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INDIAN DIASPORA: AN AID TO THE HOME COUNTRY

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ABSTRACT

The Indian Diaspora is one of the fast growing diasporas of the world. Globalization and advancement in transportation and communication have increased the rate of flow of the migrants from India to different parts of the world, especially in the developed countries.

Recent studies show that the Indian diaspora consists of various types of professionals. Previously, there were very few skilled people migrating but the present wave of migrants is skilled professionals like Doctors, Engineers, Scientist, etc. Though, there is a variety in the occupation of these people but one thing is common in them i.e. Philanthropy. Now days, the Diaspora plays an important role in the development of the home country. Sending money to the family members had always been a part of the history of these people. The Indian diaspora in these countries is gaining a tremendous amount of success and wealth. As maintaining relationships with their home countries by following the Indian culture in their new homes was not enough for them, they are now actively engaging themselves in the development of their home lands through remittance.

The aim of this research paper is to highlight the role played by diaspora in the development of their home country in the past and what could be done to keep them attached to their countries not only economically but also emotionally.

Keywords: Indian Diaspora, Remittance, Philanthropy, Brain-drain.

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INTRODUCTION

The term 'diaspora' was generally associated with the Jewish people since many centuries after their expulsion from Babylon. Later on, this word underwent an expansion in meaning and it became an umbrella term for all those ethnic communities or groups who left their homelands and dispersed for more than two countries but still maintained their relations with their motherland in the real or

imaginary sense. Some people in the diaspora are transnational and their social, economic, religious, and political networks are transnational too. In this sense we speak of the Indian diaspora, the Chinese diaspora etc. Here the word transnational refers to all those people who frequently visit their homelands and maintain both the homes.

'Vasudhaiva Kutumkumb', Indians have been known for this philosophy from centuries. The Indian

culture is the amalgamation of various cultures and has become a very unique and one of the richest cultures of the world. Indians have also been spreading their cultural legacy to different parts of the world. King Ashoka the well known Emperor who embraced Buddhism and also sent monks to central and eastern Asia to spread the gospel of Lord Buddha is one of the best examples of transmuting culture. Migration was not a new thing to these Indians but it had not occurred in a considerable amount.

India has a long history of cultural and commercial relations with the world. Economic and commercial migration has always been in fashion.

The first significant migration had taken place when the shortage of labour arose in the colonies of Britain and other countries due to the abolishment of the slavery system. In the nineteenth century Indians migrating to Fiji, Mauritius, Africa, and the Caribbean countries consisted mainly of indentured labours in a hope to harvest the greener pasture of different parts of the world. These people had not received any formal education or had very little education. In the succeeding generations the standard of education became higher and some went on gaining international recognition in their fields.

The process of migration of Indians to the other countries started from indentured labour and up until now has covered many phases. The chain formation from the pathetic journey undertaken by the indentured labours through ships to the luxurious journey from flights is the sign of successful Indian diaspora in the different parts of the world. This transformation in the economic condition of Indian diaspora is not only the result of the hard work of the old existing Indian diaspora but also the contribution of the skilled migrants like doctors, engineers, IT professionals, scientists, etc. It is a commendable feat achieved by them. The massive success of Indian diaspora leads us to think about the role of these people in their own homeland.

A Different Approach to Diasporic Studies

It has become a trend these days that every theorist, whether cultural, post colonial or post modern, represents the diasporic consciousness in

relation to 'discovering identity' without including other factors. Some theories are relevant but the excess amount of romanticisation in this field would lead us to the misinterpretation of this term. One of the famous theorists, Roger Brubaker, also warns about this and says:

As the term has proliferated its meaning has been stretched to accommodate the various intellectual, cultural and political agendas in the service of which it has been enlisted. This has resulted in what one might call a "diaspora" diaspora'- a dispersion of the meaning of the term in semantic, conceptual and disciplinary space.(1-19)

In our postmodern world, the complex global economic interdependence and cultural interpenetration complicate the notion of diaspora. So some theorists in this field are trying to explore the role of diaspora not only in social life but also in economic and political affairs. Some diasporas like Chinese diaspora has played an important role in the development of China and provokes us to contemplate whether if it is also be possible with our Indian diaspora.

