can be specifically used in an ethnic group. On a local level, Jonathon Lord MP described how when he spoke at the Surrey Hindu Cultural Association he changed his rhetoric to suit what he saw as the requirements of the Hindu Population. On the other hand has also described the Labour Party candidate failing to do so especially regarding Kashmir. When you are at an Indian event focus on your policies that appeal to them like you would at any event. This messaging effectively placed was something that feels self-explanatory but Jeremy Corbyn and Ed Miliband failed to do. For example, focus on the economic strategy for the business which will appeal to British Indians when speaking to them, or law and order background or education investment. Speak about these vital things when working with the community. Education is another policy area in which he could be very effective. He attended Reigate Grammar School which was a Grammar School for a period he was there. Indians are acknowledged earlier support Grammar school. He needs to stress this point as it is an area of mutual bonding; he can begin to create a relationship with the group. By creating common ground with this ethnic group he will be able to engage them much more effectively than he would be able to do so otherwise. Again he needs to give the impression of “one of their own.”

On the same idea, his candidate selection needs to be shrewdly played. Where there is a large British Indians or any ethnic minority community, select a candidate who can connect with the community. Statistics show ethnic minorities are subconsciously more likely to vote for that candidate. This is something that is not overly complicated by shrewd electioneering. It plays into the idea of “one of their own.” It is not overly complex and a simple and easy recommendation.

Finally, I would urge Keir Starmer to try and personally engage with the community. David Cameron attended Diwali events, held party receptions, and spoke to the community. He was lucky to have the expertise of Lord Dolar Popat however Starmer can use his own parties knowledge and the general ideas from Lord Dolar Popat. By hosting Diwali events he begins to gain the loyalty of voters slowly and surely. Whilst this is not always going to be easy it is doable. By engaging the community he can show why the Labour party is a viable option. He needs to present himself as a friend of the community and someone who understands the critical issues. He can show British Indians that they are a vital part of the society he envisages for the future. He needs to work in places where Labour has been suffering from reduced majorities such as Leicester, Harrow and Watford where they have lost seats. By electioneering early with the community he can target them and I believe if they do it correctly they are vulnerable. Rhetoric is important here too. He needs to remind them who fights for ethnic minorities and who puts their interests first. He can use the recent developments in the Black Lives Matter movement as a catalyst. Events like this are the basis for community and local relationships.

Finally, those MPs with large populations of British Indians need to understand the communities they work in. This recommendation was supported by Tony McNulty. He suggested there needs to be a "strategy and vision that can appeal to communities." These are exactly the changes which need to be implemented. On a national level MPs need to be given clear instructions on how to engage with our communities. The leadership need to take responsibility for this issue however, it is also down to local councils. If they can along with the associations work with the MPs on community engagement then there will be a greater level of success for the Labour Party on a national level. Focus on this element is not one sided.

In conclusion, Labour has a difficult job winning these seats back because they have failed in the last 10 years. However, Starmer does have the credentials to manage this by clarifying balanced positions and engagement. A variety of smaller measures will win back these voters if they play it correctly.

WHERE NEXT FOR THE CONSERVATIVES

The Conservative Party has been a success story overall with British Indians in the past decade. They have many more votes however, there are still seats in areas such as Leicester, Derby, and Brent where they have work to do. In all these regions, they have decreased majorities of senior Labour party figures like Jon Ashworth, Dawn Butler, Diane Abbott, and Barry Gardiner. These seats are now being contested to a greater extent and with even more targeted work towards British Indians will be a huge threat.

The Conservative Party needs to continue to engage with the community in the same way they have over the past decade. I would consider setting up an event to praise and accept the contribution British Indians make to the country. British Indians are leaders in the professional services and inviting leaders to reception to honour the history of immigration would be a vital step. This could continue to build links with senior leaders but also individual leaders in communities. We need to invite Punjabi, Gujarati, Kashmiri, and Goan immigrants to celebrate the work of British Indians. Recognising the diverse culture within the British Indian sphere will be an effective strategy. A huge part of how to engage British Indians is the validation. This event could be led by the CFI to provide a celebration of what British Indians are to the country. It is the cultural value of this when the community feels like they are valued by the party and they will repay this loyalty at the ballot box. By also honouring British Indian culture by continuing Diwali and temple visits it shows a sustained interest, not just at election times but all times. British Indians know their votes can change elections

and hence they are valued highly. They do not want superficial engagement but genuine engagement. I would also consider the value of street art as a cultural unification. By commissioning a mural or statue celebrating British Indians this will be well received by the population. It is the little actions that mean the most to the community that has suffered greatly. Colonisation is another issue which I would argue an acknowledgement and apology for could be beneficial for. Many Indians feel angry about this so by apologizing for the obvious mistakes could be welcoming and humble. I have seen murals which are dedicated to cultures and there should be one commissioned around the country. By depicting the value of British Indians in our multicultural society it will be a feel-good and easement factor not just for British Indians but all ethnic minorities. It is a genuine way of changing the field of play for the better. I believe it will make people feel that the Conservative Party is engaged. Like the song "Neelam Hai Asama," they need similar initiatives to keep the community going and engaged. This will be a serious piece of progress for the British Indian community by keeping the engagement up. Finally, Indian Independence Day is often understated by the political parties- an event celebrating this could be a strong movement in India and Britain. It would also acknowledge the difficulties of empire. Empire has strong connotations for many British Indians; acknowledgement of mistakes may alleviate some of the pain and anger.

