JNU

IMDS Working Paper Series

Working Paper Nos. 58–60
June, 2013

Incorporation of Skilled Migrants in a Host Country: Insights from the Study of Skilled Indians in Switzerland

Metka Hercog and GabrielaTejada

Migration, Return and Coping Patterns: A Study of Gulf Returnees in Andhra Pradesh, India

Ajaya Kumar Sahoo and Trilok C. Goud

Growing Relevance of Modern Indian Diaspora for India's International Relations

Ujjwal Rabidas

IMDS Working Paper Series

Working Paper Nos. 58–60
June, 2013

International Migration and Diaspora Studies Project
Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies
School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110 067, India

Contents

Incorporation of Skilled Migrants in a Host Country: Insights from the Study of Skilled Indians in Switzerland

Metka Hercog
Gabriela Tejada
Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, Switzerland

Abstract

It is commonly accepted that mobility of people, especially of highly-skilled workers, has acquired a much more temporary character. Such fluid patterns of mobility call to attention the need to observe in what way highly-skilled migrants at present relate to their host societies, in the face of lasting expectations to relocate. This paper presents a case study of Indian migrants in Switzerland, who are characteristic for short-term stays. Nearly half of all Indians with tertiary education stay in Switzerland for less than five years. The selection of Switzerland as the case study of migrants' incorporation in host society matters also in terms of possibilities for integration. With a relatively small Indian population, inter-ethnic contact opportunities are rather limited. This article presents a qualitative analysis aimed at understanding the migratory space of skilled migrants with a particular focus on the effects of migratory plans on creations of their space. The ways in which skilled migrants' mobilities are embodied is examined by the type of networks and solidarity relations they build up with the local community within their transnational space through their professional and social activities as a response to their need to create local anchorage. The article brings together different strands of research on migrants' experiences: the literature on their incorporation and transnational activities and investigates the linkages between migratory planning (and mobility) on both.

Keywords: *Highly-skilled mobility, Host society, Incorporation, Transnational spaces, Switzerland*

1. Introduction

Migration planning has a bearing on the behavioral patterns of the migrant in the host society as well as on the efforts exerted to engage in a home country (Cassarino, 2004). Whether international mobility is seen only as a short-term stay abroad or as a permanent move, it will have an impact on migrants relationship with the environment they live in. In other words, if a person expects to stay in a certain country for an indefinite period, he or she will be more likely to invest in him/herself by acquiring location-specific human and social capital, such as learning the local language and interact with local community. Conversely, future plans to return to the country of origin or to move on to a third country might reduce the efforts to integrate socially and politically (Borjas & Bratsberg, 1996). It is commonly accepted that mobility of people has acquired a much more temporary character than it used to be. Globalization and related sectorial shifts in employment require supply of highly-skilled manpower, which is increasingly flexible, responding to the changing needs of economies. Faster and cheaper transportation also made it possible that people can return and travel between countries easily, while technological progress intensifies communication practices and hence, makes transnational networks even more important. Such fluid patterns of

mobility call to attention the need to observe in what way highly-skilled migrants at present relate to their host societies, in the face of lasting expectations to relocate in a short-term horizon as well as possibilities to be actively engaged in their home countries. This paper presents a case study of Indian highly-skilled migrants in Switzerland, who are characteristic for short-term stays. Nearly half of all Indians with tertiary education stay in Switzerland for less than five years[1]. Not only is Switzerland a good case for studying because of the temporary character of highly-skilled migration, the place of residence matters also in terms of possibilities for integration. With a relatively small Indian population, inter-ethnic contact opportunities are rather limited. Research on migrants' incorporation in the host society and transnational activities has mostly focused on low-skilled migration while little is known about the experiences of skilled migrants and their embeddedness in the local environment. Are strategies of migrants to expand and deepen their migratory space limited by the lack of long-term perspectives and thus, a lack of interest to incorporate in the host society? In order to gain an insight in this relationship, a series of semi-structured interviews have been conducted with Indians in Switzerland.

The purpose in this article is to bring together research on migrants' experiences and incorporation in host societies with their transnational activities and investigate the linkages between migratory planning (and mobility) on both. Migrants' material and imaginative experiences and relations are studied under the lens of transnational spaces, which allows us to break the artificial distinction between both processes and to look into simultaneous engagement in life across borders.

2. Methodology

This article presents a qualitative analysis aimed at understanding the migratory space of highly-skilled migrants with a particular focus on the effects of migratory plans on creations of their space. In order to gain an insight in this relationship, a series of 20 semi-structured interviews have been conducted with Indian professionals in Switzerland. In addition to interviews, this study draws on the insights gained through authors' participation in conferences and workshops concerning Indian international mobility as well as attendance of cultural events organized by the Indian community. We draw on results from a larger research study of highly-skilled Indians in selected European countries which aims to explore possibilities for leveraging their potential in home country development2. Interviews were conducted with 20 individuals currently living in Switzerland who explained in detail how they assess their experience in the destination country and how they personally act to adapt to the situation of living abroad. The interviews lasted from one to two hours each and were performed in the period between July 2011 and June 2012. The profile of the interviewees ranges from PhD students, academic researchers to professionals working in the fields of IT, banking, finance and food industry. Five of them were women, which is consistent with the general male dominance among Indian skilled migrants. We received their contacts through different channels of informants: Indian community representatives, research institutes and sports clubs. By contacting people of different profiles, we intended to broaden the range of

interviewees' experiences and identities. Four interviewees hold Swiss citizenship. One of them was born in Switzerland while the others acquired it with naturalization after years of living in the country. Among our respondents, some plan to stay in the country for a longer period of time while the others see their stay in Switzerland as transitory, either planning to soon leave to another country or return to India. We compare engagement in the host country and the home country between those migrants who have been in Switzerland for a longer period of time with that of short-term stayers.

The questions centered on interviewees' experiences in Switzerland, the situation surrounding their settlement and motivations to participate in social activities. These questions relate to the situation in a particular host society which has limited experiences with non-European immigration and is characterized by short-term stays of skilled migrants. Much research on transnational activities of migrants and their incorporation in the host society has focused on low-skilled migration (Al-Ali, Black, & Koser, 2001; Dahinden, 2005; Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2003; Pedraza, 2006; Snel, Engbersen, & Leerkes, 2006) while less is known about the skilled migrants and their embeddedness in local environment. We examine the ways in which skilled migrants enact their identities through social and professional activities, by the types of networks they engage in and by their solidarity relations they develop with the local community within their transnational space. The scarce literature on skilled migrants and their social and cultural practices is overly focused on transnational elites which are characterized as aloof from local life, not identified by any particular country but mainly led by the dynamics of global capitalism (Beaverstock, 2005; Sklair, 2001). This article will show that skilled migrants are not only 'accidental tourists' (Mahroum, 2000), following corporate decisions, but are diverse in their migration paths and experiences. By including people with different profiles, we assess what it is that influences their interest (or a lack thereof) in engaging in localized social networks and in what way the host society context might have an influence on the extent of such engagements.

3. Theoretical discussions

Simultaneous involvement of migrants in different contexts continuously changes fluid social spaces (Levitt & Glick-Schiller, 2004; Pries, 2005). The study of transnational spaces yields for us a direction to investigate the multiplicity of transnational experiences and relations in which migrants as well as non-migrants are involved. Transnational migration and with it, frequent flows of people, money, goods and "social remittances", transform the lives and contexts also for those people who never moved (Levitt, 2001). As a consequence of migrants' engagement in more than one context, transnational space involves also those people who get in contact with migrants, either in home or host countries. Following Jackson et al. (2005) we observe transnational space as having both material and imaginative significance. Material geographies of migration include the actual movement of people, goods and services, while the imaginary geographies encompass ideas, norms and symbols through which the involved explain the world around them. While looking only at the dynamics in the home or host countries is essentially incomplete when studying transnational spaces, we focus our attention on the activities based in the host countries as our particular question lies also in the impact of local conditions on the extent and success of migrants' efforts to engage in the new environment as well as in their homelands.

Empirical research in the field of remittances shows that migrants often send money to their homelands as a form of social insurance (Amuedo-Dorantes & Pozo, 2006). Similar behavior can be expected also for non-economic activities. Based on their assessment of what their future needs might be, they strategically invest their time and resources in connections which could turn out to be significant in the future for either social or economic reasons. If migrants plan to return home, higher importance is expected to be placed on maintenance of ties in the home country. Transnational involvement, either through economic ventures or socio-cultural activities which spans borders, is by the same token a phenomenon through which people respond to long-distance social obligations and recreate a sense of belonging to their places of origin (Itzigsohn & Giorguli Saucedo, 2002; Levitt, 2001). However, not all social practices and relations in connection with the home country express migrants' conscious identification with their country of origin or with their ethnicity. Oftentimes, individuals engage in practices across the borders which are part of their ordinary life but they do not attach a sense of belonging to it. Transnational way of belonging is enacted when migrants recognize their social practices as their source of identity (Levitt & Glick-Schiller, 2004).

At the same time, transnational activities in some instances support successful adaptation to their new countries. According to Pedraza (2006, p. 15) 'transnationalism has consequences for the extent to which immigrants can assimilate – both culturally and structurally'. Portes, Haller and Guarnizo (2001) empirically show that successful transnational entrepreneurship can work as a distinct path of immigrant incorporation to the host country. Likewise, another study based on the same data shows that transnational political actions may have a constructive effect of providing immigrants with a "renewed sense of efficacy and self-worth" which in turn facilitates political integration (Guarnizo, Portes, & Haller, 2003, p. 1239). These examples correspond to the view which emphasizes transnational participation and incorporation in the host society as "concurrent and intertwined social processes" (Itzigsohn & Giorguli Saucedo, 2002, p. 915). Increased socioeconomic status of migrants is proven to promote transnational participation and at the same time incorporation in the host country. Portes (2003) highlights in his findings that transnationalism is not in the realm of the poor and the marginalized. Quite to the contrary, it is more educated, well-established and high-income migrants who economically and socially engage in their home countries or lead associations linking diaspora of the respective countries.

The alternative view points to the negative effects of transnational activities, involvement in which supposedly hinders incorporation in the host country. Congruent with the classical assimilation theory (Gordon, 1964), which claims that with time, when migrants are more exposed and get more acquainted with the norms of the host society, they will have less contacts with the home country and with people with the same ethnic background. This view is not prevalent in the recent academic literature, but some studies still point to the impeding effects at least in certain spheres of integration. The study by Snel, Engbersen and Leerkes (2006) on different categories of immigrants in the Netherlands, for instance, finds out the relationship between the level of socio-cultural transnational activities affects the identification with the native Dutch people in a negative way.

We should stress that the local conditions in the host country influence the extent and success of efforts to engage in the new environment and hence, also the intensity of interaction with co-ethnics and social network in the home country. For example, Glick-Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton (1992) claim that non-acceptance in the established society

favors identification among immigrants with transnational and home country communities. Likewise, Portes (2003, p. 880) argues that 'immigrants who become dispersed and whose inconspicuous presence protects them from discrimination are less prone to engage in transnational ventures.In examining how the conditions in the new environment of the host countries affect migrants' social space, the diversity in the forms of geographical mobility and its specific determinants should be recognized. We focus our interest in what is particular for the migratory space of skilled migrants to portray the increasing temporary character of the mobility of people as a consequence of the restructuration of capital and space in which the rise in the competition of human capital is apparent. As argued by Bruneau (2010), today a much higher proportion of migrants arrive to the country of destination with advanced education and professional talent facilitating their transnational linkages and flexibilising their mobility patterns. Also, employment opportunities in the host country play a significant role on migrant's mobility choices as well as on their capacities of intervention in the host society. For example, as shown by Eliasson et al. (2003), individual labor market status and spatial variations in employment opportunities influence interregional job search behavior and mobility decisions.

We explore if skilled professional migrants, as 'transnational mobiles' (Dahinden, 2010) tend to have a low level of local attachment to the host country given that they are in continuous mobility. As argued by Dahinden, in this type of transnational formation mobility becomes an essential part of migrants' life strategies and their impetus to stay mobile and move frequently can be viewed 'as a professional asset' (p. 56). The ways in which skilled migrants' mobilities are embodied and grounded is examined by the type of networks and solidarity relations they build up with the local community within their transnational space through their social and professional activities as a response to their need, to a certain extent, to create local anchorage. Furthermore, the study of the experiences of skilled migrants' representations and practices, as well as their class position in the host countries will provide insights on the symbolic and material settings - their *ways of being* and *ways of belonging* of the transnational space (Levitt & Glick-Schiller, 2004).

4. The Swiss context

In recent years we have been able to observe a systematic increase in the flows of skilled professionals from India towards the countries of Western Europe, specifically to those countries that have adapted their migratory policies as part of their strategy to attract skilled personnel, Switzerland being one such case in point. The strategy to exert a pull on foreign human capital as an economic buffer have changed to more liberal and open options which following market requirements offer employment opportunities and means of entry to skilled personnel. Immigration policies as well as the favourable labour and academic environment that Switzerland offers are complementary components that have influenced the evolution of skilled immigration from India. In the second half of the last century, migration from India to Switzerland was characterized by modest flows of skilled persons who came in pursuit of work opportunities as engineers with multinational companies or workers with international organizations in Geneva. At that time, the Indian community in Switzerland was made up of a small group with diverse ethnic and linguistic characteristics, scattered geographically around the country. This period saw the establishment of associations that brought students, or more generally persons from India, together to celebrate cultural events and social encounters with fellow nationals based in the major Swiss cities. Recently this geography has been transformed

with rapid increase in the migration of skilled professionals and students and scientists from India, specifically within the areas of ICT, finance and management, biotechnology and pharmaceutical industry. While the population with Indian citizenship in Switzerland was estimated to number 2,229 in 1980, it was assessed to be 13,635 in 2012.[3]

In examining the determinants that facilitate or limit the incorporation and integration of skilled professionals and scientists from India in Switzerland, the particularities of the context and the social environment to which they are exposed play an important role. Several elements such as the scientific and educational excellence of Swiss academic and research institutions which are at the vanguard of technological progress and innovation, the high quality of life, as well as the favourable employment conditions of transnational companies, are part of a framework of reception in the host country, which is seen as being favourable for skilled migrants. A recent study highlights the favourable conditions of the Swiss labour market for emigrant workers based on the fact that three out of every four persons of the total foreign labour force is employed, a fact that positions Switzerland at the head of the OECD countries (Liebig, Kohls, & Krause, 2012).Another influence in the incorporation of migrants into the social space of Switzerland is how the subject of immigration is handled in the political discourse and the way that this influences the structures of inclusion and exclusion (Riaño & Wastl-Walter, 2006), and the consequent impact on both the social integration of foreigners and the position that they are assigned in Swiss society. Migration policy, which has been highly controversial in Swiss society up to now, has been conceived as a means of meeting the challenge of finding a pertinent balance between the economic need for foreign labour and the demographic stabilization of the foreign population in Switzerland, causing fear of the threat of foreign overpopulation for the Swiss national identity (the issue of *Überfremdung*) (Becker & al., 2008; D'Amato, 2008; Kaya, 2005; Liebig, 2004). Based on current legislation[4], which gives priority to immigration from the European Economic Area (EEA) and which limits the admission of persons from third countries to skilled professionals, foreigners have been classified in the current Swiss political discourse as holders of differential qualities according to their country of origin and their level of skills. Immigrants are distinguished according to their 'class', with skilled migrants being portrayed as 'those required by the economy and by science' and the 'most capable of being integrated' into the host society (Riaño & Wastl-Walter, 2006). The consequence of this is the double vision of Swiss society towards foreigners: the vision of the foreigner as culturally close and the foreigner as culturally distant from Switzerland, either on the ground of its origin or the skills level. Beside the cultural difference discourse, which creates a structure of inequality in terms of opportunities for social and economic participation, the application of restrictive citizenship policies show that immigration policies have focused on controlling the admission of foreigners rather than promoting their integration into the host society (Gross, 2006). Indeed, the application of restrictive citizenship policies has given rise to a lack of identification with the nation state on the part of immigrants and a 'segregated relationship between nationals and foreigners' (Riaño & Wastl-Walter, 2006).Swiss immigration policy as 'a policy of national identity' (Riaño & Wastl-Walter, 2006, p. 16), the political discourse of double vision towards foreigners, together with the international competition for human capital sets the context for the mobility of skilled Indians, their social and professional incorporation and interventions in the host country as well as their transnational social

---

[3] Based on data from the Swiss Federal Office for Statistics (SFOS), accessed 2 February 2014.
[4] The New Foreign National Act - NFNA and the Agreement with the European Union for the Free Movement of Persons

practices. The following section presents the main observations regarding the situation of skilled Indians in the professional environment and their integration through their work and professional activities in the host society in Switzerland. We examine the influence of the professional setting on the type of belonging that they build with the local community as a result of their temporary imaginary geographies. The specific experiences of skilled Indians in Switzerland, both material and imaginary, which take place in this context, are observed.

