



INDIAN DIASPORA IN ASIA AND AFRICA: AN ANALYSIS

Presentation by

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Introduction

- Diasporas have emerged as an important component in the process of globalization.
- An important factor in foreign policy, economic development and knowledge transfer.
- With over \$ 60 billion worth of remittances, overseas Indians play an important role in the country's economy and management of its foreign exchange.

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- The origins of the modern Indian Diaspora lie mainly in the subjugation of India by the British.
 - × Indians were taken over as indentured labor to Fiji, Mauritius, Trinidad, Surinam, Malaysia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, and other places attest in their own peculiar ways.
 - × The continued existence of diaspora cultures, the culture of communities living outside of their ‘home lands’ is a key element of cultural diversity across the globe today.

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- × India is the top source of International migrants, with one-in-twenty migrants worldwide born in India.
 - × According to UN World Migration Report (2018) Indian diaspora is world's first largest, with 16 million people from India living in other countries has revealed that the historically contingent term continues to be contested and to an extent open to subjective interpretation.
 - × India's relations with Asia and Africa regions of the World have been not only the oldest but also the most impressive and deep.

Objectives of the Research paper

- × The research paper analyses how and in what ways the Indian Diaspora in Asia and Africa interacts with Globalization through their economic and social capital in generating foreign direct investment and remittances.
- × It explores the theories of globalization and conceptualizes the economic power, geographical dispersal and trends in social networking of Indian Diaspora from 1830s to present.
- × The paper was analyzed based on the secondary resources obtained from World Bank migration reports, published books on Indian Diaspora, journal research articles, news paper articles, web sources etc.

Historical Realities and Trends in Networking of Indian Diaspora in Asia and Africa

- × Indians have been sojourning since ancient times.
- × There is historical evidence of Indian-influenced colonies and kingdoms in South-east Asia.
- × Indian cultural influence is also known to have existed in Afghanistan, Tibet and parts of China.
- × In contrast to ancient emigration, modern migration from India was wholly a British creation.


Table 1: Estimated Total Migration to and from India: 1834 – 1937 (000's)


Year	Emigrants	Returned	Net*
1834-35	62	52	50
1836-40	188	142	46
1841-45	240	167	72
1846-50	247	189	58
1851-55	357	249	108
1856-60	618	431	187
1861-65	793	594	199
1866-70	976	778	197
1871-75	1,235	958	277
1876-80	1,505	1,233	272
1881-85	1,545	1,208	337
1886-90	1,461	1,204	256
1891-95	2,326	1,536	790
1896-1900	1,962	1,268	694
1901-05	1,428	957	471
1906-10	1,864	1,482	382
1911-15	2,483	1,868	615
1916-20	2,087	1,867	220
1921-25	2,762	2,216	547
1926-30	3,298	2,857	441
1931-35	1,940	2,093	-162
1936-37	815	755	599
Total	30,191	23,941	6,250

Source: Davis, 1968: 59.

* Net migration refers to net emigration. The figures do not always correspond to the exact differences between the first two columns because of rounding off.

- ✘ It is estimated that between 1834 and 1937 some 30 million Indians migrated to different parts of the world, while during the same period about 24 million of them returned home, resulting in the net emigration of 6 million (Table 1).
- ✘ As the figures in the table show, overseas Indian emigration was largely 'ephemeral' or transitory in character.
- ✘ During the period 1834-1900, the average annual emigration was about 202,000, whereas for the period 1901-1937, it was about 451,000. The data in the table also indicates four periods of fluctuations in the migration patterns.

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- The historical background against which the Indian overseas emigration was intensified with the penetration of British mercantile capitalism in Asia.
 - The profits from imperial trade were invested by the British in the mines and plantations, in Asia and Africa, which created a further demand for labour throughout the British Empire.
 - India has had trade and cultural relations with the Persian Gulf region since antiquity.

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- × Small communities of Indian traders called ‘banyans’ (a distorted form of the term Baniyas) existed in present-day Iraq, Iran, Oman, Yemen and Saudi Arabia in the seventh and eighteenth centuries.
 - × As of now, there are about five million overseas Indian workers all over the world. More than 90% of these workers are in the Gulf countries and South East Asia.

Transnational Linkages

- × The recent global transformations in economic relations, ethnic conflicts, and communication technology have led to the creation of new transnational kinship groups, transnational social circuits, and transnational communities.
- × Today Indian diaspora has a global presence and the global networks and interactions have spawned a new cultural landscape of hybridities, confluences and influences.
- × The socio-cultural linkages between Indian diaspora are one of the important features of the modern transnational diaspora.