I also believe that shrewdness in candidate selection must be applied. British Indians will respond better to the Indian candidate than they would to a British candidate generally. They feel unity and common ground- they will be representing us the best as they are one of us. It is not the most logical thing, but it is a psychological idea which we should embrace as soon as possible. It is a requirement for this to happen in my opinion because it is the best way to win seats. In places like Leicester compete there with British Indian candidates as much as possible because it will aid out the cause. It is not a complex electoral strategy and it is very easy to implement in constituencies.

I would also argue that they need to use the right rhetoric which appeals to British Indians. As I outlined earlier aspiration and education are vital for British Indians. So, talk about aspiration when addressing British Indians like Jonathon Lord MP did. It is a key technique to show the British Indians why they should vote for you. The importance of why cannot be stressed enough- if you have rational voters, they will be weighing up pros and cons. It is the party's job to add the pros column. It is about focussed campaigning on the type of person they are and aim for that. It will support the aim to gain more of the vote which they haven't always won. They need to begin to work with Indians across the country and use the visible figures they have as role models. By sending Alok Sharma, Priti Patel and Rishi Sunak into constituencies where they can campaign and connect with British Indians who have similar stories will undoubtedly be a prudent tactic.

The Conservative Friends of India have a large role to play and have resources to aid this. They could focus on exploring which seats they want to fight in and aid British Indian seats. By making themselves a presence at local meetings and working with colleges and communities they can show what is out there. They should also consider how they can promote British Indianism in the right seats. By possibly working with the party to suggest their own bank of candidates for British Indian majority seats and they can be involved with the process. However, I think the central idea is to integrate into communities. By working with groups like the Surrey Hindu Association or other local groups they can hold and sponsor events. By bringing big figures with them the community will feel like they are being directly addressed by the most senior politicians in the country. They can promote interests.

They should also from an electoral point of view try to encourage the party to work with the British Indian community during election time. By possibly trying to get British Indian figure from the party into the communities which they have the greatest knowledge about is an idea. It would be great to

Brown and Blue: An Assessment of British Indian Voting Behaviour

see them do this to use the expertise of members in communities to work out who and where they can have the greatest impact. They should also work with candidates in Indian areas to suggest what to focus on when campaigning and talking to British Indians.

My most significant suggestion for this group is that they should try to offer services to British Indians on a wider cultural scale. Using the expertise, they could sponsor local community events and show the engagement in local communities. Whether this involves Diwali or Navratri functions they could provide a location, a venue, a guest speaker, or mehndi (henna) services. Asking members to volunteer expertise and support might be a unique and exciting way of campaigning in the key swing constituencies. It is not a traditional political movement, but culture is one of the most important parts of British Indians. Hence, they involve politics and culture. They could also generally be an avenue of political support by referring the community to the correct people- from the example the MP or foreign office over visa concerns. They will not forget the support you have offered, and it will make a huge difference for them.

In the past, the Conservatives have had an issue with racism. They still face serious challenges from Islamophobia within the party. In the current situation the Black Lives Matter movement has shown rapidly increasing momentum. They must reconcile with all races over the scandalous stop and search policy but more significantly, the tarnished history. Responding to this issue is a must; they need to be proactive. By holding consultations or engagement sessions to understand concerns they can address them. They must, at least to save face, make a change.

Finally, the emphasis moves towards the local MPs and candidates. When campaigning they need to work with the British Indian population by talking to them but also treating them on equal footing and in the same way as everyone- just because they are a minority, they don't want special treatment at election time. Chris Grayling MP commented in response to my questions that he believes they want "equal footing," and I agree with this. He did agree that the events are crucial to raising support. On the doorsteps show why you can specifically aid their community and concerns. Talk to them about what matters to their community whether it is having their own space or racism on the street. They do need to deal with issues that matter to them like any other constituent, but they have different concerns. Realise this and manage them effectively. It is simple to do and a great strategy. Further to this, speak about issues which you know matter to them like aspiration, family and education, Why the party is the best on these issues is the emphasis you need to place. MPs when campaigning can do all these things but actions when in office are crucial, if they can make a focussed and real effort to engage with communities like Tony McNulty mentioned earlier, they will be far more successful.

In conclusion, British Indians and the conservative party have begun to grow closer. The work so far is great but there are simple additions to secure this vote. Strategic candidacy and the work of the CFI can win the party many constituencies which were unattainable. The changes are easy and create efficient electoral practice. It is important to note the Conservative Party do not have all the British Indian vote and still need to address certain concerns.