5. Professional environment for Indians in Switzerland: mobility, incorporation and belonging

Skilled migrants are a heterogeneous group. According to their different professional backgrounds, we tried to differentiate in our analysis between skilled professionals working in industry, scientists and researchers and postgraduate students. Skilled Indian professionals move to Switzerland to follow opportunities for professional growth and to gain international experience in multinational or Swiss companies. For them mobility is mostly industry-driven as they benefit from organizational channels, recruitment and relocation agencies. In contrast, for scientists in the academic sector and students, migration is driven by individual motivation and shaped by their personal contacts and networks. We can see how the internationalization of both higher education and professions enables skilled persons to have a higher propensity of mobility and flexibility in terms of choosing their destinations (Iredale, 2001). Our case study confirms the multi-directionality and elasticity of skilled mobility (Meyer, 2003). The decision to migrate is seen as an exercise of choice and it responds to job and academic opportunities. It allows them to gain experience and ensure their prospects for professional growth in a diverse range of geographical locations. In general, their stay in Switzerland is of a temporary nature, especially in the case of recently arrived Indians, and they consider it as one step on their on-going movement to other destinations. We observe that Indian scientists and researchers are exposed to strong expectations of international exposure and consequent mobility. The temporary imaginary geographies of skilled Indians regarding their career prospects and their scientific and professional advancement deriving from their movements also include plans in their home country. As an example of this, their testimonies show their wish to accomplish a professional, personal or familial project in the home country in the future. Their plans to return will be based on several determinants that shape their decisions, and for the most part these mix professional and familiar factors and in some cases they can cause them to feel obliged to go back to support their extended families. As pointed out by King (2002), migration decisions of skilled Indians could be a result of 'a complex continuum of coercion and free-will' (p. 92). In this regard, and referring precisely to the strong expectations of mobility for career progress of skilled persons and scientists (Ackers, no date), it is 'difficult to speak of migration as voluntary but neither is it forced in the traditional sense of the term' (p. 6). In this context, skilled Indians mostly move to follow opportunities with the best companies or institutions, and the geographic location is less important in their decisions. Accordingly, the highly international professional and scientific context together with the scientific and academic excellence offered by Switzerland are seen as being valuable assets by skilled Indians in their quest to gain new knowledge and enhance their career progression.

More foreign talent has been admitted with the increase of multinational companies on the Swiss territory, leading to a change in the ethnic landscape. The international environment is valued by our respondents for a number of reasons. While it makes it a better working

place as it creates greater opportunities, it also makes it easier for immigrants to create social networks, especially in the initial stage of their stay abroad. Professional part of life is a very important path for skilled migrants to situate themselves in a new setting. As for most skilled Indians the main reason for arriving and staying abroad is job-related, their social space tends to be centered around their work. Colleagues at work are often the first and most obvious choice for starting social interaction. Because of intensive working hours, such concentration around the working place is not necessarily by choice but is mostly circumstantial. At first glance, scientists and students as well as skilled professionals in multinational companies only have a small opportunity to interact with local people through their professional and scientific activity given the fact that only a few Swiss people form part of the teams in such international environments. They find it easy to socialize with their work colleagues and fellow students from many diverse countries who are generally in Switzerland only temporarily, and these contacts facilitate their first experiences in the host country. As one respondent who has worked for the past two years at an international research institute in Geneva put it:

> I started to make friends very soon, I don't know why. Probably because in this office no one is from Geneva. They come and they have to make friends with each other. They don't have a circle already.

Besides his good experiences of making social contacts at work, the only other people he got to know outside of work are a few Indians who took part at Indian social events. We can see that the professional space can offer skilled Indians the chance to interact with people notwithstanding linguistic, cultural or personality differences. While for many, the formal belonging to their professional space is the key that gives them access to future opportunities within the professional or academic labor market, for others this also implies the possibility of a long-term stay in the country of destination. We can also see how the idea of place, where the shared presence of the skilled Indians is located in the same relational space or common belonging, is elastic and mobile, and in numerous cases it is dissociated from the space in which one lives. In other words, there is a disembedding (Giddens, 1991) or detachment between their professional activity and the connections with/or the anchorage in the particularities of the context of the host country (Levitt & Glick-Schiller, 2004). Skilled Indian professionals mentioned language barriers, Swiss people who are reserved and conservative and what they perceive to be a limited cultural offer as some of the difficulties that they have faced in adapting to the Swiss environment. Particularities in terms of adaptation to the host country arose when we observe specific obstacles in terms of professional endeavors. Among other obstacles facing entrepreneurs, there are some which relate mainly to respondents' foreignness. One entrepreneur based in Bern with business both in India and Switzerland mentioned:

> Swiss people are very nice people, I had never any problems. The only difficulty I faced, because I am a foreigner, was to market my products. If you bring something new into the market the acceptance is higher for Swiss people who can easier market their products because of the dialect. Swiss people are mostly conservative. Now I have a Swiss business partner and the acceptance is higher because he is Swiss.

Professional character of Indians in Switzerland influences their settling in the host country to a large extent since the responsiveness of the local community hinges on the image that has been created around migrants from certain origin countries. These elements enable

the welcome and recognition provided by the host society and facilitate their incorporation into the new local setting. Swiss immigration policy has a strong focus on attracting skilled migrants and restricting the legal channels for low-skilled migrants. There was a wave of asylum seekers from South Asia, in particular from Sri Lanka, which created a stereotype of South Asians as asylum seekers. The difficulties which they encountered are known to Indian migrants because of their physical resemblance to Sri Lankans. They notice the different approach towards them once it is clear they are Indian and work in a highly-skilled job. Such remarks display sensitivity to how they are being perceived by mainstream society. The view of Indians in Switzerland is considered to be one of highly-educated immigrant group which is necessary for the Swiss economy. Such positive evaluation directs the general positive experiences Indians have in Switzerland. One Ph.D. student at the University in Lausanne elaborated on this issue mentioning that Swiss people see skilled Indians as a necessity from an economic point of view:

Swiss people do not see Indians as a threat, unlike other immigrant groups, (a threat) which is there in the public discourse. The Swiss are not indifferent, but they do have a rational position regarding India along the lines of: OK, they are third-country immigrants, they have their own cultural thing for which there is a kind of fascination, but they also include the argument of the economic need much more clearly than regarding any other highly-skilled immigrant group.

All these factors not only shape skilled Indian migrants' identities and temporary belonging and incorporation but they also shape their mobility and flexibility in terms of choosing their next destination or considering the possibility of staying.

6. Social strategies for creation of transnational social space

Even when assessing the social and cultural angle of international migration of professional workers, the institutional positioning related to their employment is inevitable. Our sample of respondents encompasses people who have been in Switzerland for very different periods of time, from one who has been in the country for only half a year to the other extreme example who arrived already in 1986; therefore, it is in line with expectations that their reach-out towards the local community has been pursued to different extents. Exactly the person with the shortest duration of stay in Switzerland corresponds with the typically portrayed undomiciled transmigrant who is willing to move from country to country, following the opportunities with the company. Culturally open disposition, willingness and capability to engage with the cultural "other" may be seen in part as a result of their cosmopolitan orientation (Kofman 2005). Regardless of how long they have been in the country, our respondents spoke favourably of the international environment in their place of residence. The international environment allures to our respondents because it creates the surroundings where one is able to immerse easily without the overwhelming feeling of standing out.

That migration experience is structured also through the racial identity is implicated by the use of terms like 'someone with my skin color' or 'a foreigner like me is more detectable'. For a respondent who lived in France before moving to Switzerland, the feeling of being 'outside' of the main society was one of the important reasons why he did not want to stay in France and it is in particular the international environment in Switzerland which made him feel that he wants to try living there. Nevertheless, the possibility to have a less conspicuous presence in the more cosmopolitan cities like Geneva and Zürich is juxtaposed to perceptions of the

Swiss countryside where one could expect difficulties with respect to racism. One interviewee who works at a large bank in Zürich area interprets the rejection of foreigners in small villages by the felling that 'they are coming and getting our jobs', which according to him would happen in any place with large labor migration. For those who have been in the country for some time, there is a general perception that the Swiss are becoming more open towards foreigners. High regard for the international environment is based also on appreciation to communicate in English. English is the common language in the international environment in which they work, and therefore for most of them learning the local language is not necessary at a professional level, and so they do not consider language a barrier from a professional point of view and they make little effort to learn any of the local languages. Only those skilled Indians who have converted their temporary stay into a longer period of residence in Switzerland have made the effort to learn either French or German. They recognize that without learning the language they might feel somehow 'handicapped'. Proficiency and the use of the majority language are one of the most important elements of social-cultural integration, and form the basis for social contacts and lessening of the distance between immigrant communities and the rest of society (Vancluysen & Van Craen, 2010). Language skills are repeatedly mentioned in the interviews as the single most important tool for integration. One post-doctoral scholar at EPFL who is married to a Swiss woman said: 'I realized that if you really want to know about Swiss culture and society you have to learn and speak French, that's when I decided I should take some courses'. He also found this step necessary to communicate with his Swiss in-laws. Those who speak any of the local languages notice a change of acknowledgment from the local people after they have learned the language.

While for those who learned either French or German, a change was noticeable in their incorporation in Swiss society, for the others language barriers outside of work place represent a major obstacle which is especially present in times of major family decisions. One interviewee, an IT specialist living in Olten with his family, mentioned that they were considering moving to an English-speaking country before the children would enter the kindergarten and school. Eventually, they decided to stay as they 'had a fortune of having many others who started early'. So, through experiences of other Indians whose children started going to school a few years earlier, this important step for their children and for the whole family was perceived to be more manageable. Those that overcome the initial concerns about their children's education in an education system unfamiliar to them, feel that later on the whole family benefits from their inclusion in the social activities through school. Parents get the possibility to interact with other parents and at the same time learn about the local society through their children. While he admitted that integration is difficult in Switzerland, it helped him and his wife a lot that their children are going to a German school and took this as an opportunity to also learn German themselves. Now their children speak English and German and understand Malayalam but reply back in English.

Knowledge of the local language represents more than only a tool for communication. In the context of learning the language of your host country as a migrant, it also signifies that one is willing to take the effort to expand their social space beyond the necessary interaction at work and beyond the comfort zone of interaction with the co-ethnics and other foreigners. Another interviewee, chemical engineer working in Lausanne, was critical of other Indians who have lived in Switzerland for a number of years and are not making the effort to speak the local language:

> You'll be floating here, if you don't learn the language. I don't feel outside, because I understand. Otherwise, you lead a blind life. You don't know what's going on, what are the daily problems. It's the way to get into the society.

He continues by saying that at least basic French or German courses should be compulsory; 'otherwise you get alienated here. You can't really hook everything for your professional life. You're living here'.

Indian community in Switzerland is considered to be relatively slow in picking up the local languages. In two interviews, Indians were compared to Pakistanis and Sri Lankans who by contrast learn the language very fast. The given explanation for such a difference is in their working situation with respect whether they interact with the locals at work. As most Indians in Switzerland are highly educated and work in English-speaking companies or research institutions, they do not feel the need to learn the local language. Another relevant remark was made with respect to a common situation in Indian couples that women stay at home as housewives which limits their opportunities of interaction with local people. Although there is a clear distance between migrant communities and the local society, Indians do not feel separated in a negative sense. The distance does not mean they are removed from local life. As people in Switzerland 'tend to give each other their space', there is a lack of intrusion also in migrants' private affairs. One respondent described Swiss culture in this way: 'It's not a high-impact culture that you feel outside. If I go back to India today, I would feel more outside than here. Because there is a mainstream culture (in India), which doesn't exist so much visibly here'. When asked if he experienced any problems in adapting, he responded, 'people in Switzerland leave you in peace'. 'You don't live *mit einander* but *bei einander*'. Instead of *living with each other*, the Swiss have an expression that they live *next to each other*. Except for one interviewee who had no interest in staying in Switzerland and saw local people as 'conservative and reserved', this perception of Swiss culture has been accepted and even seen as positive in certain ways.   By pointing out the efforts they have made to incorporate in Swiss society, more established migrants set up a dichotomy between themselves (as integrated) and other Indians, which do not show much interest to learn the language or otherwise incorporate in the host society. Such clear differences in migrants' approaches in pursuing their transnational livelihoods are related to their construction of a sense of belonging. The individual agency in producing their sense of belonging to either their home country or with the local community rests mainly on the imaginary geography of their future. Respondents who married Swiss partners are very much aware of this situation putting them in a different context compared to other Indians who have Indian partners. Likewise, children's incorporation in the education system signifies one such threshold in engagement in localized social networks and with it, an expansion of imaginary geography. Such events are not necessarily occurring as a matter of family or other personal circumstances. As several of our respondents mentioned, it was a perfectly planned and cognizant measure, pursued to expand their chances of interaction with the locals. One interviewee mentioned some of the measures he conscientiously pursued to reduce the barriers with the local people:

> When we were looking for an apartment, we said it should not be too close to Indians. If you're a few miles away, you can still meet with them a few times a week. But then you interact with local people. Also, when we first came, we took lunch from home to here (work). Then we stopped. Now I also go out for lunch with my colleagues and that's when we talk about other things. During lunch time, we speak in German. I don't see that among people who come here for a short time. If you stay in

a country for a long time, you should try to make an effort. I know people who have lived here for 5 years, and still don't try to learn.

Being simultaneously involved in the destination country as well as transnationally can lead to conflicting identities. This is obvious from all respondents regardless of their approach to integration. As clear from the above quote, some purposely stay away from Indian associations and claim that involvement in such organizations prevents one from experiencing the culture of the host country. A postdoctoral researcher from Geneva who has lived in Switzerland for seven years gave his view on people actively involved in Indian associations:

I'm not saying it's bad. It's the ones that want to preserve their culture. But for me personally, I was never interested in association because my idea was to experience new culture, learn new things, and integrate into society where you are. My idea was to learn stuff here. The biggest problem with Indian associations is that once you go in, you're trapped in a bad way. You just live among them. You hardly go out of this bubble, meet new people, and learn their culture.

