

Title

***Understanding Indian Diaspora: Lifting the Veil of Diasporic Crisis
of Dual Identity***

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Abstract:

'Diaspora' as a notion has phenomenal importance; as it bridges continuity between past and contemporary. Migration, emigration and immigration are three key concepts that are integral part of that continuity. India undoubtedly has one of the diverse diasporic histories and Indian diaspora is one of the key actors to spread the sense of Indian tradition and culture all over the world. The concept of Indian diaspora constitute on the very fact of this migration histories and on success of various Indian ethnic communities and individuals in their effective assimilation with their host countries. Their diasporic identity is related to multiculturalism, transnationalism and hybridity. New community identity of these groups largely shaped by culture and tradition of their adopted countries but also influenced by bonds with their homeland. Hence, these communities carry a dual identity; which goes through a complex process of both assimilation and effort to preserving their ethnic homogeneity.

This paper is divided into three parts: the concept of diaspora, where special attention has been given to India diaspora, construction of its diasporic identity and diasporic crisis of dual identity. The research method of this paper is analytical. The aim of the paper is to analyse and discuss some relevant questions, like:

- i) How does the concept of diaspora linked with ethnicity?
- ii) How do ethnic communities try to assimilate with the host countries?
- iii) What are the complexities in constructing ethnic identity within the realm of diasporic identity?

Finally, the paper attempts to throw some light on the facts that even after the diasporic crisis of dual identity, how this ethnic communities are trying to balance their both the identities and playing a major role in their homeland India and host countries.

Keywords: Diaspora; Indian diaspora; ethnic identity; diasporic identity; dual identity crisis; balance between two identifies.

Immigration, emigration and migration; although linked with each other but each of these words have slightly different meanings. Immigration refers to movement of people to enter in a foreign country to live permanently. Whereas emigration refers to people who leave their old country and settle down in foreign land. Migration on the other hand means movements across international borders permanently or temporarily; naturally two terms emigration and immigration come under same roof of migration. The concept of diaspora is practically linked with these three terms 'migration, immigration and emigration'. The idea of diaspora is so diverse that there are various different approaches to describe diasporic phenomena. However the actual origin of the term 'Diaspora' rooted in the Greek; which actually means 'dispersion or scattering.' Historically speaking human migration is a very natural phenomenon continuing from the past. But the discussion on diaspora has acquired

significant position in last twenty-five to thirty years; especially in sociology, politics and economics.

The idea of diaspora started with Greek and Jews history of exile but later it has broadly spread to other migrant groups in different parts of the world. The idea of globalization has become so much relevant that we can't ignore it and as we know the process of globalization has different aspects like exchange of culture, tradition, technologies and also economic exchange; but if we concentrate very carefully then we can able to understand that among all of them migration plays a significant role in globalization process. First of all diasporic globalization is not limited to any specific country. Secondly, the idea of diaspora is itself so broad and transnational in nature that it helps the globalization process in understanding different arena of culture, traditions and also idea of governments.

The reasons of migration varied from time to time. As the scenario of global politics is changing day by day so as the concept of diaspora. As stated by Laguerre, 'In any country, some areas are more prone to migration in large numbers than others. Border zones, in particular, have been the sites of international migration well before some hinterland communities have joined the process because this has always been a mechanism of survival for their residents' (Laguerre, 2006). In contemporary time the discussion of diaspora become so much important because of forced migration of the communities; that has to leave their homeland and migrate as refugee in different foreign lands. The area of diaspora is significantly diverse. It is surrounded by Jews, Africans, Carribean people, Chinese, Palestinians and many more communities. Among them one of the most important is Indian diasporic communities in different parts of the world.

The Saga of Indian Diaspora:

Historically speaking in case of India there are mainly three phases of migration: the first one during the ancient period, the second one during the period of European colonization and the last one is in the period of post colonization. Although it would be technically wrong to say that these are the only three phases of migration of Indian communities because the process of emigration is still going on ; even now also Indians are settling in different nations for the purpose of higher education, job etc. But those are the three board periods of migration. In case of the ancient period if we study deeply then we can notice traditionally Indians are very much connected and linked with Buddhist bhikkus(monks) who were there in Central and Eastern Asia too (Jayaram and Atal, 2004) . From the past to present the

Indian communities always been connected with South-East Asia. But the most significant phase of Indian diaspora is the period of colonialism; particularly this period Indians were traded as cheap and dependable labourers by the imperialists. Mostly the workers were being traded to British, French and Dutch colonies and in the same time several workers migrated to East Africa by their own wish as construction workers too.

Journey of Indian diaspora continues after the post colonization period as well. The contemporary Indian diaspora definitely has an implication of the colonial periods of emigration ; the post-colonial phase is mostly surrounded by overseas emigration of three very different Indian communities; firstly the highly skilled workers, educated professionals and students who emigrate to develop countries like: United Kingdom, New Zealand, United States America etc secondly, there is also the migration of Anglo Indian communities to Australia and England and thirdly, the unskilled or semi skilled labourers who emigrated to the Gulf countries and South East Asian regions. If we go little depth then we can understand that there is no single homogenous Indian diasporic community; in fact the idea of overseas Indians is very big. The flow of emigration of Indian communities is consists of Sikh, Panjabi, Gujarati, Bengali, South Indian and many more. At present Indian diaspora is one of the world's largest and successful diaspora.