The Indian government was not very benevolent towards the Indian diaspora in the past but latter's immense success has compelled former to think about the role that Indian diaspora may play in the development of their homeland. The government of India appointed a high level committee which was chaired by Mr. Singhvi and henceforth known as Singhvi committee. This committee also uses this (diaspora) term in generic sense for "communities of migrants, living or settled permanently in other countries, aware of its origin and identity, and maintaining varying degree of linkage with the mother country" in its report submitted in December 2001. According to this report the Indian diaspora comprises of more than 20 million people dispersed in more than 110 countries. This population consist of NRI (non-resident Indian), who are Indian citizens holding Indian passport, but have been staying for an indefinite period for the different purposes like job, education, business etc. and it also consist of Persons of Indian

origin who or whose spouse, parents, grandparents or great –grand parents were once the citizens of India

Philanthropy and Remittance

Philanthropy, this term has been gaining its importance with the involvements of ‘big guns’. World’s one of the richest individual people like Bill Gates and Warren Buffet also made their slot in the top most donator in the Forbes magazine. These big guns inspired so many people that it became one of the most important social activities of prominent businessmen. According to Barbara et.al. Philanthropy is:

We define philanthropy as private giving for public purpose. Under this definition, philanthropy is shaped by the motivation of the giver. Transfer to countries of origin may include goods and service, investment, and remittance, as well as intangible aspects such as knowledge, contacts, and values.(3)

Inclusion of the above mentioned things has made this term very rich. Remittance being one of the most essential elements is defined as “the donation given for social causes like old age home, free medical facilities, free education for the needy, natural calamities like earthquake, flood, draught, and religious like establishing religious places, spreading religious teaching”. The famous saying ‘charity starts at home’ is quite applicable for the engagement of diaspora in the development of their ‘real or imagined homeland’.

The Indian government established the committee (Singhvi Committee) to find out the possibility of using the wealth of these people and the result of this was the relaxation of taxes for the Indian diaspora in the investment in Indian companies and various other facilities were provided by the Indian government to encourage and attract them. Dual citizenship was one of them. Indian diaspora also responded according to this invitation and started investment in the Indian companies. In 2001 India was at the third position in top fifteen countries in terms of the amount of dollars remitted back home. An article published in Economics Times suggests the continual

progress of remittance from Indian Diaspora to the home country:

NEW DELHI: Remittances from overseas Indians touched \$67.6 billion in 2012-13, up from \$66.1 billion the previous fiscal. Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs Vayalar Ravi told Lok Sabha today that there has been no decline in remittances from the approximately 25 million members of the Indian diaspora. The amount was 55.6 billion US dollar in 2010-11. Gulf countries followed closely by North America accounted for the maximum amount of remittances with the former adding \$24.93 billion to the Indian kitty in the previous fiscal.

The above mentioned data provides a better view of the enhancement in the field but we cannot ignore the talent which enables them to send such huge amount of money and that talent would be beneficial for their home country. The next portion of this paper gives you a small overview about the terms like brain-drain and brain-gain which are also the part of Philanthropy.

Brain-Drain and Brain-Gain

Mark twain had once pointed out, ‘Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one’s lifetime’ (Twain 1869), represent the present condition of this world if we need to improve our skills we have to explore this world and Indians are doing the same but their settlement in the developed countries seems a permanent loss of Indian human capital which we called them as brain-drain.