Another respondent living in Lausanne made a similar argument with pointing out the context of originating from India. As culture in India is so different from the Swiss culture, it is crucial to make a decision at some point whether you are staying abroad or you will return to India. 'Sitting on the fence all your life and feeling that you don't belong here and that you want to go back is not benefiting anyone.' In his view, if one decides to stay abroad, he should accept life there and make the best of the situation there; at the same time he should then 'let one thing go. You can have one as the main thing and the other one as a hobby.'

On the opposite side, those active in associations look at those Indians who take distance from the diaspora association as being aloof from their culture. The president of one Indian student association spoke of the 'preconceived notion' that some people when they go abroad 'don't have to spend any time with people from our own country. That's how they fit into the new place. They don't speak the language we speak at home. They keep themselves away from the activities we organize.' Even for those who stay on the periphery of Indian associations, transnational ties at the individual level remain relevant but in this case their individual engagement in practices across borders do not construct their identity and belonging to a community but is in most cases a part of their ordinary life.

7. Conclusions

Through the examination of the experiences of skilled Indians in Switzerland we can see that the professional component is a major element of their identity and belonging to a community which has a common set of knowledge, way of thinking and norms, which depends in many cases on their professional sector, academic area or scientific field, or even on the institutions they are professionally engaged in. In defining spaces through mobility and interaction, specifically for scientists and researchers, science functions as a 'global space' offering them a set of contacts and academic disciplinary networks and opening opportunities of recognition and credibility (Mahroum, 2000). We can see how skilled Indians have permissibilities to succeed professionally, and these include the possibility to move freely, as a result of their advantageous social position and the fact that they belong to a category of global elites which transcends the local aspect and the borders of time and space without limitations. At a macro level, the internationalization of higher education and professions

facilitates the prevalence of an advantaged situation for skilled Indians in Switzerland. At a meso level, the commitment of current Swiss policies to open immigration of skilled professionals is accompanied by a congruent construction of the policy discourse and the social context insofar as it is believed that immigration of qualified personnel benefits the society in terms of long-term economic growth and scientific advancement. Our observations of the Swiss setting confirm the argument of Iredale (2001) that policies and cultures of inclusion are arising as demand drives the need for professional workers. Therefore, skilled Indians benefit from an advantaged situation regarding their mode of incorporation in the host country (Portes & Borocz, 1989), given their high level of education and their valuable skills and their engagement in positions of professional recognition, which in turn, facilitate their interaction with the local community.

The identification or identity of the skilled Indians is situated in a context of multiple belongings influenced by the difficulty that they have to establish long-lasting and embedded places of belonging. Their places of belonging become mobile and deterritorialized and they take on an importance in accordance with their particular needs or situations. Accordingly, we can see that the construction of a sense of belonging by the skilled Indians is not only linked to the territory in which they live, but rather they are also influenced by imagined spaces in other geographic and temporary contexts, which the scientists and skilled professionals think and perceive themselves as being members of.

Alternative points of view on the relationship between transnational activities and incorporation in the host society exist not only in the theoretical discourse, but also in perceptions of migrants themselves. The transnational family and community links with the country of origin and with Indians abroad are either seen as both a curse and a boon for the creation of links with the host society. Recent migrants do not generally meet in networks or associations and they are immersed in their own particular process, which involves constant negotiation of their cultural belonging to both Switzerland and India and the oscillation of their subjectivities between assimilation and exoticism (Jain, 2011). Despite they may not learn the local languages, skilled Indians show a culturally open disposition to the host culture and society as a result of their cosmopolitan orientation to which speaking English language is seen as part of. If this *privileged national* moving freely with capacity to engage in multiple cultures and presenting new forms of identity and belonging corresponds to the *cosmopolitan figure*, as understood by Kofman (2005), is something that needs further examination. As far as the temporary imaginary geography is concerned, we can see how the skilled Indians decide to establish ties in a certain territory based on the idea how they imagine the future and the strategies they believe as being necessary to make these come true. The transnational engagement of skilled Indians should be seen as a dynamic process, embodying individual life plans, social expectations and professional opportunities, as well as variance in public discourse. In these imagined geographies, the skilled Indians build for themselves a situation in which their freedom of movement is not restricted, and where their desire to create a professional, personal or familiar life project in the present and in the future is a reflection of their temporary nature.

References

Ackers, L. (no date). Moving people and knowledge: the mobility of scientists within the European Union.

Al-Ali, N., Black, R., & Koser, K. (2001). Refugees and transnationalism: the experience of Bosnians and Eritreans in Europe. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 27*(4), 615-634.

Amuedo-Dorantes, C., & Pozo, S. (2006). Remittances as Insurance: Evidence from Mexican Immigrants. *Journal of Population Economics, 19*(2), 227-254.

Beaverstock, J. V. (2005). Transnational Elites in the City: British Highly-Skilled Inter-Company Transferees in New York City's Financial District. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 31*(2), 245-268.

Becker, L., & al., e. (2008). Migration policy and industrial structure: the case of Switzerland. *International Migration, 46*(2), 81-107.

Borjas, G., & Bratsberg, B. (1996). Who Leaves? The Outmigration of the Foreign-Born. *The Review of Economic and Statistics, MIT Press, 78*(1), 165-176.

Bruneau, M. (2010). Diasporas, transnational spaces and communities. In R. Bauböck & T. Faist (Eds.), *Diaspora and transnationalism. Concepts, theories and methods* (pp. 35-49). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Cassarino, J.-P. (2004). Theorising Return Migration: The Conceptual Approach to Return Migrants Revisited. *International Journal on Multicultural Societies 6*(2), 253-279.

D'Amato, G. (2008). Erwünscht, aber nicht immer wilkommen. Die Geschichte der Einwanderungspolitik. In D. Müller (Ed.), *Die neue Zuwanderung. Die Schweiz zwischen brain gain und Überfremdung* (pp. 27-44): Avenir Suisse, Verlag Neuwr Zürcher Zeitung.

Dahinden, J. (2005). Contesting transnationalism? Lessons from the study of Albanian migraton networks from former Yugoslavia. *Global Networks, 5*(2), 191-208.

Dahinden, J. (2010). The dynamics of migrants' transnational formations: Between mobility and locality. In R. Bauböck & T. Faist (Eds.), *Diaspora and transnationalism. Concepts, theories and methods* (pp. 51-71). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Eliasson, K., Lindgren, U., & Westerlund, O. (2003). Geographical labour mobility: migration or commuting? *Regional Studies, 37*(8), 827-837.

Giddens, A. (1991). *The consequences of modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Glick-Schiller, N. (2010). A global perspective on transnational migration: Theorising migration without methodological nationalism. In R. Bauböck & T. Faist (Eds.), *Diaspora and transnationalism. Concepts, theories and methods* (pp. 109-129). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Glick-Schiller, N. (2011). A global perspective on migration and development. In T. Faist, M. Fauser & P. Kivisto (Eds.), *The migration and development nexus. A transnational perspective* (pp. 29-56). Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Gordon, M. (1964). *Assimilation in American Life. The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Gross, D. (2006). Inmigration policy and foreign population in Switzerland. *Policy Research Working Papers Series, 3853*,

Guarnizo, L. E., Portes, A., & Haller, W. (2003). Assimilation and Transnationalism: Determinants of Transnational Political Action among Contemporary Migrants. *American Journal of Sociology, 108*(6), 1211-1248.

Iredale, R. (2001). The migration of professionals: theories and typologies. *International Migration 39*(5), 7-26.

Itzigsohn, J., & Giorguli Saucedo, S. (2002). Immigrant Incorporation and Sociocultural Transnationalism. *International Migration Review, 36*(3), 766-798.

Jackson, P., Crang, P., & Dwyer, C. (2005). Introduction: the Spaces of Transnationality. In P. Jackson, P. Crang & C. Dwyer (Eds.), *Transnational Spaces* (pp. 1-23). London: Routledge.

Jain, R. (2011). Negotiating assimilation, exotiscm, and global Indian modernity: transnational subject-making of second generation Indians in Switzerland. *Asiatische Studien / Etudes Asiatiques, LXV*(4), 1001-1027.

Kaya, B. (2005). Switzerland. In H. Niessen, Y. Schibel & C. Thompson (Eds.), *Current immigration debates in Europe: A publication of the European Migration Dialogue* (pp. 383-398). Brussels: Migration Policy Group.

King, R. (2002). Towards a new map of European migration. *International Journal of Population Geography, 8*, 89-106.

Kofman, E. (2005). Figures of the cosmopolitan. *Innovation. The European Journal of Social Science Research 18*(1), 83-97.

Levitt, P. (2001). *The Transnational Villagers*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Levitt, P., & Glick-Schiller, N. (2004). Conceptualizing simultaneity: A transnational social field perspective on society. *International Migration Review, 38*(3), 1002-1039.

Levitt, P., & Glick-Schiller, N. (2004). Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society. *International Migration Review, 38*(3), 1002-1039.

Liebig, T. (2004). Recruitment of foreign labour in Germany and Switzerland. In OECD (Ed.), *Migration for employment: bilateral agreements at a crossroads* (pp. 157-186). Paris.

Liebig, T., Kohls, S., & Krause, K. (2012). The labour market integration of immigrants and their children in Switzerland. *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs*. Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/33/31/49654710.pdf

Mahroum, S. (2000). Highly skilled globetrotters: mapping the international migration of human capital. *R&D Management, 30*(1), 23-32.

Meyer, J.-B. (2003). Policy implications of the brain drain's changing face. *Science and Development Network*. Retrieved from http://www.scidev.net/en/policy-briefs/policy-implications-of-the-brain-drain-s-changing-.html

Ostergaard-Nielsen, E. (2003). *Transnational politics: the case of Turks and Kurds in Germany*. London/NY: Routledge.

Pedraza, S. (2006). Assimilation or Transnationalism: Conceptual Models of the Immigrant Experience in America. In R. Mahalingam (Ed.), *Cultural Psychology of Immigrants*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Portes, A. (2003). Conclusion: Theoretical Convergencies and Empirical Evidence in the Study of Immigrant Transnationalism. *International Migration Review, 37*(3), 874-892.

Portes, A., & Borocz, J. (1989). Contemporary immigration: theoretical perspectives on its determinants and modes of incorporation. *International Migration Review, 23*(3), 606-630.

Portes, A., Haller, W., & Guarnizo, L. (2001). Transnational entrepreneurs : the emergence and determinants of an alternative form of immigrant economic adaptation. University of Oxford. Transnational Communities Programme.

Pries, L. (2005). Configurations of Geographic and Societal Spaces : a Sociological Proposal Between "Methodological Nationalism" and The "Spaces of Flows". *Global Networks, 5*(2), 167-190.

Riaño, Y., & Wastl-Walter, D. (2006). Immigration policies, state discourse on foreigners and the politics of identity in Switzerland. *Environment and Planning, 38*, 1693-1713.

Schiller, N. G., Basch, L. G., & Szanton Blanc, C. (1992). Transnationalism : A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration. In N. Glick-Schiller, L. G. Basch & C. Blanc-Szanton (Eds.), *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Reconsidered* (pp. 1-24). New York: New York Academy of Sciences.

Sklair, L. (2001). *The transnational capitalist class*. Oxford, UK; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell.

Snel, E., Engbersen, G., & Leerkes, A. (2006). Transnational involvement and social integration. *Global Networks, 6*(3), 285-308.

Tejada, G. & Bolay, J-C. (2010). *Scientific diasporas from developing countries in Switzerland: empirical evidence and policy responses. Skilled migrants from Colombia, India and South Africa in Switzerland as partners in development.* Bern: Peter Lang.

Vancluysen, K., & Van Craen, M. (2010). Integration and perceived discrimination: two competing hypotheses tested among persons of Moroccan andTurkish descent in Belgium. Paper presented at the QMSS2/ESF seminar 'Measuring integration and discrimination' Paris, INED, 5-6 July, 2010

Migration, Return and Coping Patterns: A Study of Gulf Returnees in Andhra Pradesh, India

Ajaya Kumar Sahoo
Trilok C. Goud
Centre for Study of Indian Diaspora, School of Social Sciences, University of Hyderabad

Abstract

India has exported large numbers of migrants to different parts of the world under different circumstances. Indian migration, mostly as contract labour, to the Gulf countries is a recent phenomenon. The Gulf countries imported a large number of foreign laborers mostly from South Asian countries to work either in the oil companies or in the construction related jobs in the early 1970s and 1980s by providing all travel expenses. However, in recent time the situation has changed because of huge competition among foreign labours in the Gulf and also because of Gulf economic crisis. Due to lack of sufficient employment opportunities in rural areas of Andhra Pradesh state of India many people have opted to migrate to the Gulf countries by spending a huge amount on the migration process. This study is based on both primary and secondary sources. The fieldwork was conducted in the Karimnagar district of Andhra Pradesh from where migration to Gulf countries has been considerable in the recent past. There is a total of 100 respondents selected for this study. For collecting information from respondents, a structured interview schedule was used consisting of nine pages in which the questions were arranged sequentially. To substantiate the primary data we have visited the Non-Resident Indian (NRI) cells in Karimnagar district and Overseas Manpower Company of Andhra Pradesh (OMCAP) for gathering relevant information regarding the programs conducted by them for the migrants. The study concludes that extreme poverty, lack of employment opportunities and backwardness of the district led to the large scale Gulf migration. However, because of the failure of jobs in the Gulf countries, the returnees are commonly called as 'Gulf victims' in the villages. There is now a serious need for government intervention especially to help these poor migrant families who are under debt and now committing suicides because of severe economic crisis.

Keywords: Immigration, Diaspora, Gulf, India, Andhra Pradesh, Returnee

1. Introduction

India has exported large numbers of migrants to different parts of the world under different circumstances. Indian migration, mostly as contract labour, to the Gulf countries is a recent phenomenon. The Gulf countries imported a large number of foreign laborers mostly from South Asian countries to work either in the oil companies or in the construction related jobs in the early 1970s and 1980s by providing travel expenses. However, in recent time the situation has changed because of huge competition among foreign labours in the Gulf and also because of the Gulf economic crisis, as a result India has witnessed significant return migrations from the Gulf. This chapter examines the socioeconomic life of Gulf returnees in the state of Andhra Pradesh, India. It is divided into three sections; after a brief introduction

on the patterns of Indian emigration, the second section focuses on the Indian emigration to the Gulf countries and the final section focuses on the issues of return and its socioeconomic impact on families in Andhra Pradesh. The chapter argues that, although the return is a necessary outcome of Gulf migration it has mixed results for returnees: while for some the journey is highly successful, for others it is a failure, the latter being the common feature of the majority of respondents in this study. Because of the failure of jobs in the Gulf countries, the returnees were now called 'Gulf victims' in the villages.

2. Indian Emigration

Perhaps no other diaspora in the world is characterized by such diversity in its population as the Indian diaspora in terms of culture, languages, regions, religions and other forms of social stratification. Emigration from India too has been widely varied in terms of the historical context, causes and consequences as well as the social characteristics such as level of education, caste, gender, class, place of origin and religious and linguistic affiliation of these immigrants.[2] A brief history of Indian emigration to other parts of the world shows how the Indian diaspora formed under different socioeconomic and political contexts over a period of time. Landy *et al.* (2004: 203-4) have categorized the Indian emigration, from the historical to the contemporary period, into six broad phases:

> a) merchants who went to East Africa or Southeast Asia before the 16th century; b) migration of various groups (traders, farmers) to neighbouring countries (Sri Lanka, Nepal); c) indentured labourers to colonial empires like the Caribbean, Fiji, Mauritius or Natal; as well as migration through middlemen (kangani, maistry) to South East Asia; d) migration of skilled workers after the Second World War towards the developed countries (UK); e) migration of contract workers to the Gulf countries; and f) recent migration of knowledge workers to developed countries (USA).

