SOUTH ASIAN MIGRATION IN GREECE: CULTURAL PLURALITY AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

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1. Introduction

At the end of the 20th century, Greece transformed, together with the other countries of the European South (Italy, Spain, Portugal) into an immigrant destination as a result of a set of internal and external factors[1]. On the one hand, the fall of the ex-Soviet Union regime as well as the ensuing globalization broadened the borders between the countries and therefore facilitated the population movements from the developing towards the developed world. On the other, Greece, having achieved a high degree of economic and social development as a country of the European Union, attracted a big number of immigrants primarily from the Balkans and the countries of Eastern Europe which gradually became even bigger with immigrants from Asia and Africa (King 2002; Triandafillidou and Gropas 2009, Triandafillidou and Maroukis 2010).

Over the last years, Asia appears to be an ever-growing source of immigration, mainly because of its population growth, as well as many other reasons (i.e. low levels of economic development, war conflicts and ecological problems that trigger humanistic crises, environmental degradation, political persecutions, etc) that conduce to the movement of populations. The factors that function as a pole of attraction are the comparative affluence and stability of Europe, the specific macro-economic characteristics of Greece and other Southern European countries, and especially the geographical position of Greece which is the gate of entrance to Europe. This last parameter points to the role of the country as a "stopover" for a big number of Asian immigrants on their way to other European countries (Papadopoulou 2004). This movement is many times illegal because of the long coastline of Greece and the big number of islands which make the control of the borders difficult and practically offer an easy access to immigrants (King and Rybaszuk 1993, Baldwin-Edwards 1998, King 2000, Lambrianidis and Lymberaki 2001: 74-75).

According to the last census of 2001, the population of Greece is almost eleven million (10.964.020). The immigrants are 762.191, that is, 7% of the country's population. Nonetheless, it is estimated that the actual number is bigger and that it reaches 1,5 million, because the deficient legitimation and the growing irregular immigration is difficult to record. It is true that the great number of immigrants that live in Greece come from the Balkans and Eastern Europe, but there is also a considerable number who come from Asia. According to official data, people from the countries of the Indian subcontinent constitute 5,4% of the migrant population of Greece, the main country of origin being Pakistan with an overall 2,9% (Zoumbopoulou 2008). More specifically, the community of Pakistanis numbers around 50.000 people, the community of Indians surpasses 15.000 people, and the

[1] The special characteristics of the European South countries have led the analysts to speak about the South European model of migration (Simon 1987, King 1993, King and Black 1997, King et al. 2000, Baldwin-Edwards 2004).

community of Bangladeshi reaches 12.000 people. Unofficial data however points to an almost double percentage, given the fact that the number of irregular immigrants is generally difficult to estimate and the rhythm of illegal entrance into Greece is fast increasing[2]. It should be noted here that the "status" of irregular immigration does not refer only to the way of entrance but also to the immigrants' inability to renew their stay permit for a variety of reasons, such as the absence of work contracts (Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2007a: 371).

The immigrants from South Asia constitute a new population for the Greek experience, a population that is characterized by the lack of any previous (historical, cultural or economic) bonds between the counties of origin and the country of destination (Triandafyllidou and Maroukis 2010: 51). Their numeric presence may not seem to be considerable, but what is definitely distinctive is their cultural and religious diversity that make them particularly "visible" in Greece, both in the capital, Athens, as well as in the rural regions of Central Greece where they live. This diversity "colours" with its variety the so far homogenous cultural landscape of Greece.

Because of the relatively recent arrival of these groups in Greece as well as their small, at present, number, the research about the South Asian immigrants in Greece has just began to develop. The first attempt for systematic study was made by the Department of Asiatic Studies of the Institute of International Economic Relations to the net MedAsia which concerns the economic and social dimension of Asian immigrants in general and constitutes an important source of data (Tonchev et al. 2007). Some case studies have been recently published concerning the economic and social characteristics of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, while fieldwork is currently carried out concerning the religious and cultural patterns of Indian immigrants, in their majority Sikh (Lazarescu and Broersma 2010: 381-440, Papageorgiou 2011).

