

Indian Diaspora, Globalization and Transnational Networks: The South African Context

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ABSTRACT This paper focuses on the consequences of contemporary globalization on diaspora communities, connecting them more than ever through transnational networks. Citing a few instances of transnational networking among the diaspora communities, the paper analyses the nature and functioning of such networks among the Indian immigrants in South Africa. The state initiative to reconnect the People of Indian Origin (PIOs) and Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), especially through the newly established Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, is also examined here besides the informal social and religious linkages in the context of South Africa.

THE CONTEXT

Contemporary globalization has revolutionized the very thought of space and time, shrinking the both to an unbelievable magnitude. The enormous growth in the technologies of communication and transport during the later decades of 20th century has miniaturized the globe, facilitating real time interactions among people poles apart and mobility at an incredible speed. Under the conditions of contemporary globalization, diasporas have a distinct edge in the promotion of their culture and economy, engaging their communities dispersed worldwide besides the scope it offers to renegotiate with the ancestral / motherland.

The government of India officially acknowledged the presence of her diaspora with the dawn of the new millennium and decided to formally engage them through various programs including the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas from 2003. Much before such an initiative by the Government of India, the dispersed Indian communities had already been networking by establishing several voluntary organizations. For instance, the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin had its first convention in 1989 to unite the entire Indian diaspora to safeguard and promote her interest. GOPIO has been gaining ground far and wide. Same is the case with Punjabi and Gujarati associations networking around the world. The Telugu diaspora initiated its global networks through launching of the World Telugu Conference in 1975 which subsequently emerged as

World Telugu Federation (WTF) in 1992. The WTF held its Convention in Durban 1994, hosted by Andhra Maha Sabha of South Africa, bringing the Telugus world over to South Africa.

Today we find transnational networking among the Indian diaspora based on multiple identities of religion, region and also of caste, especially among the *new diaspora* and the diaspora communities which have retained closer linkages with places of their origin. The process of contemporary globalization has only furthered these networks, taking them to the realm of cyber space, creating virtual communities or online-communities and identities. Internet is assuming today a pivotal role in augmenting diaspora identities and transnational networks. Descendents of the families scattered as indentured labor across the globe are networking and reuniting. Ravi Naidu, a management professional from South Africa, for instance, had successfully traced his uncles and cousins spread over in Mauritius, UK, US, and Fiji before he met me at the Centre for the Study of Indian Diaspora in Hyderabad for locating his ancestral home and relatives in India to reunite the family and celebrate.

ON DIASPORA

During the last decade of the 20th century, the diaspora dialogue has replaced the ethnic minority and integration discourse of the 1980s and earlier, leading to a significant paradigm shift, as rightly observed by Clifford (1994: 311), that “Diasporic language appears to be replacing, or at least

supplementing, minority discourse". However, some of the immigrant communities accept the term and the conceptualization to acknowledge the country of their or their ancestor's origin while the others consider it politically incorrect to highlight this relationship. There are still others who consider the word 'diaspora' valorized, implying the centering of the 'motherland' or 'ancestor land' by relegating them to the 'periphery'. Despite the resistance in some such quarters, the 'diaspora' term and the concept is here to stay, in its popular interpretation than its narrower antecedents from the Jewish experience. The application of the word 'diaspora' in broader sense has been interestingly noted by Jain (2010: 4-5) in the 1993 edition of the *New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* for the first time, which mentions that the term also refers to 'the situation of people living outside their traditional homeland' (quoted in Jain 2010: 4). For the reasons best known to them, the government of India preferred to call the newly established executive body the 'Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs', though the Parliamentary Committee which enquired into the conditions of Indian immigrants in various countries was 'The High level Committee on the Indian Diaspora'. However, the only document that we have today dealing exhaustively with the presence and conditions of Indian Diaspora, scattered around the globe under varied circumstances, is the Report of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora, tabled in the Parliament in 2002 (MEA 2002).

GLOBALIZATION

The *process* of globalization has been assuming different paradigms over time for centuries from silent trade and barter exchange, through international trade and multi-national corporations, to a free flow of capital and culture beyond the boundaries of nation-states spanning the globe. The last two decades of the 20th century have particularly ushered in a new paradigm of globalization miniaturizing space and time at the dawn of the 21st century. The far reaching changes in technologies of transport and communication, that followed the micro-electronic revolution, have already impacted immensely on the way people think, work and view the world.

