



## **THE INDIAN DIASPORA IS CRITICAL TO INDIA'S CONNECTIONS WITH AFRICA.**

**Dr Vijay Kumar Badetia**

Assistant Professor,  
Department of Political Science,  
Janki Devi Memorial College,  
University of Delhi—

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### **Introduction**

As the twenty-first century advanced, it was recognised as a period during which existing international institutions aided in resolving difficulties related to global economic, social, and cultural unification. As a result of these advances, the Diaspora study has grown in importance and significance. Any diaspora is diverse in terms of language, identity, and position. However, the economical and political role of any diaspora, as well as the degree of integration and assimilation, all have a role in preserving and protecting the culture and traditions that link two countries together. Despite the fact that diaspora members contribute significantly to society in every corner of the world, they are viewed with distrust and scepticism. There are around three million persons of Indian ancestry on the African continent. Through a series of staged migrations, India established a sizable number of communities in Africa. The relationship between India and Africa has gained increased relevance in recent years as a result of the diaspora's prominence in the nexus between domestic and international politics.

**It is a term used to refer to an ethnic group of individuals who have migrated from their home nation to another.**

The terms "diaspora" and "sperio" stem from the Greek words dia (through or over) and sperio (to live), respectively, which signify "through or over" (dispersal or to sow). Diaspora is a Latin word that means 'dispersion' or 'scattering.' India is believed to be the common ancestral homeland of the Indian diaspora, from which Indians relocated freely or involuntarily to other areas of the world for a number of reasons. Following such migration, the term 'diaspora' gained popularity (Lal 2007: 14-18).

According to V.S. Sheth, a diaspora is "the dispersal of individuals who share a common ancestry, background, and beliefs" who have spread throughout the world (Sheth 2003:



105). Transnational exchanges and links have become increasingly important in recent years as a result of increasing state dependency. According to the Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences, "Diaspora is a Greek term for a nation or a portion of a nation that has broken away from its original state or territory and dispersed among other nations while keeping its national culture" (1935: 126).

The term "diaspora" is frequently used to refer to Jews who live outside of Palestine and are not regarded to be Jews. The diaspora's connections are loaded with symbolism. The term "diaspora" is used by specialists to describe a collection of people that includes immigrants, guest workers, ethnic and racial minorities, refugees, expatriates, and travellers. A diaspora might form as a result of voluntary or forced migration, mass exile, or the relocation of economically disadvantaged people. Recent changes in the global political and economic order have resulted in enormous migration in practically every region. Due to the diasporic group's strong ties to their homeland, they may be allowed to return to the country in which they were raised. As a result, migration serves as a mechanism for global dispersal.

Additionally, the diaspora is made up of ethnic minority groups that have established themselves in host countries but maintain strong emotional, psychological, and material ties to their ancestral homelands and cultures (Sheffer 1986: 3). Since then, the term has been generalised to refer to any group of individuals who have emigrated from their home nation and settled in another. They selectively integrate and synthesise their own roots and sense of history with those of their forefathers in order to develop a better understanding of themselves.

When evaluating the diaspora, it is also vital to include the economic contribution provided by the diaspora in addition to its historical and cultural ties. Migrants are a critical source of historical change in a globalising culture, as they assimilate and acculturate, losing their feeling of belonging and ties to their origin (Gupta 2003: 2). As a result, the diaspora is critical to the establishment of ethnic identities, the moulding of interethnic relations, and the reconstruction of societies worldwide. Their complete framework for analysing cultural processes has increased their significance in recent history, owing to their increased application.

**The term "New Diaspora" is a concept.**

In the United States, the term "People of Indian Descent" refers to foreign individuals of Indian ancestry who live abroad, whereas "Non-Resident Indians" refers to Indian passport holders who live abroad (NRI). This group represents a varied spectrum of ethnic, linguistic,



and religious backgrounds, mirroring India's cultural and regional diversity. Indians have travelled in a variety of migration waves and professional roles throughout history.

They travelled the world as traders and explorers in ancient times. The nature of Indian migration began to change in the latter three decades of the twentieth century, resulting in the emergence of a 'New Diaspora.' As a result of more lenient US immigration regulations for highly educated migrants, Indian migration has shifted toward professionals - professors, scientists, engineers, physicians, and managers, many of whom have proven great entrepreneurial aptitude. While the majority of NRIs settled in the United States, many more settled in the United Kingdom and its dominions, where they swiftly established themselves as prominent players in worldwide 'great corporations.' (Dutt 1980)

After a decline in the nineteenth century, contract labour demand began to reappear in the Persian Gulf's oil-rich republics, as well as in Southeast and East Asia's economies. Given the substantial remittances received by labourers, their services became increasingly valuable to India. These new indentured labourers faced much of the same atrocities as their forefathers in the eighteenth century, but were not permitted to establish permanent residency in their host cultures, unlike their forefathers. The Indian diaspora gained popularity in the host countries over time, and they established themselves as significant assets for both their new home and the host countries.

