

ISRAELIS EXPERIENCES IN DIASPORA *

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to present new narratives of Jewish identities and Jewishness among young postmodern Israeli travelers' in India and to analyze the paradigms of Jewish engagement beyond Israel. This paper seeks to address the question regard in as to how these young Israeli Jewish traveler's define their "Jewishness" as well as provide self-definition of what it means to be Jewish, individually or collectively, thousands of miles away from Israel.

Keywords: Identities, Jewishness, Individualism, Freedom, Israeli Traveler.

KOPUNTUDA İSRAİLLİLERİN DENEYİMLERİ

Öz: Bu makalenin amacı, Hindistan'daki genç postmodern İsraili gezginler arasında Yahudi kimlikleri ve Yahudilik hakkında yeni anlatılar sunmak ve İsrail'in ötesindeki Yahudi bağlılık paradigmalarını analiz etmektir. Bu makale, bu genç İsraili Yahudi gezginlerin "Yahudilik"lerini nasıl tanımladıklarına ilişkin soruyu ele almanın yanında, İsrail'den binlerce mil uzakta, bireysel veya toplu olarak Yahudi olmanın ne anlama geldiğine dair soruyu ele almayı amaçlamaktadır.

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Kimlikler, Yahudilik, Bireycilik, Özgürlük, İsraili Gezgin

Introduction

Since the early 1990s, a particularly large influx of Israeli youth, have started travelling to India after completing their military service. Every year approximately fifty thousand Israeli travellers¹ visit India and they stay there an average of three months to one year or more. They start their visit with the mountainous villages of the north and later shift it southwards to explore the southern and western states of India. Over the past few years, India has indeed become a niche rite of passage for Israelis, make in their second home (Roy, Salem, 2020). Approximately 75000, Israelis finish their conscription each year and out of which 60% or about 50000 Israeli post IDF (Israel Defence Force) youth choose to travel for solo or group backpacking travel around the world prior to the starting of a significant beginning of their new life. This rite of passage is an important phenomenon which has become a worldwide phenomenon that exemplified by young Israelis and their way of life.

Travelling after post army has become a common trend for young Israelis. Subsequently, exploring the world almost is an expected vision for every Israelis during their early twenties. In some perspectives, this obligatory army service may be interpreted as abruptly holding them from natural processes of growing up. Nonetheless, army service speeds up the process of maturity by obliging them to take responsibility for the Israeli national security. Therefore, a kind of vacuum has created in the conventional process of maturity. Consequentially this travel act is a process to fill the space of the late teen years to adulthood. In fact, this travel helps Israeli youth to relink with their inner self, inner youth. Israelis consider this entire India trip as "*Et Hamasa Hagadol*" in Hebrew meaning "The Great Journey", a special journey which is unpredictable and wherein they can have many hurdles, challenges and through these are the learnings which help them to construct their life. Henceforth, the analysis of this paper is based on wide-ranging interviews with Israeli travellers, Israeli social organisations in India, Israelis in various professions and local Indian villagers, shopkeepers, guest house owners in Himachal Pradesh, India. Fieldwork was done at Dharamshala, Kasol, Manali, the famous Israeli hubs in Himachal Pradesh in Northern India and Paharganj area in Delhi, a transit point for majority of Israeli travellers and through online interviews.

¹ Indian Embassy govt. website, <https://www.indembassyisrael.gov.in>

1. Social Life outside Israel

A different geographical place, different environment, different social and cultural infrastructure, different climate, different language, different food, it is not easy for the Israelis to adapt to all of this together. Rather, they face adversity in order to fully immerse themselves in the environment and circumstances and the resistance of adversity settles the Israelis which make them more composed in nature. In fact, all is the way to gain experience to know the sense of life or spirituality. Some of them consider this journey as a spiritual journey. Despite of intriguing variety of differences the social environment of Himalayas region of India has taken a place of trust for the Israelis by which they repeatedly come here in the hope of a faithful refuge. The continuous struggle against social cohesion in Israel forces some people to feel vulnerable and dejected while expressing subtle sense of their perception which leads a consistent struggle to maintain their existence or identity. Therefore, they look for escapism and land in mountain villages in North India as susceptible ambience to find sudden conformity which gives them sense of acceptance and provide them freedom to get rid of their confusion and dilemma and enjoy the mental comforts by which they can blow out their all tensions².