2. The migration of South Asians to Greece

The immigration of South Asians to Greece has been realized in three phases: the first, migratonal waves until 1991, the second, in the period between 1991-2003 and the third, after 2003 (Tonchev et al. 2007). More specifically, the first immigrants are Pakistanis who arrive at the beginning of 1970 following an inter-state agreement between Greece and Pakistan; they are mainly occupied as manual workers at the shipyard of Skaramaga, in Piraeus. In addition, a small number of Indians who work mainly for Greek shipping companies complete the first migrational wave from the Indian subcontinent to Greece. In the 80s, the number of South Asian immigrants is growing, probably because of the accession of Greece into the so-called then European Economic Community which raises their expectations for better movement conditions within it. In this way, until 1991, mainly Pakistanis, few Indians and fewer Bangladeshis form the first distinctive South Asian migrational communities in Greece (Tonchev et al. 2007, Lazarescu and Broersma 2010: 387-388).

In the period between 1991 and 2003, in the frame of the broader "explosion" of international migrational fluxes, the number of Pakistanis and Indians is considerably augmented, while immigrants from Bangladesh are also attracted to a greater degree. At that time, a big percent of South Asians arrived in Greece to cover the increasing

[2] According to unofficial information, the number of illegal immigrants who enter Greece is estimated about 350 people per week, whereas the total number those who entered in Greece, over last ten years, is estimated about 5.000.000. Pakistan and Bangladesh are in the list of countries that "supply" Greece with illegal immigrants (Nikolopoulos 2009, Ligeros 2009).

needs for unskilled workforce in the Greek economy: in farming, tourism, constructions etc; at the same time the amelioration of the educational and living level of young Greeks as well as their reluctance to find employment in these fields created many job vacancies. Additionally, the decision for the organization of the Olympic Games in Athens in 2004, brought forth the need for extra working force to be occupied in the olympic constructions.

Nevertheless, the biggest influx of immigrants is noticed after 2003, when to the already existing pull and push reasons another one is added: the "self-supply" of migration. To be more specific, the already settled migrational communities attract friends, relatives and compatriots, and encourage their settlement in Greece. This concentration of ethnically, religiously and linguistically homogenous migrational population is interpreted in many cases with the theory of social networks Stanton 1997, Massey et al. 1994, Green 2002: 128, Glytsos and Katseli 2004, Emke-Poulopoulou 2007: 318).

3. Socio-economic characteristics

The great majority of South Asian immigrants are young men in the productive age of 20-40; they are single or married who live in Greece without their family, which they have left back in their home country. More specifically, 98% of married Indians and 78% of married Pakistanis live in Greece without their wife and children, while the percentage of Bangladeshis is similar (Lazarescu and Broersma 2010: 391-391). Consequently, the disproportion between the two sexes is especially apparent in the communities of South Asians, as the big majority of them are men (Pakistanis 96%, Indians 93%, Bangladeshis 97%). The cases of family reunions hardly surpass 2% (Triandafyllidou and Marourof 2010: 53-54); on the one hand, because of the practical barriers posed by the Greek legislation concerning this matter (Lazarescu and Broersma 2010: 390), and on the other, as a result of personal choices of the immigrants themselves who many times prefer to live in Greece alone in order to collect as much money as possible to send back to their country to secure the survival of their family (Papageorgiou 2011).

The majority of South Asian immigrants are low-paid and unskilled workers who are employed in various sectors of Greek economy: agriculture, constructions, small industries, commerce and services; they work in the "secondary" work market (Zoumbopoulou 2008). Pakistanis work mainly in the processing industry (43%), while they are also active in the sectors of constructions and services, such as car repairs, petrol stations and so on (13,5%). At the same time, their occupation at Internet cafés and communication centers that cater for the needs of immigrants are constantly on the increase. The majority of Pakistani industrial workers live in Attica (Athens), whereas those who are employed in land farming (13,3%) live in the broader area of Attica (Marathon and so on), Boiotia, Evoia and other provincial areas of Central Greece. Bangladeshis are concentrated in Athens and work principally in the processing industry (52,2%), but also in small commercial businesses and restaurants (26,1%), while a small percentage are occupied in the field of constructions (5,5%). A few of them run their own businesses, such as restaurants, small super markets, video stores and so on (Tonchev 2007: 39).

