



## **DIASPORA: A SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Lots of studies have been done on Diaspora but not much is done on socio-cultural dimensions of life in host country and its impact in country of origin. Diaspora is one among the leading factor in social transformation and development of India. The financial support that is received by families in India is noticeable. Primary cause of immigration and settlement in host country is by economic reasons like economic inconvenience and less employment opportunities with low job securities. However it does not imply their dislike for their tradition, social structure and culture of natal community, which they are still preserving in host countries.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The word Diaspora is originated from two Greek words dia-meaning through, speiro- meaning scattered. In Greek it means ‘to disperse’ and is based on a translation of the Hebrew word, Galut. It means movement of people from one place to another, whereby they shift their residence and in the Ancient Greece, the word referred to migration and colonization. Diaspora was originally used for Jewish people ousted from their homeland Israel and settled in all over world. In Hebrew, “the term initially referred to the setting of colonies of Jews outside Palestine after the Babylonian exile and has assumed a more General connotation of people settled away from their ancestral homelands” (Shuval, 2003).

Human civilization is outsized densely inhabited cluster which possesses definite territory, culture and sovereignty. Society is studied generally in terms of member people residing in it.

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But, during recent time, a new trend of studying society in terms of native people residing presently in foreign country has developed. This trend is called as Diasporic Studies.

Diaspora is a multifaceted social phenomenon which has attracted the attention of Social Scientists, Government, NGOs and policy makers. Research in the field of Diaspora particularly in Indian studied only after independence and got momentum with globalization process. The word Diaspora is analyzed in terms of immigration of people to foreign lands. The diasporic study incorporates aspects of identity, culture, conflicts, multiculturalism, power, ethnicity etc. These include emigration to and settlement in foreign countries, their socio- economic profile, position in host and home countries, organization of socio-cultural life in host country, problem of socio- cultural adjustment and preservation of separate socio-cultural identity, relation with home country and impact on home country in terms of bringing of socio-economic development and changes.

In recent years, the notion of Diaspora has moved from religious, migration and cultural studies to the policy realm as well. Diasporas have come to be seen as central in relation to a range of issues, from struggles for political recognition of nation states over identity politics to transnational mobilization of development and reconstruction projects. Migrants' contributions to development in terms of remittances, investment and democratization are also receiving growing attention. The concept of 'Diaspora' is quite broad in that different disciplines tend to use it to mean different things. For example, Sociologists and anthropologists sometimes use it to describe communities that possess certain ethnic characteristics regardless of whether these groups maintain any kind of relationship with their former homeland.

Basic reason for lighting the sociologist's interest in study of Diaspora and its emergence as the important subject title of sociology is its nature of influencing changes and adjustments in socio-cultural and economic life of migrant and its family left behind. International migration leaves an impact, which may be direct or indirect, on everybody in the concerned family. The movement of people across the international borders has multiple impacts such as: demographic, economic and social in both countries of the origin and destination. The *International Organization for Migration* provides a broad definition of diasporas as "members of ethnic and national communities, who have left, but maintain links with, their homelands. The term 'diasporas'

conveys the idea of transnational populations, living in one place, while still maintaining relations with their homelands, being both ‘here’ and ‘there.’”

## **INDIAN DIASPORA: A BRIEF OUTLOOK**

The Indian Diaspora is an alarming political, economic, intellectual, and technological force in the host countries, which has the possibility to influence the decisions of the host countries in India’s favor. According to the 2001 census, the USA has 1.7 million people of Indian origin. Indians are the fourth largest immigrant community. In England, this number is 1.5 million, a sizeable 1.8% of the population. Such statistics prove the global supremacy of the Indian diaspora. The power manipulated by the Indian diaspora in the context of the globalized, multicultural world has to be properly analyzed keeping in mind the questions of modernity, social mobility, market economy, dislocation and relocation, acculturation and assimilation etc. Diaspora therefore, being a very multifaceted phenomenon, ever changing and evolving, requires to be studied at the regional, national and global levels. The Indian Diaspora is estimated to be over twenty million. They constitute of “NRIs” (Indian citizens not residing in India) and “PIOs” (Persons of Indian Origin who have acquired the citizenship of some other country).

Migration from India has taken place within two specific periods. The first phase was conditioned by colonialism and second phase was postcolonial period. In the first phase, large numbers of Indians were sent to different imperial outposts as indentured laborers. The second phase started early in 20<sup>th</sup> century and gained momentum in the post- 1945 period, when skilled and professional Indians migrated to western countries in largely response to a scarcity of skills and professionals.

