



India's Soft Power Triumph: Assessing the Quality Role Played by the Indian Diaspora

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Abstract

In recent years, Indian diaspora has emerged as a formidable force on the global stage, leaving a deep impact on various sectors. From Bollywood to Silicon Valley, the members of Indian diaspora have been making their mark and reshaping India's positive image around the world. With a rich cultural heritage and a legacy of entrepreneurship, the Indian diaspora community has soared to new heights by bringing their talents and skills to the forefront. The influence of Indian diaspora can be seen in multiple domains, including business, technology, finance, and entertainment. Entrepreneurs and innovators from the Indian community have founded successful startups, revolutionising industries and creating job opportunities globally. Moreover, Indian professionals have become key players in the global workforce, enhancing creativity and diversity in their respective fields displaying India's soft power and rich cultural heritage. This research paper explores the remarkable journey of Indian diaspora and assessing how they are shaping the perception about India around the world in various domains, transcending geographical boundaries and leaving an indelible mark on our global society. It advanced the argument that the influence of Indian diaspora on India's soft power is a multifaceted and substantial force, shaping the nation's global image, fostering cross-cultural understanding, and contributing to India's diplomatic and economic successes on the international stage. For the theoretical framework, this paper agrees with Shashi Tharoor, who agrees that India possess enough soft power resources and Indian state needs to channelise these in various ways.

Key Words: *Diaspora, Cultural Diplomacy, Soft Power, Smart Power, International Relations.*

Introduction

The recent upsurge of India and the centrality its leaders are enjoying in deciding the key global issues at various global events in international relations such as, SCO summit, BRICS summit, and G-20 (presidency of India) highlight how India is able to influence the world in global agenda setting and deciding the norms of the international world order. This became possible for India not by its ever-increasing hard power resources such as its growing economy and military power but also using its non-coercive soft power resources such as culture, heritage, and values.¹ The concept of soft power appeared in the domain of international relations after the publication of the seminal work, *Bound to Lead: the Changing Nature of American Power* by a Harvard University Professor, Joseph Nye, in April 1990.² In India, the concept of soft power gained prominence only in the first decade of the present century when the Indian scholars have shifted their focus of study on the impact of non-coercive resources in India's international relations. The proponents of soft power approach in India's foreign policy making believe that India with its rich history, diverse culture, and Bollywood's global appeal can become a major player in world politics.³ They asserted that India's soft power is significant because its soft power is deeply rooted in its millennia-old civilisation, which has given rise to a rich tapestry of art, literature, music, dance, philosophy, and spirituality.⁴ The country's cultural diversity and the legacy of ancient civilisations like the Indus Valley and Maurya Empires contribute to its soft power appeal. These proponents are of the view that the subsequent Indian governments should use the soft power resources such as *yoga* (originated in India), Indian cinema, particularly Bollywood, (has a massive global audience) and the Indian cuisine, (known for its flavours) all have gained worldwide recognition which are the significant aspect of India's cultural export. These all have been channelised through the strong four million plus⁵ Indian diaspora, spanning across the globe, which plays a pivotal role in preserving and promoting Indian culture, fostering cross-cultural understanding, and acting as unofficial ambassadors of India's soft power.

1. Historical Perspective

The historical migration patterns have resulted in a diverse and widespread Indian diaspora, influencing the cultural, economic, and political landscape of both their host countries and India itself.

1.1 The Migration Patterns

The historical migration patterns of the Indian diaspora are marked by centuries of movement of people from the Indian subcontinent to various parts of the world. These migrations have occurred for a variety of reasons, including trade, labour, colonisation, and opportunities abroad. Some key historical migration patterns; first in the ancient and medieval periods the Indian merchants and traders established trade relations with regions such as Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and East Africa. These periods have facilitated cultural exchange which have marked the spread of Indian culture and its belief system particularly Hinduism and Buddhism. Particularly the spread of Buddhism led to the movement of monks and scholars to different parts of Asia,