2. Community Bonding

There are few Jewish religious and social organisations working in Himachal Pradesh and surrounded mountain region to look after the wellbeing of Jewish people around especially the larger population of Israeli travellers who live there. Beit-Chabad or Chabad, Lev Israely, Lev Yehudi and Beit Bina are some of few examples of Israeli social organisations that are working in Himachal Pradesh, northern part of India to offer support to young Israelis to open up and go through profound personal growth after their army services. Moreover, they are also engaged into Jewish commune setting in Himachal as well as supporting fellow Israeli travellers if they need any help. All these organisations have their respective ideologies. Some of them religious or some of them are non-religious or flexible. They might have differences in ideologies however they have common objective to extend their support to the Israelis who seeks help spiritually, culturally, or general guidance. Social organisations seek to provide a Jewish alternative to Israeli travellers during their extended period in India through establishing a Jewish Home abroad to make them feel Israeli Home away from Israel. For instances, they invite these travellers for meals, engage them in preparing meal, playing with children, friendly get together or conversation, entertainment programme, various kind

² Interview, 29th April, 2020.

of music, Shabbat dinner, Jewish occasions etc. Some of the organizations provides supports to Israeli young travelers who seeks spirituality in foreign culture or do follow up outreach programmes for backpackers who have returned to Israel. Here, these young people are not limited only with Israeli community congregation rather they have social actions in the surrounding villages. These social organisations are trying to study a Jewish experience and Israeli experience also a social orientation and social justice through the travellers. Some travellers are volunteers in this village with these organisations or independently which is perhaps creating a more conscience travelling, thereby Jewish community in this place is encouraging Israelis in some places in Himachal Pradesh to integrate in the local community to have personal experience and volunteer with them in the village. Therefore, they have few opportunities for volunteering and really get to know the community experience as this is most critical time of life of young Israelis. Often a difficult transition from army to real life and even Jewishly trying to find themselves.

According to Israeli social organizations in Himachal Pradesh, approximately forty thousand young Israelis travel a year only in India. At this junction when these young Israelis are looking for themselves, looking for the meaning of their life after the army. Indeed, India is the place of multiculturalism, therefore they can explore different cultures which lead them to explore Buddhism, Hinduism in order to know culturally. Travel to India after army service has become a common trend among young Israelis. Even though this is an old trend which started since early 90's. Therefore, India is the better place to pick young Israelis because it is their second home after the army. The significant point is worthy to mention here that apart from wondering the mountain villages and recreation, many young Israelis are experiencing through Tikkun Olam³ or working into community, or volunteering in the mountain villages that makes world a better place to live and something they do not experience in other places in India. Perhaps, this is a sense of something really a humanistic mission that many young Israelis are doing independently or with non-governmental organisations in Dharamshala and other places in Himachal Pradesh.

It is important to remember that every single Israeli is deeply connected to others who were on the trail at the same time. Israelis generally are not that autonomous on these treks. Most of the Israelis try to celebrate Jewish festivals when they are in India. They socialize with fellow Israelis/ Jews in the Chabad houses or Jewish open houses and attend Shabbat night dinner.

³ The Hebrew phrase *tikkun olam* (pronounced tee-KOON oh-LUHM) means "world repair." In modern Jewish circles, *tikkun olam* has become synonymous with the notion of social action and the pursuit of social justice (MyJewishLearning.com).

Some of them maintain it as religious notion or some of them take it as cultural tradition. Some of Secular Jews visit Chabad house to attend Shabbat dinner and observe Shabbat during their stay in India. Even they do get together with fellow Israeli travellers at the Jewish house or Chabad house. However, they do not have such contact with any Jewish communities in Himachal or any other places in India⁴.