## **GUJARATI DIASPORA**

The Gujarati Diaspora forms a vital part of the great Indian Diaspora. The Non-resident Gujaratis are now spread all around the world and are settled in various countries like USA, UK, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Australia and the Gulf. Being an important component of the host societies, providing services in sectors as diverse as retailing, hospitality industry (hotels and motels), medicine, drug stores, engineering and information technology, Gujarati Diasporas are now making a great contribution to their socio-economic, cultural and political life of the host countries. Lord Dholakia, Lord Meghnad Desai, Lord Bhiku

Parekh and others are the better examples that testify to the great success of Gujarati Diaspora. Formation of the Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA) and Federation of Gujarati Associations in North America (FOGANA) with membership in USA and Canada is a evidence of dynamism of the vibrant Gujarati Diaspora.

The Gujarati Diaspora has maintained its emotional, cultural and economic relations with the homeland in a very special way. It is noticeable in their desire to make emotional and economic investment in Gujarat by establishing hospitals, schools and colleges. Their prompt response in coming forward to the aid of Gujarat during the terrible earthquake in 2001 was remarkable. They have successfully lobbied in their host countries for foreign investment in boosting and developing industries in Gujarat. Their role in getting the latest technology and their contribution to the enrichment of religious and cultural life cannot be exaggerated. For instance, the Swaminarayan sect has built up many temples in the West as well as in the home country. Diaspora has great bearing upon the economy, social structure and culture play significant role in socio-economic development and socio- cultural changes in area of origin at local, regional and national level. These immigrants also act as ambassador in the country of their immigration by representing culture and society of origin. In view of such numerical and functional significance, several Diasporic studies have been conducted on Gujarati Diaspora. In the absence of sufficient socio- cultural study on Gujarati Diaspora, the present research is an effort to achieve a broader understanding of the socio-cultural study of Gujarati Diaspora with special reference to England, America and Canada.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In the present research work mostly quantitative method for data collection is used through Interview schedule. Questionnaire method is very close to schedule method. The salient feature of the method is that here too a questionnaire is prepared and the informant is required to give information. But it differs from questionnaire method to the extent that the investigator personally takes that to the informant and personally makes entry. In this system it is possible to cover much wider field and scope.

**Data collection tool for present study:**This study in the field of Gujarati Diaspora focuses on Socio-cultural aspect of migrants (whose homeland is in Baroda, Anand, Nadiad and have migrated to England, America and Canada.) and family left behind in India. Locating the visiting migrants was a challenging task; and the information being confidential, snowball- sampling

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technique was used to identify respondents. The data were collected from 75 respondents through “interview schedule” coupled with observation technique.

**Criteria for sample selection for present Study:** The purposive sample of 75 has been taken where 25 respondents were taken from Anand, 25 respondents from Nadiad and 25 respondents from Vadodara. While taking these samples researcher kept uniformity in respondents with 25 each from America, England and Canada

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The broad objectives of the present study are to examine and understand Gujarati Diaspora by focusing on the following issues:

- 1) The socio-cultural and economic background of Gujarati Indians who have migrated to England, America and Canada
- 2) To analyze socio-economic factors responsible for emigration
- 3) Interface/border between Gujarati Diaspora and host-communities; studying the structure and dimensions of their relationship
- 4) Diaspora’s contributions to the Social Transformation and Development process in India: remittance and investments
- 5) To assess the impact of emigration on the family members in India.

## **SOCIO- ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS**

Socio- economic and demographic profile of respondent make the study more understandable by providing the bracket pattern of age, caste, religion, income, occupation, sex, education, type of residents etc. The examination of socio- economic background of respondent visitor indicates that majority of them are possessing higher education and doing labour and lower level white collar jobs with a monthly income far better than what they were earning in country of origin. It was found from multiple responses that families in Homeland (India) felt financially more secure, their familial and social interaction increased and their consumption of luxurious items increased. Thus it indicates that migration did have positive impact and plays a big role in social transformation and development process.