Conclusion

British Indians are complex. When concluding it is vital to caveat my work. I am a 17-year-old student exploring a deeply complex topic which has many different strands. I have had amazing support and I credit those who have been especially important below. My research has been hindered by the coronavirus crisis and I haven't been able to explore as many different areas as I would like. However, this does not take away from the fact that I am a politically active British Indian that has experienced much of our culture. I have a wide and diverse family which I am lucky to be able to draw upon. They have helped me a lot with their advice and experiences of the political culture and I am lucky to have had this as a support for my project. British Indians, themselves cannot be constrained as single block vote or ethnic group. Every single person I have interviewed has agreed with this first premise. British Indians all have entirely different backgrounds and social desires. These differing backgrounds and locations mean there is not a single strategy which you can conclusively say will win the British Indian vote. It is not going to work so you need to be flexible and diverse. These different opinions and ideas will need to be catered for in a variety of ways. Political candidates and parties can use a variety of methods that will aid you in trying to win the vote. There are a variety of key factors which I am going to summarise by generation.

The older, first-generation immigrants are focussed on history. This group values who let them into the country and have the best memories of their homelands. They often feel like visitors to the country and till reminisce about home. Hence British Indians in this group overwhelmingly vote Labour because they have driven the immigration change and made them feel more welcome, to begin with. History is the driving factor in voting behaviour which is unchangeable. They feel the effects of Enoch Powell and do struggle to manage this. Hence, this group is solidly set in their ways and unlikely to change. Hence, this group of the British Indians solidly vote Labour however being the older generation they are sadly passing away and part of the reason the vote for Labour is diminishing. However, whilst the physical voters are changing the psychology of British Indians has not changed; the Conservatives cannot lessen the efforts.

However, all the other generations are wholly different in what drives their voting behaviour. Social, cultural, economic, and political factors all contribute in different proportions. It makes it near impossible to manage all these expectations. Generally, the prevailing theme is cautious economic policy with a focus on secure and stable systems. This is similar to the economic theory of austerity. Many British Indians holds close the value of saving not spending- this is what they were forced to do growing up. Hence on a wider scale, this is applied. The keyword around the whole of this is engagement. Making the community feel part of British culture and combining identity. It is about the unification and whilst values are similar, they need to feel welcome. Generally, this has been achieved across the board and then you drive deeper into policy. Policies that British Indians like are the ones which are generally Conservative, but they were, blurred with New Labour. Since the socialist movement of the Labour party and widening of the political gap, this has exposed to British Indians why they are closer to the Conservative Party. Inevitably this will change with shifting political parties and Keir Starmer is likely to try and move Labour back to the centre. This will test the British Indian bonds with the Conservative party.

Tactics to engagement vary across the political parties. Labour must win these voters back politically and over Kashmir. It is a difficult task to manage the party's variety of ideas and backgrounds on contentious issues. The Conservatives must keep going and use the CFI who has the knowledge of the local communities which need careful management and care. They need to capitalise on the resources they have within the party.

Brown and Blue: An Assessment of British Indian Voting Behaviour

Harrow East is a fine and shining example of what has happened over the past few years. This is where British Indians have moved away to Conservative messaging and is a tribute to the work of Bob Blackman in the local community.

It is also important to accept the diversity of flexibility of British Indians. Whilst other ethnic groups can be categorised as a single group you cannot easily do this with British Indians. Generally, politics in been much more flexible and fluid. It is crucial avoid the stereotypes of everyone in this minority votes this way. This was acknowledged by Tony McNulty in his notes to me where he describes the “fluidity” of the electorate. Further to this he urges a resistance to stereotyping. So, whilst the project as whole categorises British Indians and types how they vote. There will always be exceptions in every minority, and these just must be taken as they are. Especially in a diverse and settled group like British Indians there are a growing number of anomalies from the trend.

Overall, my overriding theme of the project is that British Indians have changed the wider political spectrum and are complex beasts. They have moved towards the Conservative party now, but this is an ever-changing scenario. They have shifted the political standing in the United Kingdom much further towards the Conservative party. 1.4 million might not seem like a big number in the context of the United Kingdom but these historically, culturally, socially, economically, and politically diverse individuals have an overwhelming impact on the political system. Gaining their votes will determine a significant part of British politics as they are a large percentage of swinging voters. It is important that this minority gets the representation they deserve and continue to flourish in Britain.

Brown and Blue: An Assessment of British Indian Voting Behaviour

WITH THANKS TO:

Lord Meghnad Desai

Lord Dolar Papat

Cllr. Ameet Jogia

Cllr. Reena Ranger

Jonathon Lord MP

Chris Grayling MP

Kim Johnson MP

Bob Blackman MP

Dr. Martin Offord MP

Shailesh Vara MP

Cllr Vina Mithani

Tony McNulty

John Austin

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