On the contrary, the majority of Indians resides in rural regions of Greece, such as the broader area of Attica (for instance, Marathon and Megara), Boiotia (Thiva and Oinofita), Argolida, on the islands of Argosaronikos Gulf and Crete and is occupied

in agriculture (52,7%). More concretely, most Indian immigrants find employment in land farming, livestock farming and fruit gathering. Most of them work as land workers for a wage, while a small number of them rent the land of Greek farmers and work on a profit percentage. A part of them also work in the fish industry (Tonchev 2007: 15 & 18).

There is also a percentage of Indian immigrants, 2.000-3.000 approximately, who live in the broader area of the capital (Athens and Piraeus) and work in the sector of processing industry and constructions (18,3% και 8,3% correspondingly). Some of them (5,8%) have their own businesses, such as groceries, restaurants, kiosks, hair salons, video clubs and tourist shops (Tonchev 2007: 39). On the whole, one can notice a kind of distribution of work with Pakistanis and Bangladeshis working mainly in the field of processing industries and constructions, while Indians in that of agriculture. Additionally, a big number of South Asian immigrants work uninsured as the comparative statistical data of National Statistic Service of Greece and of the Institute of Social Insurance confirm (Tonchev 2007: 18-19).

Another parameter of the profile of South Asian immigrants is the low educational level. According to the available data, the educational level of South Asians is in general lower than the average level of all immigrants in Greece. More specifically, the percentage of illiteracy for Pakistanis (13,8%), Indians (10,7%) and Bangladeshis (11,1%) surpasses the average of all immigrants (9,2%), as the bigger groups are those who have received only elementary education (30,6%, 35,8% and 29,9% respectively) (Tonchev 2007: 21, Lazarescu and Broersma 2010: 392). Another major problem that they face is the use of the Greek language, as just a few of South Asians can speak it very well and even fewer can write it. This problem poses barriers for their communication with the public services and in general for their incorporation into the Greek society.

Consequently, one can say that the socio-economic characteristics of South Asians who live in Greece present big similarities among them and may be summarized as follows: young men, living alone (single or married without their family), unskilled, low paid and many times without insurance, of low educational level and unable to use the Greek language effectively.

4. The ethno-religious profile

While the socio-economic profile of South Asians in Greece appears rather uniform, the cultural profile seems to be quite differentiated. The triple national origin of South Asian immigrants becomes even more diverse by the fact that they come from particular regions, which afford their own ethno-cultural and religious identity. Therefore, the South Asians who live in Greece are differentiated in terms of ethnic belonging and religious affiliation without necessarily identifying with both terms. There are elements that unite them and others that separate them. Some times language unites them but religion divides them and other times religion unites them but ethnic origin separates them. These data come mainly from field research, given the fact that the official census records only national origin.

Generally speaking, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis present a remarkable mono-religious Muslim identity, while Indians “transplant” in Greece the ethno-religious heterogeneity of their country. More specifically, most of Pakistanis in Greece (almost 80%) come from North Punjab (Lazarescu and Broersma 2010: 393). They speak Punjabi as their mother tongue while they are also familiar with Urdu, the official language of their country. Most Pakistanis are Sunni but there is also a

considerable number of Shih. Bangladeshis are also Muslim and they come mainly from the area of the capital of Bangladesh, Dakka.