In the Indian context, emigration has been a continuous process since pre-colonial times when its purposes were for trade and the propagation of religion. Historical and archival data suggest that Indian emigration goes back to the first century AD when Indian princes, priests, poets, and artisans migrated to Southeast Asian countries (Suryanarayan, 2003). The early emigration from India owed its origins to the Buddhist missionaries, when the Hindu kingdoms of medieval Southeast Asia attracted laborers and craftsmen from India during the sixteenth century. According to Vinay Lal (n.d.), "long before the Mediterranean trading routes were established in the early modern period, the Indian Ocean trading system facilitated the migration of Indians to the east coast of Africa, Southeast Asia, and the area that is now encompassed under the term Middle East".

These trade contacts slowly developed, and thereby small colonies established themselves in East Africa and Southeast Asia. Also during this period, merchants from Gujarat, Bengal, and Tamil Nadu settled in the great port cities of Southeast Asia, such as Malacca, Acheh, Ternate, and Tidor. They gradually assimilated with the local population (Suryanarayan, 2003). Claude Markovits (2000) provides an excellent analysis of diasporic trading networks of Hindu merchants from the towns of Shikarpur and Hyderabad in the province of Sind, describing how they came to control the trading networks throughout the world. In reference to the case of Gujarati merchants and their trading networks, for instance, Jha (2008: 38) pointed out that "the commercial activities of Gujarati merchants developed much on overseas trade and 'international' contacts during the pre-modern period. The oceanic

networks in the Indian Ocean were old and well established, and for centuries Gujarati merchants operated on these networks". However, large-scale migration of people from the Indian subcontinent into Southeast Asia began with the expansion of western colonialism and capitalism during the last two centuries (Sandhu and Mani, 1993: xix).

It was only in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in the wake of the European imperialist expansion, that further conditions for emigration of large numbers of Indians to different parts of the world were created. New plantations and industrial and commercial ventures in European colonies created the need for large supplies of labour; and with the abolition of slavery in the British, French, and Dutch colonies, respectively, in 1834, 1846, and 1873, there were severe shortages of labourers to work in the sugar, tea, coffee, cocoa, and rubber plantations in the colonies. Looking for alternative sources of labour, aside from the African ex-slaves and European immigrants, the colonial government imported Indians under the designation of 'indentured labour'. The indenture labour system "took a variety of forms, typically articulating with indigenous social relations, but generally was a contractual arrangement with penal sanctions whereby workers agreed to passage to and employment in a foreign country under specified terms, usually for five to ten years" (Goss and Lindquist, 2000: 389). The emigration of indentured labour started during the late eighteenth century and continued up to the early twentieth century. Thousands of Indians emigrated to East and South Africa, Mauritius, Fiji, and the Caribbean under this system.

The post-World War II scenario has changed the whole international migration process by affecting every migrant country, and India was not far behind. During this period migration was directed towards developed countries, and the migrants were for the most part talented professionals, skilled labourers, and entrepreneurs from the peripheral colonial and underdeveloped countries besides Anglo-Indians. This post-war migration was totally different from the earlier migration of indentured, *kangani*, and other forms of labour migration. During this period, large-scale migration of Indians took place to developed countries such as the United States (US), United Kingdom (UK), Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Indians from other parts of the world, especially from the former colonies, also started entering these countries. They were labelled as 'twice migrants' (Bhachu, 1985).

In contrast to the ex-indentured populations, Indian immigrants in the industrially developed countries today have been able to maintain extensive ties with India because of their comparative affluence. Marriage arrangements, kinship networks, religious affiliations keep many immigrants well linked to their places of origin, since a large number of Indians are still first-generation migrants. Another factor that has enabled overseas Indians to maintain ties with their homeland is the flow of their remittances and investments.

3. Indian Emigration to the Gulf Countries

Although Indian migration to the Persian Gulf started as early as the 1930s after oil was discovered in the region (Khadria 2006; Pradhan 2010), it was in the early 1970s that the large scale migration took place as a result of the price hike of oil. The consequent earnings of large revenues accelerated the process of industrialisation and social change in the GCC states characterised by massive investment in social and economic infrastructure necessitating the service of a large number of foreign workers.[1] As Gardner (2011: 6) rightly points out:

---

[1] According to Leonard (2005) the historical ties between South Asia and some of the Gulf States even goes back to eighteenth century.

Each of the states configured modernization and economic diversification plans to make use of this wealth, and those plans required heavy infrastructural development: cities would grow; highways would be constructed; electricity would be produced; new industries would prosper; universities, mosques, stadiums, hospitals, and federal buildings would be constructed and staffed.

For a brief period during the 1990-91 Gulf War "the number of low-skilled Indian workers in the Gulf declined due to Indian government restrictions" (Khadria 2010: 67), however, it again picked up afterwards when the demand for labour in the GCC states increased and diversified across many sectors from construction, services, oil and manufacturing (Breeding 2011). In order to avail the opportunities, Indian workers began to migrate to the Gulf countries.

Migration of Indians to the Gulf is totally different from migrating to other developed countries like the US, UK and Canada. Migrants are recruited purely on contract basis as the "Gulf oil countries do not allow family reunion and settlement" (Castles 2000: 277). Migration to the Gulf countries started with a few thousand per year during the middle of 1970s and assumed large proportions during the 1980s and 1990s. Although it is difficult to know the exact size of the migrant workers in the GCC countries, available information suggests that it was about 12.5 million in 2002; of this total, there were 3.5 million non-Gulf Arabs, 3.6 million Indians, 1.7 million Pakistanis, almost one million Bangladeshis, more than 700,000 Filipinos and over 700,000 Sri Lankan (Rahman 2010). According to Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA 2007: 3) "Indian technicians, nurses, teachers and other professionals handle almost the entire services sector in the Gulf. Around 70% are engaged in semi-skilled and un-skilled work; while 20-30% comprises professionals and other white collared workers." Migration from Kerala accounts for more than 50 per cent of the total stock of Indian migrants in the Gulf, with Tamil Nadu ranking second, followed by Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and the Punjab (Prakash 1998; Zachariah *et al.* 2002).

Pradhan (2010: 95) categorised the Indian expatriate community in the GCC states into four broad groups: (a) unskilled workers, employed in construction companies, municipalities, agricultural farms, and as domestic workers; (b) skilled and semi-skilled workers; (c) professionals, such as doctors, engineers, accountants, employed in government and private sectors; and (d) businessmen. The respondents covered in the present study belonged to the category of semiskilled and unskilled workers out of which many are even illiterate. Because of the lack of education, these migrants face various problems in their migration process, in the host country itself and then also after return to the homeland. This study explores the internal dynamics of this migration process and its effects on migrants and their families.

4. The Context

The fieldwork for this study was carried out among the returnees[2] from the Gulf in four districts of Andhra Pradesh – Karimnagar and Nizamabad districts from Telangana region, East Godavari from Costal Andhra region and Cuddapah (Kadapa) from Rayalaseema region – from where migration to Gulf countries has been considerable in the recent past.[3] One of

---

[2] Returnees here mainly implies first generation migrants. Tsuda (2009: 5) makes the difference between 'return migrants' and 'ethnic return migrants' in the sense that while "return migrants are going back to their *natal* homeland (i.e., place of birth), ethnic return migrants are later generation diasporic descendants returning to their *ethnic* homeland, where their ethnic group originated".

[3] Andhra Pradesh has three distinct regions known as Telangana, Rayalaseema, and Andhra. The Andhra region is also called as Coastal Andhra. Telangana is consists of 10 districts, coastal Andhra is consists of 9 districts and Rayalaseema consists of 4 districts.

the main factors for migration in these districts is landlessness. For example, the majority of respondents covered in this study opined that they do not have sufficient agricultural land and some of them are even landless. Even those having agricultural land are unable to cultivate and seek profits due to droughts and low irrigation facilities. Apart from this, natural calamities like famines and floods, shrinking of the cottage industry and lack of employment opportunities forced many of them to migrate to urban areas and also to the Gulf countries (Bhat & Sahoo 2005).

Migration from Andhra Pradesh started with internal migration especially "from the rural areas of Telangana districts to the coal fields of Godavarikhani, textile centres of Gujarat and Maharashtra" (Sampath 2006: 6). Male migrants used to migrate to Bombay (present day Mumbai) to work in industrial and construction sites and from there they used to gather information about the opportunities available in the Gulf countries. This trend was noticed mainly during the 1980s and 1990s (Azeez and Begum 2009). Once these migrants had reached the Gulf, they would send information to their children, relatives and neighbours about the opportunities available there. Such migrant 'networks' would facilitate further migration (Gold 2005). As Gardner (2011: 9) mentioned "chain migration through personal contacts, often arranged by other family members or acquaintances already in the Gulf, remains a significant force in the Gulf". Several scholars have discussed the role of personal networks in migration. Vertovec (2002: 3) for instance, pointed out that "for migrants social networks are crucial for finding jobs and accommodation, circulating goods and services, as well as psychological support and continuous social and economic information".

5. Methodology

The study is based on data collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected from respondents in four districts of Andhra Pradesh. Through a snowball technique 198 respondents were selected for this study. For collecting information from respondents, a structured interview schedule was used consisting of nine pages in which questions were arranged sequentially. The interview schedule was divided into three parts - personal information, migration and living conditions in the Gulf, and coping after return. Besides primary data we also gathered relevant information from the Non-Resident Indian (NRI) Cell in Karimnagar district and the Overseas Manpower Company of Andhra Pradesh (OMCAP) Limited in Hyderabad. These two organisations conduct various programmes for migrants in Andhra Pradesh. For secondary sources, we relied on the published literature in various journals, books, reports, national and local (Telugu) newspapers and the internet.

Out of the total respondents selected for this study 81 percent were males and 19 per cent females. During the course of this study, we did not find many female respondents. It might be the reason that, and as the literature shows, female migration from India to the Gulf countries is mostly from the state of Kerala (Percot and Rajan 2007) and to a lesser extent from the state of Andhra Pradesh and Goa. Jain (2007) pointed out that "females are less comparable to male and they have less job opportunities unlike as nurses, teachers, and domestic servants".[4] Getting work and work permits as a domestic labourer[5] depends on the

---

[4] Studies have shown that in many cases the female migrants engaged as housemaids, *ayahs* and cleaners were being exploited, cheated and abused (Jureidini 2003; Human Rights Watch 2010). And because of these reasons most of the many countries have restricted the out migration of women to the Gulf countries (see Ahn 2005). Nevertheless several women have been travelling via other countries illegally, for example, Nepali women travel via India and Indian women via Sri Lanka (Ahmed 2010; Thimothy and Sasikumar 2012).

[5] In the context of UAE, Bindulakshmi (2010: 168-69) categorized women domestic workers, based on living arrangements, into two types: live-in and live-out. "Live-in domestic workers usually stay with the employers whereas live-out workers live outside the employers'

networks; hence most migrants prefer their own family members or relatives to refer to such work.

Age is an important determining factor in Gulf migration as most of the migrants engage in construction and service sectors. Since these jobs are risky, only physically fit candidates are preferred and for that reason mostly young people migrate to Gulf countries. Out of the total respondents in the present study 68 per cent belonged to the age group of 18-40 years and the rest (32 per cent) were above the age of 41 years. Zachariah and Rajan's (2012) study showed that 90 per cent of the male and 66 per cent of female migrants belong to the age group of 19-39 years. Another study by Jain (2007) noticed that, 84 per cent of migrants were under 35 years of age and in that 50 per cent were unmarried. Thus it is clear that age is still considered to be the dominant criteria for the Gulf migration at the present time.

Migration of Indians to Gulf countries is not only influenced by economic factors but also by many other factors like caste, religion, and geographical location. The lower castes and tribes have a greater propensity to migrate, and many of them migrate for a short-term; low skilled and low paid workers with the highest levels of vulnerability and the lowest level of social protection also tend to migrate more. Migration offers schedule castes (SCs) and schedule tribes (STs) an escape from the traditional structures of caste based oppression in villages and gives them some bargaining power vis-à-vis their traditional employers (see Deshingkar and Start 2003). Among the total respondents included in the present study 25 per cent were belonged to general castes, 22 percent belonged to SCs, and 53 percent belonged to Backward Castes (BCs). The BCs were having majority in the study areas compared to other caste groups. Nambiar (1995) study in Kerala found that only 7 respondents were from forward castes (upper castes) and 90 respondents were from backward castes among Hindu religion. Another study by Prakash (2000) in Kerala found that 31 per cent were from upper castes, 59 per cent were from backward castes and 10 per cent were SCs and STs. As a result of shrinking of cottage industries and traditional caste occupations, many backward caste communities (especially the youth) lost their livelihood and this has compelled them to search for new occupations. The alternative was to move to different cities within the country and also migrate to Gulf countries, through personal networks.

6. Life in the Gulf

Working and living conditions of migrants completely depends on the host society. Immigrants in the Gulf countries face discrimination in getting salaries and sometimes are ill-treated by their owners (Frontpage 2012). Hence, the process of recruitment, wages, terms and conditions of work were the critical factors that affect the living conditions of migrants in the Gulf countries (see Jureidini 2003). For instance, salaries paid to Arab migrants and Non-Arab migrants differ (Kapiszewski 2006). Migrants have to live in labourer camps which are in some cases located near to the work itself, however in other cases located in isolated areas far away. Majority of respondents in this study said that the camps were mostly temporary in nature and that the living conditions were unhygienic with no proper sanitation being maintained.[6] In a single room more than 10 people used to live together. If a migrant decided

---

households. Even though these are the two large categories, the nature of work of domestic workers depends on the channels through which they migrate to the UAE".

[6] As Bruslé (2009-2010: 4) pointed out, the conditions of labourers' camps "greatly depend on the willingness of their employer to provide them with proper conditions. If the employer is not a large company, workers share rooms in some derelict buildings in the centre for the town".

to live outside the camp he would have to bear the extra cost, unthinkable for an unskilled and daily wage labourer.

Although some companies provide medical and housing facilities to the workers, it again depends on the rules of the company. Some small companies wanted to recruit workers illegally because they could not afford to pay for medical facilities and accommodation for legal migrants. Some of the respondents said that they were 'illegal' (*kalli valli*[7])) in the host country because they had entered the country on tourist visas. Tourist visas create the problem that migrants have to live illegally in the host country after the visa terms get over, which results in severe punishments, deportation or being sent to jail. In 2007 it was reported that there were around 70,000 migrants who have returned from the UAE alone and most of these migrants were illegal because they had overstayed beyond the term of their visa (*Indian News*, 5 November 2007).[8] Many respondents in this study revealed that there were instances that they could recall where Indians were sent to jail. Here the role of Recruiting Agents (RAs) cannot be ignored as they play an important role in the migration process. As Rajan *et al.* (2011: 88) found in their study:

> …since most RAs from sending countries like India collect huge amounts of money from the aspirants, they very often fail to ensure that the workers have the necessary skill levels. This results in workers being brought in en masse, and a consequent reduction in salary and depletion in living standards. All these factors can result in workers becoming illegal immigrants in the destination country.

The present study found that, the construction and services sectors are the main employers of migrants in the Gulf. As Nambiar (1995) showed: "migrant workers employed in the Middle East countries… range from poorly educated ABCD workers (Ayahs, Bearers, Cooks, Drivers) to highly educated professionals. However, by and large a majority belong to the category of less educated workers engaged in manual jobs". Working hours in unskilled professions make matters even more complex. For example, most of the respondents (77 per cent) opined that they worked more than 10 hours a day while very less respondents (23 per cent) said that they worked less than eight hours a day. Gardner (2011: 10) pointed out that "migrants are often forced to work longer hours than those indicated in the contract they signed in the sending country, and many report not receiving additional wages for these additional (overtime) hours". Working hours vary from company to company; sometimes migrants do not have any time limit and they have to work until the work is completed on the particular day.