By the end of the 20th century, the process of globalization has gone beyond its erstwhile domain of liberalization of markets, multi-national

corporations (MNCs) or transnational corporations (TNCs) to include worldwide diffusion of practices, expansion of relations across several nation-states and a way of life with global consciousness. There is greater interdependence between nation-states across borders, not merely in trade and commerce but in almost all aspects of life, ranging from food, clothing, sports, music and entertainment to ideology and spiritualism. With the revolutionary advancement in technologies of information, communication and travel during the 1980s and 1990s, there has been steep increase in the global transfers of people besides capital, technology, media and ideologies, as sketched in terms of 'scapes' by Appadurai (1997), across several nation-states.

Robertson (1992) looked at the globalization process from a cultural perspective, demonstrating how world becomes compressed and consciousness of the world as a whole spreads. He argued that technological and organizational developments lead to the compression of the world and creation of a global field in which individuals and societies become part of a larger system of societies and identify themselves in relation to global standards. It is essentially a space of social life - supraterritorial or transnational - that cuts across several nation-states. Globalization, according to Robertson, produced a more integrated yet also differentiated world society. For instance, there is 'glocalization' incorporating some of the global or universal features in local cultures and also the incorporation of local specificity at the global level (Robertson: *ibid*). Taking the local - culture, media, cuisine - to the global reach is of particular interest to immigrant or diaspora communities.

Globalization today transcends nation-state territory and its borders, opening not only to the forces of capital, information, specialized services and, above all, migrants whose contribution have become inevitable to the so called developed and graying world (doctors, nurses, engineers, accountants, etc.). In this era of globalization, says Jagdish Bhagwati, immigration is 'unstoppable' and the ability to control migration has shrunk as the desire to do so has increased. Most of the developed countries have 'borders beyond control' and little can be done to really cut down on immigration (Bhagwati 2003 and 2004).

One of the major constituents of globalization is the uncontrollable international migration of a large volume necessitated by the very process

itself. Cohen (1997) is tempted to use the term *diasporization* as a concept akin to globalization for the two are inseparably enmeshed. Though not the same, they mutually reinforce each other. Contemporary globalization is propelled by 'sociotechnological infrastructure' (Nonini 2005: 565), - social uses and application of new technologies of communication and travel. Contemporary globalization has also lead to the emergence of multicultural societies as a norm, accepting the 'others', whose presence has become 'inevitable'.

TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS

Relationship of any diaspora with the homeland/motherland falls under the broader domain of international relations as it involves at least two countries to formally accept to permit their citizens to interact with each other. Today the diasporic communities go beyond their nation-states and countries of origin - motherland or ancestral land - to network with their communities dispersed around the globe. The emergence of such networking and community sentiments, cutting across several countries, is most appropriately described by the term 'transnationalism'.

'Transnational' generally implies migration of people across the borders of one or more nations. In fact, the terms 'transnationalism', 'transnational communities' and 'diaspora' are often used interchangeably in many of the contemporary studies (Vertovec 1997). Transnational networks form a precondition to the emergence of transnational communities and the process of this transformation is generally designated by 'transnationalism'.

An excellent analysis of the process of transnationalism is provided by Portes (1997) in his paper on globalisation from below. He states that transnationalism is a process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. He argues that this process is called 'transnationalism' especially to emphasise that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural and political borders. They actively engage in multiple spheres of life in host countries as well as in the countries of their origin. Such involvement is further extended to include other countries too, where members of their communities are dispersed.

Levitt (1999: 4) has examined the significance of several factors that lead to the emergence of the transnational networks. These include a) easy travel and communication, b) the increasing role immigrants play in the countries of their origin to legitimize themselves by providing service to migrants and their children, c) the increased importance of the receiving country states in the economic and political futures of sending countries, d) the social and political marginalization of migrants in their host countries, and e) migration takes place within an ideological climate that favors pluralism over the melting pot.

Besides the forces of globalisation, advancement in technologies of travel, transport and communication too plays a key role in the emergence of transnational networks. Affordable air travel, telephones, televisions, electronic mail and the most versatile Internet with Online interaction, compresses space and time in a magnitude never ever anticipated, has brought a sense of connectedness among the diasporic communities.

Diaspora communities, like Chinese in China Towns or Indians in their ethnic enclaves of 'Little India' world over, built 'home away from home', but the transnational networks of contemporary times has facilitated members of these communities to be 'here and there' at the same time. Nearly 30 countries now have the provision of 'dual citizenship' (Bhagwati 2003: 101) to facilitate free movement across the borders.