The Indian diversity is conversely expressed in Greece by Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims immigrants. More specifically, contrary to India itself where the great majority of people are Hindus, the great majority of Indian immigrants in Greece, almost 90%, are members of the Sikh religious community (Papageorgiou 2011). Therefore, as Sikhism is inextricably related with the ethnicity and language Punjabi, they come from the Indian Punjab, speak Punjabi and communicate easily with Pakistani Punjabis. A few Indians who come from West Bengal are Hindus, have Bengali as their mother tongue and communicate easily with the Muslim Bangladeshis who also speak the same mother tongue. Fewer Indians are Muslims from corresponding regions.

To face the difficulties of adaptation to the Greek society but at the same time conserve their particular ethno-religious identity, South Asian immigrants are organized in associations. The widely accepted associations bear the title of national origin of immigrants, such as Community of Pakistanis, Community of Indians, Community of Bangladeshis. These associations have a variety of purposes and a broad field of activities. Research points out that the basic purposes of these associations are the support of their members to tackle various problems, the reinforcement of friendship between their members and the Greek society, the protection of work rights and the amusement of their members (Tsakirides 2009: 125-126).

Except these national associations, the South Asians are strongly and more essentially related by their ethnic and religious identities. They tend to create cultural associations on the basis of ethno-linguistic and "confessional" criteria with a view to establishing a cultural center that in reality functions as a worship center. In the case of Muslim immigrants, such cultural associations that place special emphasis on religion are: the Association of Muslim Pakistanis, the Association of Shih Muslim Pakistanis, the Association "Al Jabbar" that is the religious association of Bangladeshi immigrants (Tatsis 2009). On the contrary, in the case of Indian immigrants, both forms of associations (national and religious) coincide, because the (national) Association of Indians of Greece "houses" the main gurdwara of the Sikh immigrants (Papageorgiou 2011).

In reality, these informal worship places are many more, as to their particular national and religious identity are also added reasons concerning the ethnotic origin of immigrants, their particular linguistic background, the geographical proximity of the region of origin, as well as, the geographical distribution of immigrants in the capital, Athens, and in the rest of Greece. These worship places function broadly as ethnotic places of gathering, where immigrants communicate in their mother tongue with their compatriots, exchange information about employment and housing opportunities and support and reinforce each other for facing their problems. In this way, they transform into centers of reproduction not only of religious but also of ethnic identity, as well as of development of communal solidarity. Consequently, their role is multifunctional with religious, cultural, ethno-linguistic and social dimensions. In addition, the support and help that they provide to their members eventually makes them function as places of adaptation of immigrants into the new for them Greek context (Antoniou 2003, Lazarescu and Broersma 2010: 421).

5. The "reception" of South Asian immigrants in the Greek society

The ethno-religious heterogeneity of South Asian immigrants presents a special interest for Greece, a country that –until recently- is considered to be racially, nationally and religiously homogenous. Their integration becomes a difficult issue, as their "visibility" on physical and cultural terms is especially discernible in the Greek society. On the one hand, the South Asians constitute "recognizable" communities, as their appearance reveals their foreign origin. On the other hand, the Muslim identity of the majority of them raises suspiciousness in the Greek society, due to the connection between Islam and international terrorism as well as to the confusion of Muslim identity with the Turkish one, which unfairly connects the Muslim immigrants with the national issue of Greek-Turkish relations (Tonchev et al. 2007: 24, Athanasopoulos 2009)

Additionally, the characteristics of the socio-economic profile of the South Asian immigrants who live in Greece do not "favour" their integration into the Greek society. Their vast majority are first generation immigrants, young single men or men without their families, unskilled and temporary workers, of a low educational level and unable to speak the Greek language well. According to bibliography, they constitute a migrational group that integrates slowly into reception societies and this seems to be the case in Greece as well (Emke-Poulopoulou 2007: 444).

These "negative" characteristics are balanced by the function of official or unofficial social networks, either on the basis of national associations, or on the basis of cultural – worship centers, or on the basis of strong family and relatives networks. These networks "alleviate" the traumatic experience of immigration, they help to face the basic needs (employment, housing etc) and they create a safety net towards the new –for them- and reluctant to accept them society. They function positively at least in the phase of adaptation to the new migrational environment and they cultivate the probable future accession of South Asians into the Greek society.