### **The Indian Diaspora in Africa is dispersing.**

Today, India's diaspora is a sizable and distinct force in the global economy, considerably contributing to its growth. PIOs have had considerable success in their host nations. They now live in nearly every country on Earth and are represented in nearly every sector of endeavour, including business and government. When it comes to countries with a sizable Indian community, such as Fiji, Guyana, Mauritius, and Surinam, Indians make up more than 40% of the population. Rather from being viewed as a community of helpless migrants, the Indian diaspora is today viewed as a community that excels in every field, holding key positions in politics, institutions, and industries worldwide. Leaders, lawmakers, eminent professors, and other prominent professionals from India's diaspora have left their imprints in their fields of endeavour. People from the Indian subcontinent have been documented travelling to a variety of countries in a variety of circumstances throughout history. Indian immigrants make up a sizable share of the total population in their respective nations.

Taking a glance at the world's demographic map at the moment, we can see that there are almost no countries with no inhabitants of Indian ancestry. They are widespread in the Western Hemisphere, the Middle East, Africa, the West Indies, South and Southeast Asia,



Australasia, and Oceania. Indians have been migrating and establishing themselves in numerous nations throughout recorded history. During the colonial era, many Indians were indentured servants in far-flung countries such as Mauritius, South Africa, Trinidad & Tobago, Guyana, and Fiji. They travelled in quest of work and discovered it on sugar farms, where they were subjected to severe abuse and exploitation. They developed an irreversible attachment to the country in which they were reared and schooled after a period of time. During the post-independence period, migration from India was dominated by technical specialists and trained professionals who were free to relocate in quest of better economic opportunities. On page 5 of Volume 22, Number 3, the author, K. Matthews, writes.

PIOs are the majority ethnic group in Mauritius (almost 70%) and Guyana (51%), and the single largest ethnic group in Fiji (less than 50%) and Surinam (less than 50%). (less than 50 percent ). (37%). Indians are Trinidad and Tobago's second largest ethnic group, accounting for more than 40% of the population and ranking second only to Africans. India is third or fourth in terms of population in several other nations, including Malaysia (9%) Singapore (6.4%), and Sri Lanka (5.5%). (Sahadevan, 1995, p.16).

Around three million individuals of Indian ancestry live on the African continent, out of a total of 30 million people of Indian ancestry worldwide. They are distributed across Africa. They are said to have come to Africa for a variety of reasons, including enslavement, commerce, indentured labour, construction work, and economic opportunity. From the time when sailors and traders used 'dhows' to sail to and from each other's beaches, the Indian Ocean's waves have connected India and Africa. The colonial era and the advancement of transportation technologies resulted in a huge increase in the number of interactions between the two continents. The remains of several commercial outposts and villages along the East African coast, as well as the discovery of Indian coinage, provide evidence of widespread trade links between India and East Africa.

Slaves transported the first wave of Indians to Africa. On the other hand, the first regular migration to Africa began in the early nineteenth century with the hiring of indentured labourers to work as agricultural labourers. Economic prospects drove a large number of people to Africa, where they worked as traders, clerks, businesspeople, artisans, and lawyers. Over three million PIO reside in African Union member states; the majority live in Anglophone Africa, with smaller and more recent communities in Arab Africa, Francophone Africa, and Lusophone Africa, as well as other locations. (Lall 2001) As previously stated, the initial wave of Indian migration originated on Africa's eastern coast, with successive waves spreading throughout the Indian Ocean shoreline region, including islands in the western Indian Ocean and the western Indian Ocean island states. Indians have now colonised every country on this immense continent. If we examine historical data carefully, we can deduce that the first systematic migration of Indians to Africa occurred in Mauritius in the early nineteenth century. They were employed on sugarcane plantations as indentured workers.



The second wave of immigrants arrived in South Africa in the late nineteenth century, when indentured Indian workers were transported to the province of Natal. After their indentured contracts expired, the Indians returned to the colonies, where they found labour that was both necessary and desirable. Carpenters, small business owners, chefs, cleaners, and washermen collaborated with them to build railroads connecting East Africa. While the majority of railroad personnel returned to India once their responsibilities were over, a handful elected to remain in Africa to further their careers. Indians were employed to manage train operations during the period when East Africa was connected to the network. With the expansion of commercial activity emerged a new generation of professionals - doctors, attorneys, and merchants - and the Indian diaspora's actions, while seemingly modest, had a substantial impact on African trade and growth. For example, the earliest Indian petty traders travelled into remote and interior portions of Africa, where they supplied rural agricultural items at razor-thin profit margins to the region's cities and towns. Even today, the term 'duka' (derived from the Hindi word 'dukan,' meaning shop) is extensively used across the African continent.