including China, Tibet, and Southeast Asia.⁶ Secondly the Colonial period, which had witnessed the colonisation of India by European powers, particularly the British, have led to significant migration patterns. Indians were transported as indentured laborers to British colonies in the Caribbean islands, Africa, Fiji, and Southeast Asia to work on plantations. The Indian merchants and traders have also established themselves in various colonial trading posts and cities. Thirdly during the post independence period after 1947, the migration continued, driven by economic factors and educational opportunities. In addition, the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 led to mass migrations and the displacement of millions of people, particularly between the two newly formed nations.⁷ Fourthly, the professional and educational migration in the mid-20th century, including doctors, engineers, and scientists, began to migrate to Western countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada for educational and employment opportunities.⁸ The Indian diaspora in these countries grew significantly during this period. Fifthly, the Post-1970s period saw a surge in Indian migration, especially to North America, Europe, the Gulf countries, and Australia. This wave included professionals, skilled workers, and students. The Gulf countries attracted a large number of Indian laborers, particularly in construction and infrastructure development. Sixthly the Brain Drain and Return Migration refers to the migration of highly skilled and educated individuals from India to Western countries. However, there has also been a trend of return migration where some Indian professionals return to India after gaining experience abroad. Lastly, the recent trends in India's economic growth and globalisation have led to increased mobility, with Indians working in various industries worldwide, including information technology, finance, and healthcare and the cultural diaspora supported by the various government agencies such as Ministry of External Affairs and the Indian Council of Cultural Relations which has a mandate to spread India's soft power and to seek its cultural relations worldwide.⁹ The cultural diaspora, spreading Indian music, dance, cinema, and cuisine, has spread globally, leading to the establishment of cultural communities and festivals in different parts of the world.

1.2 Key Milestone in the Development of Indian Diaspora

This includes significant events and movements that have shaped the global Indian community over the years. These milestones reflect the dynamic and evolving nature of India's diaspora, highlighting their contributions to host countries, their role in India's development, and their enduring impact on global culture and society. Firstly, the Indentured Labor Migration (19th and Early 20th Century) was one of the earliest and most significant milestones of the migration of Indian indentured laborers to British colonies in the 19th and early 20th centuries. They were sent to work on plantations in countries like Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Suriname, Fiji, and South Africa. This migration laid the foundation for large Indian communities in these countries, with a lasting impact on their culture and society. Second, the post-independence migration (1947 onward) which saw the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 resulted in a massive migration and displacement of people between the two nations. This event marked a significant chapter in the history of the Indian diaspora. Indian communities were established in Pakistan and Bangladesh, while those who chose to

stay in India contributed to the country's post-independence development. Third, the Educational and Professional Migration (1950s-1960s) saw a wave of Indian professionals, including doctors, engineers, and scientists, migrating to Western countries for higher education and employment opportunities. The establishment of the Indian diaspora in countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia grew significantly during this period. Third, Indian Diaspora Organizations (1960s-1970s), such as the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) in 1989, provided a platform for diaspora members to connect, advocate for their interests, and contribute to India's development. Fourth, the Technology and IT Boom (1980s-1990s) led to a substantial migration of IT professionals to the United States and other Western countries. The Indian diaspora played a crucial role in the success of India's IT sector and helped establish India as a global IT hub. Fifth, the Economic and Business Achievements (2000s-present) of the Indian diaspora has made significant contributions to the global economy. Indian entrepreneurs and business leaders have established successful companies worldwide. Prominent figures in industries like technology, finance, and healthcare have emerged from the diaspora. Fifth, the political representation (Various Periods) of the members of the Indian diaspora in their host countries, with some holding high-ranking positions in governments, parliaments, and city councils. Last, the Indian culture, including Bollywood, music, dance, and cuisine, has gained international recognition and popularity, contributing to India's soft power. The festivals like Diwali and Holi are celebrated globally, displaying India's cultural diversity.

1.3 Prominent Indians and their Contribution in India's Soft Power

The Indian diaspora has produced numerous notable individuals who have made significant contributions to Indian soft power by promoting Indian culture, heritage, and values, as well as by advancing India's influence on the global stage. Some prominent figures and their contributions include; one, Kalpana Chawla (1961-2003): Kalpana Chawla, an Indian-American astronaut, became the first woman of Indian origin in space. Her achievements in space exploration inspired millions and displayed India's prowess in science and technology. Two, A.R. Rahman, renowned composer and musician has not only won international acclaim for his music but has also composed for Hollywood films. His work has introduced a global audience to Indian musical traditions.¹⁰ Three, Mira Nair, an acclaimed filmmaker, known for films like *Monsoon Wedding* and *The Namesake*, has portrayed Indian culture and the diaspora experience on the international screen.¹¹ Four, Kamala Harris of Indian and Jamaican heritage, made history by becoming the first female Vice President of the United States. Her Indian roots have been celebrated, and her rise to power reflects the success and influence of the Indian diaspora in politics. Five, Satya Nadella, the CEO of Microsoft, is a prominent figure in the technology industry. His leadership displays the achievements of Indian professionals in the global tech sector. Six, Nikki Haley, of Indian Sikh descent, served as the US Ambassador to the United Nations and as the Governor of South Carolina. Her political career highlights the Indian diaspora's influence in American politics. Seven, Raghuram Rajan, an Indian economist, served as the 23rd Governor of the Reserve Bank of