Transnational space or social field is constructed from the transnational networks, which in turn are built upon transnational family networks (interactions between members/kith and kin of a family living in different countries) as well as from the networking of community organisations (caste associations, religious institutions, for instance). Transnational networks are increasingly dense web of social contacts between places of origin and destinations spawned by migrant's spatial displacement, that are sustained on the basis of social and kin relationship (Portes 1997). These networks enable immigrants to maintain simultaneous connection with two or more nation-states. Further these networks are intensified as a result of contemporary globalisation, continuous circulation of people (such as labour), money (especially the role of World Bank and International Monetary Fund etc.), and information (through Internet and other faster means of communication) across the countries. Such

intensified transnational networks constitute and sustain diasporic communities with global spread or, in other words, transnational communities.

The remittances/investments that flow between transnational migrants to their families back home as well as the socio-cultural networks with the motherland, as in the case of Jewish, Chinese and Indian diaspora, is also an interesting example of transnational networks. This sustained transnationalisation of migrant ties is currently on steep increase. Further, the global economy, along with international business operations, and provision of dual nationality by the homeland governments offer opportunities for promotion of transnational interactions.

In so far as the diasporic communities are concerned, not only the ties with the motherland are reinforced and intensified under the conditions of contemporary globalization but are extended to reach the members of their community settled in many other parts of the world. These networks are transnational in nature as they cut across not just the 'motherland' and the country of immigration but cover several nation-states where members of the same diasporic community are dispersed. Unlike the earlier 'motherland' centred *dyadic* diasporic relations, the immigrant communities dispersed in multiple localities are connected today forming extensive transnational networks.

THE INDIAN DIASPORA

Recent population estimates by the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora suggest that the Indian immigrants have crossed approximately the 20 million mark, dispersed around the globe in more than 70 countries (MEA, 2002). They number above 10,000 in 48 countries and half a million mark in 11 countries. People of Indian origin represent a significant proportion of the population of some of the countries such as Mauritius (60.35%), Trinidad and Tobago (39.04%), Guyana (51.01%), Surinam (35.00%), Fiji (41.34%), South Africa (3.00%) and Malaysia (7.20%). They are a 'visible' minority in countries like United Kingdom (2.10%), U.S.A (1.60%), Canada (2.6%), Hong Kong and Singapore (5.40%)¹. Almost all countries in West Asia and the Gulf have a substantial work force recruited from India though they return to the places of their origin after the termination of their contracts.

Their return is ensured by the host countries as they deny citizenship to immigrant workers.

One of the major constituents of Indian immigrants today comprises of the '*Old Diaspora*', broadly the 3rd to 5th generation descendants of the early emigrants during the mid-nineteenth century, to the British and European colonies in Africa, Southeast Asia, Fiji and the Caribbean as plantation labour and railway workers under indenture system. As Clarke (1990) points out, under this system some 1.5 million persons migrated to the above destinations. Cohen (1997) has classified them as 'labour diaspora'. Many of them have lost contact with their 'motherland' including the mother tongue. The professionally trained and skilled emigrants to the developed countries of the West during the second half of the 20th century form '*New Diaspora*' and they continue to have a vibrant interaction with places of their origin and pay frequent visits to India. The migrant labour force, from unskilled to highly skilled and professionals, to the countries of West Asia and the Gulf following the oil boom, constitutes the third component of the immigrants from India and they form the majority among the Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) or expatriate Indians. Many of them have left behind their families in India and remit savings towards family maintenance and investments.

Migration of IT, ITES and the nursing professionals to developed countries since the 1980s to date forms the fourth category of immigrants. They are a potential diaspora as they initially migrate to international destinations under the H1 B visa and gradually seek green-cards and, finally, opt for the citizenship of those countries where the working environment is highly conducive for their career advancement.

Despite certain similarities, each stream varies from the other in so far as the socio-economic and educational background under which they emigrated from India and also their location in the country of their immigration. They also differ in terms of their linkages with the 'motherland' in general and the places of their origin in particular.

India is unique for the magnitude of her diversities in terms of languages and regions, religions and sects, castes and sub castes, rural and urban, food and style of dress, which are also reflected by her diasporic communities. Hence, it is not surprising to find extensive networks based on language and region, religion and caste among the Indian diaspora. Hindu

Diaspora (Vertovec 2000), Muslim Diaspora (Brah 1996) and Sikh Diaspora (Tatla 1999) are instances of such extensive religious networks, global in coverage. Similarly, there are diasporic communities linked on the basis of linguistic or regional identities such as Punjabis, Gujaratis, Sindhis, Tamilians, Malayalees and Telugus. Global organizations have emerged to preserve and promote these identities and cultures, uniting transnationally India and the global Indian diaspora. Overseas Citizenship of India, People of Indian Origin Card and liberalization of travel VISA have further facilitated the formation of this transnational space. The emerging trend is briefly examined in the paper with the illustration of the global organizations of People of Indian Origin underlining the emergence of transnational networks among the Indians world over.