Majority of the respondents (68%) are from General caste but at the same time 16% of respondents are from other backward caste, scheduled tribe and scheduled castes with 8% and 8% respectively. Where religions distribution shows Hindus (92%) followed by Muslim (4%) and

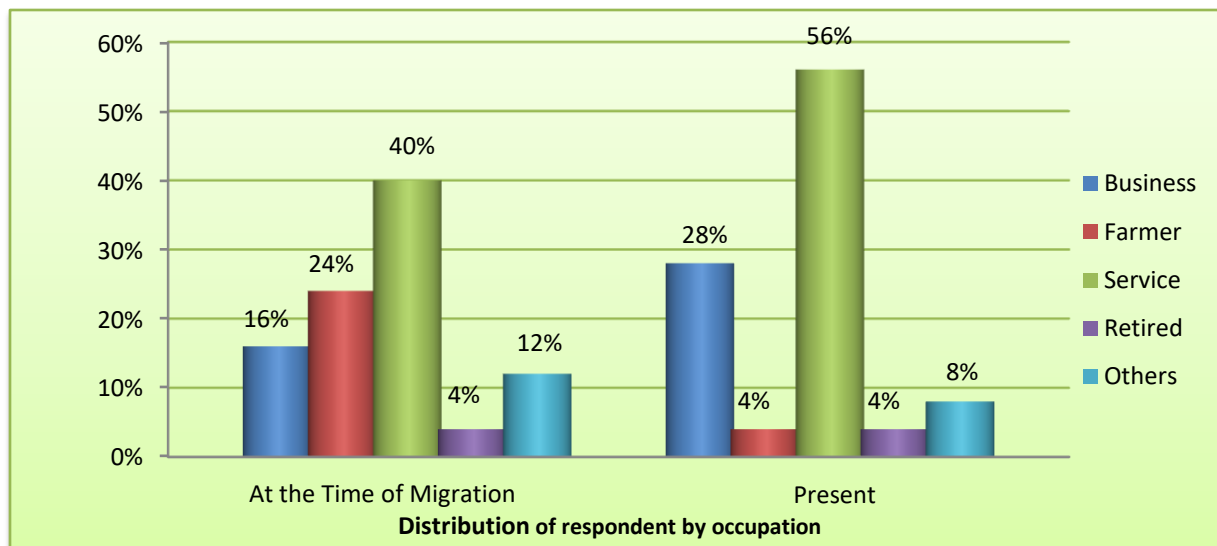
Jain (4%). It is a very common pattern when we use snow-balling method as reference network mostly have same religious groups.60% are in age group of 25-40 years. 72% of respondents were male and 72% were graduates. Majorities (60%) of the respondents have their own houses and only 40% of the respondents have rented houses, which also includes NRGs living with their relatives or kins in foreign lands.

**Table 1: Statistics of respondents occupation**

Sr. No.	TYPE OF OCCUPATION	FREQUENC Y	PERCENTAG E	FREQUENC Y	PERCENTAG E
		At the time of Migration	At the time of Migration	Present Occupation	Present Occupation
1	Business	12	16	21	28
2	Farmer	18	24	3	4
3	Service	30	40	42	56
4	Retired	3	4	3	4
5	Any Other	16	12	6	8
	Total	75	100	75	100

Graph No.1: Distribution of respondents by occupation

The above Graph& Table No.1 shows that the percentage of business and service class has increased from the time the NRGs migrated to the foreign lands whereas the percentage of



people working as farmers or doing other types of jobs has decreased. This indicates that the NRGs are becoming more professional and engaging in white collar jobs. While being in India

40% of respondents belonged to service class whereas 24%, 4%, 12% and 16% were farmer, retired, others and businessmen respectively. Migration of these respondents brought change as 56% got in services in host country whereas 28% holds business, retired, farming and others with 4%, 6% and 8% respectively.

### **Changes in the Socio-cultural aspects: In host countries**

The analysis of primary data on immigration and settlement of respondents under present study indicates that most of them had immigrated due to lack of good employment opportunities and economic inconvenience of their home region on the one hand and possibly for higher earning and better living conditions in host countries. The process of immigration of these respondents was relatively smooth in majority cases, as most of them immigrated on family and kinship relations as well as got full support from their relatives' caste fellows, already living in host country in terms of sponsorship and making necessary advance arrangement for their initial stay and employment. There is complete change in educational and occupational spheres of their life as all of them have taken up modern education and occupation. Again most of them have adapted themselves to the Western mode of living which implies change in their work habits as well as life- style. More over large majority of them have adapted Western ideologies of materialism, utilitarianism, consumerism, secularism as well as modern values of individual freedom, equality and economic rationality. However so far as their attitudes and practices regarding major social institutional spheres like marriage, family, kinship, caste and religion are concerned, continuity (tradition) is observed in case of most of these respondents.

