

The Diaspora and its Impact on Host Country: A Case of Indian Diaspora in United States

Suheel Ahmad Parry*

Department of Political Science, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, India

Abstract: The migration is a continuous process, people has been migrating from one part of world to another from ancient times. With the process of Globalization, the migration from Home Country to Host country has increased tremendously over the last decades. People are migrating from their homeland to host country for better and comfortable life. This has created a serious impact on host societies in both positive and negative ways. However, the Indian Diaspora in the US popularly known as Indian Americans, with a population of around three million, have impacted the host country such as United States in positive terms. They are well placed in the education and economic fields in the US. They have become a productive section of US society and high level of education has significantly helped the Indian American community to achieve this status. They have left their mark as academicians, entrepreneurs, doctors, lawyers, engineers and financiers. They have made excellent progress in the field of science, technology, medicine and academia. Not only they have very well assimilated in the American society but also they have retained their Indianness, family values and contributed towards spreading Indian culture in the United States. Thus the present paper tries to examine the positive impact of the Indian community in the United States by analyzing their social, cultural, economic and political role in the United States.

Keywords: Diaspora, host country, multicultural society, lobbying, Immigration.

1. Introduction

The Impact of any community to the host society can be viewed in terms of its manifest and latent consequences and in terms of positive and negative, which are often short term as well as long term. The process is not simple rather it's a complex interplay of many factors. In this context, the contribution of diaspora to the host society is a complex one. Cultural evolutionists and sociologist find more evidence in the impact of migrant on host society both in positive and negative ways. However, in positive terms, there are several factors that determine the contribution to the host society which include the composition of the diaspora group i.e. the profile of the diaspora that broadly are education, skills, status of their stay in the host society, political economic context they have settled in the host society and pattern of culture in host society. Diasporic experiences and their contributions also vary according to the space available for the diasporic group to contribute. In Multicultural societies like USA Diaspora are vibrant communities and play significant role in wide spectrum of

socio-cultural, political and economic areas, whereas, in certain other countries they have limited space as in the case of west Asia where strict laws do not allow migrant to play any role in the political and cultural sphere.

So far as USA is concerned, Indian Americans have influenced the host society in many ways. The Indian Diaspora in the US popularly known as Indian Americans, with a population of around three million, have made their presence in every walk of life in the United States. They are well placed in the education and economic fields and this speaks of their positive impact in the US. They have left their mark as academicians, entrepreneurs, doctors, lawyers, engineers and financiers. They have made excellent progress in the field of science, technology, medicine and academia. Indians are the richest ethnic community in the United States and have proved their mettle in different walks of life in a multicultural society like America. Not only they have very well assimilated in the American society but also they have retained their Indianness, family values and contributed towards spreading Indian culture in the United States.

2. Indian Americans: A Short History in US

The United States of America is often called the "land of immigrants" as the history of this country is "the history of waves of migration" (Jha, 2003). United states is also known as a "nation of immigrants" Handlin (1973:3) perhaps realized this squarely when he said, "Once I thought to write a History of the immigrants in America then I discovered that immigrants were American history". The Statue of Liberty is also an emblematic symbol that upholds the verifiable fact that United States is the "land of the free". The families have settled here from all over the worlds and the flow of immigrants keeps on increasing year by year. Earlier mainly Europeans immigrants were in abundance and now the influx of Asian is dominating the state figures of migrants. A substantial section of these migrants from Asia also comprises of South Asians who mainly of Indian Origin. Indians have been migrating from ancient times either for trade or for pilgrimage. However, the Indian migration to United States can be divided into two sections: the early migrants till 1960s and post-1965 immigrants, when stricter and detailed immigration law were passé by US congress.

