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integration**

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Throwing Tebbit a Googly: British Hindus and integration

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Jyoti Saraswati and Indraneel Sircar

Most British Hindus cheered for their 'mother country' during Sunday's cricket match between England and India, not for the country in which they were born and raised. They failed the 'Tebbit Test', but does it matter? Perhaps a lack of integration into wider British society is not the threat to national cohesion we believe it to be.



Is Norman Tebbit's cricket test still relevant?

The London Olympics has been described as a watershed moment in Britain's multicultural experiment. From [Danny Boyle's opening ceremony](#) (decried as '[leftie multicultural crap](#)' by Tory MP Aidan Burley) onwards, the two-week sporting event appeared to reflect a Britain more at ease with ethnic diversity than ever before. In 1992 Linford Christie's decision to celebrate his victory in the men's 100m at the Barcelona Olympics [wrapped in a Union Jack flag](#) sparked a national debate. Twenty years later, did anyone even raise an eyebrow when Somali-born Mo Farah draped himself in similar attire during his lap of honour (despite a [spoof photo](#) making the rounds on the internet)?

But what then of that Great British sporting event-meets-race relations litmus test, the cricket match between England and any of the South Asian countries it gave the game to? Just two years before Christie's 'Union Jack moment', the Tory MP Norman Tebbit lambasted the ethnic minorities who cheered, not for England, but the cricket team from where they - or their parents - had emigrated from. Entering the political lexicon as the '[Tebbit Test](#)', such support was seen as evidence of a community's lack of integration with broader British society. By extension, it was assumed to have a number of adverse social and political ramifications. Is it now as dated as

the debate over Christie's victory celebration in 1992?

Our research suggests not...or, more accurately, not exactly.

When India scored a [resounding victory](#) against England in the T20 cricket World Cup in Colombo on Sunday 23 September, the vast majority of British Hindus - many of whom have never been to India - cheered on India. This supports the conclusions from our small [pilot study](#) examining the relationship between integration, cohesion, and social mobility for a group of British-born Hindus - supposedly amongst the most integrated of the UK's diverse Asian communities - based in East London. In our survey, however, the overwhelming majority of British Hindus fail the Tebbit Test. Moreover, there seems to be a strong association between failing the Tebbit Test and a lack of visible integration, as understood in terms of ethnic identity of partners and friends. Of the British Hindus surveyed, the overwhelming majority also married and socialised exclusively within their community.

Could Norman Tebbit's 'back-of-an-envelope' hypothesis really be valid, even in 21st century Britain?

Not exactly. [Our findings](#) demonstrate that, while British Hindus continue to fail the Tebbit Test and display little or no visible signs of integration - e.g. 80% said that most of their closest friends were from within the community - this need not be at the expense of national cohesion and an impediment to social mobility as Tebbit and others had assumed. Most strikingly, more of those surveyed self-identified first and foremost as British (35%), in preference to Indian (25%), Hindu (15%) or Asian (10%). They also exhibited strong loyalties to Britain. In addition, nearly all enjoyed close connections and deep affiliations with the areas in which they live and the places that they work - both of which they are usually minorities in. And disproving the notion that a lack of integration is an impediment to employment and a reflection of underachievement, the group enjoyed high levels of social mobility (55% had graduated from university and a further 35% obtained post-graduate qualifications) despite their largely working-class origins.

So what does this mean for our understanding of contemporary British multiculturalism? The prevailing current of thought, on both Left and Right, is that visible integration is highly desirable due to the perceived social and political benefits that accrue from it. Integration is seen as a cure for social ills and a silver bullet for political woes within Minority Ethnic groups. And it continues to be sought by politicians (including [Tebbit himself](#)) and trumpeted by the media accordingly.

Our research questions such assumptions. It suggests that positive attachments to British society can co-exist without the tell-tale signs of visible integration. These findings are important in countering negative perceptions of certain communities, such as the British Asian Muslim community, where a lack of visible integration is often conflated with anti-British or anti-Western sentiments.

The British Hindus in our study have thus thrown a googly to Tebbit: they may continue to fail the test and fall well short of visible integration. But by still identifying themselves as British and demonstrating close attachment to the UK, they prove the strength and inclusivity of British identity, rather than its brittleness. That - unlike the result of the match between England and India - is something we can surely all celebrate.