### **IMPACT ON COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:**

The process of migration is a global phenomenon that has intense effects on the lives of migrants' family members remaining at home. Members of transnational families remain linked to one another and experience the process of migration on both sides of the border. International migration has the potential to extend families across vast geographic spaces. Despite these distances, communication technology helps families remain associated as social units within a transnational space. Familial links sustained across borders, however, do not provide equal substitutions for the physical presence of the family members within households. Familial separation may intensely influence the role, support arrangement, and tasks of transnational

family members resulting in change in psychological and emotional anxiety levels for all family members.

Immigrants' remittances are of significant importance in the sense that they provide additional capital and are a source of foreign exchange earnings. Considered as a development originator (even as an important tool in poverty reduction), remittances sent by NRGs contributes to long-term socio-economic development, thus by strengthening the capacity of the households exaggerated to make investments in education, entrepreneurship and health.

When coming back to importance of returning for families in country of origin it is most of the time increase in social status, feeling of financial security, increase in purchase habit and efforts of supporting family members to migrate. Immigration does have impact on mode of communication with relation in India. It is also important to note the impacts on social interaction, conflict in role among family members, relations with relatives and neighborhood, consumption of luxurious items, missing the migrant on important occasion and many more. Migration brings changes and influences the education of children living in India and at the same time it does set adjustments in household work.

Table No.2, shows that how the financial support sent by migrant has affected the purchase habit of relatives in India. Increase in purchase could be seen in food (36%), clothing (80%), education (80%), health (76%), house (68%), entertainment (64%) and modern gadgets (68%). Decrease in purchase of food (12%) and house (12%) is because after their migration less number of family members are in India, about modern gadgets (20%) usually NRGs send require gadgets from foreign lands which reduces these purchase.

Table No.3, shows that most (76%) of the respondents and their families in India prefer using web communication. 16% of respondents use mobile, 8% said they use public telephone booth, do not communicate or any other source of communication, whereas no one said they use post or telegram which is reflection of transformation in communication. Web communication as a source of communication indicates the level or reach of computer and computer literacy. This is clear that migration has encouraged the modern communication technology and is well accepted by relatives in India.



**Table No.2: Financial support sent by migrant affecting the purchasing habits of relatives in India**

Sr. No.	ATTRIBUTE	RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
	<b>Food</b>			
1		Increase	27	36
2		Decrease	9	12
3		No change	39	52
		<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100</b>
	<b>Clothing</b>			
1		Increase	60	80
2		Decrease	0	0
3		No change	15	20
		<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100</b>
	<b>Education</b>			
1		Increase	60	80
2		Decrease	0	0
3		No change	15	20
		<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100</b>
	<b>Health</b>			
1		Increase	57	76
2		Decrease	0	0
3		No change	18	24
		<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100</b>
	<b>House</b>			
1		Increase	51	68
2		Decrease	9	12
3		No change	15	20
		<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100</b>
	<b>Entertainment</b>			
1		Increase	36	64
2		Decrease	0	0
3		No change	27	36
		<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100</b>
	<b>Purchasing modern gadgets</b>			
1		Increase	51	68
2		Decrease	15	20
3		No change	9	12
		<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table No.3: Mode of communication of Diaspora with relatives and friends in India**

Sr. No.	ATTRIBUTE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Through Mobile	12	16
2	Through telegram/post	0	0
3	Through web communication	57	76
4	Any other	6	8
	Total	75	100

**Table No.4: Migration influencing education of children in India**

Sr. No.	RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Yes	75	100
2	No	0	0
	Total	75	100

**Table No.5: Migration influencing educational attributes of children in India**

Sr. No.	RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Able to study in good school	39	52
2	Able to go to private tuition	24	32
3	Any other	12	16
	Total	75	100

Graph No.2: Description of influence of migration on education of children in India