On contrary, some of them (atheist) do not observe Shabbat and do not prefer to mix with only Israelis as they want to explore different socio-cultural life rather than limiting themselves only within Israel. However, during crisis time especially in lockdown period, many of such group of Israelis felt very much dependent on information from the outside. Therefore, they were all over the WhatsApp groups, Facebook groups, this time they were very much in touch with fellow Israelis.

They travel with a friend and join with different Israeli groups or other travellers from Europe, Australia even sometimes few Indian travellers and travel all the villages for two and half weeks also with a group. They are most of the time surrounded by Israelis while riding local transportation or social gathering in Beit Chabad house. In fact, there are few interesting incidents shared by respondents that some of them have found their future partner (Israeli) here in Himachal and they are still together last few years⁵. On the other hand, some of atheist or secular Jews prefer to socialize with local people or Israeli travellers whom they met there in Himachal instead of socializing with Israelis in Chabad house or some of Jewish houses based in Himachal as they feel extreme religiosity within these organisations which they are not inclined to be⁶. In addition to this, some Israelis who identify themselves as Jewish however they do not observe Shabbat as they consider it religious tradition. "Even though many Jews consider it cultural, but it is coming from the religious way of life"⁷.

Although it can mostly be seen that Jewish people have a strong Jewish community bond, it is rarely visible here with other Jewish communities in India, rather they keep a close bond only with the Israeli Jewish community. Even though majority of Israelis have less contact with Indian Jewish community in other places in India, some of the Israeli youth travel India with their own obligation of being Jewish and show their responsibility by supporting Jewish community in India. One respondent who identified himself

⁴ Interview, 2nd April, 2020.

⁵ Interview, 29th April, 2020.

⁶ Interview, 5th April, 2020.

⁷ Interview, 12th April, 2020.

as non-religious rather than being reform or traditional Jew who belongs to traditional Mizrahi background, worked for a month voluntarily on behalf of American Jewish organization for Indian Jews community in Tamil Nadu before traveling to Himachal Pradesh⁸.

The religion of the Jew is Judaism, and their ethnic culture is called Jewish, but most of Israelis in Himachal say the exact vice versa that is religion is Jewish; Judaism is a culture. Henceforth, contextually, Judaism can be considered as a way of life by which the Israelis maintain their cultural or spiritual life. It also often exemplifies that some ethnic cultures are metamorphoses of religious cultural attributes. Because of this, people practice identical, ethnic, or regional customs or cultures regardless of their religious deference. Refer to my question “do you go to Synagogue or Chabad house here in India?”, one respondent replied “Not here. But in Chabad there are prayer songs with every three meals which I remember always. So, in coming month I am thinking of going for one Shabbat in the Chabad house as I remember the song very much”⁹. Perhaps, this reflects a Jewish tradition which is culturally associated with Judaism.

In India majority of Israeli people identify themselves as secular. Especially young post IDF Israelis sometimes turned to Buddhism or Hinduism spiritually in India. It might be slightly more difficult because of the divisions between secular and religious and the stereotype surrounding religious way of living in Israel, but in India these young people are open to expose to various cultures and religions which also help them to connect with spirituality or to re-explore Judaism. Subsequently, Jewish organisations in India are also flexible in nature by allowing these young Israelis to be secular Jews and have a full Jewish identity that they can celebrate Jewish holidays, or they can have a spiritual connection if they would like. Therefore, in doing so, they can enjoy their freedom as well as they can find their way in the cultural Judaism.

It is noteworthy to state that young Israeli travellers are unique in nature. Therefore, they cannot be generalised as regular tourists. They do not follow any tourism campaign or guidebooks rather they travel based on review, feedback, and recommendation of fellow Israelis through student community, social networking platforms and chain of WhatsApp communications. Young Israelis stay in India two to ten months even more in villages instead of city or touristic places. They choose to live a simple lifestyle and inclined to experience the hardship of life unlike general tourists. It is interesting that Israelis travel to India on frequent intervals, and they visit same places each

⁸Interview, 1st April, 2020.

