

Globalization, Diaspora and Transnationalism

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Abstract:

This article examines the paradigms of diaspora theory and in the current world the diasporic communities go beyond the host nation-state and motherland to network with their communities dispersed around the globe. The emergence of such networking cutting across several countries is most appropriately described by the term 'transnationalism'. The process of globalization is characterized by the mobility of capital and the inevitable expansion of markets which has denationalized national economies and territories, as well as decentred sovereignty. Globalization transcends territory, location, distance, and borders, and has raised questions about identity, citizenship and nationality.

Key Words: Globalization, Diaspora, Transmigration, Exile and Homeland

In the current times of globalization, diaspora has become an extraordinary popular word. This has become possible due to sudden changes which have occurred after the World War II. African community has showed a bond of solidarity and Asian community too have tried to relocate and get settled as independent Indian communities. As a result contemporary era has featured a new class of internationally recognised refugees. We have seen drastic change in recent decades as number of people who are moving across borders is growing enormously. We can visualize the recent age as a new era of international migration or an age of diaspora. The major changes which we can see in the present world is the efforts by various states to reach out to their overseas populations, trying to get investments back in the host countries and offering new forms of dual or flexible citizenship. The terms like decolonization, repeat migration, refugee status has wider significance and it has far reaching significance for a global age.

As long as the homeland recognizes, patronizes, and praises its diaspora people, the diaspora not only remains connected with the homeland socially and culturally but also becomes an economic and political asset. Some part of the diaspora has become so powerful that they influence the economy and polity of the host society and homeland simultaneously. The relationship between the diaspora and homeland has become more pronounced in this age of globalisation. Over the decades global diasporas have played crucial role in the political and

economic development of their homeland. We have fine examples of the Jewish diaspora, Armenian diaspora, Chinese diaspora, Indian diaspora, or any other diaspora at a global level.

The diaspora and the host countries both have become important for each other. The relationship of any diaspora with the homeland/motherland falls under the broader category of international relations as it involves at least two countries that formally permit their subjects to interact with each other. Today the diasporic communities go beyond the host nation-state and motherland to network with their communities dispersed around the globe. The emergence of such networking cutting across several countries is most appropriately described by the term 'transnationalism'.

The age of decolonization, which began in the mid-twentieth century, gave rise to new kinds of migration. There has been found a process that can be called as "repeat migration." Since the local population showed resentment to many Asian migrants they were forced to move from the places their ancestors had settled. As the conditions became more severe for the people of Asia and East Africa received economic and political hostility. Since Indians faced an even adverse more deep adverse effect during the period of decolonization.

Indians faced many problems when Ceylon (known since 1972 as Sri Lanka) became independent in 1948. The South Indian Tamil population was excluded from the protection of the new constitution by the Sinhalese majority. Since Tamil people were denied citizenship in India as well they remained stateless until 1964, when India and Ceylon agreed on terms for their repatriation. Nearly for the two decades, hundreds of thousands of Tamils moved "back" to India, a land their ancestors had left generations ago and in this land they found themselves as strangers. Tamil militants had fought a huge war between the year 1983 and 2009, resulting in massive internal displacement and further their return to their own country.

International migration, moreover, is less open today than it was a century ago. In both Asia and the Atlantic world, the century beginning in the 1830's was the golden age of unrestricted mass migration. Most of the countries which welcomed European migrants, notably the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, imposed restrictions on immigration during and after World War II, these steps brought the era of mass migration from Europe to an end. In Asia in the same manner the economic downturn and the outbreak of war in the 1930's signalled the end of the great cycle of open migration. As we know that the United States abolished its race-based quota system in 1965, inaugurating a new era of global immigration, international migration throughout the world is now regulated by the vast state bureaucracies.

The term 'exile' is resonant with ideas of forced emigration, displacement, social and political marginalization of an individual or a group of refugees. It aligns to experience to experiences of loneliness, foreignness, homesickness and an enduring longing to re-migrate to the place of origin. Generally, people refrain from moving into exile and staying here. Exile is a state forced upon individuals, groups or a nation; they are passive reactors subjected to this state. At times, though, individuals, entire groups and people may actively escape into exile in order to seek refuge and avoid persecution. Once politically secure in

exile, these individuals and groups may actively work to support other refugees and to bring about a change in political oppression. Mostly exiles think of their exile as a temporary state and their focus of identification, attention and activities clearly rests with the territory and culture of their former home.

