

Indian Diaspora? Understanding with the Virtues of Existing Definitions

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ABSTRACT

The notion of diaspora is variedly used in many streams of present social science research. Since the concept of diaspora has pervasive usage, the necessity of defining it is the real essential for the pool of knowledge base. The concept of diaspora emerged from the Jews dispersal in 6th century. The evolution of diaspora came across a varied understanding. Each experts define diaspora differently with their own ideas and experiences. India has the largest diaspora population and the viability of diaspora is enormous, so defining the Indian diaspora and categorizing them would help researcher and policy makers to identify the target population and stakeholders definitely. The present research article attempts to analyse relevant diaspora articles and their operational definition in respective articles to conclude the definition of diaspora for better understanding. The main objective of the article to define and understand diaspora in greater notion. On analysing the existing research on the defining diaspora, I strongly support and extract six attributes to justify a group under the diaspora umbrella from the Jonathan Grossman research article 'Towards definition of Diaspora' the respective six attributes to define diaspora are Transnationalism, Dispersal/Immigration, Outside the homeland, Community, Home land orientation, Group identity. The article concludes that the comprising the above six attributes the diaspora can be defined based on the definite scenario and situations.

Keywords: Understanding Diaspora, OCI, NRI, Transnationalism, Group Identity.

PREVAILING NOTIONS OF DIASPORA

The evolution of the human being given origin to many concepts. These concepts also evolve according to the prevalent trends, and some concepts keep on transforming with the upcoming

trends and changes. One such concept that persists from fifth century B.C with loads of transmission is diaspora. The deep path gave different dimensions, and this progress will be a continuous process until people's transmission around the world exists. Exploring a concept and finding new possibilities out of it constitutes the development of that respective concept. Diaspora as a concept became a prominent one in social science research today, and the importance of diaspora will maintain the prominence for decades together. When we talk about diaspora, many put a perplexed face since they do not understand the concept of diaspora crystalline. It is not about the concept; in particular, the thing that plays the puzzlement role is that diaspora has different definitions in each phase of the societal evolution. This confusion does prevail among scholars who work in diaspora, migration, and transnationalism studies. Being the important international actors among states, it's essential to understand diaspora and who are they? There are different types of notions on diaspora given by great philosophers and scholars, and there is one more thing that complicates the ease of understandings is the literature. In history, the term diaspora has been used to represent any group of people in different scenarios. Diasperio is the Greek word that constitutes meaning "to scatter" or "sow over." From this respective term, the crucial concept 'diaspora' was derived. The cruel history of Babylonian war 601- 586 BC holds the record of diaspora and its origination too.

The term diaspora was first used to denote the Jewish population who were forced to expel from the Kingdom of Judah. Hitherto, the diaspora has the touch of Jewish exiles, who were then called the Jews diaspora. The other notion of diaspora emerged during the 17th century by the abolition of slavery. Because of it, the other form of slavery arose in the form of indentured labour. Imperialistic powers, especially the British, made many indentured labours from Asia and Africa to fulfil the workload in their colonies worldwide. These indentured labour who got settled over the place where ever they were assigned to work became the living population of the respective areas. Consequently, they also gained the citizenship of the countries and became the migrated and diaspora population.

In the social science sphere, diaspora is represented so that they are the group of people who share the same motherland and settle down in any other country that becomes their host land. However, until they identify themselves as the descent of their respective country in their host land, they will not fall under the diaspora category. Apart from this, other forms of ideas on diasporas such as political lobbyists, Proxy players, nation's assets, remittance makers, etc. To clear the notion of Diaspora in India, we have to collate the general idea of diaspora with the world's largest diaspora population, the 'Indian Diaspora.' The present study attempts to explore the evolutionary definitions of diaspora. The study will also try to understand who constitutes diaspora and who all will come under this concept. This research work adopts the content analysis method to examine the existing definitions and to bring out the simple picture of the diaspora population and their norms.