Indians in abroad are working in top most agencies of developed nations like NASA and with this instance one can easily associate the names of Sunita Williams and Late. Kalpna Chawla. If people like these scientists could return back to India and transfer their accumulated experience, knowledge and technical skills then it would do much benefit to their homeland in comparison to the direct sending money. The condition of returning back to the country of one’s

origin depend upon the desire of returnee for the development of their motherland and which would be greater than the factors that restricted them from coming back to the country of their origin. The success rate of Indian diaspora is coupled with the migration of the new transnational Indians to the developed countries. The renowned Indian institutes like AIMMS, IIT, IIM, ISRO etc have been producing successful professionals in the world. The skilled migrants of developing countries like India have different character in comparison to developed countries. Most of the migrants who come as students and professionals for a short duration often decide to stay on in the developed host countries. As Mario Cervantes and Dominique Guellec say:

Mostly, the problems caused by the brain drain in poorer sending are great. Migrants from developing countries are generally more likely to stay in the host country than migrants from advanced countries. Survey evidence on the share of foreign PhD graduates in science and technology who stay abroad show the majority of 1990-91 doctoral recipients from India (79 %) and China (88 %) were still working in the United States in 1995. In contrast, only 11% of Koreans and 15% of Japanese who earned S&E doctorates from US universities in 1990-91 were working in the United States in 1995.

There have been many reasons behind these facts. The first and most important reason is an opportunity for a better future. Weak administration, corruption, preference given not on the basis of talent but likeness are some of the other reason why these people decide to stay abroad than to return to the homeland. This is similar to what occurred in the past as indentured Indians were transported to work in the plantation fields. Some developed countries became more receptive to the qualified workers from developing countries like India but Indians skilled migrants like scientists, engineers and other professionals became the backbone of many developed nations. The boom in the IT sector in USA

has provided enough chances to Indian migrants to establish themselves.

The reasons to return to the homeland like discrimination in the host country, emotional attachment with the homeland are not big issues anymore. The conditions of Indian diaspora in the developed countries have dramatically improved. Immense amount of success in different professions, new improved immigration laws, human rights with the availability of social and cultural heritage also lead them to stay in these places. Old Indian diaspora has maintained the social and cultural heritage. Bollywood, internet, accessibility of local news and serials through internet and television, and easy transportation and communication has lessened the impact of such 'real and imagination belongings'.

So, the newer generation of the old Indian diaspora and the new wave of professionals of Indian diaspora have decided to help their homeland through Philanthropy and remittance.

Challenges

Indian diaspora philanthropy to India is provided particularly for social causes like free medical facilities and education for weaker sections, rehabilitation of victims caused by natural calamities, religious purpose and investment in industry. Many NGOs are working for the welfare of the needy and collecting a huge amount of money from the Indian diaspora. Many a times these institutions are not able to utilize this amount in proper sense just because they look at the Indian diaspora as 'donors' and don't incorporate them in the schemes of personal interest.

Indian diaspora is the most diversified diaspora as india. So the philanthropy that comes to India is based upon region and language. Religious donations often create communalistic division and as pointed out by Mark Sidel it can also highlight and exacerbate fractures within the diaspora and also within the home country:

In particular, giving by and through Hindu religious groups to Hindu nationalist group (Hindutva) in india has sparked ongoing struggle within the Indian community in the United States. And the importance of

religious giving are, and how closely such philanthropy is tied to the key fissure points of contemporary india.(215-257)

It is also to be noticed that this thing works for all the other Indian communities as well. The enthusiasm of the Indian diaspora in the investment of Indian companies decreases when they think that it would be more beneficial to the corporate companies of India in comparison to Indian poor people. Black money and political interference of few associations are also noticeable challenges in the role of the Indian diaspora in the development of India.

Conclusion

The past few years have witnessed a proliferation in theorizing the complex identities and historical evolution of the Indian diaspora. This research paper aims to enhance the study in the lives of diasporic (Indian) people from the Economic and Political perspective. The Dual citizenship and other attractive offers to these people can be viewed as further orchestration of participation and experiences amongst the diaspora and their extended communities at home. Remittance is one of the essential elements of these people through which they feel partly connected with their homeland. This paper would enlighten in the new sphere of Indian diaspora like remittance whether in the form of economy or in skill and technology.

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