

The Impact of Indian Diaspora on the Foreign Policy of India¹

"The formation of a diaspora could be articulated as the quintessential journey into becoming; a process marked by incessant regroupings, recreations, and reiteration. Together these stressed actions strive to open up new spaces of discursive and performative postcolonial consciousness."-Okwui Enwezor²

The term 'Diaspora' means people settled far from their ancestral homelands.³ But the expression Indian diaspora means Non Resident Indians (NRI) as well as Person of Indian Origin (PIO). Therefore NRI and POI are also part of Indian Diaspora.

In current growing world Diasporas have emerged as powerful entities since they are recognized as 'soft power' in the realm of foreign policy strategy and also as an agent or catalyst of economic development of countries of origin beside their active role in the host countries.

For instance, in the economic sphere, the Chinese Diaspora has been seen as a propelling force for its emergence as an economic super power. In the political sphere, the Jewish Diaspora has a strong grip over the US and European Union in terms of shaping their strategic relationship with Israel. Hence, Diasporas being transnational communities have become important non-state actors as well as deciding factors in international political and economic relations.

Due to globalization and liberalization of global economic system coupled with the rapid advancement of transport and communication technologies that have reduced time and space that have in turn intensified their socio-economic, political and cultural ties very stronger with their origin countries. Hence, not only have Diasporas attained due importance at the international level, but also in the domestic political and economic affairs of home countries than ever before. Eventually, they have emerged as an 'inevitable link' between their home and host lands along with major political and economic implications for both sides.

The Indian Diaspora is the highest as compared to the countries all over the world. Over 15 million migrant's form India are living abroad, as reported in a study conducted by the U N Population division. International migration data shows Indian make up the biggest population living outside their country of birth.⁴

According to UN World Migration Report 2018 Indian diaspora is the world's largest diaspora. The report was released by the International Migration Organization.⁵ The Indian diaspora constitutes 6% of the Total number of international migrants (people living outside the country of their birth), which was estimated at 243 million in 2015.

At the same time, the Indian diaspora is increasingly highly educated and accomplished. From Bobby Jindal – the first Indian-American state governor (Louisiana) – to former presidents of Singapore Devan Nair and S R Nathan, and PepsiCo CEO Indra Nooyi, Indians are making their mark outside the country.

¹ Mr. Dileep Kumar Singh, Teaching and Research Associate (Gujarat National Law University).

² https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/175632.Okwui_Enwezor accessed on 29 July, 2018.

³ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/diaspora> accessed on 29 July, 2018.

⁴ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/indians-diaspora-is-the-largest-in-the-world-more-than-15-mn-live-abroad/articleshow/63482043.cms> accessed on 29 July,2018.

⁵ <https://www.iom.int/wmr/world-migration-report-2018>, accessed on 30 July, 2018.

Now the government of India has also changed its foreign policy. Considering its size and expansion, the Government of India changed its foreign policy and thereby considered that “The Sun never sets in the Indian Diaspora”. It is recognized that there is a convergence of Diaspora policy and foreign policy of a country due to the embedded role of Diaspora in the foreign affairs.

However, the Diaspora policy of India has been sporadic and patchy because of lackadaisical approach and compulsion of deep linkages between Indian Diaspora policy and India’s foreign policy.

The role of the diaspora in India’s foreign policy?

Indian diaspora is playing a particularly and significant role in soft power diplomacy the government. Like Chinese and Jewish Diaspora, the Indian diaspora is also important. Present government has recognized its importance that is why the government has made a proactive diaspora policy. Moreover the merger of Person of Indian Origin (PIO) and Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) has raised and expanded the size of Indian Diaspora.

India was the largest remittance- receiving country in the world, with migrant workers from the country sending home USD 69 billion in 2017, according to 'Remit SCOPE - Remittance markets and opportunities - Asia and the Pacific' said India (USD 69 billion), China (USD 64 billion) and the Philippines (USD 33 billion) are the three largest remittance- receiving countries in the world in 2017.

Remittances contribute to the region more than 10 times the official development assistance in the region, the report said. In the region, 400 million people, one out of every 10 people, are directly affected by remittances either as a sender or as a receiver.⁶

Indian Diaspora is an asset like a customer and the present government not only recognize it and linked it to the flourishing markets across international borders. They make personal use of daily consumables from India, enjoy Indian movies, music and buy ornamental goods like art and craft. This not only opens up the Indian market abroad but also provides a platform for the cross country selling and trade.

Besides being customers, Indian Diaspora can be successful suppliers of their businesses and trade in India. This opens up a world of opportunity for India to have hands on to hi-grade technology, working skills, management and material. The entry of multinationals can provide a definitive boom to Indian market. It would provide an access to various resources for industries and businesses and latest technical know-how.

The Diaspora can make a significant contribution to make in India and the diaspora policy of the government is evidence of it.

⁶ <https://www.ifad.org/web/latest/news-detail/asset/40287816> accessed on 30 July 2018.