

Concept Note

Contributions of Indian Diaspora in Freedom

Struggles of India and the rise of Global India during Amrit kaal

The Indian Nationalist Movement has a long history of Indians struggling for their rights from the oppressive policies of the colonial ruler. The Nationalist Movement gained momentum with the help of great reformers and leaders in India who gained exposure from many other countries. These leaders were the driving force behind taking the Indian Nationalist Movement forward and spreading the objectives of these movements among the international community. Many important leaders like Mahatma Gandhi started their political journey in other colonised countries. The methods and principles adopted by Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa came to be used commonly in Indian National Movement too. There were many others like Dadabhai Naoroji, B. R. Ambedkar, Shyam ji Krishna Varma who went to other countries and became influential figures in the Indian National Movement.

The Indian Diaspora abroad contributed to the Indian National Movement. There was a large number of Indian Diaspora in the British colonies who had travelled under different capacities like that of indentured labourers or passenger Indians. The Indian leaders in the 20th century started travelling to British colonies to seek the support of the Indian Diaspora in their national movements. Lala Lajpat Rai went to seek support and assistance from Indians in Canada. Mahatma Gandhi's principles like Ahimsa, Non-violence and Satyagraha were used for the first time in South Africa against the colonial government. There were many other Indian leaders who worked hard to create awareness amongst the Indian community abroad to join the Indian National Movement. These leaders also worked with the help of some organisations which helped them build their base and support around the world. The support, sympathy and contributory role of Indian Diaspora differed between those who were under colonies and those who were in independent North American and European countries. These two segments of Indian diaspora had two different domestic situations,

constraints and opportunities to contribute to Indian freedom struggles and they need to be understood in this context.

Indian Diaspora had played a major role during the freedom struggle and dedicated their lives from across the world. They participated by publishing magazines and writing articles from abroad against the British atrocities in India. Also, B.R. Ambedkar, Rash Bihari Bose, Lala Lajpat Rai, Subhas Chandra Bose, V.D. Savarkar were some of the main characters in the struggle. Many PIO's and NRI's with moral and ideological support stood as a strong pillar for the people in India. For example, Japan also supported the Indian independence therefore, in early 1942, Japan had launched a campaign to mobilize Indian prisoners of war in Shanghai, Hong-Kong and Singapore to join Indian national army and fight for the freedom of India. Similarly, Mauritius is known as 'Little India'. During the struggle Quit India Movement, Hind Swaraj and many other were the slogans. Ganga Talab used to be the secret lake for gatherings.

Thus, the contributions of Indian Diaspora during the freedom struggle helped in generating awareness regarding the Indian freedom movement against the colonial powers. The Print media had also played a significant role in the spread of ideas and philosophies of the nationalist leaders and the freedom movement.

Indian Diaspora not only played historical role in decolonising India. They help in building country's value internationally through their huge success stories. Indian Diaspora is an important part of India's "soft diplomacy" or "diaspora diplomacy". The diaspora's ability to spread Indian soft power, lobby for India's national interests, and contribute economically to India's rise is now well-recognized. One of the greatest economic contributions of Indian diaspora has been in terms of remittances.

Indian diaspora is one of the richest minorities in many developed countries. Their advantage is evident in "diaspora diplomacy", whereby they act as "bridge-builders" between their home and adopted countries. For example, Indo-US Civil Nuclear Deal is a case in point, as ethnic Indians in the United States successfully lobbied for the signing of the Nuclear Deal. Also, according to a World Bank Report, India received approximately 87 billion dollars in remittances in 2021 with USA being the biggest source, accounting for over 20% of these funds.

Indian Diaspora has played an important role in the field of Science & Technology. Indian emigration thus increasingly consisted, among others, of highly qualified scientists, engineers and other professionals, also termed as the Brain Drain. Utilizing the expertise and knowledge resources of the diaspora, particularly the scientific diaspora, has been part of the strategies of many countries. In the recent years, realizing the importance of the potential of the diaspora to contribute to national development and Science, Technology, and Innovation ecosystem, countries have used Science Diplomacy also to engage with the scientific diaspora.

India's professional diaspora is regarded as innovative 'opportunity entrepreneurs', who forge links, invest in, and mentor high value technology ventures between their countries of residence and origin. The diaspora is now seen as integral to India's growth story and there is strong receptivity within India to a 'diaspora forward' engagement strategy.

The policy of reaching out to the Indian diaspora began in earnest during the tenure of Atal Bihari Vajpayee. It was under NDA-I that Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) was first launched in 2003. To mark the contribution of Overseas Indian community in the development of India Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is celebrated on 9th January every year. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) Convention is celebrated once in every two years to strengthen the engagement of the overseas Indian community with the Government of India and reconnect them with their roots. During the Convention, selected overseas Indians are also honoured with the prestigious Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award to recognize their contributions to various fields both in India and abroad.

Thus, keeping in mind the Role and contributions of the Indian Diaspora in India's freedom struggles and rise of Global India the proposed Conference would broadly deliberate on the following sub-themes under four different sessions, though not just confined to them:

1. History of Indian Diaspora migration and settlement across the world.
2. Role of Indian Diaspora in Freedom struggles and in supporting India's independence movement.
3. Indian Diaspora's historic role for India and its implications for its connect in the Contemporary times

4. Indian Diaspora as an important part of India's "soft diplomacy" or "diaspora diplomacy" and their contribution economically.
5. Indian Diaspora as an important part in the field of Science & Technology.
6. Indian Diaspora as a significant source of trade and investment in India.
7. Rise of India as global player and role of Indian Diaspora
8. Indian Diaspora and its overall role in rise of Global India