India (RBI) and as the Chief Economist and Director of Research at the International Monetary Fund (IMF). His expertise has contributed to India's economic standing. Eight, Sundar Pichai, the CEO of Alphabet Inc. (Google's parent company), is a prominent figure in the tech industry. He leads one of the world's most influential companies and represents Indian talent in Silicon Valley. Nine, Priyanka Chopra has transitioned from Bollywood to Hollywood, starring in TV series like *Quantico* and films like *Baywatch*. She is also a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, promoting various social causes. Last, Amitabh Bachchan is one of India's most iconic actors, known globally for his contributions to Bollywood. His international recognition has contributed to India's soft power in the film industry.

These individuals, among many others, have leveraged their talent, influence, and success in showcasing India's cultural richness, technological prowess, and global presence, thereby enhancing India's soft power on the global stage.

2. Cultural Diplomacy

2.1 Role of Bollywood and Indian Cinema in Promoting Indian Culture

Bollywood and Indian cinema have long been celebrated as more than just entertainment; they are vibrant showcases of India's diverse culture, traditions, and values.¹² Through their colorful narratives, evocative music, and captivating dance sequences, these films serve as a powerful medium for projecting India's rich heritage to the world. Some examples when Bollywood has displayed India's rich cultural diversity to its global audience. First, the films produced in it often portray India's cultural diversity and its ability to unify within this diversity. In the film *Bajrangi Bhaijaan*, directed by Kabir Khan, the story follows the journey of a young mute girl from Pakistan who is lost in India. The film beautifully captures the unity and love that transcends borders, promoting the message of peace and harmony.¹³ Secondly, Indian cinema strikes a balance between traditional values and modernity. In the most decorated film *Queen*, directed by Vikas Bahl, the protagonist embarks on a solo trip to Europe after her wedding called off. The film highlights a young woman's journey of self-discovery, shedding light on the evolving role of women in Indian society.¹⁴ Thirdly, Bollywood is known for its grand portrayals of Indian festivals and celebrations. The film *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* (K3G), directed by Karan Johar, showcases *Diwali* celebrations in their entire splendor. This sequence has become an iconic representation of the festival of lights, familiarising global audiences with the significance of *Diwali*.¹⁵ Fourthly, Indian cinema has garnered a massive international following, with Bollywood films screened in countries around the world. The film *Slumdog Millionaire*, directed by Danny Boyle, incorporated elements of Indian cinema and culture, winning eight Academy Awards, including Best Picture, and introducing millions to India's vibrancy.¹⁶ Fifthly, Bollywood sets fashion trends that resonate globally. The film *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (DDLJ), directed by Aditya Chopra, famously features actress Kajol's vibrant and trendsetting sarees. This iconic look continues to inspire fashion enthusiasts worldwide.¹⁷ Sixthly, Indian cinema's music and dance sequences are legendary. A prime example is the film

Lagaan, directed by Ashutosh Gowariker, which blends Indian classical and folk dance forms with cricket, creating a memorable fusion of culture and sports. Seventhly, Indian cinema plays a vital role in cultural diplomacy.¹⁸ The Cannes Film Festival frequently screens Indian films, and the 2013 film *The Lunchbox*, directed by Ritesh Batra, was a hit at the festival, enhancing India's cultural presence on the global stage.¹⁹ Eighthly, many Bollywood films address critical social issues. *Taare Zameen Par*, directed by Aamir Khan, sensitively portrays the struggles of a dyslexic child and highlights the importance of inclusive education.²⁰ The film inspired discussions on learning disabilities and child welfare worldwide. Ninthly, Indian cinema is increasingly collaborating with international filmmakers. In *Life of Pi*, directed by Ang Lee, the Indian character Pi Patel's journey becomes an allegory for life's spiritual and philosophical aspects. The film's success demonstrated the synergy between Indian and international storytelling. Lastly, Bollywood films often feature stunning Indian locations that have since become tourist attractions. The 2001 film *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* highlighted the iconic Taj Mahal, inspiring tourists to visit this marvel of architecture.²¹

Therefore, Bollywood and Indian cinema are not just sources of entertainment but also influential cultural ambassadors. They transcend borders, promoting Indian culture, values, and traditions on a global scale. Through their stories, they invite viewers into the heart of India's colorful tapestry, fostering cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. Bollywood truly stands as a glittering lens through which the world can experience the beauty and diversity of Indian culture.