*Corresponding author: suhailparry22@gmail.com

3. Early Immigrants: Pre-1965 Phase

The Indian Diaspora population in the United States is now over three million, but this massive number has increased from a small start. A cursory look at the records of US census Bureau (2014) shows that Indian Diaspora constitutes 17 percent of the total Asian immigrants. However, this significantly large number has grown over a period of time. The first case of Indian migrants recorded in history books is of an Indian maritime worker who entered U.S in 1970. He came as early trade connections between the two countries and he was from madras. During the period of between 1820 and 1870, 196 Indians mainly from the state of Punjab migrated to the US. The presence of the Indian community in the US was too small to attract attention in early decades of the 19th century. It was however not until 1880 that their total number crossed 200 marks in a single year. From 1820 to 1900 altogether 696 Indians immigrated to the United States. Thus, during the nineteenth century only 700 scattered adventures, merchants, monks, and professional men mainly from north India immigrated to the US. In the early 20th century a notable group of Indians came to the west-cost of the United States and entering from Canada not from India. This new wave of Indian immigration of about 7000, mostly from Punjab took place from 1904 to 1923 were mostly Sikhs by religion, wearing turbans as one of their religion custom. The Americans therefore termed the influx of Punjabis as the “tide of turbans”. According to the US immigration and naturalization service the total number of Indian immigrates in US till 1965 was just 6,336.

However, during this phase Asian migration with Indian migration to USA witnessed very low as compared to European countries. It was mainly due to the restrictions imposed US government. The increasing number of Indians migrating to the United States overlapped with rising anti-Asian sentiments, mainly against Chinese and Japanese immigrants, that were gaining ground in America. The new Indian immigration faced a series of discriminatory measures that were taken against Indians by the US Government.

4. Immigration After 1965

Immigration Act of 1965 passed during President Johnson administration brought drastic changes in immigration policy and reversed a half century old policy of discrimination against Asian immigrants. This Act deleted ethnicity and race as a factor of elimination; removed the restrictive Asian quota under the 1921 law; abolished the national origins quota system (as was fixed in 1924); removed the "Barred Zone "provisions of the 1917 law" and set up seven preference categories, favoring the entry of professionals and skilled workers which the U.S. needed most.

India has become one of the major beneficiaries of the 1965 Immigration Act. This act facilitated the way for thousands of Indians to immigrate to the US, to have their economic desires fulfilled and also helped them to form a distinct ethnic community of their own. Now immigrants entered from almost every Asian Country, the majority however emigrated from

China, India, the Philippines, Korea and Vietnam. The number of Indians gradually increased in 1965 onwards and the trend in Indian immigration took a new turn, with Indians from Caribbean Islands, British Commonwealth countries, European countries, and about 70,000 Indian refugees from business and professional classes.

According to the National Statistics Bureau's estimate, the Indian American population increased by 103% in 1980-90, a growth rate second only to that of China. Among Asian American ethnic groups and 55 per cent in 1990-1997, second only to Vietnamese. The Indian American population numbered 1,215 million in 1997, making it the third largest Asian ethnic group in the United States after the Chinese and the Filipino Americans, leaving Japan behind. Between 1990 and 2000, the Indian American population increased twice. The largest portion of these immigrants resides in the states of California, New York, New Jersey, Texas, Florida and Illinois in that order. The number of Indian Americans population is roughly equivalent to that of the state of Nebraska.

From its humble roots, the Indian Diaspora in the United States has undergone a significant transformation. They left their homelands to settle in America in the hope of better economic opportunities and a better life style. But at the same time it is also true that the U.S. desired, welcomed and hosted them in its national interests, economic and otherwise. The early immigrants catered to the American needs for laborers and in post 1965 phase skilled workers, engineers, doctors, scientists, educationists, software computer experts, information and technology experts, contributed to other sectors of American life and society. The migration to the developed countries from developing countries is likely to continue. India's young demography will continue to move to the United States as one of the most preferred destinations for studies and for better opportunities.