INDIAN GLOBAL ORGANIZATIONS

During the first five decades of independence, Indian immigrants had limited linkages with the places of their origin, most of which were familial and religious. These interactions were individually promoted through frequent home visits, marriage alliances, pilgrimage to sacred places, remittances for family maintenance, and overseas family reunions. Besides the informal relations and networks, several formal organizations have emerged on voluntary basis to safeguard and promote socio-cultural, economic and political interests of the overseas Indians.

There have been, of course, several cultural and religious organizations networking for the promotion of culture and religious activities, such as Vishwa Hindu Parishad, World Sikh Organization, American Federation of Muslims of Indian Origin (US and Canada) and the International Sikh Youth Federation across the globe, to pursue their limited objectives besides a variety of associations (often referred to as *ethnic minority* organizations in the countries where Indian immigrants are in minority) to articulate their specific interest. One cannot undermine the role of such associations, especially the support they offer to the immigrants to safeguard their culture, economy and political rights. Several of the global diasporic leaders and issues have emerged from these very structures at the grass-root.

The government of India, after formally recognizing the presence of overseas Indians dispersed across the globe, initiated a formal

dialogue to network with them to mutually promote socio-economic and political interests of the *global Indian family* since 2000.

Indian diaspora is characterized by diversities; the diaspora formed by the descendents of the indenture labour immigration share very few features in common with those who emigrated after India's independence. Besides the pan-Indian identities, the sub-national identities, such as regional and linguistic, are assuming greater significance in recent times.

Global organizations initiated by Indian immigrants may be broadly classified into two categories: a) organizations based on pan-Indian identity, and b) organizations based on regional/linguistic identity.

Pan-Indian Global Diaspora Organizations

The term 'global diaspora organization' is used here to refer to those voluntary associations formed by diaspora communities, drawing their membership across nations, from all over the globe, to promote their socio-economic, political and cultural goals. They address issues that have relevance to the entire community dispersed from a common country /region / place of origin.

The most significant global organizations among the Indian immigrants are Global Organization of the People of Indian Origin, one with its headquarters at New York and the other having its capital in Mauritius. Both have successfully mobilized Indian diaspora world over and trace their birth to the First Global Convention of PIOs in New York during August 28 - September 3, 1989. The New York International Convention is a significant achievement on the part of Indian immigrants, mobilizing both the *Old* and the *New diaspora* on the common platform. But soon enough, with in a span of just three years, there were serious differences on leadership that resulted in a split that occurred more or less on the lines of *New* and the *Old* diaspora. The split came to the forefront when a section of GOPIO (who have since formed the PIO Capital in Mauritius, mentioned as GOPIO (M) hereafter) organized the 2nd GOPIO International Convention at Paris in 1992 whereas the other section (who have formed GOPIO with its headquarters in New York, referred as GOPIO (NY) hereafter) held its 2nd Global Convention in 1993 at New Delhi. The trajectories that these two GOPIO organizations followed have been different although both have the

advancement of Indian immigrants globally at their heart.

The GOPIO (M) has been holding meetings every two years and has so far organized seven International Conventions; from Paris they moved to Montreal for the 3rd Convention in 1994, to Mauritius in 1996 for the 4th Convention, in 1998 to Durban for the 5th Convention, to New Delhi in 2000 for the 6th Convention and the recent one, the 7th Convention, was held during December 5-7, 2003 in Mauritius. Following the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas celebrations, the GOPIO (M) has been organizing Annual Conventions of GOPIO Dialogue on January 10th every year. The GOPIO (M) has been addressing issues pertaining to socio-cultural persistence, marginalization, removal of anomalies in the PIO Card scheme, business opportunities, etc.

The GOPIO (NY) draws its strength from the National Federation of Indian American Associations (NFIA), the largest umbrella organization in the US which hosted the First Convention in 1989, besides several other Indian associations in Canada, Caribbean countries and Europe. Today they have around 25 Chapters in 19 countries. The GOPIO (NY) organized its Second Global Convention in 1993 at New Delhi, Global Convention '99 to mark its 10th Anniversary Celebrations in 1999 at New York besides Global Conventions at Zurich (Switzerland) in 2000 and Leiden (The Netherlands) in 2002. Besides organizing 2-day Annual Conventions prior to every Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Celebrations, the GOPIO (NY) held the 20th Anniversary Convention in New York 2009. GOPIO (NY) seeks to promote educational, scientific and technological opportunities in India and Indian diasporic countries, dual citizenship, voting rights, including representation in the legislative bodies to facilitate partnership in India's development.