INDIAN PERSPECTIVE OF DIASPORA

India holds the world's largest diaspora population at present. The growth of the Indian diaspora population has emerged predominantly in the 1830s. Latter, the phases of transmission are of different types and needs. Before imperialism covered India, under the king's rule the

great Indian merchants travelled to many other countries to flourish their business. These merchants developed a great relationship with their customers' and fellow people of the country. This type of migrants was generally wealthier and free to go to their desired countries around. While we are talking about the migrant population, we should understand the roots of ancient India and its versatility. The origins of ancient India has a great kingdom that extended to continents. One such powerful kingdom in India was Cholas's empire. Shreds of evidence prove that during the 9th century 860 CE Cholas's period in Indonesia, Tamil traders settled with their trading business. A senior archaeologists from Aekenas Research centre, Bambang Budi Utomo, stated that the trade around the Bay of Bengal was dominated by Tamil merchants. He also sketched that the Tamil merchants spread to several countries, including Thailand, Myanmar, the northern tip of western tip Sumatra, notably Barus, Banda Aceh and Medan. Consequently, the merchants organised an association for them in the name "The Five Hundred of a Thousand Direction" (Ayyovole - 500)[1].

Historian describes that the Cholas invasion of Indonesia was not meant to capture the place. And it was the punishment that Raja Raja Cholan has given to the Srivijaya empire since they harassed the Tamil merchants to pay a massive amount of taxes. Existing corroboration defend that there prevailed friendly relations between provinces, and there were also few invasions and rival based on the precise needs. The collaboration of people from the different country took place and leads to interracial marriages. These factors enhanced the relationship between the two kingdoms. You represent a very important factor indeed in the life of this province...Without the assistance of the Chettiar banking system Burma would never have achieved the wonderful advance of the last 25 to 30 years.... The Burman today is a much wealthier man than he was 25 years ago; and for this state of affairs the Chettiar deserves his thanks. - Sir Harcourt Butler, Governor of Burma to the Chettiar representatives, 1927(....). Likewise, migration took place in every part of India. The settlement that happened during the 9th and 10th century become natural, and in many cases, the Indian descent has gradually forgotten by their generations. Immigration and its role are no new thing to India; the only new thing is the representing idea of migration in different terms like 'Diaspora'.

As the roots of the 9th and 10th-century migrants are unclear without definite records, we look forward to the Indian diaspora population whose migration held in the early 1800 and later with intelligible data. During this period, migration was concrete, and there exists merely two types of migration: forced migration and voluntary migration. The former kind of migration makes up to enormous diaspora population today. Generally, a voluntary type of migration can be adopted by wealthier and influential people. Both of this category of people were observed fewer in British India. Out of the voluntary migration, the migrants would fall under the student category or traders category. The forced migration in India started when the British government abolished slavery in 1833, bypassing the Slavery Abolition Act. As soon as the act passed by, the European colonies came through an acute shortage of labourers. This labour crisis was replaced by hiring labourers from Asia and Africa in the name of 'Indentured labour'. In his book 'A new system of slavery' Professor Tinker has brought out many aspects common in slavery and indentured labour. We could say that majority of the migration and proper form of Indian diaspora started with the new state of slavery. i.e. 'indentured labour system'. The

labourers were exported to the Caribbean, East and South Africa, Fiji, Tirrinad, Mauritius, Srilanka, Malaya, Guiana, Jamaica, Grenada, Surinam, Seychelles, Singapore, Saint Lucia,



Figure: 1. Archive records for the exporting of Indian Indenture Labour.

Saint Kitts, Saint Vincent as plantation workers and coolies. (...) The indentured labour system comprises many rules and regulations in which Workers were introduced to bonding and agreement for a maximum of five years. Within that period, the workers cannot come out of it unless the owner wishes to remove the labour.

After the agreement period, the labourers are set free to go back to their countries or sign another agreement to work with any other landlords. (...) As stated earlier, significant migration took place during the 1830s to 1920s. After 1917 there was no new indentured form of labours sent or hired since the Indenture labour system was also abolished in the year 1917. Latter, the migration becomes gradual between the 1920s to 1960s. The next grand wave of migration held during the post-independence period in the name of brain drain. Migrants got settled down in the countries by gaining the citizenship of the respective country for which they worked. Generally, the literature indicates that the migrants who settled down, got citizenship from other countries, and identified themselves as an Indian descent constitutes Indian Diaspora. We pose on the Indian diaspora to have a solid connection to their motherland by following the religion and practices essentially, to pass on their culture and tradition to the next generation.