Festivals


- × Festivals are the cultural symbols of India, which are celebrated among Indians all over the world.
- × It provides Indians the platform to bind them together in a tight-knit community.
- × The major festivals of Indians, which is celebrated with much fanfare across the globe are; Holi, Diwali, Dasahara, Id, Rakhee, Baisakhi, Buddha Jayanti etc.

Religious Networks

- × Religious groups like Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Muslims and Buddhists etc. have made success in transplanting their religious traditions and customs in other countries.
- × There are associations and network of religious communities such as Indian Christians United (ICU), Indian Muslim Association etc. that has transnational linkages with their own religious communities.

Globalization and Diaspora: Conceptual and Theoretical Delineations

- × Globalization is reshaping how we have traditionally gone about studying the social world and human culture.
- × The first theory of diaspora appeared, according to Gabriel Sheffer, with the work of Armstrong in his paper: “Mobilized and proletarian diasporas” published in the *American Political Sciences Review* in 1976.
- × Robin Cohen in his book *Global diasporas: An introduction*, suggest that the “Jewish archetypal” could be a base for reflection even if it couldn’t be a transposable model.

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- × William Safran suggests that in his view the term diaspora could be considered as a “metaphoric designation”.
 - × Wallerstein’s World-systems theory is constituted on the proposition that the appropriate unit of analysis for macro-social inquiry in the modern world is neither class, nor state/society, or country, but the larger historical system, in which these categories are located.
 - × Sklair has put forward a ‘theory of the global system’.
 - × Manuel Castells’ groundbreaking trilogy, *The Rise of the Network Society*.

- × For Anthony Giddens, the conceptual essence of globalization is ‘time-space distancing’.
- × David Harvey, in his classic study *The Condition of Post-modernity*, argues about globalization.
- × For Appadurai, locality is less a physical than ‘a phenomenological property of social life’ and involves in the age of globalization new translocalities.
- × Scholars such as Levitt (2001), Smith and Guarnizo (1998), and Portes and his colleagues (1999) point to the novel character of transnational links in the era of globalization.
- × Ritzer (1993, 2002) coined the now popularized term ‘McDonaldization’ to describe the socio-cultural processes by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant came to dominate more and more sectors of US and later world society.

Globalization of Indian Diaspora: towards a process of Intensification

- × Indian diaspora and Globalization are intertwined is exposed by the relationship that the Indian government has developed with the Indian diaspora.
- × This can be attributed to the influence globalizing processes have had on communication technologies and time-space compression which has resulted greater interconnection between the Indian Diaspora and the 'mother country'.
- × Modern diasporas expedite business transactions by resolving monitoring problems, reducing opportunism, and building reputation and ethnic trust based on networking.

Remittances

- × India has been the highest recipient of remittances by its diaspora in recent years.
- × Social remittances for example – transfer of ideas, values, attitudes, social capital, organizational and managerial skills and practices have the potential to play an equally significant role.
- × Overwhelming evidence suggests that family and community remittances play a complex but vital role at the household, community and regional levels.

**Table 2: Remittances and their share in GDP 2005–2006
to 2013–2014 (US\$ billion)**

Year	Remittances	Percentage of GDP
2005–2006	21.3	3.7
2006–2007	25.4	3.7
2007–2008	38.7	4.9
2008–2009	51.60	4.6
2009–2010	55.06	2.8
2011–2012	66.10	3.8
2012–2013	67.60	3.8
2013–2014	70.39	3.4

Source: RBI data 2015.

- ✘ Despite remittances coming at a steady pace, their contribution towards GDP has declined. In 2017, remittances contributed 2.8% to India's GDP, which is the same as 2016, as noted by the World Bank.
- ✘ In the past six years, the contribution of remittances to GDP fell by 1.2%, while the average remittance was about \$68 billion. In 2011-12, remittances were 4% of the GDP, the highest in the last six years, as a 2012 report in Hindustan Times mentioned.
- ✘ While remittances are raised in 2018, the number of migrant workers fell nearly 34% compared to 2015, according to the Migration 2018 report of the International Labour Organization (ILO). In seven years leading up to 2017, number of workers migrating fell by 39%. According to the latest available statistics, the flow of official remittances to the developing world reached \$ 167 billion in 2005, of which \$32 billion (19%) went to South Asia with India's share being \$22 billion – rising rapidly from the \$13 billion recorded in 2001.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

- × Foreign Direct Investment in India increased by about 3 per cent to \$61.96 billion in 2017-18 on account of steps taken by the government to improve business climate and liberalized policy norms.
- × FDI inflows stood at \$60 billion in 2016.
- × The main sectors that received maximum foreign inflows include services, computer software and hardware, telecommunications, construction, trading and automobile.