7. The Issues of Return

Return to the homeland is compulsory as they were recruited on a contract basis. Migrants cannot get permanent citizenship or own property even if they stay more than ten years.[9] Return is mostly predetermined by the objective they had set out to achieve at the time of migration. Migrants always think that they will earn good money and become successful if they migrate to another country. However, in this study we found failure to occur more often

---

[7] An Arabic word commonly used in the Middle East.

[8] Shah (2008: 6-7) defined an irregular or illegal migrant in the GCC countries as: 1) a person may enter the country illegally (either without required documents or with fictitious documents), 2) the person may become illegal through overstaying after the contract and the legal residence period has expired, and 3) when a migrant worker takes up employment for a person other than the sponsor.

[9] Although in many cases it was found that the migrants continue to stay in the Gulf and flourish their families over generations (see Ali 2011; Gardner 2011; Vora 2011).

than success among the respondents. Several respondents opined that they have returned back because of different reasons such as expiry of contract (44 per cent), visa problem (22 per cent), less wages and harsh working conditions (17 percent), health problems (11 per cent), and job loss (6 per cent). In recent times it was also observed that because of the increasing number of foreign workers in the Gulf the recruiting companies in collaboration with the Government have reduced the salaries and wages for semiskilled and unskilled workers. As Rajan and Narayana (2011) argued, "the global crisis has affected the GCC economies through falling oil prices, depressed property and equity prices, low investor confidence, and reversal of capital flows. As the GDP growth in the GCC economies spawns large population growth, especially large influx of migrant labourers from South Asia, recession affects the flow of migrants and remittances".[10] Several respondents reiterated that, they wanted to return back to India even a little earlier (as they faced difficulties in accommodation and food due to financial problems) but they could not afford the airfare as they did not have any savings. In August 2008, the Indian consulate in Dubai, for instance, has arranged for the return of large numbers of impoverished workers through a special scheme. More recently, 35 illegal immigrants from Andhra Pradesh were provided free air tickets by the Gulf Telangana Welfare and Cultural Association (GTWCA) and extended amnesty by the government to return to India. They "did not carry the authorised travel documents and the legal residency permits. They were poor and could not afford the air tickets" (*The Hindu*, 25 January 2013, p.4).

As was discussed earlier, the main reason for migration to Gulf countries is unemployment at home and related economic factors. This situation continued for much of the respondents even after return with having gained important work experience in the Gulf. Before migration, these migrants were already in a weak position, then the economic downturn hit them in the Gulf itself and as a result they were forced to return to India: but they returned to a situation which had not improved much, probably got worse, exacerbated by now mounting visa-related debts.[11] Majority of respondents felt that they were not satisfied with their present life as they are still under debts – the money they borrowed at the time of their migration to the Gulf migration has not yet been cleared. Migrants depended on money lenders and friends as a source for money for visa and travel expenses. And during their stay in the Gulf countries they worked as a daily wage laborer for less salary and hence they could not save enough money to clear their debts.

The study found that, 67 per cent of the respondents were engaged in some work related to their skills after return, while 33 per cent were not at all working. Since the majority of returnees were socially and economically backward at the time of their migration, their status had not changed even after spending several years working in the Gulf. Among those respondents who had found employment after return, several were working as agricultural laborers (54 percent), daily wage laborer (29 per cent) which was also their occupation prior to migration and the remaining were in petty businesses (17 per cent). Among those respondents who have not found any form of employment, the majority said that they were planning for re-emigration to the Gulf. The question arises why they want to re-migrate to the Gulf when their previous migration was not successful and satisfactory. Many of the

---

[10] The recent crises in Dubai economy, for instance, affected directly the construction sector. Since most of the construction companies have ceased their work it resulted in the forceful leaving of all temporary workers.

[11] India's economy has grown rapidly with a "growth rate of 7-9 percent during post-liberalization and post-financial crisis period. Unfortunately, the growth has been uneven during last two decades across states and sectors. It has multiplied incomes but also caused increasing insecurity, particularly, among low income groups and in rural areas" (Sahu 2011).

respondents felt that they cannot repay the debt if they engage in agricultural work in the village while others opined that they would like to re-migrate because of problems like re-integration and social factors.[12] Reintegration is another problem for the Gulf returnees; gulf beneficiaries generally do not have any problem with re-integration, but the problem is for the so-called 'gulf victims'. Gulf beneficiaries are those who worked in the Gulf and earned enough money that could be saved and sent back to their families as remittances, while Gulf victims are those who could not benefit (economically) with the Gulf migration at all but ended with the additional burden of clearing their previous debt. Gulf victims have a lot of problems in re-integration because they have to cope with debt issues. Sometimes they plan to re-emigrate only to avoid the pressure from the moneylenders. Some of the respondents (name changed) detailed their visit to the Gulf and shared the experience of their return.

Jalender, aged 37, male from Karimnagar district said:

Poor economic conditions of my family was the major reason for migrating to the Gulf. In Dubai I got less wages for work compared with what the agent assured me before. Moreover, I also faced problems in food and accommodation. I spent Rs.100,000/- for visa which was having three years of validity but I was sent back home after two years of work by paying less wages. When I contacted the agent - who helped me to get the visa - he said that he is only responsible for sending the person to Gulf countries and not responsible for anything after that. After returning from the Gulf we sold our land to partially repay our debt, and the debt is still continuing. We request the Government to support us financially by giving loans to start a new business, so that we can clear our debt in the future.[13]

Jyothi, aged 35, female from East Godavari district revealed:

I migrated to Kuwait. The agent helped me in getting the passport and visa. After I reached Kuwait I worked in Arab's house but I did not like the work in the house and hence I left the job. I was working in another house but meanwhile the first owner gave complain against me and I was sent to jail and later returned to India with Out-Pass given by the Indian embassy. Now I am waiting to clear the Gulf debt.

Katakam Ravi, aged 29, male from Karimnagar district mentioned:

I went to Qatar for the purpose of a driver but there they made me as a shepherd in the desert. I had worked 20 hours a day and there was no time to eat and take rest properly. My salary was 300 DH with irregular payment but, I spent Rs.120,000/- for the visa. There was no electricity in the room where I lived. They did not allow me to come back to India, my passport was with them. I was sent to jail for two months because I came out from my owners without intimation. After coming from jail my friends gave me money for my return ticket, my visa debt is still there to be paid. I will not go to gulf again; we are being cheated by agents and they are charging huge money for visas. After returning from Qatar I am working as a taxi driver and I am getting 200-300 rupees per day.

84 per cent of respondents in this study said that they were now the 'Gulf victims' as they were burdened with huge debts. One of the consequences was that it forced many of them to commit suicide. An article in an internet blog revealed that "within the state of Andhra Pradesh, Karimnagar district has recorded the highest number of suicides, with 1,363 persons

---

[12] Social factors like the issue of 'prestige' involved in migrating to a foreign country, this has influenced many migrants from the village to go abroad (see Ali 2007).

[13] Interviews were originally conducted in Telugu and latter translated into English.

ending their lives in 2008, and 840 till September 2009… the problem that the Gulf migrants face could account for the large number of suicides in Karimnagar" (Reddy 2009).

8. Conclusion

Return is compulsory for all Gulf migrants. Policies of Gulf countries do not allow migrants to become permanent citizens even though they work there for several years. In recent times Gulf countries have also started restricting the inflows of foreign workers despite the fact that "foreign workers have helped in the rapid transformation of the infrastructure as well as institutional development in the Gulf" (Shah 2008: 3). This chapter discussed several factors which have resulted in the return migration of Indians from the Gulf. Similarly re-integration for returnees becomes a serious problem, as they undergo social, economic and psychological pressure when they are burdened with debt. The majority of respondents depended on personal loans with a huge interest amount on it and the amount earned in the Gulf was so meager that all their savings and remittances are used in order to pay off the interest, leave alone to clear the loan. This study contradicts the study conducted in Kerala where Osella and Osella (2000: 119) found that the "Gulf migration offers to some the chance of rapid and vast accumulation of wealth… their newfound wealth and access to consumption may dramatically alter their status and their relationships with others, and offer them the chance to forge new identities".

It may be concluded that, less duration of stay was one of the factors for the failure. Since their stay was cut short, the migrants could not achieve what they had hoped to achieve in terms of financial gains at the beginning of their migration. Another factor was the lack of awareness among migrants. Since many of the migrants were illiterate and less aware of the visa process, they completely depended on the agents. And the agents were more concerned about their commissions – because of competition among the agents – as a result they knowingly cheated the migrants. Because of the failure of jobs in the Gulf countries, the returnees were now called 'Gulf victims' in the villages. Although, in recent time, the Government of Andhra Pradesh started special departments in the district called 'NRI Cell', 'OMCAP', and also started several other special programmes (see Migrant Forum in Asia 2012) towards orientating the Gulf migrants, the migrants are less aware of these programmes. Hence, it is suggested that the Government should take further necessary steps to popularize these programs in the districts.

Acknowledgments

References

Ahmed, A. 2010. Migrant Domestic Workers in Kuwait: The Role of State Institutions. In: *Viewpoints: Migration and the Gulf*, pp. 27-29. Washington, DC: The Middle East Institute.

Ahn, P-S. 2005. Prospects and Challenges of Out-Migration from South Asia and its Neighbouring Countries. *Labour & Development*, 11 (1): 1-33.

Ali, S. 2007. 'Go West Young Man': The Culture of Migration among Muslims in Hyderabad, India. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 33 (1): 37-58.

Ali, S. 2011. Going and Coming and Going Again: Second-Generation Migrants in Dubai. *Mobilities*, 6 (4): 553-568.

Azeez, A. and Begum, M. 2009. Gulf Migration, Remittances and Economic Impact. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 20 (1): 55-60.

Bhachu, Parminder. 1985. *Twice Migrants: East African Sikh Settlers in Britain.* London: Tavistock.

Bhat, C. and A. K. Sahoo. 2005. Transnational Networks of Indian Diasporic Communities: The Case of Telugu Diaspora. *Man in India,* 85 (1&2): 61-80.

Bindulakshmi, P. 2010. 'Gender Mobility and State Response: Indian Domestic Workers in the UAE'. In: S. I. Rajan (ed.), *India Migration Report 2010: Governance and Labour Migration*, pp. 163-181. New Delhi: Routledge.

Breeding, M. 2011. India-Gulf Migration: Corruption and Capacity in Regulating Recruitment Agencies. In: *Migrant Labour in the Gulf: Working Group Summary Report No. 2*, Center for International and Regional Studies, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar.

Bruslé, T. 2009-2010. Who's in a *labour camp*? A socio-economic analysis of Nepalese migrants in Qatar. *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research*, 35-36: 154-170.

Castles, S. 2000. International Migration at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century: Global Trends and Issues. *International Social Science Journal*, 165: 269-281.

Deshingkar, P. and Start, D. 2003. Seasonal Migration for Livelihoods in India: Coping, Accumulation and Exclusion. *Working Paper 220*, Overseas Development Institute, London.

Gardner, A. 2011. Gulf Migration and the Family. *Journal of Arabian Studies: Arabia, the Gulf, and the Red Sea*, 1 (1): 3-25.

Gold, S. J. 2005. 'Migrant Networks: A Summary and Critique of Relational Approaches to International Migration'. In: M. Romero and E. Margolis (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Social Inequalities*, pp. 257-285. London: Blackwell.

Frontpage. 2012. The Exploitation of Immigrant Workers in the Middle East", Interview with Jay Johnson. Available at: http://frontpagemag.com/2012/jamie-glazov/the-exploitation-of-immigrant-workers-in-the-middle-east/. [Accessed on 15 January 2013].

Goss, Jon and Bruce Lindquist. 2000. 'Placing Movers: An Overview of the Asian-Pacific Migration System', *The Contemporary Pacific,* 12 (2): 385–414.

Human Rights Watch. 2010. *Slow Reform: Protection of Migrant Domestic Workers in Asia and the Middle East.* New York: Human Rights Watch.

Jain, P. C. 2007. *Indian Diaspora in West Asia: A Reader.* New Delhi: Manohar Publications.

Jha, Murari Kumar. 2008. 'The Social World of Gujarati Merchants and their Indian Ocean networks in the Seventeenth Century'. *In:* Rajesh Rai and Peter Reeves (eds.), *The South Asian Diaspora: Transnational Networks and Changing Identities*, pp. 28-44. London: Routledge.

Jureidini, R. 2003. Migrant Workers and Xenophobia in the Middle East. *Identities, Conflict and Cohesion Programme Paper Number 2*, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, Geneva.

Kapiszewski, A. 2006. *Arab versus Asian Migrant Workers in the GCC Countries.* UN Expert Group Meeting on International Migration and Development in the Arab Region, Beirut, 15-17 May 2006 (UN/POP/EGM/2006/02).

Khadria, B. 2006. *India: Skilled Migration to Developed Countries, Labour Migration to the Gulf.* Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore.

Khadria, B. 2010. Paradigm Shifts in India's Migration Policy toward the Gulf. *Middle East Institute Viewpoints*, February 2010: 67-69 [www.mei.edu].

Lal, Vinay. (n.d.). 'Reflections on the Indian Diaspora, in the Caribbean and Elsewhere'. Available at: http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/southasia/Diaspora/reflect.html [Accessed on 10 August 2008].

Landy, Frederic, Brij Maharaj and Helene Mainet-Valleix. 2004. 'Are people of Indian origin (PIO) "Indian"?: A Case Study of South Africa', *Geoforum,* 35 (2): 203–215.

Leonard, K. 2005. South Asians in the Indian Ocean World: Language, Policing, and Gender Practices in Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 25 (3): 677-686.

Markovits, Claude. 2000. *The Global World of Indian Merchants 1750-1947: Traders of Sind from Bukhara to Panama.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Migrant Forum in Asia. 2012. *Programs & Services for Migrant Workers & Members of their Families in 3 Indian States: Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu*. Philippines: Migrant Forum in Asia: www.mfasia.org.

Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA). 2007. *Issues Relating To Overseas Indians: Fourteenth Report Standing Committee on External Affairs*. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat.

Nambiar, A.C.K. 1995. *The Socio-Economic Conditions of Gulf Migrants*. New Delhi: Commonwealth Publishers.

Osella, F. and Osella, C. 2000. Migration, Money and Masculinity in Kerala. *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute*, 6: 117-133.

Percot, M. and Rajan, S. I. 2007. Female Emigration from India: Case Study of Nurses. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 42 (4): 318-325.

Pradhan, S. 2010. India and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC): An Economic and Political Perspective. *Strategic Analysis*, 34 (1): 93-103.

Prakash, B. A. (ed.). 1998. *Indian migration to the Middle East: Trends, Patterns and Socio-Economic Impacts*. Rohtak: Spellbound Publications.

Prakash, B. A. 2000. Exodus of Gulf Emigrants: Return Emigrants of Varkala Town in Kerala. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 35 (51): 4534-40.

Rahman, A. 2010. Migration and Human Rights in the Gulf. *Middle East Institute Viewpoints*, February 2010: 16-18 [www.mei.edu].

Rajan, S. I. and D. Narayana. 2011. The Financial Crisis in the Gulf and its Impact on South Asian Migrant Workers. *SANEI Working Paper Series* No. 11-13, South Asia Network of Economic Research Institutes, Dhaka.