Indian Regional/Linguistic Global Organizations

Indian diaspora communities have established several regional or linguistic global organizations besides those formed on pan-Indian identity. Many of these organizations are promoted by the new immigrants who have maintained close contacts with places of their origin. Global organizations formed by immigrants from Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Bhojpuri region are briefly examined here in terms of networking

for the promotion of their respective cultural, economic and political interests.

Telugu Diaspora

Today Telugus have the distinction of being the largest South Indian community to have immigrated to different parts of the world since the 19th and early part of 20th century. They originally hail from the Telugu speaking areas of the then Madras Presidency in British India and presently the state of Andhra Pradesh, which is the third largest state in India.

Natural calamities like famines and floods, shrinking of the cottage industry, and lack of employment had *forced* many Telugus to emigrate. At the same time they also saw opportunities of plantation labour in the British colonies that *lured* them to emigrate to the countries such as Fiji, Malaya, Burma, Natal (South Africa) and Mauritius. There are two major waves of overseas migration of Telugus from Andhra region:

- the colonial migration as *indenture* and *kangani* labour to the British colonies during nineteenth and early part of twentieth century; and
- migration of professionals such as engineers, doctors, scientists, students and, more recently, the software professionals to the developed countries such as USA, UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

Presently Telugus are found in almost all the continents of the world. They form a considerable segment of the population of some countries such as Fiji, Mauritius, South Africa, Myanmar, UAE and USA. Though they are present in other countries like New Zealand, Australia and Singapore, their population is almost negligible.

Telugu migration to Natal, South Africa occurred as a part of the indenture system from the Madras Presidency during 1860. This immigration continued till 1911. The indentured labourers worked on the sugar and tea estates, collieries, railways, wattle plantations etc. Apart from a large presence of *Naidus* (*Naidoos*), the Telugu immigrants in South Africa included peasants, farm labourers, clerical staff, teachers, Blacksmith (*kamsala*) and Potter (*kumara*). A few traders (*komatis*) too had migrated but lost their identity later on. Some of the Telugu immigrants today pursuing their business along the coast of Natal, Durban and Pietermaritzburg

and are involved in the distribution of food and household goods, and owned cinema halls, garages and transport companies (Bhaskar 2004).

Until the formation of the Andhra Maha Sabha of South Africa (AMSSA) in 1931, there were hardly any attempts to unify Telugus on a regional or linguistic basis. Currently, the Sabha has more than 30 branches, and promotes the teaching of Telugu at schools and university level. For instance, the University of Durban, Westville used to offer courses on Telugu language and teaching.

The Government of Andhra Pradesh initiated global Telugu diaspora forum in 1975 through the establishment of International Telugu Institute in order to promote Telugu language, literature and culture among the Overseas Telugus. The main objective of this Institute was to organize conferences by bringing all Telugus together, especially reaching out to Telugus in the diaspora. The Institute has organized two conferences abroad, in Malaysia (1981) and Mauritius (1990), where Telugus are found in significant numbers.

World Telugu Federation (WTF)

The World Telugu Federation (WTF) was formed in 1992 as a Non-Governmental Organization to promote Telugu language and culture among the overseas Telugus. The initiative to form the WTF came from Chennapuri Andhra Maha Sabha, the Telugu Association of North America (TANA), and the Tamilnadu Telugu Federation (TTF). The First Convention of the WTF was inaugurated by Sri N.T. Rama Rao, the then Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, in New York in 1992. Today, WTF has emerged to be a coordinating body for most of the Telugu associations world over and liaisons formally and informally with Andhra Pradesh, including the Government of Andhra Pradesh (www.worldtelugu.org).

The Federation has held six biennial conferences till date at Chennai (1994), Hyderabad (1996), Delhi (1998), Visakhapatnam (2000), Singapore (2002) and Bangalore (2004) to discuss both cultural and trade-related issues.