2.2 Indian Cuisine and its Global Popularity

Indian cuisine has emerged as a global culinary sensation, transcending geographical boundaries and delighting taste buds worldwide. Beyond its aromatic spices and diverse flavours, Indian cuisine serves as a powerful source of soft power, enhancing India's cultural influence and international reputation. This subsection explores how Indian cuisine has gained global popularity and why it is a significant asset in India's projection of soft power. Firstly, the Indian cuisine offers an astounding array of flavors, ranging from the fiery spices of a vindaloo to the rich creaminess of a butter chicken curry. This diversity captivates palates worldwide, making Indian cuisine a favorite among food enthusiasts. Two, India's rich tradition of vegetarian and vegan cooking aligns with the global trend towards plant-based diets. Dishes like *dal* (lentil curry), *aloo gobi* (potato and cauliflower), and *paneer tikka* (grilled cheese) offer a delectable range of meat-free options.²² Three, many Indian spices and ingredients are known for their health benefits. Turmeric, for example, is celebrated for its anti-inflammatory properties, and spices like cardamom and cinnamon have been used for centuries for their medicinal value. Secondly, Indian restaurants and food festivals abroad provide a platform for cultural exchange. They introduce not only Indian flavours but also elements of Indian culture, from music and dance to traditional serving styles. Two, Indian chefs have achieved international acclaim, earning Michelin stars and other culinary accolades. Their expertise in Indian cuisine attracts food enthusiasts and tourists to India, promoting culinary tourism and cultural understanding. Three, Indian cuisine is often featured in diplomatic receptions and state banquets. World leaders get a taste of Indian culture, fostering

goodwill and diplomacy. Thirdly, Indian restaurant chains, such as *The Curry House* and *Tandoori King*, have expanded worldwide. These establishments serve as ambassadors of Indian cuisine, spreading its popularity. Two, the global demand for Indian spices and ingredients has created a lucrative export market, benefiting the Indian economy. Lastly, Indian cuisine plays a central role in festivals like *Diwali*, *Eid*, and *Holi*. The celebration of these festivals abroad further promotes India's soft power by displaying its cultural diversity.

Indian cuisine's global popularity extends beyond its delicious flavours; it is a powerful soft power asset for India. By appealing to diverse palates, fostering cultural exchange, and contributing to the economy, Indian cuisine has carved a niche in the international culinary scene. As it continues to evolve and adapt to global tastes while preserving its authenticity, it will undoubtedly remain a source of pride and influence for India on the world stage. Through the medium of food, India continues to weave a flavorful narrative of cultural richness and diversity.

2.3 Festivals Celebrated by the Indian Diaspora

The Indian diaspora, spread across the world, brings with it a rich tapestry of festivals and traditions that serve as vibrant expressions of India's cultural heritage. These celebrations not only foster a sense of community and identity among diaspora members but also offer unique opportunities for cultural exchange and understanding in their host countries. One such example is the *Diwali* Celebrations. *Diwali* has celebrated with great enthusiasm in the United States, particularly in areas with significant Indian communities like New Jersey.²³ The lighting of *diyas* (lamps), fireworks, and cultural performances display the essence of this festival. *Diwali* is also a public holiday in Fiji, where the Indian community comes together for festivities, including decorating homes with rangoli (colorful designs) and lighting lamps.²⁴ Second, such example is the *Holi* (Festival of Colours) celebrations. *Holi* is celebrated with zest in Australia,²⁵ where community events feature colourful powder throwing, traditional music, and dance performances. Major cities like Sydney and Melbourne host large-scale *Holi* festivals. Two, the *Holi* is celebrated by the Indian diaspora in Canada, with events organized in cities like Toronto and Vancouver. Third, the *Ganesh Chaturthi* celebrations. The Indian community in Mauritius celebrates Ganesh Chaturthi with processions, idol immersion in the ocean, and cultural performances.²⁶ The festival is an integral part of the country's cultural fabric. In South Africa, particularly in Durban, with its significant Indian diaspora, hosts grand *Ganesh Chaturthi* celebrations, attracting participants from diverse communities.²⁷ The festival underscores the importance of tolerance and unity.