Identity as Important Elements of Society:

There is no doubt that the idea of identity formation depends upon so many aspects and thus the idea of identity is very much linked with the concept of diaspora too. Although at present in various occasions it is termed as 'identity politics.' Identity has so many different aspects all together like; religious, gender, caste etc and among those ethnic and diasporic identities are two most important aspects. From twentieth century the overseas people of Indian origin started to get global identity. But no matter what we can't deny the fact of identity as an important aspects of rights. Particularly in case of country like India which has caste hierarchy system in its society identity become very important aspects. We can divide the concept of identity from various different aspects but in this I am particularly discussing about ethnic and diasporic identity. Globalization has an important impact on transnational identity building. The process of globalization actually encourages the flow of cross border migration of human being and culture. Hence this transnational identity in a way is a result of globalization process; although the idea of identity perception can't be changed

but sometimes it becomes complicated because of the presence of dual identity: one that is ethnic identity and another one that is diasporic identity.

i. Ethnic identity formation

Ethnic identity formation is basically nurtured by homeland. Although the concept of ethnic identity cannot be defined by any particular way; but in general ethnicity or ethnic identity defined by a particular cultural group a person or a community belongs from. Hence, ethnic identity is directly and indirectly refers to origin of that particular community and also it includes the racial elements like physical attributes. Therefore ethnic identity is symbolic and at the same time ethnicity of any particular community is very much driven by the influence of cultural, racial, religious and language perspectives (Kivisto & Nefzger, 1993). Hence, the ethnic identity of overseas people actually shows their attachment and connection to their homeland or origin in broader way. In many occasions the overseas ethnic minority groups identify themselves from their common physical similarities, customs, languages and natural history. Sociologist Max Weber has distinguished between racial and ethnic identity. He believed that 'ethnic groups those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; this belief must be important for group formation; furthermore it does not matter whether an objective blood relationship exists.' Hence according to him for racial identity blood relation is important but that is not the case for ethnic identity.

ii. Diasporic identity formation

The flow of globalization has a major impact on the idea of diaspora and diasporic identity. Cross border migration, transnational flow of labour, culture and language basically construct the theorization of diasporic identity. Some people termed diasporic identity as hybrid identity. In a very simple way overseas people or communities adopt their diasporic identity by the host country. They try to assimilate themselves with the new culture, traditions, and language and from there they get the diasporic identity. Globalization influences the idea of migration to become open-minded. Although the process of migration can be describe in various way as well, especially in the twenty-first century when people are witnessing forceful emigration then idea of migration is not so simple. However, the immigrants in generally assimilate with the new atmosphere and certain times they have to frequently

modify themselves with different kinds of culture with in very short range of times as they migrate from one place to another very frequently.

Complexity of Dual Identity: Journey of Indian Diasporic Communities:

On the one side of the coin ethnic identity can best be known by the actual origin of people and on the other side diasporic identity can be evaluated as the assimilation process to mingle with the of the host country. Now, the complexity occurs when these two types of identity get engage with each other. Several times, the migrated communities or people try hard to balance these two identities together. Here, in this paper the particular focus is on the Indian diaspora across the international arena. The problem is various times the diasporic identity unknowingly replace the idea of home or origin. Indian diasporic communities faced difficulties to identify their belongings. The real thing is in the age of globalization the idea of ethnic identity is in a troublesome situation. We can find this in Jhumpa Lahiri's book named 'Namesake' in which she has tried to portray the complexity of two generations of people regarding their own identity. She has discussed how a first generation person named as 'Ashima' connect herself with her homeland; for her real home is her homeland. But in the same family, 'Gogol', a second generation person feels more attached with his birthplace USA rather than original homeland (Lahiri, 2003). 'Ashima' and 'Gogol' are not the only one example; most of the time the hybrid identity of people is actually creating a rift in the idea of true home especially for the second generation and third generation migrated Indian communities.

The gap between these two identities undoubtedly creates an identity crisis among the people of Indian origin. This dual identity creates confusion about the real identity among the migrant groups. At the same time, although the first generation feels sentimental and nostalgic about their home land but that is not the case with the second or third generation people. Assimilation with different culture, tradition, language is undoubtedly a good human nature but certain times human mind feels difficulty to carry more than one identities at a same time. Ethnic identity is associated with an emotional attachment and bonding with the homeland (Cohen, 1997). But at this time the transnational identity sometimes over shadows the root. The process of socio-cultural adaption has also an impact on ethnic identities. Like for an example in her novel 'Namesake' author Jhumpa Lahiri tries to show how Gogol was not at all feel connected with Indian culture. The question is why it is so? Human behaviour is very much related with the society it is associated with. Hence, the

ideas of one's own identity, culture, tradition etc are kind of things which are very closely connected with the society they are born and brought up. So, in case of Gogol he feels attached with the host country, where his ancestors migrated, because that is the place he is born and brought up. But in case of Ashima her nostalgia is very much relevant too as she feels the emotionally attached with her roots (Lahiri, 2003).