With time, the Indian diaspora in Africa grew to encompass a diverse range of people, with some drawing their African lineage from the earliest Indian settlers and others descended from India's expatriate communities. (Gupta 2008) With the exception of a tiny number of fifth generation descendants, the majority of the Indian diaspora in Kenya are third or fourth generation descendants of early Indian migrants. Recently, new investors have arrived in Kenya, concentrating their efforts on the country's most vital businesses, which include textiles, floriculture, telecommunications, and petrochemicals. They were forced to depart Uganda in the 1970s due to Idi Amin's regime, but were welcomed back by the Ugandan government once peace was restored. As a result, over 30,000 Indians now reside in Uganda, including new investors and returning citizens. Tanzania is a major trading partner of India and is home to around 40,000 Indians. Zimbabwe, for example, has roughly 10,000 Indian residents, the majority of them are proprietors and dealers of small businesses. Resource-rich Burundi also boasts an Indian community that recently relocated from Uganda. Following the civil war, the Rwandan government welcomed over a thousand Indians, and they have positioned themselves for success as a result of the country's steady economic growth.

India's relationship with Mozambique is critical and important in both countries' history. When the Portuguese seized Goa, they established a formal commerce and trading system between the two countries. Among other things, the most often exchanged items were wood, tea, coffee, and spices. Traders from Goa began travelling to Mozambique to join the military and governmental ranks. The pioneering Indians from Goa have become so ingrained in Mozambican society that they can no longer be identified as being from the state of Goa. Ethiopia is another African country with significant relations to India, which were bolstered in the 1970s by the presence of Indian professors in Ethiopia's elementary



and secondary educational institutions. Over 25,000 Indians reside in Nigeria, with approximately 8,000 acquiring Nigerian citizenship. Botswana has over 6000 Indians, while Eritrea has only 500. Liberia's civil war had a devastating effect on the Indian population, which was compelled to abandon the country in huge numbers. Liberia is currently home to almost 3500 Indians. This small NGO earned international acclaim for its work managing war shelters in Monrovia, the city that bore the brunt of the civil conflict.

According to official figures from the Indian government, the Indian diaspora on the African continent has grown dramatically in recent years. The Indian diaspora is believed to be dispersed over 46 African countries, accounting for around 12% of the continent's total diaspora population (Upendra Tripathi, 2017). The Indian diaspora in Africa struggled to integrate with indigenous African civilizations, which must be acknowledged when analysing the diaspora on the continent. Additionally, they faced a variety of economical and political obstacles, including economic hardship, denial of equal political rights, social segregation, and problems of political allegiance. At various moments throughout history, the diaspora has been marginalised.

### **Africans in the Diaspora: Their Contribution and Role**

Numerous development initiatives that have garnered significant attention during the last decade can be traced back to the diaspora's involvement. It takes the form of economic growth in the host country, which has piqued policy interest recently in terms of poverty alleviation; remittances, which are a significant contribution by the diaspora to their families in India and contribute to the development of emerging economies; and investing in community projects in their home country, which has piqued policy interest recently in terms of poverty alleviation.

South Africa is a country on the African continent. When it came to South Africa's struggle against apartheid, the Indian diaspora played a critical role. According to the late Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi was a significant figure in South Africa's history and played a role in liberating the people from apartheid. Mandela's 21-year term in South Africa resulted in the development of views and resistance tactics that have had an incalculable impact on the history of the peoples of India and South Africa, Mandela wrote in a letter to the country's president. *The Wire*, a novel by E.S. Reddy, was published in 2016. Along with Gandhi, other people of Indian heritage made valiant efforts and adopted a range of techniques to oppose South Africa's discriminatory regime. The political environment in South Africa has shifted dramatically over time as a result of the establishment of various local parties and the politicisation of identity. It was only a matter of time before an Indian political party emerged, which was later chastised for focusing exclusively on Indian issues,



particularly in Durban, and on prominent business families such as the Guptas, who are believed to have influenced African National Congress (ANC) leader Jacob Zuma, who is currently facing corruption charges. As a result, the Indian community as a whole has been targeted for attack. Since the end of apartheid, the Indian diaspora has played a significant influence in South Africa's economics and politics, as well as in the rest of the world. In India, there are approximately 3,000 extremely successful businesspeople, accounting for 3% of the overall population. The huge number of ministers who now serve under the ANC's leadership is another indicator of their active participation in politics.