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While the concept of “diaspora” has been subject to various interpretations, its geographical and territorial dimensions are clear. The term “diaspora” is often applied to describe practically any population that is considered ‘deterritorialized’ or ‘transnational’- that is, which has originated in land other than that in which it currently resides, and whose social, economic, and political networks cross the borders of nation-states or indeed, span the globe. It is therefore evident that geographically, diaspora involves a radical redefinition of a place. Simultaneously nowadays diaspora increasingly transcends place as result of the technological revolutions in the telecommunication industry.

Drawing from the work of Safran, Sheffer, Bruneau and Cohen a migration can be defined as a “ diaspora” if four conditions are met : firstly, an ethnic consciousness; secondly an active associative life; thirdly, contacts with the land of origin in various forms, real or imaginary; fourthly, there should be relations with other groups of the same ethnic origin spread over the world. It is also observed that, going back to the original land/ motherland is a natural desire of many diasporans, and this in natural way well become a perpetual and utopian longing. On the other hand strict alliance with co-ethnic members in the hostland may lead these people to turn their backs on the reality of the country in which they are now are living. Contradictory feelings such as loss and gratitude, frustration and hope or joy and sorrow lie at the core of the diasporic position. To make matters even more complicated, the members of the specific diasporic community may greatly differ in terms of gender, race, class and ethnicity. The formation of diasporic ethnic identity is influenced by three set of struggles. Firstly, there is struggle within the ethnic group for control over its ‘material and symbolic resources’. This will determine the groups boundaries, and the conditions which will ascertain inclusion or exclusion. Secondly, there is struggle between ethnic groups as they compete for resources, rights, and privileges. Finally, there is a struggle between the state and the groups which dominate it, and the other country. According, the diasporic identity is very often, the complex and unpredictable outcome of the subjects never-ending efforts to cope with particular and ever changing factors and circumstances.

A significant feature of all diasporic community is their linkage or network with the motherland, imaginary or real. While some of the diasporic communities are fortunate are fortunate to engage in close interaction with their motherland, others have to be contented with the images retained. The intensity of these linkages was based on the proximity or distance- geographical and cultural between the motherland and the host society, and the affordability on the part of immigrants; the closer the proximity of the diaspora from the

motherland, greater the intensity of networks and cultural continuity, including retention of the mother tongue. The past decade has witnessed a phenomenal dynamism, made possible by the recent advancement in technologies for travel, transport and communications. Not only did these developments bring the diasporic communities, made possible by the recent advancements bring the diasporic communities and their motherland closer but also has facilitated in bringing the members of the dispersed community around the world closer together.

Although the concept “diaspora” is being used extensively in academia over the last two decades, its history can be traced back to later part of 19th Century when the term was used to refer to the dispersal of the Jews in terms of exile and longing for their return to the homeland. Over the last two decades, there has been considerable debate as to what exactly constitutes a diaspora. William Safran formulated a number of characteristics of diaspora based on the Jewish experiences which can be applied to any of the expatriate communities labelled under the rubric ‘diaspora.’ Roger Ballard examines the patterns of immigration of South Asians to Britain, their ethno-religious, demographic and socio- economic characteristics, dynamics of transnational linkages and its possible implications for both homeland and the receiving society.

India is unique for the magnitude of her diversities in terms of languages and 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 diasporas.

Patrick Eisenlohr examines how language plays an important role in the emergence of the diasporic communities and how it has been considered as one of the transplanted cultural elements whose persistence may yield clues about the production of diasporic identity in Mauritius.

The rise and spread of transnational communities and their diverse roles in the growth and poverty reduction in their homelands suggest a case for the mainstream international development sector to embrace these communities as full partners in the development cooperation. Most of the literature on migration and remittances focus on the economic impact of remittances either for receiving and sending countries or both. The semantic broadening of ‘diaspora’, both in terms of relating it to any dispersed group of people and to conceptualize a certain type of consciousness, have made diaspora one of the most fashionable terms in academic discourse of late 20th Century. Authors and writers use the once restricted notion in an arbitrary, unspecified, fairly free way. Apparently, an often plainly metaphorical application of diaspora is prevalent, encompassing under the very term a wide range of phenomena considered appropriate. The term’s popularity has resulted in a dissolution of semantic, “decomposing” into exactly the early Greek philosophical meaning the notion’s ability to encompass certain situations and relations.