Initially, of course, integration is a political issue and Greece seems to have a slower rhythm compared to the rest of the European countries that have long-term experience as immigrant receiving countries. This issue does not concern only South Asians, but all immigrants who live in Greece. At the moment, there is no consistent policy that facilitates the integration of immigrants in Greece. Some Greeks are opposed to the idea of legitimation of immigrants on the grounds that this might function as a "pull factor" for prospective immigrants. Others have fears for the national security, given the fact that many immigrants come from countries that are related with terrorism. In addition, there are others that worry about an eventual loss of purity of the Greek national identity (Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2007, Emke-Poulopoulou 2007: 474).

An additional factor that may function as a deterrent for the integration of immigrants is the high degree of ethnic and religious homogeneity of the Greek society. Although this factor is difficult to detect due to lack of extensive and comparative research among the migrational groups, it seems important to take it into consideration in order to study the acceptance of South Asians by the homogenous Greek society.

It is a fact that Greece, contrary to many European countries, presents a high degree of homogeneity, especially until the decade of 1990, the time of arrival of a great number of immigrants (Anthopoulos 1998, Christopoulos 2001, Getimis 2002, Romaios 2001,Garoufas 2001). The New Greek state that was founded in 1829 was established, like all modern nation-states, on the basis of national, racial and religious homogeneity (Smith 1998). This homogeneity reached its zenith with the allocation of lands to the Greek state in the beginning of the twentieth century, especially after the

First World War, and the exchange of populations in the Balkans. Greek people learned to live on the theory of one nation, one religion, one civilization that speaks only Greek and does not face religious or national conflicts. The ethno-cultural diversity, such as the Muslim minority in Thrace, was not enough to change this tradition of homogeneity (Emke-Poulopoulou 2007: 555-6).

Despite the ongoing secularization that characterizes the Greek society (Petrou 2004: 189-206), the official data constitutes evidence of a strong ethno-religious homogeneity. More concretely, the European Values Survey (1999) shows a high degree of religious homogeneity as 97 percent of Greeks claimed adherence to the Orthodox Church with the vast majority of them (96 percent) claiming to be Christian orthodox (Talin 2010). According to the European Social Survey (2003) about religiosity, the Greeks ranked first in Europe as two out of three (63,7 per cent) claimed that they pray on a daily basis or quite a few times during the week, whereas almost half of the participants in the survey considered religion to be one of the most important values in their life. In this survey, 60,2 percent of the respondents thought it was better for all people in a country to share the same religion.

Contrary to most European countries, there is an official relationship between the state and the church in Greece, just as a familiar relationship between Greek people and the Orthodox Church. According to the Greek Constitution, the Eastern Orthodox Church is recognized as the state religion of Greece. This recognition does not necessarily mean special privileges; it is rather a symbolic recognition of the church, which the vast majority of the Greek people have faith in. Nevertheless this situation highlights the special bond between the Greek nation and the Orthodox Church (Frazee 1969, Papastathis 1999, Manitakis 2000). Moreover, the church holds a symbolic role in all state events and celebrations, such as national holidays, the oath-taking of the Greek government and the president of the Hellenic Republic, oath-taking in the Court of Law, benediction at the beginning of each school year and on the first day of the New Year, and so on.

Despite the recent influx of immigrants, that reaches approximately 10% of population, Greece seems to remain adherent to its image as a homogenous country. This homogeneity has acquired an ideological significance in the conscience of Greeks who continue to consider Greece as a homogenous country that is threatened by the presence of immigrants. So, the ethnocentrism of the Greeks and the identification of the Greek (national) and the orthodox (religious) identity create suspiciousness towards the non-Greeks and non-Orthodox. The reactions towards them do not have many times as object a specific immigrant, but the image of an immigrant who "threatens" the national and religious homogeneity as a whole (Delithanasi 2010).