Assimilation of diaspora populations. They face less hostility in Africa than in other nations where the Indian diaspora migrates in quest of work opportunities, such as the United States, Europe, and the Gulf. Mozambique, for example, prohibits all forms of discrimination against outsiders, including Indians. (Reddy 2016) They are not discriminated against in their ability to run enterprises or serve as public officials in the government. According to a recent World Economic Forum research, there are currently over three million people of Indian ancestry living in Africa, and their numbers are growing at a rapid pace, with a noteworthy spike in Keralite migration. India is also Africa's seventh largest investor, having invested \$17 billion in the continent in 2015. India's trade with Africa totaled \$63 billion in fiscal year 2017-18. For many years, the Indian diaspora excelled in most African countries' retail and industrial industries. In nations such as Tanzania, Madagascar, Mozambique, Kenya, and Uganda, where they have established themselves as leaders, Indians play a critical role as a trade and commerce bridge between India and Africa.

The Diaspora as a Facilitator of Development They provide their home countries with a valuable source of skilled labour and experience as a result of their return migration from abroad (both temporary and virtual). Additionally, in today's globalised world, the diaspora represents a goldmine of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in their home nations, as well as essential economic linkages to developing markets. On the other hand, officials' interactions with diaspora groups are rarely direct and straightforward. (Dubey2010) The primary issue is a lack of conceptual clarity regarding the terms "diaspora" and "diaspora," which can refer to anyone from first-generation migrants to those whose ancestors travelled several generations before them. Today's notion of diaspora include both current migrants and individuals who have renounced citizenship in their 'home' country but have strong emotional ties to their motherland or ancestral homeland. As a result, diaspora groups are diverse, and policymakers must find individuals who genuinely care about their home country achieving significant socioeconomic change. Meanwhile, authorities must decide if the diaspora's interests align with those of their home nations' residents. Finally, governments must look beyond the obvious and leverage the benefits of multi-state linkages facilitated by expatriate groups.



The Remittances-Economic Growth Relationship Individual and family remittances are critical in sustaining relationships between the diaspora and the host country. When considering the desirability of money flows associated with migration and the development of diasporas, two opposing perspectives must be considered. The following unfavourable characteristics of the phenomena are highlighted: Continued migration and remittances will strengthen the country's dependency on diasporas, stimulate more chain migration, and therefore contribute to brain drain. This will also exacerbate domestic economic instability, impede entrepreneurialism, fuel consumerism, create inequality, and result in developmental distortion and economic decline, which may even outweigh the benefits to a limited number of beneficiaries. The purpose of the positive remittance perspective is to refute each of the negative reasons for sending money home. As a result, it is asserted, homeland economies will have to become more responsive to market forces, homelands will receive development resources as a result of the multiplier effect of those funds, and remittances will improve income distribution and contribute to an increase in the receiving country's standard of living (encompassing better education, sustenance for elderly people, and adequate housing for families in homelands). Neither the negative nor the positive perspectives, however, are entirely correct. It is difficult to demonstrate that remittance money plays a role in economic crises or recessions in receiving countries. As a result, it is difficult to assert that remittances have established themselves as reliable engines of economic growth or have contributed to the alleviation of social and economic imbalances in recipient nations. (Dutt 1980)

Both development and investment are critical components of any organisation. It is vital for the diaspora to participate in their home countries' development by collective involvement in community projects, and one of the most successful ways to do so is through the establishment of hometown organisations. This phenomena is visible in a variety of settings, including hospitals, schools, literacy efforts, and upskilling missions. Consider the formation of Ghanaian homeland organisations in the United Kingdom. These organisations are united by a strong desire to aid the Ghanaian people in their growth. Apart from economics, the diaspora's bilateral and multilateral links must be utilised to foster a healthy exchange of ideas and people among its members. This is seen in a number of countries, including India. Young professionals and students can obtain a better understanding of contemporary India through the Ministry of External Affairs' 'Know India' programme, which offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for them to do so. Inter-nation ties can also affect people's decisions to return home, which is the inverse of 'brain drain' and benefits the country where they were born.





## **Conclusion**

Indians in Africa are unique in that they have given their knowledge and expertise to the development of their adoptive nation while also blending into the local population. Despite their distance from their homeland, the diaspora has achieved incredible success in Africa. Additionally, because they maintain emotional, cultural, and spiritual ties to India, the Indian government is now aware of the PIOs' successes and acts. The government has also recognised the community's accomplishments. Additionally, Indians' contributions to the country's growth are highly recognised. As a result, we can see how critical the Indian diaspora is to Africa's economic progress.

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An Overview of Indian Diaspora in Africa: Implications for India | 21

22 | An Overview of Indian Diaspora in Africa: Implications for India

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