Rajan, S. I., Varghese, V.J., and Jayakumar, M.S. 2011. *Dreaming Mobility and Buying Vulnerability: Overseas recruitment Practices in India*. New Delhi: Routledge.

Reddy, S. U. 2009. In Andhra Pradesh 39 Persons Commit Suicide a Day. Available: http://udumulasudhakarreddy.blogspot.com/2009/11/in-andhra-pradesh-39-persons-commit.html [Accessed 10 August 2011].

Sahu, B. K. 2011. Growth or Development: Growth Experiences During Post-Reform Period in India. *The Indian Economy Review*, available online: http://theindiaeconomyreview.org/Article.aspx?aid=89&mid=5 [accessed 25 January 2013].

Sampath, R. P. 2006. *Impact of Migration on Rural Power Structure: A Case Study of Karimnagar district in Andhra Pradesh, South India*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Sandhu, K.S. and A. Mani (eds.). 1993. *Indian Communities in Southeast Asia*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Shah, N. M. 2008. Recent Labour Immigration Policies in the Oil-Rich Gulf: How Effective Are They Likely To Be? *International Publications Paper 52*. Cornell University ILR School: http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/intl/52.

Suryanarayan, V. 2003. 'Indian Communities in South East Asia', *Dialogue,* 5.1. Retrieved March 8, 2006 (http://www.asthabharati.org/Dia_jul03/suryanarayan.htm).

Thimothy, R. and Sasikumar, S. K. 2012. *Migration of Women Workers from South Asia to the Gulf*. Noida: V. V. Giri National Labour Institute.

Tsuda, T. (ed.). 2009. *Diasporic Homecoming: Ethnic Return Migration in Comparative Perspective*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Vertovec, S. 2002. Transnational Networks and Skilled Labour Migration. *Working Paper 02*, Transnational Communities Programme, Oxford University.

Vora, N. 2011. From Golden Frontier to Global City: Shifting Forms of Belonging, "Freedom," and Governance among Indian Businessmen in Dubai. *American Anthropologist*, 113 (2): 306–318.

Zachariah K.C., and Rajan, I.S. 2012. *Kerala's Gulf Connection, 1998-2011: Economic and Social Impact of Migration*. Hyderabad: Orient BlackSwan.

Zachariah, K. C., Prakash, B. A., Rajan, S. I. 2002. Gulf Migration Study: Employment, Wages and Working Conditions of Kerala Emigrants in the United Arab Emirates. *Working Paper No 326*, Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum.

Growing Relevance of Modern Indian Diaspora for India's International Relations[1]

Ujjwal Rabidas
Jawaharlal Nehru University

Abstract

The modern Indian diaspora's increasingly associational assertion with its "original birthplace" and simultaneously rising international stature of India are calling for a coherent and consistent line of thinking as the strategic leverage of this overseas asset may prove highly beneficial for India's national well-being. It is necessary for this that India does not allow the material strength of the new diaspora to eclipse the political significance of the old one. For the precise reason that the new and the old segments of the modern diaspora have not be synchronised, India's foreign affairs machinery appears weakest in the triadic relations among the Indian diaspora, their hosts, and homeland if the aspect of reciprocity – the crucial element of diaspora formation – is taken into account. This paper therefore, by way of explanations, suggests few means by which India's foreign policy establishment, while incorporating the new diaspora-oriented statistically-dependent variables, can move beyond them and appreciate it within the changes in the international politics and society without which the modern Indian diaspora loses it meaning.

Keywords: *Diaspora, Transnational, Identity, Indians*

I

As the changing world gives way to more unconventional stake-holders to claim their due places in the contemporary international relations, the diversity of the acting-ground is bound to bring additional challenges and opportunities for the foreign policy of a state-actor. Though the role that an overseas community could play for its "original home" is not unknown to the international community, its increasing associational assertion with the "homeland" is becoming a notable phenomenon in the international politics. The "hostland" too, more interestingly, seems to be welcoming and even encouraging this diasporic development. This therefore allows a diasporic community to earn strategic importance which is not necessarily confined to a single sovereign territory, often prompting the exhortation of a "transnational community" in understanding this new phenomenon in international politics.

The state of India has not been immune to this development, and thus the appointment of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora in August 2000. The Committee later on reported that India boasts over twenty million people overseas, and thus the expectation seemed high that something significant would take place in deepening the diasporic variables of India's foreign engagement. The expectation, however, waned afterwards as India's

---

diasporic disposition seemed mainly confined to annual celebratory moods with little substantial achievements. Why was it so?

The Indian strategic community is not so ignorant (as it may appear at times) that it does not know that the buzzword of globalisation has made inroads into every national and international thinking. It should be aware that the process of globalisation is allowing every single actor to play a role of certain kind. Perhaps, the strategic community is not yet confident enough as to how it can appreciate the relevance of the Indian diaspora in the changing world sphere. And it may be more so because the weight of the domestic electoral calculus seems to be so high that the strategic community is yet to find its own way into the diasporic variables of India's foreign conduct. The complex nature, however, of the Indian diaspora itself may be a point to take note of. Moreover, the entire context may have been further handicapped by the abstinence of the Indian scholars of international relations from adding even a single chapter in their mainstream foreign policy monographs that could have generated some thinking into the subject. This paper brings some of these concerns into discussion and makes a preliminary attempt to explain some of the diasporic variables of India's foreign policy in the emerging international context of diaspora. It argues in favour of a thoughtful and coherent diasporic policy consideration to substantially engage with the overseas communities to match India's so-called rising international profile.

II

Diaspora is a relatively new conceptual category to look at the identity formation of a group of people with certain nationality or nationalities and the ways it interacts with several other categories with which the people identify themselves. In the process of such identifications, the category of diaspora often struggles hard as it is required to compete with other conceptual categories (for example, emigrant/immigrant, people in exile, refugee etc.) which are far less ambiguous than that of diaspora. It, however, often co-opts the other categories for its fuller expression. Precisely, this co-opting tendency of diaspora may initially diminish the leverage for its formal consideration as an important variable of a state's foreign policy and render it atypical; more so for a vast, diverse, and constitutionally secular country like India because of the embeddedness of cultural, religious, and ethnic identities within a diaspora group. At the same time, it is the real challenge before the Indian strategic community today to craft the rightful place for its overseas communities and utilise it as a critical factor of India's foreign conduct.

Towards the due direction, it seems that over the preceding decade the Indian state has proactively attempted to engage with its diasporic communities, giving the impression that the diasporic factors would constitute among the vital foreign policy components to suit the national interests. India's international standing has grown up and, as figure 1 shows, so is the size and significance of its diaspora across the world which is estimated around twenty millions now (MEA, 2001: V). When both (India and its diaspora) have risen up internationally to a considerable extent, it appears logical that they would interact with each other and would develop deep mutual interests. There are intended dialogues from both the sides, and while catching up the dialogues the Indian scholars particularly have attempted to broaden the Indian "diasporic history" back to ancient India. The scholars argue that the existence of the Indian diaspora dates back as early as 2000 BC when the inhabitants of the Indus Valley Civilisation interacted with their Aryan, Egyptian, and Sumerian counterparts for trade, travel, and religious exchanges (Ray, 2009: xxvii). It is also suggested that the

Figure 1: Regional distribution of Indian diaspora
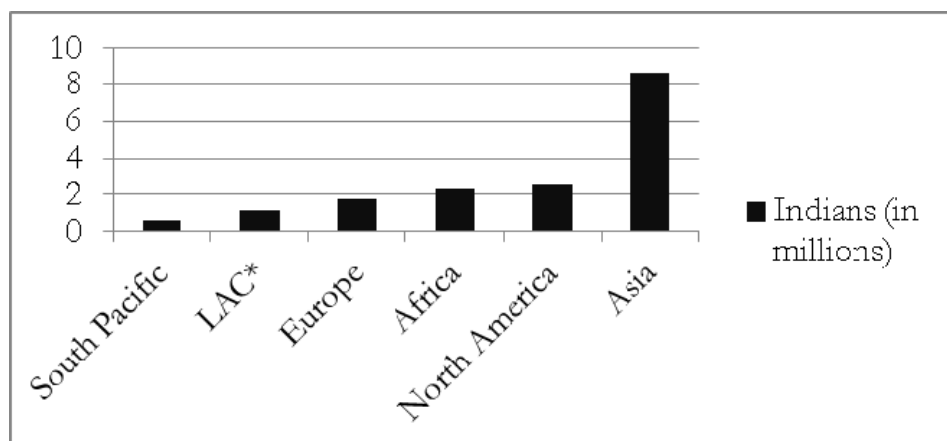
Source: *Computed from MEA (2001) data*
*Latin America and the Caribbean

bhikkus had travelled to parts of Central and Eastern Asia in ancient time perhaps as peacemakers (Tinker, 1974: xi, quoted in Helweg, 1986: 104) and even the records of continuous contact between the kingdoms of the Coromandel coast of India and the islands of Southeast Asia are emphasised with survival of religious and cultural signs (Jarayam, 2004: 19). Likewise, William McNiell had brought to knowledge the presence of small Indian trading communities in East Africa and a colony of Indian merchants was believed to live permanently in Memphis of Egypt at around 500 BC (McNeill, 1963: 210, quoted in Jarayam, 2004: 19). Such Asian and African links of Indian traders are stated to further exist through the "Silk Road" but are supposedly weakened by the advancement of the European maritime trade (Sengupta, 2009).

Those "ancient diasporas" may bear importance from the historical and "nationalist" point of views; they are, however, least discussed in the Indian disasporic literature if compared with the attention paid to the diasporic communities that emerged much later in the early nineteenth and late twentieth centuries. Ravindra K. Jain (2010: 01) thus notes:

> Although Indian traders, entrepreneurs, travellers, and religious missionaries have been travelling overseas since the beginning of the third century AD, especially to Southeast Asia and the east coast of Africa, the modern Indian diaspora begins to emerge in the third decade of the nineteenth century with Indian labor migrating to the plantation economies of Mauritius, South Africa, Malaya, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and the Anglophone, Francophone and Dutch colonies in the Caribbean.

Figure 1, therefore, represents the volume of twenty million people of Indian origin which is broadly termed as "modern Indian diaspora" and is further divided as the "old" and "new" Indian diaspora.

Those Indians contracted by the colonial administrations for specific periods and exported to the private estate planters in the colonial territories (as noted by Jain above) were constituted the old diaspora. Fiji from the South Pacific too received those Indians later in the

1870s. Indentured in the wake of the abolition of slavery in 1830s and after, their sufferings had gone beyond the dreaded *kala pani* and in the plantation estates due to adverse socio-economic and ecological conditions. Though they were indentured to work, as Brinsley Samaroo (2012) argues in the Caribbean context, they had to face the irk of British sepoys in the estates as many of them had participated in the Indian Revolt of 1857.

The narrative of the new diaspora is qualitatively different from that of the old one. Beginning after the Second World War, Indians had started working in the industrial sites in Britain due to shortage of workers. Gradual advancement in technology, education, and allied factors in India subsequently enabled it to export trained professionals to several of the countries in Europe, Australia, and North America; standing close to 4.5 million (MEA, 2001). The pillars for Europe and North America in figure 1 exclusively represent this new diaspora which have earned remarkable credits in science and technology and other important areas. They have grown up significantly in the Gulf countries too and contribute more than half of the current non-residential Indian (NRI) investments in India (Gupta, 2009: 322). The old diaspora, on the other side, have clinched the top political positions and have embellished the Prime Ministerships and Presidentships in their host countries. Thus, the modern (old and new) Indian diaspora together constitute vital significance for the Indian state. The question is, however, how far India is ready to positively exploit its vital assets scattered around the world. Though India has exhibited some kind of diasporic disposition since Independence, if compared with other countries (China and Mexico, for instance), it still lacks a diasporic policy as such that can deepen its mutual interests vis-a-vis its diaspora. In the following sections, this work therefore argues in favour of a coherent thinking on modern diaspora and its inclusion among the core factors of India's foreign policy and suggests few useful means with regard to the formulation of a diasporic policy.

III

The national history, particularly the previous two centuries and a half, and a vast landmass of India with huge natural endowments have been decisive in its foreign policy thinking and acting. The Indian Ocean, for example, washes the long strip of southern shore of Indian territory and the Himalayas stretches a long range in the north; creating vital security role for the navy and foot-soldiers in the country. Similarly, the historical legacies inform India's principled commitment to the precepts of Nonalignment and *Panchasheel*, and resistance to colonialism, slavery, and racism in the international community. The natural resources and "demographic dividend" that India boasts have further acted upon its policies for acquiring vital national capabilities and strategically exploiting the same internationally to satisfy domestic economic interests. Alternatively, as the roots and branches of the Indian economy have grown thicker, the foreign policy establishment has played to-and-fro to resolutely catapult India into the global polity and economy. It seems, however, that diaspora has not acted upon the conduct of India's foreign relations, though for some time it has been a subject of academic interest in the country and has sporadically solicited some kind of official attention in the preceding century. Nonetheless, diaspora suddenly appeared to be an area of vital interest for India only in the outset of the twenty-first century when it appointed the High Level Committee on the India Diaspora in August 2000. Since then a diverse set of literature has come up dealing with various dimensions of the Indian diaspora. Academic cohorts have been appended with few institutes, and all of them continue to explore new facets of Indian diaspora with theoretical and policy contributions. However, it is argued that

only two kinds of concerns have been predominant in this subject, namely, (i) to know the socio-anthropological adjustments that have occurred over a period among the Indians overseas and (ii) to search for ways to extract material benefits from them; therefore privileging sociocultural and political economy perspectives on the Indians abroad (Sharma, 2004) An unconvincing "cultural-civilisational" view has simultaneously accompanied the diasporic discourse in the country. But importantly, among all this, the attention has been slipped off from the foreign policy and international relations dimension of the subject. Therefore, while discussing the notion of "transnationality" among the overseas Indian communities, Jain (2010: 137) has the following to conclude:

> I also wish to incorporate here a disclaimer by way of note. The subject I have chosen is vast and within the scope of this book I could have hardly hoped to do it complete justice. Were I to integrate more fully in my discourse the perspectives of international relations and political science, for example, I should have dealt with international organizations (both governmental and non-governmental), border issues and what is sometimes called a trans-national civil society, especially by the human rights activists, in greater detail. That, however, will have to await a more extended treatment.

It is useful to recall that a foreign policy is a reflection of the world-view of an organised political community and the systematised programme of action that it employs to engage with similar other communities in the world. Such a political community has conventionally been imagined to be organised around a national territory and acquiring the form of a state with various organs of governance. Thus, the notion of a sovereign state as a participating unit in the international system has gained a long-standing contemplation. National history and geography, among others, have had fundamental role in the foreign policy considerations of this sovereign entity and therefore, the idea of diaspora as a foreign policy variable appears atypical in the states-system. However, as Jain (2010: 137) has hinted at, the possibility of such a consideration is around; and more so if the multidisciplinary nature of the academic agenda of Indian diaspora, as Jayaram (2004: 23) has pointed out, is vouched for.

Since a diasporic community resides outside the country of its origin, its study essentialises a thinking outside the domestic border along with a consideration of the changing nature of the world where the country of the diasporic origin itself is placed. Today's world is proverbially interpreted as integrated, interdependent, and globalised. Back in the 1970s, for instance, Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye (1977: 04) had considered the world politics as a "tapestry of diverse relationships" because (i) they saw an absence of clearly defined hierarchy of interests and issues, (ii) states were not necessarily the coherent and dominant actors in the international affairs, and (iii) even the use of force did not stand as an effective instrument for foreign policy consideration. Now-a-days, such a notion of world politics is normally expressed as a "post-Cold War" phenomenon, but Keohane and Nye were able to predict it much before the handy phraseologies of "post-Cold War" and "globalising world" surfaced. Moreover, an understanding of the world politics as a tapestry of diverse relationships (involving integration and interdependence) provides a constructive way to look at the function of a state that is spelt through foreign affairs machinery and a possible role that diaspora can play atypically.