The Greek Orthodox Church, as well as the Greek society, faces immigrants with many reservations. Being connected to its image as national Church it defends the Greek national identity at the expense of the ethno-religious diversity expressed by the immigrants. The official ecclesiastical discourse sounds many times ambiguous and dichotomic; some times inclusive and other times exclusive of "stranger". Nevertheless, over the last years, some efforts are made to approach the immigrants with a view to preparing the ground for their coexistence with the local people. In the frame of these efforts, for example, was attempted the elaboration of a project of coexistence with diversity. The purpose of this project was the recording of immigrants' worship places – mainly of the Muslims- and the communication and collaboration with the religious leaders (imams and priests) at the local parish level (Papantoniou 2009).

Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, despite the fact that they have not developed so far any form of collaboration with the Orthodox priests of their parish, applaud this initiative, they are willing to collaborate and they believe that the Orthodox Church can contribute to the resolution of their problems. The Indian Sikhs, as well as the fewer Hindus, remain until now "invisible" within the Greek Orthodox Church and the Greek society.

In reality, this ambiguous attitude of both the Orthodox Church and the Greek society in general towards the immigrants denotes the transitional phase from a condition of ethno-religious homogeneity to a condition of developing plurality that tends to characterize the Greek cultural landscape (Romaios 2001). It is a fact that the settlement of immigrants, that are carriers of diverse cultures and traditions, has started to "erode" the almost compact, homogenous cultural background of Greece, which is becoming more and more pluralistic (Petrou 2005). Dealing with this plurality is a matter of major significance for Greece as it is not easy to come to terms with this new reality (Liakos 2010, Xydakis 2010).

The South Asian immigrants, with their diverse cultural traditions constitute a part of this new emerging pluralism. Despite the difficulties of adaptation and integration that are due to both the Greek society and their "weak" profile, their presence is indisputable and contributes to the new cultural landscape of Greece. Their existence has its own significance in the process of "erosion" of Greek homogeneity and it raises issues of renegotiation of the Greek identity (Malouchos 2010, Kitromilides 2010). The realization of this emerging pluralism is a crucial point for the Greek society and may play an important role to the social integration of immigrants, South Asians included.

6. Conclusion

The process of integration of South Asian immigrants into the Greek society remains long and difficult. The long ethnic and religious homogeneity of the Greek society that leads to misbelief towards the "strangers", not to mention the lack of consistent policy, does not favour the integration procedure. On the other hand, the South Asians are in a disadvantageous position because their majority bears those characteristics that function as a deterrent or hindrance to an effective integration. Immigrants themselves try to balance these negative characteristics through the organization of their collective life. The practice of establishing their own associations does not satisfy only their particular purposes, either at practical or at symbolic level, but also creates a bridge of communication with the Greek society and prepares their "recognition" on ethnic and cultural terms. Nevertheless, the efforts of immigrants can be fruitful, only if they are matched with the acceptance and tolerance of the Greek society that should in its turn become adapted to the new pluralistic reality. It is early however to define the nature of this pluralistic reality. It is true, though, that South Asian immigrants' diversity seems to be the tessera that completes the mosaic of the new Greek cultural landscape.

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Νοτιο-Ασιάτες μετανάστες στην Ελλάδα:
Πολιτιστικός πλουραλισμός και κοινωνική ένταξη

Περίληψη

Τα τελευταία χρόνια, η Ελλάδα αποτελεί ένα σημαντικό πόλο έλξης μεταναστών που προέρχονται από τις χώρες της Νότιας Ασίας για πολλούς και ποικίλους λόγους. Η θέση της Ελλάδας που ταυτίζεται με το νοτιο-ανατολικότερο όριο της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης από τη μια πλευρά αλλά και η πολιτική σταθερότητα και η σχετική ευημερία που παρουσιάζει παρά την τρέχουσα οικονομική κρίση, την καθιστούν «εύκολο στόχο» για τη μεταναστευτική πρόσβαση από την Ασία. Σύμφωνα με τα επίσημα δεδομένα, ο αριθμός των Νότιο-Ασιατών μεταναστών στην Ελλάδα υπολογίζεται σε εκατόν τριάντα χιλιάδες περίπου, σύμφωνα όμως με ανεπίσημα στοιχεία, ο αριθμός αυτός υπερβαίνει τις πεντακόσιες χιλιάδες δεδομένου του σημαντικού αριθμού των άτυπων μεταναστών που διαβαίνει καθημερινά τα σύνορα της χώρας. Οι μετανάστες αυτοί, εκτός από την εργατική τους δύναμη, μεταφέρουν τη γλώσσα, τις παραδόσεις τους, τα ήθη και τα έθιμά τους και γενικότερα την εθνο-πολιτισμική τους ταυτότητα, της θρησκευτικής συμπεριλαμβανομένης, καταγράφοντας μια σημαντική εθνο-πολιτισμική πολλαπλότητα.