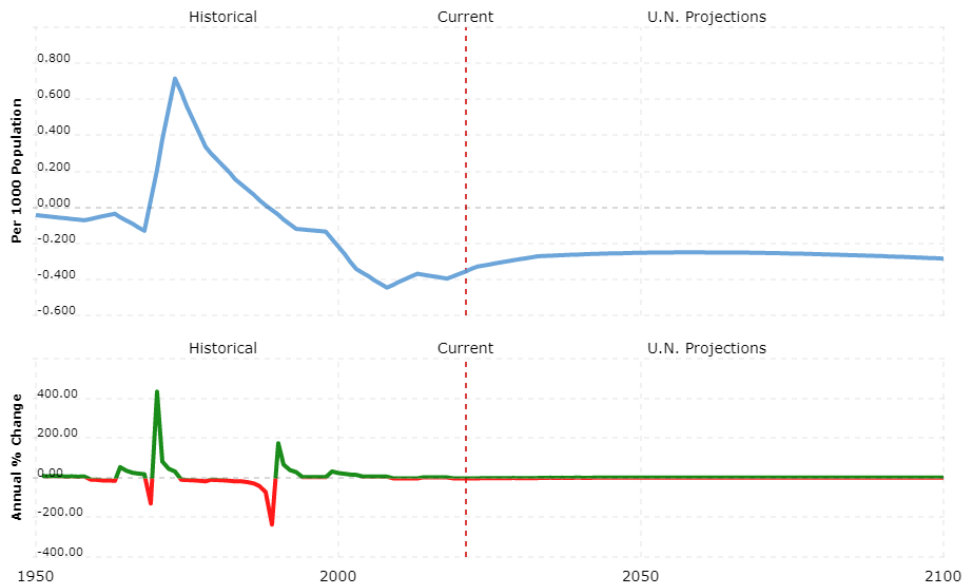
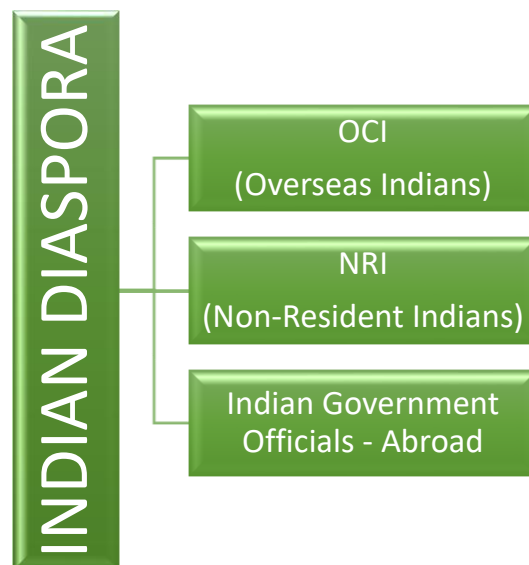


Figure: 2. India net migration rate 1950 -2021

DIASPORA: AN INDIAN CLASSIFICATION

Indian diaspora posited as one of the important module in the historical analysis of ethno nationalism and acculturation innate of diaspora dynamics. India is reaping its unforeseen fruits from its diaspora population not only in the terms of remittance, but in number of aspects. The three major classification of Indian descents living outside India stated by the government of India are Non-resident Indians (NRIs), Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) and Overseas citizens of India (OCIs). The definition of Indian Diaspora was shaped slightly for the better understanding on Indian Diaspora as a concept the Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) and Overseas citizens of India (OCIs) card holders brought under one umbrella called Overseas citizens of India (OCIs) in 2015 by the Indian government.