Further, the atypicality of the idea of diaspora as a factors of foreign policy seems to lie in the fact that, unlike any other factor, its loci is outside the sovereign territory of the state; yet the diasporic community identifies itself with the state as its place of origin. How should,

therefore, the place or country of origin perceive the diasporic setting? Should the Indian foreign policy machinery adopt a diasporic policy in general, or it should have a country-specific strategy? Both ways seem logical if the Indian diaspora as such remains in policy-focus where merely the "metaphor of homeland" in one hand and the extraction of material benefit on the other are conceded. But today's dynamic milieu, as this work contends, suggests a step forward and plan the diasporic factor in the manner that the contemporary world – customarily spotted as a globalising space – as well as an emergent India, warrant for.

IV

Over the last two decades, the world-system has moved forward into a *space* that incorporates a set of diverse actors and stake-holders. Consequently, a local sociocultural attribute appears as important an issue internationally as the attention that a cross-border fire between two sovereign entities beseeches for. It is precisely so because there is a *space* that is sensitive to the respective actors and stake-holders and that allows them again to move into a wider scope of consequence. When India attained Independence, the citizenship issue of the Indians overseas came up. But the *space* at that time was qualitatively different and yet the issue of citizenship of the Indian communities had opened up for discussion. In a preparatory paper, for instance, for the 1950 Conference of the Institute for Pacific Relations, Vidya Prakash Dutt (1950: 18) mentioned:

> Under the law, all the citizens of Burma [i.e., Myanmar], Ceylon [i.e., Sri Lanka], Mauritius, Fiji, India, the United Kingdom and the Dominions were British subjects. The position is now different because India, Ceylon and Pakistan have achieved independence and Burma had gone out of the Commonwealth. Under the circumstances, Free India had to tackle the problems of Indians overseas in a way different from that of the former Government of India.

The overseas-Indians were, however, encouraged to settle down permanently in their place of residence. Otherwise, without interfering to protect the "vested interests" of the Indian communities, they were assured to receive "most favoured treatment" by the host countries lest they decided to embrace citizenship of Free Indian (Dutt: 1950: 18). India is believed to have reiterated this policy when those countries subsequently became independent where the people of Indian origin were housed.

For the Indian state, interestingly, diaspora was not yet the catchphrase for the overseas-Indians at that time; probably because India was yet to start exporting trained professionals to the materially advanced nations of North America and West Europe. Dutt (1950: 17) had therefore to be confined in summing up:

> Indians overseas number nearly 3,500,000. They are distributed mainly in Burma, Ceylon, Malaya [i.e., Malaysia], South and East African territories, Mauritius, British Guiana, Trinidad, Jamaica and Fiji.

Both the Indian state and the Indian diaspora have been able to attract each other's concerns incrementally through state –and sub-state linkages; and in so doing the diasporic communities seem to have played proactive role in the first place. India's rising political-economic profile could have played significant role as it allows the homeland to be vocal in its international gestures and thus inviting further associational assertion from the people of its origin. Homeland's rising profile has been apparently conducive for sociocultural, political,

and material satisfaction for its people in a foreign setting.[2] The Indian diaspora, in turn, has further solicited attention from the Indian state as they have consolidated themselves politically and professionally in few pockets of the world.

The formation of the Indian diasporic identities and its transnational expression bring forth an enriching experience for the Indian state particularly in the era of globalisation because the Indian diaspora is a microcosm outside the Indian territory within different socio-economic settings. The realm of diaspora is thus a laboratory for critical reflection into India's own socio-economic milieus and insularities, simultaneously allowing construction of a "foreign" policy for the national welfare. Rabindranath Tagore thus had observed, "To study a banayan tree, you not only must know its stem in its own soil, but also must trace the growth of its greatness in the further soil, for then you can know the true nature of its vitality" (Tinker, 1977: iii, quoted in Jayaram, 2004: 15).

V

Understanding the Indian diasporic diversity is important when it truly is a microcosm of the Indian society abroad and incorporates all the multiplicities and diversities found in India whether these are religious, geographic, linguistic, ethnic, caste, class or gender. The Indian state is, however, familiar with these factors in its domestic milieu and thus the formulation of a "diasporic policy" may be passionately misinterpreted as an extension of its "domestic policy". The prevalent notion of "domestic-international interface" may further encourage such a misinterpretation. Whatever could be the Indian policy-take on its diaspora, it is obvious that there is no officially mandated policy so far even after "high-level" bureaucratic talks and reports on the Indian diaspora for over a decade. Moreover, these are the Indians residing in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada who are apparently considered valuable diasporic Indians, may be because these are the places that provide more chances of economic prosperity and carry highest status symbol in the Indian minds. One should, however, note the increasing trend among the Indian diaspora of growing proportion of non-working dependents to exceed that of workers in these countries and employment of many of them in poor occupations (Jain, 2010: 89). It should further be contrasted with the Indians in the Gulf countries who cannot bring their families along because of financial restrictions imposed by the host countries; creating higher stakes among them in maintaining stronger ties with India and in identifying themselves as Indians (Gupta, 2009: 322). The socio-economic profile of these Indians in the Gulf countries has been shifting in a positive direction since 1980s (MEA, 2001: 20). These two regional trends should act against the Indian official situation of not having a clear diasporic guideline and should act in favour of considering the diasporic variables into its formal policy design without which the optimal contributions from this valuable asset would remain unrealised.

Countries like Fiji, *Trinidad* and Tobago, the United States, South Africa, Mauritius, and Singapore constitute the major chunk of diasporic parlance in India. But figure 1 shows that maximum Indian communities are working in Asia with the population of more than eight

---

[2] This aspect of "associational assertion" of the Indian diaspora with its "original birthplace" was repeatedly observed by this author during a recent research trip to Fiji and Australia. One Fiji-Indian respondent and a prominent political representative and also previously a Professor of Economics at the University of the South Pacific, Fiji, wished to see the presence of the Indian High Commission in a magnanimous building (like that of Australian one), while a senior faculty of Business Studies at the Australian National University and a prominent Fijian citizen of Indian origin was passionate to see India into various activities in Fiji that are not second to Chinese ones. Again, Prof. Brinsley Samroo's (2012) recent compelling articulation that the Indian revolt of 1857 had certain "revolutionary" consequences in the Caribbean, the other side of the Indian diasporic world, provides another line of associational assertion from the academic point of view.

millions, whereas least of them are present in the South Pacific (including Australia and New Zealand) with less than one million people. If seen numerically, Indians in the African Continent are more than in all the Latin American and Caribbean countries put together. Indians in Africa outnumber their counterparts that are present in all the European countries counted together, but fall short when compared with the Indians in North America. Thinking in this line is important to have a regional outlook in a possible diasporic policy.

It is further important for India to know the country-specific weight that the Indian diaspora could possibly exert. Figure 1 can impress the Indians in the developed areas that they have come of age, but soon it changes the colour if their number is broken down country-wise and put in percentage against the total population. Thus, as figure 2 shows, they are 0.52 per cent in the United States, 1.93 per cent in the United Kingdom, 0.88 in Australia, and 1.16 per cent in New Zealand against their total population. Even in Canada they remain at 2.5 per cent. If read in the context of power politics these developed countries are outshined by the Indian diaspora in Suriname, Fiji, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and Mauritius where in percentage terms they are 30, 36, 38, 48, and 54 per cent respectively against the total population. It is again baffling that why South Africa with merely 1.98 per cent and Singapore with 6.25 per cent Indian population would solicit disproportionate interest as it seems when they neither have the capacity of power politics like others nor are economically influential like the Indians in the developed countries. Such a disproportionality should rather act now more as an encouragement for the Indian state for having a proper diasporic policy formulation and bring into light the important countries like Bahrain and the UAE where Indian population have crossed over 16 and 20 per cent respectively as reported by Ministry of External Affairs in its diasporic report of 2001.

Figure 2: Indian diaspora in selected countries (against total population)
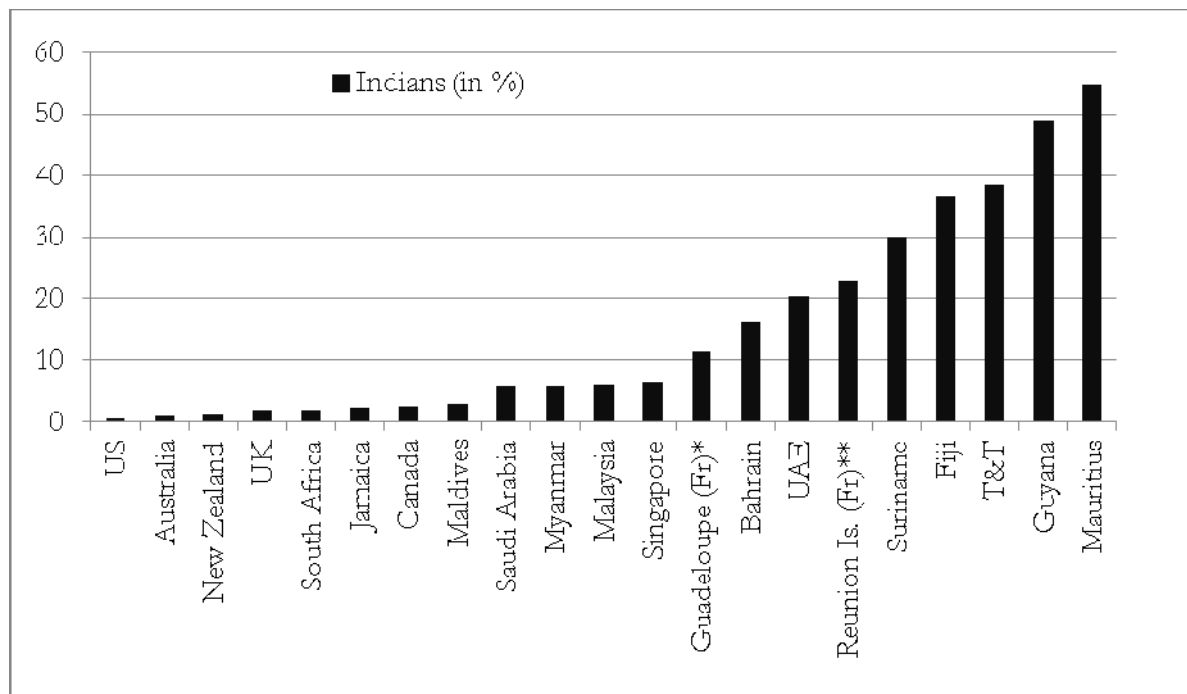
Sources: **Computed from MEA's (2001) and UNDP Human Development Report's (2010) demographic data**
*Association of Caribbean States, 2002, in Narayanan (2004: 04)
**Population in 2012 as quoted in www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/500226/Reunion (Accessed on 12

Figure 3: Indian diaspora in selected countries (in absolute volume)
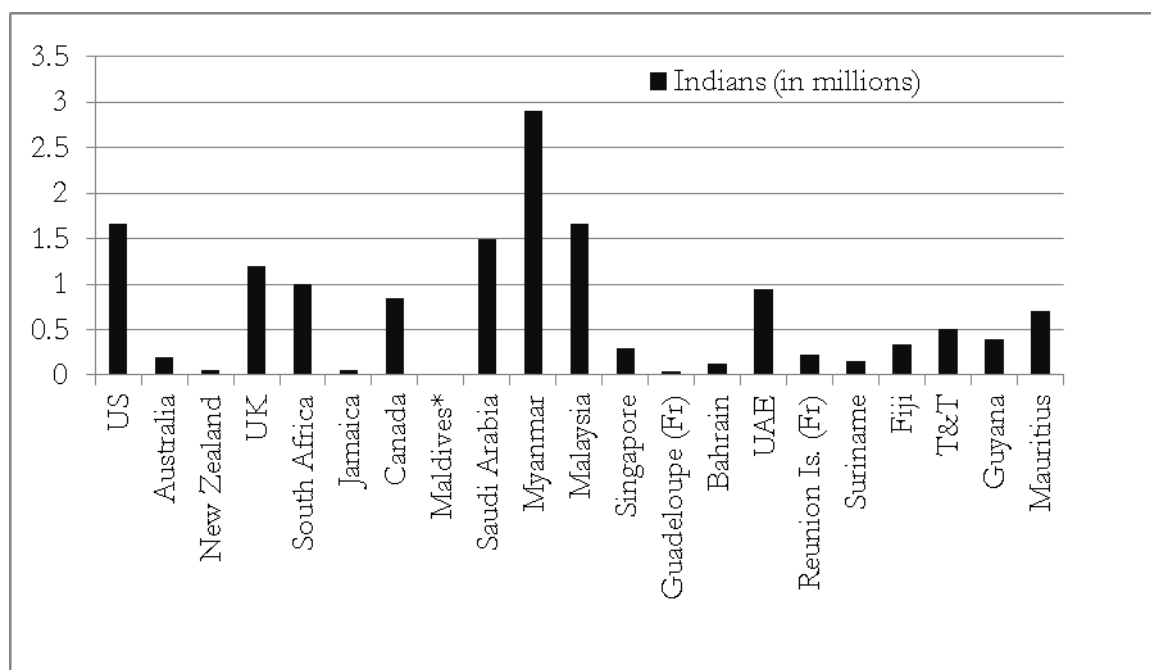
Source: Computed from MEA (2001) data

***MEA reports 9001 Indians in 2001**

Again, the sheer percentage of the overseas-Indians is unlikely to act as the major policy-guideline. Their size can be numerically small but, as figure 3 would suggest, if they are split country-wise and seen in absolute volume (without comparing against the total population), Indians in several of the countries that cannot hold in power politics are significant at their own merit, if the nature of those countries is appreciated in today's international context. Thus, the presence of the 1.67 million Indian diaspora in the United States, 1.2 millions in the United Kingdom, and 0.85 millions in Canada becomes vital given the amount of power these states exercise in world politics and the political economic role that the Indians from these places can possibly play for India. The favourable role that the Indian diaspora in the United States has arguably played in the Indo-US relations, and as discussed by Rao (2011), is a good example in hand.

Indian communities in Singapore, Suriname, Fiji, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Mauritius and several others places perhaps ask for consideration of an under-appreciated feature of these countries. These states are so little in territorial and demographic size that they are readily defined as "small" and "micro" states and are proverbially delineated as "vulnerable" due to their political, economic, and geographic attributes.[3] Their political-economic vulnerabilities, consequently, compel them to search for allies and partners for regional and international bargaining collectively. If the fact is additionally remembered that *at least* half of today's United Nations' sovereign members are small and micro states and are

---

[3] The study of small states, however, has grown manifold into several directions from seeing them as "under-resourced" (Arthur Lewis, 1955) to "small powers" (Davit Vital, 1967) to the "irrelevance of smallness" (Winston Griffith, 2007) to "small as discursive" (Donna Lee andNicola Smith) and so on.

situated in the Caribbean and the South Pacific with vital presence of the Indian diaspora, it would not take much for the Indian strategic community to weigh the leverage that these tiny states can hold for India regionally and internationally. "Because of their organization and determination", Gabriel Sheffer (1986: 05) had thus noted, "ethnic diasporas can become, in some small states, a significant political factor both domestically [for homeland] and in the foreign affairs of their host countries."