Obviously, the boundaries of diaspora have become ever more blurred and confused in its popularization. Certainly there is no lack of ambitious projects to define the terms and thus to

tighten the semantic boundaries, as carried out by Safran, Hettlage, and Cohen to name the more systematic and encompassing approaches. It is for the analytical heuristic and capacities that a definitional specification appears worthwhile, despite the term's overuse. Conceiving "diaspora" as an unbounded, analytical category both singling out and encompassing a certain semantic field, is meant to enable and facilitate transcultural research, comparison and understanding. Undeniably, modern and post-modern adoption of the diaspora has extended, although not refined the term's semantics. Implicitly 'diaspora' has been used for analytical work and transcultural comparison abundantly already, albeit mainly in an untheorized way. Some few authors, such as scholars in African studies explicitly have made use of the transcultural, comparative capacity of the diaspora term. Certainly, interests in drawing specific comparisons have had their shares too.

Conceptualized as an analytical category, a multitude of research field open up. Transcultural comparison of the complex areas of 'dynamics of religion' or religious change, migrated cultures and transplanted religions, or persistence with change of individual and collective religious identity come to mind. The trans or cross- cultural study of diasporic situations enables investigation from a similar angle and interrogating approach, different historic and socio-politically contextualized settings, be it Greek settlers in the Archaic Period, Jewish merchants, and citizens in Hellenistic and later times, or South Asian migrants and citizens in North America and Britain. Insights gained and structuring patterns recognized in one specific case might heuristically be transferred to a different diasporic case, thus intellectually investigating and re-arranging the data afresh.

Furthermore, transcultural comparison importantly applies to delineating the triangular relationship of diaspora group,(former) ancestral homeland and country of present residence. This might apply to investigating factors and shifts of influence between the relational poles, or to changing identificational foci of the diaspora group, to name two areas only. Significantly for current multicultural political discourses, examples can be stated in which a diaspora group's retention of religious difference does not impede its socio-economic integration and national identification.

In view of late 20th Century technological achievements such telecommunication and the internet, the master narrative of a diaspora's triangular relationship has become blurred and multiplied, however. Increasingly, relations of a diaspora group are not aligned with its country of actual residence and its former ancestral homeland only. More and more diaspora groups of same national, cultural, or religious bondage in other overseas sites take influence on the form and processes of a specific diaspora group. Rather than thinking of a relational triangle, many globally distributed diasporas such as the present Indian, Chinese, Irish, Tamil, Sikh, or Hindu diaspora constitute a diasporic network or web with joint venture points and various various gravitational centres. Dynamics of post-modern deterritorialization, its global cultural and economic flow, thus demand an on-going refinement of concepts and relational locating of diaspora.

One of the most important dimensions of globalization today is the flow of capital from the diaspora to the homeland as a result of several factors like the affluence of diasporic Indians

in the host economy and influence in the host politics, the increasing hostility of being an ethnic minority in the wake of political and religious factors, or the growth and development of India's economy and society. In the last two decades, India has developed from a poor underdeveloped economy to one of the most successful and prosperous economies in the world., thanks in the part to globalization and the diasporic contribution. The networks that take place between India between India and the Indian diaspora today are manifold, ranging from micro-level networks such as transfer of money/ remittances and consumer goods to families and relatives back home, constructive ideas for community development to that of macro-level networks such as the trade and investment in real estate, industries, institutions, corporations, and influence in homeland politics.

India has excelled in the recent past in the information and technology sector and the diamond cutting and polishing industry. It is visible to the world that Indians have surpassed in IT positively and it has impacted the growth of domestic India. In the wake of globalization and in response to global demands, India has extended support to its diasporic communities and have participated fully in the development initiatives of the homeland. For a long time India has neglected the issues and concerns of its diaspora because of its own internal problems and inadequate government policies. However, with the emergence of a nationalist consciousness among Indian political elites in the early twentieth century, there has been a shift in the nature of relationship between India and the Indian diaspora.

To conclude, Diaspora may transcend geopolitical boundaries, change their functions over time or even disappear as a result of globalization and transnational migration but the homeland persists through such transformations. Sections of the Indian diaspora, for instance, in areas such as East Africa, the Caribbean, and Fiji have produced new 'twice displaced diasporas' in the UK, Canada, the Netherlands, and Australia but their emotional attachment to the original homeland in India remains unchanged and in the wake of globalization it has further strengthened the transnational networks facilitated through the homeland government. Both India and its diaspora have benefitted greatly from their strong and improving relationships.

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