I.Overseas Citizenship of India

OCI stands for Overseas Citizens of India. The word literally denotes the Indians who live in countries which are connected by seas. This is a type of status given by the Indian government to the people of Indian origin. The Indian origin implies the meaning of either the respective father, mother, grand parent or their ancestor should have been the citizen of India by birth or by gaining the Indian citizenship by proper means. This is also called as the permanent residency form for the people of Indian origin. It facilitates the people to stay in India for indefinite time. The OCI can work in Indian government, their kids can study and they can do any type of business over here. The only thing that they cannot enjoy is that the democratic tool i.e. to vote in any type of government election or to take part in election and to take part in election and to hold public office. This OCI status is always subject to revoke or of cancellation under some circumstance. The OCI idea was born out of the demand posed by Indian Diaspora for the dual citizenship which will bring out enormous power to the overseas Indians. Based on that perusal, the citizenship amendment act was brought into force in the year 2005. Along with the amendment they also gave the eligibility criteria to possess the OCI status. It states that an individual or his or her parents or ancestor should have been a citizen of India on 26 January 1950 or at any time after that or an individual belonged to the territorial parts of Indian union from August 15, 1947. Apart from the people originated from Pakistan and Bangladesh, there is one more group of people who cannot acquire the OCI status, they are the people who served as the military offices in any foreign country.

II.Non Resident Indians (NRI)

The citizens of India who stays out of India for varied reasons will fall under the Non-Resident Indian category. There are certain time frame stated by government of India and to consider an individual as NRI. In a year he/she should be abroad for 182 days in a year or 365 days is the last four years. Those who do not fall under this category will also be considered as NRI. If they have Indian citizenship and stays out of India for quite a long time.

NRI's can be categorized under various work groups they can be laborers , blue color job holders, white color job holders and people who work as helpers in household. Under this category of work they can do any job and they should possess proper and updated documents. Apart from working category, the NRI can pursue education and they can also trade in other countries. The income of NRI that they earn in other countries is never subject to tax in India until unless it crosses 1 million USD. A NRI can avail for a NRI account even from his host country and through ethical online process, the account will be created. The NRI account is accessible all around the world. There are three different types of services provided by the banks of NRI to serve their purposes. The first service is rendered to Non -Resident ordinary account (NRO). The respective account is to save the income that an individual earned in India. For example, the property rents, the dividends and other sources. The second service that they provide is the Non-Resident External Account (NRE), this service helps the NRI to maintain the external fund i.e. any other income from any other country and they can save those money in this respective account. The third one formed on a purpose to help the NRI to save foreign

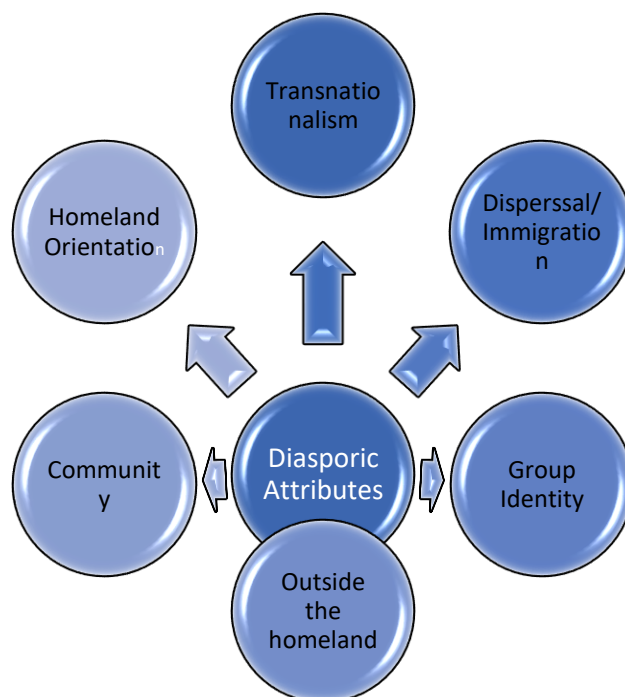
currency as such without converting it to INR and this deposit is subject to the acceptance of RBI's rules.

III. Indian Government Officials - Abroad

The representatives of a country in other countries is essential in bringing out the opportunities and possibilities and to maintain a cordial relation with the two respective countries. India do have many Indian government officials to serves as their representative in varied streams. Those government officials can be drift into the category of Indian diaspora because usually their duration would always be more than 5 years together. For example, the high commissioner of India in Singapore, Periyasamy he served as the ambassador.