⁹ Interview, 7th April, 2020.

time. Travel to Himachal is so often to them that even many of them on their multiple trips in India and deliberately maintain the continuity to coming back to Himachal year after year. They have become so acquainted with the mountain villages and the local people which have made them feel at home. They are open for new ideas and they are away from their stressful life also away from home. Most importantly they are at their crucial junction when they are looking for their identities and meaning of their life. Subsequently, India is allowing them to find it and giving the freedom to find their own way. Israelis can study Buddhism, or they can practice Yoga and one want to attend Sabbath or the way they want to live. Furthermore, Beit Chabad or other Jewish organisations are also not engaging how Israelis live their life, but they do want to have something with Jewish identity and with social justice.

3. Religion and Spirituality

Most studies on this group of Israeli travellers are sociological and religious or spiritual dimensions have been neglected. However, many young people are spiritually open or feeling profoundly connected to God on these India trips, those are the ones I would focus on this section. There are multiple meanings behind their surreal escape from Israel. Himachal Pradesh play a role of mediator by developing an uncanny synchronicity between confused, traumatised, emotionally, or mentally distressed Israelis and world of spiritualism. According to one respondent, “no place can be compared with these peaceful villages placed deep in the Himalayas, I am in love with these hills, and I feel a magnetic charm and peace¹⁰. Some of them feel connected to spiritual world of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism even some of Jews feel more connected to God in a spiritual way.

Most of the young Israelis in Himachal identify themselves as secular or non-religious. Moreover, many of them consider themselves absolute secular or atheist. Interestingly, a significant change occurs among some of the self-proclaimed secular or non-religious Israeli Jews during their stay in India. Some of them become the observant Jews who do pray, attend ceremonial rituals in Chabad house, synagogue, and turn to become religious and feel connected to Judaism. Chabad house and Jewish social organisations in Himachal Pradesh and perhaps the atmosphere of Himalaya’s mountain villages play a pivotal role and instrumental in this entire process of transformation of Israeli youth.

In terms of homosexuals, the rigid religious restrictions in Israel, are driving them away from being religious. Due to the religious orthodoxy in Israel, young Israelis from LGBT community have been getting disconnected from the

¹⁰ Interview, 3rd Nov, 2019.

Judaism despite being traditional believer in God. As a result, they are being forced to abandon religion in order to maintain their identity and their social life. Even though gay rights are legal in some extent, gay marriage is still not legally accepted in Israel and gays are not fully welcomed in mainstream Israeli society or acknowledged in the periphery. As well as they face many challenges in Israeli society to sustain their gender identity. Thus, they feel themselves outcast from the mainstream Israeli society

While some respondents self-identified as gay during interview, they are differed widely in the significance they deeply connected to their gender identity and in the sense of community they share with other LGBT adults. Some of them consider their gay identities as immensely significant to their whole identity. Moreover, it also creates relatively a tussle between religious autonomy and their social life. Therefore, as they are not accepted by religious authority in Israel, they choose to be amputated from the religiosity and keep themselves restraint from being religious. According to one respondent, "I respect the tradition of Israeli stuff and I used to be religious at the age of 18 until 23. I do believe in God but right now as being gay I feel like religious community will not necessarily accept me, so I do not like religious people, religious houses and I do not observe religious rituals. But I do believe in God and respect Judaism and I like tradition"¹¹. According to them, the serenity of this mountain villages, the warmth and welcoming nature of the people and most importantly freedom of choice help them to begin an intense personal journey that leads them back to their Jewish roots. As Kamenetz discovers, "sometimes you have to go far away to find your way home"¹².

According to a respondent who belongs to Israeli LGBT community, "Rabbi and Rabbanit"¹³ of Chabad houses in India actually motivated them a lot. They made Israeli youth comfortable and made them feel very own. While learning Torah by Rabbanit in India, young Israeli girls got the opportunity to share their stories with each other. Interestingly this kind of congregation of Israeli people never happens in Israel in general. All the girls sit together with Rabbanit and talk about their individual life stories. Perhaps, this kind of atmosphere is unusual in Israel. It is indeed a great feeling when people are extremely stressed for his or her life and just then they can feel the comfort to express their problems in front of strangers what could be better than that. They can share their experiences, talk about themselves, their lives, but the irony is that normally the social atmosphere never allows them to do with their friends in

¹¹ Interview, 29th April, 2020.