5. Current Position of Indian American in United States

Although Indians constitute relatively a small segment in the total population of the US, they have a strong influence on American society. They have achieved an honorable status for themselves in the US in comparatively shorter time than several other ethnic immigrants who took several generations to achieve the same. They have found a congenial atmosphere for pressuring their cultural identity in the United States and have remarkably higher achievements in the field of education, compared to other ethnic groups. They, indeed, constitute a section of high quality human capital comprising educationists, scientists, engineers, doctors and it is believed that the largest number of outstanding Indian talent outside India is in the U.S.

According to 2010 US census, 71 percent Indian Americans are with bachelors or higher degrees placed at 2nd position in United States in educational positions. However according to the recent findings of the American Community Survey, 40.6% of Indian Americans have graduation or professional degrees and 32.3 percent have bachelor's degrees and additional 105 have college education. Indian Americans have become a productive section of US society and high level of education has significantly helped the Indian American Community to

achieve this status.

In matters of holding jobs, Indian Americans are ahead of Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans and Korean Americans. According to the 2013 American community survey, more than 69% of Indian Americans were occupied in management, business, and science and arts occupations. The community achievements in the field of science and technology, medicine and academia are praise worthy. Many of them have reached the level of chairman's of the departments or coordinators of the programs. Given their high educational level and professional success, it is not surprising that Indian Americans top the Chart of median household income too, and have emerged as one of the most affluent community in the United States. The former president Richard Nixon Once remarked "the average Indian immigrants to the US have higher income than the average Americans". The average annual income of Indians today is indeed higher than that of any both ethnic group in the United States, and Indian Americans record the highest Median family income as well.

6. Impact of Indian Diaspora in US

Migration plays an important role in United States as one third of total US population is of Migrants. There are several factors that determine their impact to the host society which include the composition of the diaspora group i.e. the profile of the diaspora that broadly are education, skills, status of their stay in the host society, political economic context they have settled in the host society and pattern of culture in host society. As already explained the demography of Indian community in US, it's not surprising to say that Indian community has positively impacted the US society in almost every part of American society. Indian diaspora in US is not only seen as a humble migrant but a community holding high post in politics, universities, industries and other professions. It is one of the most educated and successful communities in the United States. The Indian American community is recognized and respected for its hard work, discipline, non-interference and for successfully integrating with the local community in every part of the American Society. Indian diaspora in US has made an important impact not only in the economy of the country but also taking active implications in US politics, culture, and society as a whole.

7. Impact on US Economy

Of all the immigrant's groups in the US the Indian Americans are in the highest income group. Their per capita income is \$17,777.00, that is higher as compared with national per capita income of \$14,143.00. Their poverty rate is only 9.7%, lower than the national average of 13% and annually buying power is around \$20 billion annually in US. They have made excellent progress in the field of science, technology, medicine and academia. Over 5000 faculty members in Universities and 30,000 Indian-American Medical doctors, forming single medical doctors, forming single medical ethnic group, are present in US. We are fully aware in economy that that higher position in occupational patterns means more income and

finally tremendous impact on nation's economy. Further, Indian Americans command over 50 percent of the economy in the lodging sector owning around 12,500 hotels with a total market value of their properties estimated at \$31b.

In present times, their latest area has been in the fields of computer technology and software sector. About 1/4 of programmers are Indian and 1/3 of the wages paid in the entire IT industry goes to Indian InfoTech technicians working in the U.S.A. In 2012, there were over 223,000 Indian American owned firms in the U.S, employing more than 610,000 workers and generating more than \$88 billion in revenue. The economic advancement and entrepreneurship of Indian Americans further gets reflected from the fact that in recent years the United States has seen Indians as heads of major U.S companies e.g., Microsoft CEO, Mr. Nadella is also an Indian American. At least but not the least, there are about 200,000 millionaires of Indian origin in the U.S., which means that one in every 14 Indians in the U.S., is a millionaire (estimated by Investment Firm Merrill Lynch).