ATTRIBUTES OF A DIASPORA

Based on the deep analysis done by Jonathan Grossman in his research article, towards the definition of Diaspora, we get to explore the extensive usage of diaspora concept by various experts in the field. The diaspora concept is getting vibrant since their role is being widely spoken and finding strategies to strengthen the bilateral relations between the host and home countries, hence defining the concept is crucial element for understanding the theory, this will facilitate the other stream scholars to communicate with the subject extensively. In Grossman article, he have brought out six attributes of diaspora by a qualitative analysis using the Atlas ti software. The respective six attributes are Dispersal/Immigration, outside the homeland, Community, Homeland Orientation, Transnationalism and Group Identity.



I. Transnationalism

Most of the authors have argued that diaspora population do necessarily constitute the transnationalism aspects on the process of becoming the diaspora population, but we need to understand that different group of people may transform into diaspora. Above all the ad interim

workers do create a transnational bond and they may not constitute the diaspora population for a long term but Hugo (2006) states in his article as long as they love in the host country they are the representative diaspora of a nation. Hence the point that we need to understand is that, those who share two borders, until they stay in a host country they become diaspora if they contribute economically, politically and socio-culturally.

II. Dispersal / Immigration

The dispersal and immigration has historical roots with diaspora as a concept. Since we usually refer the Jews as the first representatives for the concept diaspora. The immigrants will take huge time to transform into diaspora community. The dispersal usually comprises of traumatic expulsion from their home country. The dispersal is still taking place in the contemporary society as well.

III. Group Identity

One of the important factor that applies while we describe a diaspora population in their identity. A individual can be identifies as diaspora only through his acknowledgement of telling his society that he/she belongs to this race, or this country and tries to associate themselves with their group of similar people and thus forms the association and it will lead to formation of a mass group.

IV. Outside the homeland

The dispersal and immigration derives the outside the homeland attribute. The descendants of the dispersal population may not know their roots and origins, once they tries to trace it out they may end up in identifying a common area shared by two diaspora populations. The outside homeland can be explained exactly with the renowned example of Jews.

V. Community

As the community that we form on general, the community attribute of diaspora exhibits the sense of oneness and feelings of cohesion. A diaspora would obviously form a community since one of the important aspects of diaspora is to form a community by identifying themselves and associate them with the respective similar communities

VI. Homeland Orientation

India being one of the largest diasporic hub, the Indian diaspora do have the material and symbolic ties with its home country while there exists this kind of ties with the home land. This represents the hallmark of diasporic identity. The home land orientation enhances the diaspora to bring out its actual capability of bridging the two county in optimistic way. Some of such actions could include political participation in their origin country and to lobby for the homeland in many aspects. The connection between people will also get ease with new formation of relations and opportunities. The home land orientation enables the diaspora population to strengthen more on tourism, home land politics, economic welfare, cultural and religious exchanges.

CONCLUSION

Diaspora the essentially contested concept is being variedly used by many group of people to address varied group of people. The Indian government in their official website of Overseas Indian affairs have clearly defined that all the Indians who stays away of India becomes Indian diaspora. It could be for 1 week or 10 Years, they all come under diaspora population until unless they stay outside India. The prevailed definition towards diaspora evolves from ancient time to now according to the societal changes. As a layman Indian, the understanding of Diaspora is mislead by various usage of the concept of diaspora. They simply mean it that diaspora is the group of people who live abroad. Since the world is optimistically influenced by the soft power and one of the important tool of soft power constitutes the Diaspora of various nations. Hence we are in need to travel on definite path towards defining the Indian diaspora. According to the average definition derived by the qualitative analysis of Jonathan Grossman there are several aspects which are widely used by various disciplines scholars. While analysing the article towards a definition of diaspora by Jonathan Grossman, there are six major attributes through which scholars around the world define the diaspora. On that basis, the Indian diaspora can be defined, the individuals of Indian origin can be the citizen of host country, but those who directly or indirectly take part in the socio-economic and cultural aspects of host country can be treated as the Indian diaspora. In that case, India constitutes a huge number of labourers population through them, they may not be that much contribution towards the host country except the smaller extent of economic contribution. But then, there are Indians who fits into all the attributes of widely spoken, they are the Indians who got permanently settled in their host country with the so called home land orientation. Defining Indian Diaspora would be a difficult job, but this interpretation will lead to major rivalry in understanding their contribution.

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