If a doubt still creeps towards the policy thinking as to which of the Indian diasporas are to be prioritised for national interest, such a thinking rather should be restrained for better. If the 2010 human development index (HDI) value, for example, of these countries are taken into account, all of them (in discussion in figure 4) rank higher than the HDI value that India owns, except Myanmar (UNDP: 2010). In UNDP's 2010 HDI value enumeration, Norway earned the highest value of 0.938 and the lowest value of 0.140 was received by Zimbabwe. Interestingly, out of the twenty-two countries (including India) listed in figure 4, eight fall in the category of very high HDI value including Singapore, Bahrain and UAE, five fall in the

Figure 4: Human Development Index (HDI) value of selected countries
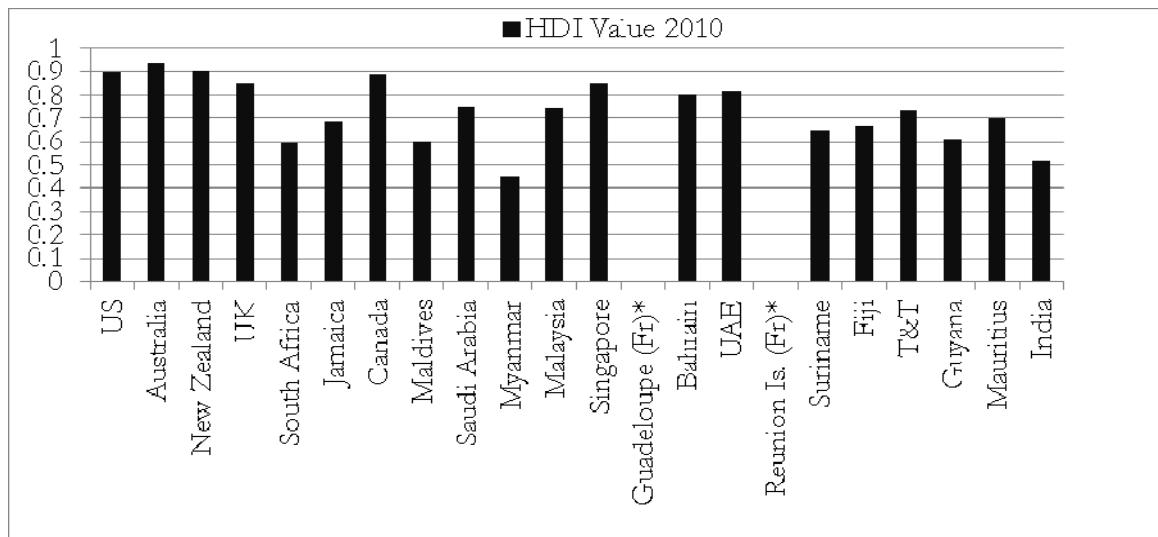
Source: **Computed from UNDP Human Development Report (2010)**

*Non-independent overseas territory of France

category of high HDI value including Saudi Arabia and Malaysia, and out of the remaining, six fall in the medium HDI value category but closely compete with the high HDI value countries. Meaning thereby that the Indian diasporas are residing in the relatively well-of countries of the world with considerable capacity to contribute to India's national socio-economic well-being, and only a well-planned diasporic policy of India can help optimally realise the potential of its diaspora.

If one is still intrigued by the non-independent overseas French territories like Guadeloupe and Reunion Islands listed in the figures above, one should be more so as these are the islands hosting 11.42 and 22.88 per cent Indian population respectively. Indians have a share of 0.04 million population in the total of 0.35 million in Guadeloupe, whereas it is 0.22 million in the Reunion Islands' total of 0.85. The Indian diaspora living in these territories could be expected to share the living standard of their mainland French counterparts. Many such non-independent islands are scattered in Africa, the Caribbean and the South

Pacific/Oceania. If a distinctive set of diplomatic skills are employed in these islands while engaging the Indian diaspora, these non-independent islands can possibly unfold a very different understanding of "colonialism" that seems to work in these islands in today's "post-colonial" world.[4]

There are other significant aspects related with the Indians overseas, apart from these statistically-dependent variables. One crucial policy component is to note that the Indian diaspora is not a culturally homogenous monolith (Jain, 2010; Jayaram, 2011). Thus, for most of them the Indian nation is more of an emotional evocation than a territorial entity. This aspect is most conspicuous in any diasporic literature that engages with the question of diasporic identity. Moreover, the Indian diaspora is spotted with varying religious, ethnic, linguistic, and even "radical" features as well as the "Janus Face" (Kapur, 2009), like a true microcosm of the Indian homeland. How to frame the official Indian opinion, if asked with reference to some radical diasporic elements, when a federal court in the United States serves summons to a prominent national political figure when she recently visited that country? A pro-Khalistan rights group had complained to the federal court of that prominent figure's alleged role in "protecting and shielding" her party leaders involved in 1984 anti-Shikh riots (Dogra, 2013). In a similar instance, Punjab's Deputy Chief Minister was forced to cancel his ten-day scheduled official visit to Canada in the month of August due to alleged fear of litigation and possible detention by Canadian legal system had a Sikh organisation there complained to a Canadian court against his presiding over a government that "patronised government officials, especially those in the police who had been responsible for torture and extra judicial elimination of Canadian citizens, during Punjab's own war on terror during the 1980s and 90's" (Pandher, 2013). Again in the month of August, three major cinema companies in the United Kingdom had to retreat from screening a Bollywood feature movie, *Madras Cafe*, fearing protest and disruption by the UK-based Sri Lankan Tamil groups as the movie was set in the background of the Sri Lankan civil war in the 1990s (Menon). Because of many such dimensions of the Indian diaspora, Walker Conner (1986) had aptly characterised India among the "multi-homeland" states. Thus, a policy would hardly be considered diasporic without representing the multiplicities and diversities of the Indians overseas, along with considering the above statistically-dependent variables.

For a truly representative and reciprocal diasporic policy, it is instructive to remember that some experiences of the Indian diaspora closely resemble with the experiences that certain Indian communities in India are reported to face. The expulsion of Indians from Uganda and their current plight in some other place like in Fiji are often read in India with a "minority lens" while forgetting ill-treatments of minority groups in the homeland which may not hold good interest for its diaspora abroad. "The host society would", in the words of Jain (2010: 105-106), "directly or indirectly, look to the society of origin to see whether or not it respects the cultural freedom of its minorities (numerically or socio-politically) and would reciprocally treat its own minorities (which the diasporics normally are)."

Reciprocity between diasporas and their homelands, as Seffer (1986: 11) had pointed out, is one of the central issues of diaspora formation. Including the preceding decade of India's

---

[4] Referring to such overseas territories as "the last colonies" with a similar title to their book, Robert Aldrich and John Connell (1998:235) had observed, "Fundamental changes in the global political order in the past decade have thrown open complex issues of sovereignty, territoriality and nationhood. Questions of what constitutes nation-states, relations between nation-states and their constituent peoples and territories, and the nature of national sovereignty are no longer so clear-cut as they once seemed". Aldrich and Connell (1998: 251) in the closing line of their book rather declared these last colonies as the "avatars of the post-modern future".

diasporic engagement, the issue of reciprocity since the days of freedom struggle would show the Indian state in poor light with the fact that the fortune of the Indian diasporas is largely of their own creation. Few academic faces in India, however, have taken the pain to tell us the experiences of the Indian diaspora, though their aim has been limited to extrapolate that in what conditions the Indian socio-cultural characteristics would metamorphose in an alien setting. Reciprocity of the Indian state towards its valued asset overseas is overdue since the days when Indian diaspora had participated in India's independence movement against the British in the foreign land. M. V. Kamath (1976) and Joan Jensen (1980) had thus noted:

> Expatriates also made a contribution to the movement for independence. The Indian community published papers and generated political and public opinion in America to favour a foreign policy that would pressure Britain into supporting India's freedom movement.

(Helweg, 1986: 111)

Arthur Helweg (1986: 111) himself echoed that patriotic sentiment of the Indians abroad and inscribed, "The Indian diaspora in Canada and Britain further promoted their motherland's quest for freedom from colonialism and became an extension of the Indian Congress Party".

Finally, the homeland has to astutely understand its diasporic aspects within the background that the foreign policy contents, actors, and practices have been irrevocably altered over the last two decades. The arena of today's "international" is no longer the prerogative of the sovereign entities and of their traditional manoeuvres. As Keohane and Nye (1977) had rightly indicated long before, today's world is more like a tapestry of diverse relationships, having no hierarchy of issue-areas. For the precise reason, a diverse set of academic and policy actors have mushroomed around this relatively new conceptual category called diaspora, including in India. Participation of several from within the members of the Indian diaspora – academically and otherwise – is a further validation of the possible role of diaspora that the new politico-economic scene transnational warrants for. For the Indian foreign affairs machinery, Indian diaspora is a treasured device for diplomatic engagement and also for enhancing India's international standing, apart from earning socio-economic prizes for domestic necessities. Understood in this spirit, Indian diaspora should act as a workshop for the Indian diplomats to hone some of those skills that are paradigmatic in sailing through the sphere that does not seem to discriminate between the domestic and the international.

VI

Much of the explanations that come through this paper about the multi-dimensionality between Indian state and its overseas communities are mediated by the changes in the contemporary world which are vaguely featured as the by-products of globalisation. This contextual understanding of diaspora brings forth certain advantages as delineated in the preceding sections, and this renders Indian diaspora an atypical variable of India's foreign conduct because of its unconventional character as a factor whose loci is outside the sovereign territory. Understood this way, the Indian state needs to expand its diasporic disposition while balancing between the old and the new ones for a coherent and consistent set of policy guidelines. This will allow India to tap into both the material and the non-material (read political) strength of its modern diaspora and thus paving the way for its fuller

utilisation (with growing mutual interests). In other words, India's policy-makers have to see beyond the statistically-dependent outcomes from its strategic assets, else understanding the growing relevance of the Indian diaspora with the changing international dynamics loses its meaning.

References

Aldrich, Robert and John Connell (1998), *The Last Colonies,* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Conner, Walker (1986), "The Impact of Homelands upon Diasporas", in Gabriel Sheffer (ed.), *Modern Diasporas in International Politics,* London and Sydney: Croom Helm, pp. 16-46.

Dogra, Chander Suta (2013), "Serve summons to Sonia through hospital or security staff, says U.S. court", *The Hindu,* Wednesday, 11 September 2013 (Noida/New Delhi).

Dutt, Vidya Prakash (1950), *India's Foreign Policy with Special Reference to Asia and the Pacific,* Indian Paper No. 1, October, New Delhi: Indian Council of World Affairs.

Griffith, Winston H. (2007), "Caricom Countries and the Irrelevance of Economic Smallness", *Third World Quarterly,* 28(5): 939-58.

Gupta, Amit (2009), "The Indian Diaspora as a 'Strategic Asset'", in Jayant Kumar Ray (ed.), *Interpreting the Indian Diaspora: Lessons from History and Contemporary Politics,* New Delhi: Centre for Studies in Civilisations, pp. 315-330.

Helweg, Arthur (1986), "The Indian Diaspora: Influence on International Relations", in Gabriel Sheffer (ed.), *Modern Diasporas in International Politics,* London and Sydney: Croom Helm, pp. 103-129.

Jain, Ravinder K. (2010), *Nation, Diaspora, Trans-nation,* London, New York, New Delhi: Routledge.

Jayaram, N. (2004), "Introduction: The Study of Indian Diaspora" in N. Jayaram (ed.), *The Indian Diaspora: Dynamics of Migration,* foreword by S. L. Sharma, Themes in India Sociology Vol.4, New Delhi, Thousand Oaks; London: Sage Publications, pp. 15-43.

Jayaram, N. (2011), "Introduction: Understanding Diversities in the Indian Diaspora", in N. Jayaram (ed.), *Diversities in the Indian Diaspora: Nature, Implications, Responses,* New Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 1-22.

Kapur, Devesh (2009), "The Janus Face of Diaspora", in Barbara J. Merz, Lincoln C. Cohen and Peter F. Geithner (eds.), *Diasporas and Development,* Hyderabad: Orient BlackSwan, pp. 89-118.

Keohane, Robert O. and Joseph S. Nye (1977), *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition,* Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company.

Lee, Donna and Nicola J. Smith (2010), "Small State Discourses in the International Political Economy", *Third World Quarterly,* 31(7): 1091-1105.

Lewis, Arthur W. (1955), *The Theory of Economic Growth,* London: Allen and Unwin.

MEA (2001), *Report of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora,* Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), New Delhi: Government of India.

Menon, Parvathi (2013), "*Madras Cafe* will not be screened in U.K.", *The Hindu,* Thursday, 12 September 2013 (Noida/New Delhi).

Narayanan, R. (2004), "The Caribbean in the Age of Globalisation", *India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs,* Special Issue on Caribbean, November: 1-22.

Pandher, Sarabjit (2013), "Cancellation of Sukhbir's Canada visit raises eyebrows", *The Hindu,* Friday, 30 August 2013 (Noida/New Delhi).

Rao, P. V. (2011), "Diaspora and Foreign Policy: A Case Analysis of Indian American Influence on Indio-US Relations", in Eric Leclerc (ed.), *International and Transnational Political Actors: Case Studies from the Indian Diaspora,* New Delhi: Manohar, pp. 105-125.

Ray, Jajant Kumar (2009), "Introduction", in Jayant Kumar Ray (ed.), *Interpreting the Indian Diaspora: Lessons from History and Contemporary Politics,* New Delhi: Centre for Studies in Civilisations, pp. xxvii-xxxvi.

Samaroo, Brinsley (2012), "The Caribbean Consequences of the Indian Revolt of 1857", in Rattan Lal Hangloo (ed.), *Indian Diaspora in the Caribbean: History, Culture and Identity,* Delhi: Primus Books, pp. 71-93.

Sengupta, Anita (2009), "The Indian 'Trade Diaspora' in Eurasia: Some Debates", in Jayant Kumar Ray (ed.), *Interpreting the Indian Diaspora: Lessons from History and Contemporary Politics,* New Delhi: Centre for Studies in Civilisations, pp. 1-22.

Sharma, S. L. (2004), "Perspectives on Indians Abroad", in N. Jayaram (ed.), *The Indian Diaspora: Dynamics of Migration,* foreword by S. L. Sharma, Themes in India Sociology, Vol. 4, New Delhi, Thousand Oaks, London, London: Sage Publications, pp. 47-60.

Sheffer, Gabriel (1986), "A New Field of Study: Modern Diasporas in International Politics", in Gabriel Sheffer (ed.), *Modern Diasporas in International Politics,* London and Sydney: Croom Helm, pp. 1-15.

UNDP (2010), *Human Development Report 2010, The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development,* United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Vital, Davit (1967), *The Inequality of States: The Study of the Small Power in International Relations,* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

IMDS Working Paper Series

Available at - http://www.jnu.ac.in/Library/IMDSWorkingPapers.htm

International Migration and Diaspora Studies (IMDS) Project is a research facility at the Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies (ZHCES), School of Social Sciences (SSS) Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). The project also hosts the *Research Programme in International Migration* instituted at the Centre by an agreement between Jawaharlal Nehru University and the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA), Government of India. The project aims to conduct and facilitate research on major migration themes of significance in Indian as well as global contexts. The focus is to undertake research on various economic, social, political, cultural, and educational aspects of globalisation and migration; and to initiate collaborative interactions with other academic institutions and international organisations on major migration issues. The emphasis of these initiatives is on creating an interface between academia and policy making through workshops, conferences, teaching modules, publications, hosting of visiting scholars and other interactive pursuits.