Media and Communication Technologies

- × The most prominent form of media in the Indian diaspora is the Bollywood film industry.
- × Like the diaspora, Bollywood is a “complex symbiosis between globalism and nationalism” and is increasingly ubiquitous .
- × Bollywood is receiving heightened international attention primarily due to the over 20 million strong diaspora which enthusiastically supports the industry

Business Networks

- × Indian diaspora communities have a long track record in establishing successful business in their countries of settlement, whether in the old or new diaspora locations.
- × In the vast majority of these locations, there is a thriving Indian business sector and many communities play an important brokerage and other influential role in their adopted homes.

Political connections

- × Diaspora based political organizations maintain many types of connections with political organizations in their homelands.
- × Most of these links are quite legitimate and result in a strong, positive and democratic dialogue between India and its diaspora communities.

India and Asia Relationship: At a Glance

- × Indian diaspora in the ASEAN region (a region of South East Asian Nations) is resourceful and capable of facilitating India's connections with the countries of their adoption.
- × Asia is home to 4.4 billion people – was the origin of over 40 per cent of the world's international migrants in 2015.
- × The number of Indian diaspora in the Asian region are estimated about 2 million, but their figures for South Asia are difficult to be mentioned.

- × Most of the Indian Diaspora in Asian region are skilled people, who are gradually integrating with the mainstream of national life.
- × Indian diaspora in South Asia have been influenced by the Indian way of life and they are sensitive about their culture, religion and ethnic genealogy.
- × The position of the Indian diaspora in the Philippines is encouraging.
- × Manila has been treated as an important conduit to immigrate to the United States and services of Indian professionals are appreciated.

- × Singapore is the most favoured destination of the Indian diaspora despite Singapore's prohibitive immigration laws.
- × Tamils, Malayalis, Sindhis, Gujaratis and Punjabis are the major components of the Indian diaspora and they are involved not only in business and trade but also the civil services, the judicial system and educational institutions.
- × The largest number of Indian diaspora in Thailand is Sikhs followed by Sindhis, Punjabis, Tamils and Purabias.
- × The year 1973s witnessed the beginning of the rapidly increasing demand for expatriate labour in oil-exporting countries of the Gulf region, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar and Libys.

India and Africa Relationship: At a Glance


- × India has more than 3000 year's history of cultural and commercial relations with Africa.
- × Indian sources indicate that there were contacts and trade relations between Dravidians and Babylonians as early as the 17th century B.C.
- × It has been estimated that during 1829-1924 about 769,437 Indians migrated to Mauritius, South Africa, Reunion Island, Seychelles and East African region.

- × Majority of the Indian communities in Africa possess citizenship of their country of adoption and many among them have attained important positions. They could be crucial in strengthening India-Africa relations.
- × In political terms, their presence is insignificant and in most of the cases they are not able to obtain political offices in their host-land
- × In these countries, strength of Indian Diaspora in terms of total population of host country is very small and is scattered in various regions.

- × Keep in view of the above observations, Indian diaspora maintains multi-layered connections with its homeland of India.
- × These connections vary from being cultural, social, religious, political and economic and many of them have both transformed and strengthened over the last two decades.
- × Some of these connections can generate negative outcomes but even the so called 'old' diaspora with its long history of overseas settlement has begun to re-connect with its area of origin.
- × Meanwhile the new-diaspora communities found as entrepreneurs, traders, researchers, doctors, engineers, workers, inventors, lawyers, managers and administrators in Asia and African countries.
- × They have developed very strong economic and financial linkages with India and perhaps been the major beneficiaries of Indian government initiatives to build a more constructive dialogue with its diaspora. By playing a leading role in the global technological revolution, it has transformed India's image abroad.

Concluding Remarks

- × Indians remain a heterogeneous group with their loyalty and allegiance towards their own ethnic community, religious institutions, customs and traditions in conjunction with the customs and traditions of the countries of their adoption.
- × Indians established important networks throughout the region and played an extremely important role in the commercial and economic life.
- × In Asia and African countries Indians have been one of the most diverse communities, highly segmented and segregated on the basis of caste, creed, region, economic status and period and history of migration, barring the Indian National Army (INA) days.
- × Large sections of the Indian diaspora in the regions have managed to carve out a niche for them, some are still deprived and continue living hard lives.

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- × With the growing number of new migration from India, there has been a significant upsurge in the Indian consciousness among the people of Indian origin.
 - × From the point of view of the diaspora India still seems to be, concentrating on specific sections and shying away from overtly engaging with its diaspora.
 - × There can be no doubt that India needs an inclusive policy approach that develops community cohesiveness among its people in the region and blend larger foreign policy interests with their interests to make the diaspora partners in furthering Look East Policy (LEP) goals and results in a win-win gain for both.