Besides promotion of Telugu language and culture, the WTF has broadened its canvas to include business, tourism, education and collaboration in science and technology. The Federation has also emerged as a forum to attract trade, commerce and investments in Andhra Pradesh by Telugu diaspora. Members of both *Old* and *New Telugu diaspora* attend these Conferences in large

numbers and renew their linkages with the motherland. Advent of new communication technology, especially the Internet, and efficient economy transport system, has brought the leadership and the elites among the diaspora and home closer than ever in the promotion of mutual interest at the local and global levels.

The Government of Andhra Pradesh has also initiated periodic interactions with overseas Telugus and is involved in the organization of the WTF meets in different countries besides encouraging the AP Chapters of Confederation of Indian Industries and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

Tamil Diaspora

There are approximately 70 million Tamil-speaking population dispersed in nearly 50 countries including India (Sivasupramaniam 2010). This dispersal follows a similar trajectory to that of Telugus except the fact that the Tamils were also taken by the French rulers to their colonies earlier than the other indenture labor to the British, Dutch and Portuguese colonies. Unlike the British, there have been greater efforts to assimilate the Tamils into French culture and society in all French colonies including Reunion, Martinique and Guadeloupe.

The *World Tamil Conferences* (WTC) are a series of occasional conferences hosted by the government of Tamil Nadu, which aim to unite Tamil people around the world. The earlier Chief Ministers like M. Bhaktavatsalam, Annadurai, M.G.Ramachandran and Jayalalitha encouraged these global conferences in the past. They were organized at Kuala Lumpur (1967), Chennai (1968), Paris (1970), Jaffna (1974), Madurai (1981), Kuala Lumpur (1987), Mauritius (1989), Thanjavur (1995) and the recent Conference was held at Coimbatore in 2010 under the patronage of the current government in Tamil Nadu (Jayaprakash 2010).

The first International Conference of Tamil Studies (CTS), sponsored by the International Association of Tamil Research, the National Education (Indian Schools) Development Council of Malaya, and the University of Malaya, was held at the Third Residential College premises in the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, between 16th April and 23rd April 1966. About 132 delegates from 21 countries participated in the Conference that was inaugurated by the then Prime Minister of Malaysia Tunku Abdul

Rahaman. The moving spirit behind the conference was Rev. Father Xavier S. Thani Nayagam, originally from Tamil Eelam, serving at the University of Malaya and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Bhaktavatsalam, who extended his invitation for the second CTS in Madras in 1967 (Jayaprakash 2010).

The Second International Conference-Seminar of Tamil Studies, sponsored jointly by the International Association of Tamil Research and the Government of Madras, was held at the University of Madras in January 1968. Among the total number of Almost 500 delegates from 29 countries participated in this most memorable event, accompanied with a World Tamil Conference (WTC). As a part of the WTC a number of newly erected statues of Dr. Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar, Thiruvalluvar, Avvai, Kamban, Dr. G. U. Pope, Dr. Robert Caldwell, Bharathi, Bharathi-dasan, V. O. Chidambaram, Veeramamunivar (C. J. Beschi) and Kannaki were unveiled by him on January 1, 1968, in Madras. The late Dr. Zakir Husain, President of the India, inaugurated the Conference, at Madras under the chairmanship of the late Thiru C. N. Annadurai. World Tamil Organisation (Ulaga Thamizhaaraichi Niruvanam) was established soon after the second conference to actively connect all Tamil people around the world.

The fourth World Tamil Research Conference was held in Jaffna city in January 1974 was marred by Sri Lankan police action, resulting in the loss 9 lives and injuring more than 50 civilians. The government under Sirimavo Bandaranaike had requested that the conference be held in the capital Colombo but the conference organizers held it in the Tamil-dominant city of Jaffna.

The Fifth International Conference-Seminar of Tamil Studies was hosted by Madhurai. It was after the fifth world Tamil conference that the Tamil University was established in Thanjavur. The Tamil University hopes to emerge into a World Tamil University following the ninth World Tamil Conference. The ninth World Tamil Conference which was announced to be held in the city of Coimbatore from 21–24, January 2010 stands postponed owing to political differences. The present government proposes to hold World Classical Tamil Conference (WCTC) at Coimbatore in June 2010.

So far, three of the eight World Tamil Conferences were held in Tamil Nadu – Chennai, Madhurai and Thanjavur. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, hosted the world meet twice. Paris,

Jaffna and Moka in Mauritius were the other venues. The state has been playing an important role in forging transnational ties among the Tamils globally dispersed.

