



NRI Woman: Finding Her Identity

Women's Interests

Written by [Savia Rajagopal](#)
Monday, 03 September 2007

Email Driving You Crazy?

Bring Proven E-mail Management Training to Your Group or Company
www.randalldean.com

Repair Outlook

Free Download - Outlook Repair Software. 100% Guaranteed
Computer-Error-Repair.com

Calendar Integration

Schedule meeting rooms, resources & people within Microsoft Outlook
NetSimplicity.com

Fix Microsoft Outlook

Repair Microsoft Outlook Instantly. Get Your Free Download Now.
www.RegistryFix.com

Balancing a dual identity is becoming less of a struggle for the second generation expatriate Indian now coming into her own in the country of her birth. Savia Rajagopal reports.

"A revolving door" - that's what second generation Canadian of Indian descent Satyam Matravadia calls her act of balancing a dual identity. Explaining further, she goes on to say, "Maintaining the duality is definitely difficult and tiring. There is always a sense of expectation depending on who you're dealing with. Sometimes it feels like I don't know who I am, if I express my Indian thinking amongst non-Indian people. Likewise, when dealing with people from my community, as soon you behave in a way that is not considered to be "Indian", questions are raised.

On the flipside of that coin, when people see me behaving in an "Indian" way, then the comments are "Even though she was raised in Canada, look at how cultured she is!" It's like being in a revolving door where your identity changes as you step out of one part and into another part." Her case is not an isolated one. Many women of Asian origin go through bouts of confusion and conflict when it comes to dealing with such a sensitive issue as identity. However, the encouraging aspect is that second-generation expats are dealing with this duality in a far better way than before.

Being aware of their roots, many young Indian women are merging it into the cultural fabric of the country they live in. The younger generation are more in tune with their aspirations, whether in their professional or personal lives. This awareness also transcends into areas of identity.

Higher levels of education, travelling and the exposure from interacting with so many people from different cultures, plays an important role in changing perception. These very experiences make it easier for this generation to imbibe the best of both worlds.

Additionally, being away from their countries of origin creates among Indians abroad a tendency to hold on to their culture and tradition. In most cases, parents and close family pass on their knowledge and understanding of their culture. Also being part of a close community helps in having a better understanding about their culture through various cultural events and social groups.

On several occasions, the younger generation living abroad is accused of being bereft of a cultural identity but the opposite holds true. Common sense would suggest that it is unreasonable to expect individuals living abroad to share the exact same ideals and thoughts of those who live in India. Despite being given generic tags like 'ABCD - American Born Confused Desi' or other offensive names, many young women feel that denying or being unaware of your roots is tantamount to denying a very part of your existence.

A sentiment echoed by Matravadia who states, "You can't ignore your background and your roots, and in order to become the best person you can be, you have to be aware of all your cultural values and your heritage. I find that those who are unaware sometimes have the mindset of



painting everything and everyone with the same brush! Just because they don't like some aspects of the culture they choose not to explore and understand all of it!"



Her statement is particularly true to many young expats who discount everything from their heritage as they struggle to find a middle ground between their current lifestyles and the values handed down to them from their forefathers. Even with their newfound identity in place, there are times where conflict raises its ugly head.

Mumbai-based psychiatrist Dr Sharita Shah, agrees, noting, "For most of the second generation, it is almost like a tug of war. They are pulled in one direction by their 'Indianness' and their parents more conservative outlook and value systems and on the other hand, are pulled by wanting to 'fit' in with their peers of the West. As they go to school and college and mingle with the non-Indians they behave like them but tend to be reprimanded by their parents. It becomes difficult to blend the best of both sides and make it one."

An example in this case would be live-in relationships, which are still frowned up by the older generation. Despite this, many young Asian women prefer this choice and opt to live-in. Likewise, many are quick to point out situations where they are expected to "accept their fate" and "learn to give in and compromise" even in marriages that are not working out. While this may have been acceptable to previous generations, younger women, brought up with a modern outlook, find it difficult to digest it.

While it is a personal decision about how to lead one's life, many expats are quick to say that the very concept of being "Indian" is changing. It is not merely about strictly adhering to religious codes or moral values, it is also a sense of pride and greater understanding about a culture and its beliefs. While not everything is accepted, many young women are able to appreciate the ideas behind certain conventions, even if they don't agree with them.

So what makes it easier for the current generation of Asians to blend their identities and emerge as a secure individual? Matravadia notes, "I think it's easier for us, because a lot of times we have a clear vision of what each side of the coin holds. Despite the duality factor being so tiring sometimes, it also defines us and our character. In the churning process of ongoing duality, we are sometimes forced to really think about issues that are important to us."

Dating, having several relationships, living in, being financially dependent on parents – are all areas that younger Indian women are questioning. It is this very ability to discern what suits them best that defines the generation. There is no place for blind faith. When it comes to women especially, the younger lot are pushing the boundaries when it comes to equality and mutual respect with their mates.

No longer are they willing to stand aside and be subservient to traditional outlooks and beliefs. While they are comfortable with touching the feet of their elders, they are equally adept at questioning the double standards that exist. As we live in an increasingly globalised society, seeking and maintaining an identity is paramount. If a wealth of choices is any indication of progress, the second generation of Non Resident Indians seems to be enjoying the best of both worlds.

© Copyright Naaree.com All rights reserved. You may not republish, or redistribute content from Naaree.com, in part or whole, either by framing or similar means. We take copyright violations very seriously and expressly prohibit use of our content on your blog or website or in print without prior written consent.

Comments



Savia Rajagopal

About the author:

Savia Rajagopal currently lives in Canada and has been with The Times of India, Mumbai as a features writer. Apart from writing on relationships and fashion, her diverse portfolio includes articles on the watch and jewellery industry, education, careers and home décor, for various national and international publications and online portals. She particularly enjoys interviews and rates meeting supermodel Linda Evangelista and film producer-director Kanika Myer as the highlights of her journalistic career. She can be reached via email at rsavia@gmail.com

[Read More >>](#)**Related Articles:**[NRI Woman: Finding Her Identity](#)**Articles by this Author:**[Indian Mothers Abroad: Between Two Worlds](#)[All Things Equal: Role Reversal In Indian Marriage](#)[NRI Woman: Finding Her Identity](#)[Career Tips For The Woman On Top](#)[Where's The 'Me' In 'We?'](#)**[View all articles by this author](#)**

Last Updated (Wednesday, 05 September 2007)

[Close Window](#)