¹² See, Kamenetz, R., 1995. *The Jew in the lotus: A poet's rediscovery of Jewish identity in Buddhist India*. Harper.

¹³ Rabbi is a spiritual leader or religious teacher in Judaism. The wife of Rabbi is called Rabbanit.

Israel. But it is possible in India. Even though the same Chabad house is also working in Israel, India's social environment makes the thing different and influence them to be flexible and more open. In doing so, these young people feel more comfortable and open even if in front of unknown people. Moreover, they can also hear stories of other people which encourage them to withstand their individual challenges. Thus, the openness, warmth they receive from Chabad houses in Himachal that motivate them to continue their struggle of life¹⁴.

Even though some of young Israelis who identify themselves *non-religious* and not from religious background however some of them start doing religious prayer and keeping kosher or eating only vegetarian food and even visit Chabad house to attend the ceremonial Shabbat night prayer during their stay in Himachal. Paradoxically, the same Israeli youth avoid visiting any religious places in Israel and observing the religious tradition due to the rigid conservative religious orthodoxy in Israel¹⁵. Many Israeli youth in Himachal claim themselves as secular however they keep kosher or eat vegetarian food and simply avoid meat during their stay in India¹⁶.

It is important to mention that keeping kosher is dietary Jewish religious law however it is inherited into Jewish tradition and subsequently a mere cultural tradition for the self-proclaimed secular Jews who are non-religious and non-observant. In some context, spiritual, ethical, and social are interlinked with each other or they are all the same. Some of them visit Chabad houses if they need help regarding to any information or any support for their stay and travel in this region. Some of them get influenced by a local Chabad house and become a bit more interested in bible studies and have some ceremonial rituals done. For example, one respondent's father got Mitzvah done in Himachal even he was not religious because he grew up in a Kibbutz and never had any religion and a bar-mitzvah. And then they heard about Beit Chabad and became motivated to do so. But it did never turn them any more religious. Despite some people here turn to religion but for many people Chabad is always a place of culture. So, they love to go for Friday evenings in Chabad of Jewish Houses. "I would love that and it's a very emotional, lot of times enjoy a lot, but in a cultural sense"¹⁷.

Every Israeli has some knowledge of Judaism by living in Israel through holidays and life events and bible study in the school but they are called

¹⁴ Interview, 29th April, 2020.

¹⁵ Interview, 29th April, 2020.

¹⁶ Interview, 6th April, 2020.

¹⁷ Interview, 11th April, 2020.

secular. The issue then how to talk about spirituality that is neither secular nor religious. I suppose that exposure to Hinduism may help them articulate this. Some of them are attracted towards philosophy of Hinduism which is depicted through Hindu mythology¹⁸. The element of hospitality and active reception welcome of Chabad is something in common with some cultural Hindu notions¹⁹.

There are some stories shared by interviewees those who have grown up and lived their entire life in non-religious Kibbutz village or connected in some extent. Apparently, they are non-believer of God and have no religion, however they consider themselves Jewish. On the contrary, some of them do not consider themselves Jewish because they believe that Judaism is a religion, therefore they are not Jewish rather just a human being²⁰.

There are many instances where it has been reflected that the India trip inevitably influenced to a holistic transformation which led non-religious Jews to become believer of almighty. Refer to some respondents at the age varies to late thirties to late forties and who have been travelling to India since their early twenties that despite being Israeli secular family background and non-believer of God they have totally changed after coming to India. Now some of them of this section of Israeli Jews firmly stated their religious conviction. They do Jewish religious pray, as well as they visit Hindu Temple to worship and practice Hindu rituals for instance, offer water to Hindu God Lord Shiv, visit Muslim Mosque. In fact, the eternal truth for them is the pilgrimage and there can be no religious discrimination. They keep kosher when they are in India, however, they set their own rules as per themselves. Their preferences have changed with due course of time now *addhyatmik yatra* or spiritual journey, pilgrimage site have replaced the preference of nature, landscape, scenery instead. Alike Banaras, Haridwar, or other pilgrimage places in India are preferable choice for them. Indeed, *Tirath* or pilgrimage is the most significant element in their life²¹. In addition, some of them adapted cultural Hinduism and they identified themselves even Hindu instead of Jewish²².