The Tamils have made another attempt to build a strong World Tamil Body, which can unite other Tamil organizations. Irrespective of where Tamils live, they believe in having a National Anthem, a National Dress and a National Flag to arouse a fallen Tamil Nation. In the same manner, a Monetary Fund for Tamils is envisaged for fostering entrepreneurship, trade and business among Tamils. One such umbrella organization – the *World Tamil Confederation* (WTF) – was established in Chennai and held its inaugural conference in July 2002. Tamils from all over the world attended the Conference. The WTF proposes to affiliate the existing Federation of Tamil Sangams of North America, the Australian Federation of Tamil Sangams, etc. (World Tamil Confederation 2010).

Gujarati Diaspora

Gujarti dispersal has begun along with the indenture labour immigration though most of the Gujaratis went to African and South East Asian countries as ‘free passage’ immigrants to carry out petty trade under the colonial agreement during the late 19th and early 20th century. Their hard work led them to prosperity that became a matter of envy to the local communities. Following the discriminatory treatment of Indians in Uganda, Kenya and a few other African countries, majority of the Gujarati entrepreneurs and agriculturists had to move to UK, Canada, USA and India. The story of Gujarati twice immigrants is one of ‘rags to riches’ for they were never allowed to take with them their hard earned wealth from Africa. Besides several international organizations such as Shree Swami Narayan Gadi Samstan (the world wide centre for spiritual, cultural and social welfare, established by Gurudev Jeevanpran Shree Muktajeevan Swamibapa), the Government of Gujarat has been sponsoring World Gujarati Conference, organized by the Vishwa Gujarati Samaj (VGS), inviting the Non-Resident Gujaratis (NRGs) world over. Every year during the mid-January, soon after the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, the government of Gujarat hosts a week-long festival of kite-flying and *dandiya*, inviting local and NRG investors for the over-all development of Gujarat.

Vishwa Gujarati Samaj (VGS) was founded in 1989 as an International Organization of Gujarati Community settled the world over. It has grown from strength to strength within a span of eighteen years and holds the membership of Gujaratis from 17 countries. VGS is registered as a Public Trust in Ahmedabad and is governed by its elected office bearers settled throughout the world. VGS has its registered branch in New York. Membership is open to all Gujaratis or to Gujarati Associations throughout the world and has prominent and leading Gujaratis and Business Organizations as its members. It works for the growth, prosperity and progress of Gujarat and Gujaratis settled in different countries of the world and inspires them to cultivate the spirit of brotherhood, co-operation and to promote and preserve Gujarati language and tradition (vishwagujaratisamaj.org/).

Vishwa Gujarati Samaj has organized three World Gujarati Conferences in the year 1989 (Ahmedabad), 1996 (Mumbai) and 1999 (Vadodara) and as a part of Golden Jubilee year of Gujarat (Swarnim Gujarat), 4th World Gujarati Conference was held at Ahmedabad. It offers a unique platform for interaction of Gujaratis from different parts of the world and have a dialogue on various issues concerning Gujarat and Gujarati world community, including socio-cultural heritage, traditions and language.

Gujarati Samaj is another organization that has established extensive global networks to promote their socio-cultural, economic and political interests among the Gujaratis world over. The portal nri-gujaratis.co.in opens the website “nri-gujarati beta: Pride of Gujarat...”, providing services from matrimonial to real estate and offers information about the activities of the Gujarati Samaj organizations from USA to Africa. Perhaps no other Indian regional diaspora community has such vibrant transnational networks as the Gujaratis have. The government of Gujarat too is proactive in promoting such networks for development in Gujarat and Gujaratis around world (<http://nri-gujarat.com/guj-samaj-sa.htm>).

Bhojpuri Diaspora

The Second World Bhojpuri Conference was held in Mauritius in August 2009 to bring together the Bhojpuri speaking people dispersed across the world since the early 19th century. It was organized with objective of promoting economic,

intellectual, cultural as well as political dynamics among the Bhojpuri people over 80 million spread around four continents. Bhojpuri diaspora forms a substantial population among the People of Indian Origin and there has been a demand to consider ‘Bhojpuri’ to be the status of national language in countries like Mauritius, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Surinam, Fiji and Nepal (Boodhoo 2009).

With the new initiative of the Government of Bihar to reach out the Bhojpuri diaspora, Bhojpuri community is emerging as a global force to nurture and energize the descendants of *Bhojpuri mati* (earth/ land) in all parts of the world. With sophisticated communications networks accessible to Bhojpuris today, they have a great potential to network with each other in the promotion of mutual advancement. Around 200 foreign delegates from various parts of South Africa, England, France, the Netherlands and India participated in the conference. They were drawn from the fields of academia, literature, media, business, trade and industry, law, film and theatre, art and medicine.