The constructivist ideologies emphasises on the idea of 'identity' (can be ethnic or diasporic), which is surrounded by social norms, process of socialization and discourses. The concept of identities specifically in the context of ethnicity is socially constructed by boundaries. Hence, most of the time for most of the people identity formation is nothing but an 'ongoing process of boundary construction' which can be changed in terms of the needs of the situation (Barth, 1998). The paradigm of ethnic identity vary differently of overseas Indian communities according to their ethnic region, language, religion, ethnic styles of culture and food habit etc but that doesn't diminish the significance of ethnicity. Although there is a serious problem of caste hierarchy and economic inequalities in India but still Indian's are very much attached to their root. As a result the overseas Indian communities still try to stay connected with the each other and celebrate several festivals and tradition of their homogenous cultures. In the contemporary time period Indian origin people are living every corner of the world like; South and South East Asia, Europe, Africa, Canada, Gulf regions, Australia and many more countries. In all these countries they are assimilating with the socio-economic and cultural factors very well. Hence, on one side they are having this emotional and blood connection with their homeland and on the other side they are getting attached with the host county and become a part of it. Both the identities are equally important and significant for them and that is the reason sometimes they are finding it hard to balance the both; specially the second and third generation Indian origin people. Most of the cases they don't feel connected with the socio-cultural background of their homeland because for them the idea of home is different; for them they feel more connected with the place they are living in. In this era of multiculturalism and transnationalism concept of home did get change and there comes a crisis between ethnic and diasporic identity.

Portrays of balance between both the identities:

Every single thing has its own advantage and drawbacks. Although the existence of ethnic and diasporic identity at the same time creating a place of identity crisis but in spite of that the Indian diasporic communities are trying to balance both the identities. On one

hand in every single step of their life they are trying to make linkages with their homeland and on the other side they are assimilating with the socio-cultural factors of the host country. Protection of ethnic identities is possible only through the promotion of ethnic cultural values within the diasporic communities. As diversity in Indian diasporic communities is real factor in their ethnic nature like; Punjabi diaspora, Bengali diaspora, Gujarati diaspora , Telugu diaspora, Tamil diaspora and many others hence developing various forms of connection within the diaspora communities is indeed a significant way of preserving homeland linkages. Author Safran in this connection said, 'The diasporic continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to the homeland in one way or another, and their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship' (Safran, 1991). Technology, governmental and non-governmental organizations play a very important role in this matter. Technology brings an atmosphere where the diaspora communities are able to communicate with each other and with their homeland easily; moreover cross border flow of raw materials, funds all these help to keep the bonding strong. Several governmental and non-governmental organizations like: Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO), Islamic Organization of Indian Origin, Ramakrishna Mission, and Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) etc boost Indian culture in foreign lands.

Moreover the overseas Indian origin people always help their mother land during the time of crisis; following the days of post-Pokhran II international sanction to 1991 huge financial crisis. Not only that the migrant Indian communities also play significant roles in direct trade, industrialization and privatization policy, FDI etc.

The people of Indian origin very much concerned about their diasporic identity as well. Very efficiently they try to assimilate with the new place, new culture. The diasporic Indian communities play important role in the socio-economic factors of foreign land. In case of UK's GDP Indian diaspora plays significant role. According to a report although Indian origin people consists 1.8% of Britain's population but they contribute 6% of country's GDP (NDTV, 2016). Moreover in several foreign countries the Indian origin people take part as political leaders as well. Priti Patel, Pramajit Dhanda, Keith Vaz etc are the Indian origin people who have played a very important role in United Kingdom's politics. Similarly, in USA, South Africa, Netherlands, Singapore, Fiji, Mauritius, Canada and many more countries of the world Indian origin people become political leaders.

Besides all these the diaspora communities are basically major important aspects of successful foreign policy. They help to increase the bilateral ties and nurture the bilateral relationship in a positive direction.

Conclusion:

Identity is the most significant aspect of human life. In the present era we can't deny the fact that the idea of identity formation is precisely connected with several factors among them globalization is one of the primary factor. Globalization as a process has played very significant role in cross border movement of people. Being in the middle of ethnic and diasporic identity is complicated but the diasporic communities try to maintain different culture all together. Indian diaspora keep closer ties with their origin and also maintain their responsibility as emigrants. Ethnic identity is attached with emotion, love, memories and on the other side diasporic identity is given by the host country. The concrete fact is that there is no homogenous structure of identity formation. Not only on the basis of ethnicity and diasporic situation but also identity formation is related with religion, race, gender etc. Hence, today it is very important to understand and also accept multi national identity as well as various level of identity.

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