8. Impact on US Culture

Indian Americans have not only very well assimilated in the American society but also they have retained their Indianness, family values and contributed towards spreading Indian Culture in the United States too. In Cultural impacts, firstly Indian Americans have preserved their linking in the field of entrainment. In areas with a large Indian population, there are many Hindi radio stations, including Radio Humsafar, Radio Salaam Namaste and so on. Many metropolitan areas with a high Indian American population now have movie theaters specializing primarily in Hindi/Bollywood and South Indian languages to show Indian movies. Cultural emergence of Indian Americans and their contribution to popular American mainstream culture is now being noticed and visible in Hollywood movies and television shows.

Also they have shown their presence felt in the field of TV journalism too. For instance, Fareed Zakaria, editor of Newsweek international and Sanjay Gupta, a neurosurgeon and medical correspondent, have their own weekend shows on CNN. Indian dance and music as a fusion with genres such as hip-hop, house and reggae and in such forms it became popular in the United States. Apart from entailment, Indian has introduced Indian food cuisines to the United States, and it has become as popular cuisines in the country with hundreds of Indian food-joint nationwide.

The spread of yoga and Ayurveda among Americans is another achievement of Indians in the US. Yoga has become immensely popular in the United States and people are not only practicing it but they are now earning by teaching Yoga in America. The traditional music and dance, religious and ceremonial practices, regional food-joints, ethnic clothing, popular culture, films, media and special summer camps have helped not only to retain Indianness in the community but also impact the US mainstream culture.

9. Impact and their Role in US Politics

For a long time, Indian Americans were not active participants in political process and activities. However, this situation changed in the late 1980s and early 1990s. After the end of cold war more and more Indians Americans began to show an interest in domestic politics of US. Today there is an “Indian caucus” in both the house of representative and the senate. Organizations such as Indian American Forum for Political Education (IAFPE), Indian–American Centre for Political Awareness (IACPA), US-India Business Council (USIBC), Indo-American Chamber of Commerce (IACC) and so on are actively promoting and undertaking lobbying on cause of Indian American interests. Crucially, Indian Americans are actively taking part in the electoral process through voting, putting up candidates, or through activities like fund raising for the candidates.

In various walks of life, Indian Americans as a group have shown their mettle in the United States. In the form of active and visible political associations, they have an asset as well as an increasingly mobilized political network. In some of the Congressional districts of the United States, they are also a major voting bloc. Presently Indian Americans have sort to protect the special interest of the ethnic group through forming 1000 Indian American organizations across the country. These organizations have lobbied and persuaded the decision makers to take certain decisions in the community interests. Further, Indian community has not only played its role to enhance its own interests in US but they have also actively lobbied for the interest of their Homeland i.e., India. They have played an active diplomatic role in India-US Nuclear deal, their activism against Pakistan in matters of terrorism and military coups, also during Kargil incursion in 1998; they pressured Clinton Administration to urge Pakistan to withdraw his forces from the Indian side of LOC (Lancaster, 1999). In present they are playing an active lobbying process for Kashmir issue in US Congress towards India and also in enhancing India-US Defense Cooperation.

10. Conclusion

The Indian Americans economic prosperity, educational achievements, and professional accomplishments and their status of one of leading player in Information technology have made them able to impact the host country. This success of Indian Americans has resulted into their increasing influence in

American Socio-Political-Cultural life. Commensurate to their contribution and success in the professional field, the Indian American community is showing their clout in political arena too. Hoping to translate their growing economic prosperity the new group of Indian Americans is inspiring the budding politicians under the leadership of Indian American leadership initiative. They are now organizing lobbying, participating US politics. However, when compared to other ethnic groups, Like Jews and Chinese, Indian Americans are still marginal in mainstream politics.

Thus while analyzing and explaining the role played by Indian American community in US, it's not surprising to say that a migration can impact its host society in positive terms as well. No doubt migration has impacted its host community in negative terms in number of times but in the times of globalization it's also possible that a migrant community having a pluralistic environment in host society like U.S.A can definitely play its social, political, economic and cultural contributions.

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