Besides the plenary sessions, there were three parallel workshops that focused on Bhojpuri language and literature, Food and traditions, and business opportunities. One of the many resolutions voted highlights the fact that Bhojpuri should be included in the 8th schedule of the Indian Constitution and given due recognition and status by the Government of India. Another important resolution was to hold the Third World Bhojpuri Conference in Holland in 2013.

Another major resolution seeks teaching of Bhojpuri at pre-primary, primary, secondary and university levels, according to specific requirements of each diaspora country. It was also proposed to start an exchange program between India and the Bhojpuri Diaspora for the promotion of the language, culture and literature besides a Website for *Vishwa Bhojpuri Sammellan*. The Sammellan also underlined the need for establishing a centre for tracing the roots to facilitate descendants of Bhojpuri indenture and other immigrants to locate their places of origin.

One would be astounded at the number of websites that have been created for Bhojpuri that are doing commendable work in the promotion of Bhojpuri and furthering interaction among the Bhojpuri speaking people since almost a decade. Some of these include Anjoria.com; the Bhojpuri Sansar.com; Bhojpuri Duniya.com; Bhojpuri Film

Awards, and the Bhojpuri Association of North America (BANA). However much needs to be done in the promotion of transnational networks among the populous Bhojpuri diaspora communities and also India their 'ancestral land'.

SOME OBSERVATIONS

Today Diaspora communities have emerged to be distinctive transnational communities, bridging the 'local' and 'global' together. The improvements in communication and transportation technology have facilitated further advancement in these networks among the Indian diaspora in general and regional/ linguistic/ caste diasporas in particular. This is manifested in the socio-economic, cultural and political networks through transnational and global organizations among the overseas Indian communities, involving their homeland, and their kith and kin around the world. During the past decade, these contacts are further facilitated through the encouragement and intervention of the government of India and several state governments in various political as well as economic matters. It is obvious that, though the Indians are separated by distance, they remain linked to one another through ties of real or imaginary kinship, shared resources, and cultural exchanges. They preserve and recreate their culture in new homes across the globe.

India today is not just a place, space or bounded territory forming a nation-state, but the one for nearly a century long experience of being in Britain, Canada, Fiji, South Africa, USA and several other nations. It is what India has come to be, as it were dispersed. Under the present regime of globalization and transnationalism, 'India' stretches to all corners of the globe where Indians remain 'Indian', forming *Global Indian Family*.

There has been extensive bonding between the place of origin and the country of immigration and the borders between nation-states are allowing such free movement of people besides capital, commodities and communications. Members of the diasporic communities transcend the boundaries of the nation-states they belong and also 'belonged', creating a space of their own. Several diasporas have succeeded in securing 'dual citizenship' and many have permits to move across nation-state boundaries to pursue socio-cultural and economic interests. In other words, they network and operate in a 'transnational'

space. The network of relations - socio-cultural, economic and political - between the country of origin and a diaspora community is extended to include several other nation-states where the same diaspora community has its presence. Thus, for instance, the network of relations between Israel and the Jews in the US is extended to include those residing in other parts of the world to pursue their common interests and community ties. Under the conditions of contemporary globalization diaspora communities have emerged transnational and cyber communities.

The descendents of Indian immigrants in South Africa are as much a part of the globalization process as Indo-Mauritians or Indo-Trinidadians, though the political circumstances had kept them 'formally disconnected' for a few decades till the nineteen- nineties.

Diaspora communities by definition are characterized by dual identities of being 'insider' as well as 'outsider' at the same time. Advances in technologies of communication and travel have further lead to the emergence multiple identities and their promotion with ease as they are mediated through the localization in terms of linguistic, caste, regional and religious parameters as much as globalization in terms of intensive communal web, interconnecting in every domain of life.

Indian Diaspora communities are emerging transnational communities with their extensive global networks, with different layers of coexisting identities. The GOPIO (M), for instance, has successfully mobilized Indians in South Africa in various contexts, putting them in the web of transnational networks on pan-Indian identity, beyond Africa and India, spanning the entire world where Indian diaspora is present. The Telugu, Tamil, Gujarati, Urdu, Hindi or Bhojpuri speaking communities not only have not only well established networks with the places of their ancestral origin but also have extensive linkages with their communities in diaspora countries, invoking sub-regional, linguistic or pan-Indian identities. Efforts of the Government of India and also of the state governments in India have only furthered these ties through formalization of these networks under the contemporary globalization for the mutual advancement of India, Indian diaspora and the countries of the Indian diaspora.

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