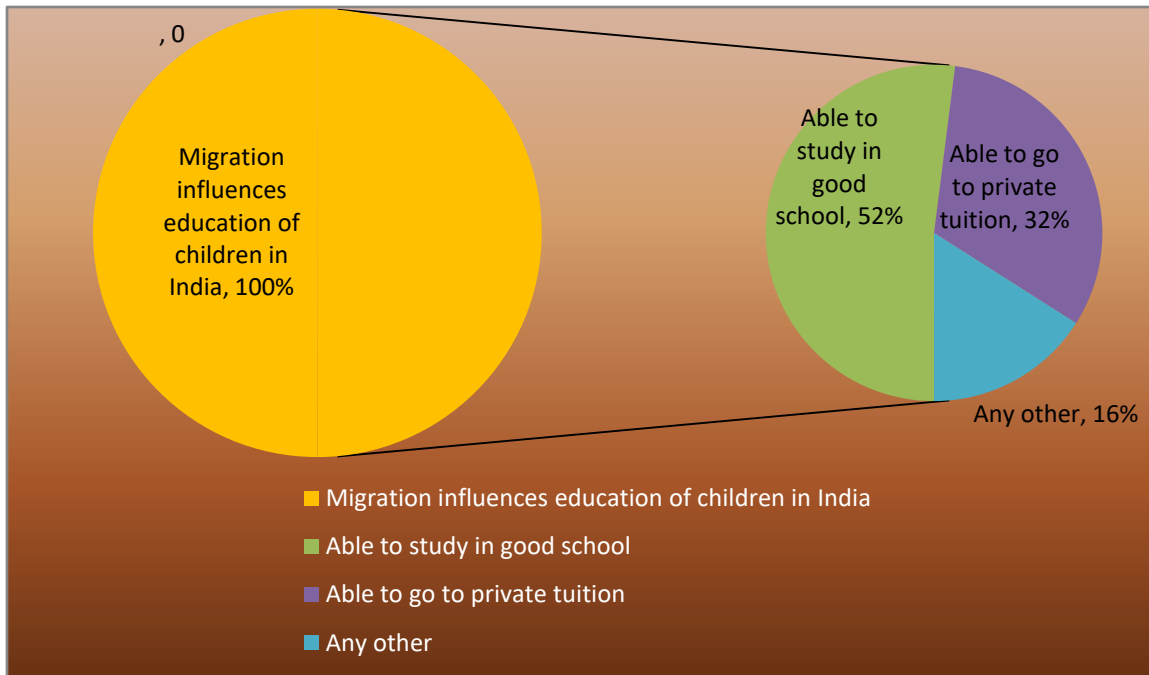


Table No.4, Table No. 5 and Graph No. 2 shows, 100% respondents believe that migration has influenced the education in India. 52% feels that now kids in India are able to go in good schools, 32% said that private tuitions could be managed as there are no financial limitations now. Also they have better understanding about schools and education level.

### **Interface between migrants and host-communities**

As perceived and reported by majority of respondents, their position in host country is quite lower. This is reflected in fact that many of them reported that they are considered as part of Black population by White people and their position is slightly up next to Negroes. Some of the respondents said that their status is just that of 'receivers' or 'takers' and not of 'giver' or 'contributor' in the host country. However, compared to other Asian immigrant groups, their position is relatively better. As reported by many, their relatively better financial position and living conditions have made them object of envy, target and opposition by other ethnic groups of host country, particularly black people. Their perception of such lower position is getting

compensated partly by their satisfaction over higher income as counted in Indian currency value and partly by their higher position in India, particularly their home region where they are regarded as successful, rich and well-off person commanding great respect.

## CONCLUSION

- (1) Immigration and settlement in Western countries is primarily caused by economic reasons like economic difficulty and physical discomforts of their home region. However it does not imply their dislike for their tradition, social structure and culture of natal community, which in fact they carried with them to foreign country.
- (2) The immigration and settlement of respondents unlike other cases of long distance migration was by large smooth due to supporting family, kinship and caste networks in host countries. It is observed in large number of cases fellows already living in host country who not only gave sponsorship but also arrange for their initial stay and employment in the same.
- (3) Most of the NRGs send remittance for the family left behind and are also assisting in their migration. Migrants are invested in real estate and are also making other investments for community or regional development such as opening schools, hostels and hospitals. Foreign remittances sent for the purpose such as agricultural improvements, small scale business, bank deposits and purchase of new lands are productive in the sense that they bring returns on investment. Foreign remittance has large positive support on growth of Indian economy and development of Gujarat.
- (4) Impact of immigration on family members left behind is positive as well as has some negative impacts. The study of NRGs suggest that initially they migrated to host country for money making and strong desire to come back to home country which never come true in most of the cases. They generally settled down in host country and their behavior creates situation in which their native family loss them forever. The old parents left away at home country and are isolated. But at the same time, these NRGs are sending remittances and are supporting families in home country. Because of their financial support children are studying in good schools in home country and the standard of living is improving. Its proven effect on the social transformation of Indian society could be seen by accounting the Web communication to interact with Diaspora.

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