Δεδομένου ότι, παρά την προϊούσα εκκοσμίκευση, παρατηρείται ακόμη στην Ελλάδα ένας υψηλός βαθμός εθνο-πολιτισμικής ομοιογένειας, η μεταναστευτική αυτή πολυμορφία θέτει μια σειρά ζητημάτων που αφορούν τόσο την Ελλάδα ως χώρα υποδοχής, όσο και τους ίδιους τους μετανάστες και την ένταξή τους σε αυτήν. Πιο συγκεκριμένα, τα ερωτήματα που τίθενται και πραγματεύονται σε αυτό το άρθρο είναι: Ποιες είναι οι επιπτώσεις αυτής της πολιτισμικής πολλαπλότητας σε μια κοινωνία που χαρακτηρίζεται από μεγάλο βαθμό ομοιογένειας όπως είναι η Ελλάδα; Η πολλαπλότητα αυτή συμβάλλει στην ανάπτυξη του πλουραλισμού; Η ελληνική πολιτισμική ομοιογένεια ευνοεί ή παρεμποδίζει την προσαρμογή και την ένταξη των Νότιο-Ασιατών στην ελληνική κοινωνία; Ποιο ρόλο παίζουν οι παραδοσιακές θρησκείες των μεταναστών στην προσαρμογή και ένταξή τους στην ελληνική κοινωνία και ποιος ο ρόλος της τοπικής θρησκείας, δηλαδή της ελληνικής Εκκλησίας προς αυτήν την κατεύθυνση;

Για τη διερεύνηση αυτών των ερωτημάτων, το παρόν άρθρο αναπτύσσεται σε πέντε παραγράφους. Μετά από μια μικρή εισαγωγή που αναφέρεται στους λόγους για τους οποίους η Ελλάδα διαμορφώνεται σε χώρα υποδοχής μεταναστών, στη δεύτερη παράγραφο, αναλύονται οι αιτίες μετανάστευσης των Νότιο-Ασιατών προς την Ελλάδα και οι λόγοι εγκατάστασης σε αυτήν. Στην τρίτη παράγραφο καταγράφονται τα κοινωνικο-οικονομικά χαρακτηριστικά (ηλικία, φύλο, οικογενειακή κατάσταση, μορφωτικό επίπεδο, εργασιακή απασχόληση και ασφάλιση) των Νότιο-Ασιατών μεταναστών. Στην τέταρτη παράγραφο περιγράφεται το εθνο-θρησκευτικό τους προφίλ και οι κοινοτικές και θρησκευτικές τους οργανώσεις στην Ελλάδα. Στην πέμπτη παράγραφο εξετάζονται οι όροι και οι προϋποθέσεις ένταξης των Νότιο-Ασιατών μεταναστών, τόσο από την πλευρά της ελληνικής κοινωνίας όσο και από την πλευρά των ίδιων των μεταναστών. Τέλος, στον επίλογο, επιχειρείται μια κριτική αποτίμηση της ένταξης των Νότιο-Ασιατών στην ελληνική κοινωνία και ο ρόλος που παίζει η ασιατική πολιτισμική πολλαπλότητα, τόσο για τους ίδιους τους μετανάστες όσο και για την ελληνική κοινωνία.