In the context of young Israelis, spirituality or mysticism takes place mostly in conformity to that context or state of social consciousness²³. In many respects, Judaism is in harmony with philosophy of Hinduism. Therefore,

¹⁸ Interview, 6th April, 2020.

¹⁹ Interview, 7th May, 2020.

²⁰ Interview, 12th April, 2020.

²¹ Interview, 7th April, 2020.

²² Interview, 7th April, 2020.

²³ Interview, 7th May, 2020.

contextually it is worthy to mention that there are many similarities between Hindu philosophy and Judaism. Because Hinduism is not just a religion but a philosophical doctrine that inspires social and spiritual paths of people. As Wendy Doniger states that Hinduism and Judaism are alike in their tendency toward orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy (Donigar, Wendy, p.16).

According to Theologists and Academic of Judaic studies there are resemblances between Hasidic²⁴ teaching of Judaism and Buddhism on the cultural and spiritual perspective²⁵. Both teach that through constant self-introspection or awareness and consciousness one can experience peace and let others know-how happiness and redemption can be achieved in our life here. Some of them read the sutras²⁶ of Buddhism and some pieces of Tora and Hasidic stories then they found how much Judaism and Buddhism are in common in a cultural and spiritual ways. They found some commonalities and it is amazing for them to discover it practically in Himachal by visiting monasteries, listening stories of spiritual journey, knowing about enlightenment, observing simple lifestyle of local people. Despite hardship and minimum resources people live life happily. The struggle between what they

²⁴ Hasidic Judaism is a subgroup of Orthodox Judaism. "Hasidic Jews are heirs of the spiritual revivalist movement that began in Eastern Europe in the 18th century and, drawing on the Jewish mystical tradition, emphasized direct communion with the divine through ecstatic prayer and joy in worship. There are a number of distinct sects, most headed by a charismatic rabbi, or rebbe, including Chabad, Satmar, Ger and Skver", https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-jewish-denominations/Hasidic-movement-founded-by-Rabbi-Israel-Baal-Shem-Tov,-with-the-vision-of-teaching-about-love,-Joy-and-humility-through-the-service-to-G-D-and-towards-fellow-human.-Hasidism-engages-primarily-inner-and-spiritual-enlightenment-over-mere-competency-in-the-textual-study.-It-teaches-oral-teaching-through-the-tales-of-spiritual-leaders'-life-and-teaching.-Those-teaching-say-every-human-being-can-have-cosmic-influence;-an-individual's-sincerity-and-responsibility-are-desirable-to-the-wisest-and-labored-scholarship;-the-silent-melody-or-song-can-be-more-significant-than-liturgical-text.-Hasidic-Judaism-uses-modified-liturgy,-flexible-prayer-time,-they-use-mostly-Yiddish-vernacular-and-use-Hebrew-only-as-liturgical-scripture.-They-have-respective-customs-and-practices,-and-religious-leadership.-Despite-sharing-most-of-the-same-fundamental-beliefs,-Hasidic-Judaism-is-distinctive-from-other-orthodox-Judaism.-Also-See,-Louise-Jacobs,-Basic-Ideas-of-Hasidism,-in:-Hasidism,-Encyclopedia-Judaica,-2007.-Volume-8,-p.-408.,-also-see,-https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4079238/jewish/17-Facts-Everyone-Should-Know-About-Hasidic-Jews.htm

²⁵ See, Abe, M. (1995). Zen Buddhism and Hasidism—Similarities and Contrasts. In *Buddhism and Interfaith Dialogue* (pp. 159-165). Palgrave Macmillan, London.

²⁶ Sutra (Sanskrit word which means in English 'string, thread' in Indian literary traditions refers to a collection of aphorisms in the form of a manual or, more precisely, a brief manual or text. Sutras are a genre of ancient and medieval Indian scriptures found in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. Also see, M Winternitz (2010 Reprint), *A History of Indian Literature*, Volume 1, Motilal Banarsidass, ISBN 978-81-208-0264-3. Buddhist Sutras or suttas are religious scripture which is a part of Buddhist tradition and regarded as oral teaching of Gautam Buddha. Also see, K. R. Norman (1997), *A philological approach to Buddhism: the Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai Lectures 1994*. (Buddhist Forum, Vol. v.) London: School of Oriental and African Studies.

know from their home and how things work in India. Because they face many adversities in India such as living with hardship, cultural differences, language differences, extreme weather etc. which they are not experienced or had prior knowledge. However, they take it as a learning process that helps them to transform for holistic development and achieve inner peace. Refer to the respondents "When they realise it and do not fight with it and go with the flow and they can open themselves to something else". Therefore, I analyse that this is the strongest feeling that some of Israelis take in back to Israel²⁷. I need to mention here, that there are insights from some of Israelis where something stood out about their experience spiritually speaking.

Conclusion

It is important to remember at the outset that the continued travel of Israeli Jews in India is not merely the purpose of leisure travel, although tourism is partially involved. Indeed, it is a learning process for young Israelis with the objectivity of gathering experiences such as exploring the diversity, serenity of nature, picturesque view, culture, and people. This travel offers to experience the practical learning of life which involves hardship, cross cultural communication, learning new skills, spirituality, and in some extent mental and spiritual development. Despite of many adversities, this trip is being a 'healing' for some of the Israelis or a remedy for many of their problems. 'A Great Journey' as this trip is a learning experience for overall transformation of their life. Therefore, it is important to state that, this big trip redresses their issues and acts as a major contributing factor to overall social development of young Israelis. Due to larger volume of Israelis seasonal settlement in many mountain villages, thus, these villages can be specifically called and considered Israeli colonies. Manali, Dharamshala, Kasol are the popular Israeli hubs in Himachal, India. These quiet and peaceful places have become a second home for thousands of Jews. Subsequently, the special bond between Israelis and Indian villagers makes Israelis feel secured and safe in India.

The emerging inclination towards individualism among Israelis:

It is also worth highlighting the emerging inclination towards individualism among Israelis in Himachal Pradesh by the glaring display of their individual choice of self-determination of being Jewish or Israeli. For instances, some of them are religious Jew and feel more connected to Judaism when they are in Himachal, some of them atheist but integrated to Indian culture and Buddhism or, some of them secular Jews but also observe religious tradition while in India, some of them have no religion rather embrace all religions and practice multiple religious observances, some of them consider themselves only Israeli

²⁷ Interview, 4th May, 2020.

not Jewish, interestingly some of them identify them only human being from Kibbutz and do not believe the existence of God however do not want any taboo of atheist. Moreover, some of them identify themselves as a Jewish but again culturally because Judaism is both like religion of a people and a culture. So culturally, someone is Jewish first, and then she/he is Israeli at the same time she/he is an atheist. There are multiple Jewish or Israeli identities exponentially visible within Israeli travellers in Himachal and the social conviction about their individual freedom to maintain their Jewish identity. Indeed, identity determines the existence of the self which is dominantly resilient in every Israelis in India which leads to a fragmentation in identities among Israelis in Himachal. Thus, instead of collective identities, it reflects an emergence inclination towards individualism within Israelis in India. In conclusion, I assert that despite partially integrated to foreign culture and foreign environment young Israelis persistently maintain their Jewishness culturally or religiously in India. Apparently, Judaism does not have much physical presence, but it is an ontological concept which practices by social engineering. Thus, in practical term, the reality of Jewishness is a Jewish value which exists beneath the Jewish social life.

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