These examples demonstrate how festivals and traditions from India have transcended geographical boundaries, fostering cultural diversity and understanding in host countries. They showcase the Indian diaspora's commitment to preserving and sharing their cultural heritage while contributing to the global mosaic of celebrations. Through these festivities, the Indian diaspora not only connects with their roots but also enriches the cultures of their adopted homelands.

3. Economic Influence

3.1 Indian Diaspora Economic Contribution and their role in India's Economic Development

Indian diaspora has made substantial economic contributions to both their host countries and India itself. These contributions take various form, including remittances, investments, entrepreneurship, and expertise. Firstly, the remittance is a significant part of the Indian diaspora's economic contribution. It refers to the money sent by overseas Indians (often referred to as Non-Resident Indians or NRIs) to their families and relatives in India. India consistently ranks among the top recipients of remittances globally. According to data from the World Bank, India received approximately \$83 billion in remittances in 2020.²⁸

Remittances provide financial support to millions of families in India, contributing to improved living standards, education, and healthcare. Secondly, many members of the Indian diaspora have established successful businesses and enterprises in their host countries. These ventures create jobs, stimulate economic growth, and strengthen economic ties between India and their host countries. The Indian diaspora's investments in India, including real estate, startups, and industries, have boosted economic development. Silicon Valley, for example, has a significant presence of Indian-American entrepreneurs and investors who contribute to India's technology sector. Third, the brain gain aspect of Indian diaspora includes a substantial number of highly skilled professionals, including doctors, engineers, scientists, and IT specialists. These individuals often excel in their respective fields abroad. Some members of the diaspora return to India or engage in knowledge exchange programs, bringing expertise, innovation, and global best practices to various sectors, including healthcare, technology, and education. Fourth, the Indian diaspora is actively involved in philanthropic endeavors, both in their host countries and in India. They support educational institutions, healthcare facilities, and social initiatives, contributing to India's social and economic development. Fifth, cultural festivals, events, and trade fairs organized by the Indian diaspora contribute to India's soft power and promote economic cooperation. These activities often facilitate trade partnerships and investments. Sixth, the Indian diaspora plays a role in promoting tourism to India by encouraging friends and relatives to visit. This boosts the tourism sector, contributing to economic growth and job creation. Seventh, Indian banks and financial institutions often have a global presence, serving the banking and financial needs of the diaspora. This financial infrastructure facilitates economic transactions and investments. Eighth, many members of the Indian diaspora invest in Indian stock markets, contributing to market liquidity and capital flow.²⁹ Their investments help fuel economic growth.

Thus, the Indian diaspora's economic contribution is multifaceted and substantial. Remittances, investments, entrepreneurship, expertise, and philanthropy collectively enhance India's economic development. This diaspora, scattered across the globe, serves as a bridge between India and the world, facilitating economic cooperation, growth, and mutual benefit. Their contributions not only strengthen India's economy but also foster global connections and partnerships, reinforcing the interconnectedness of the global Indian community.

3.2 Indian Entrepreneurs and their Global Impact

Indian entrepreneurs have made a remarkable global impact across various industries, from technology and finance to healthcare and beyond. Their innovation, determination, and vision have propelled them onto the world stage. First, such example is Sundar Pichai (CEO, Alphabet Inc.). Under his leadership, Google has expanded its influence in various areas, including artificial intelligence and cloud computing, impacting industries worldwide. Second, Indra Nooyi (Former CEO, PepsiCo) served as the CEO of PepsiCo, one of the world's largest food and beverage companies, for 12 years. Her leadership emphasized sustainability and healthy products, influencing the global food industry. Third, Arvind Krishna (Chairman and CEO, IBM) is an IIT Kanpur graduate, became the Chairman and CEO of IBM in 2020. He is steering the company's focus toward cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and quantum computing, shaping the future of technology on a global scale. Fourth, Ratan Tata (Former Chairman, Tata Group) has transformed the Tata Group into a global conglomerate with diverse interests, including automotive, steel, and technology. His leadership and philanthropy initiatives have made a lasting impact, including the creation of the Tata Nano car and the Tata Trusts.³⁰ Fifth, Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw (Chairperson and MD, Biocon) is a pioneer in India's biotechnology industry. Her company, Biocon, has gained global recognition for its contributions to affordable healthcare, particularly in the field of biosimilars. Sixth, N. R. Narayana Murthy (Co-founder, Infosys) is a multinational IT services company that played a pivotal role in the growth of India's IT industry. Infosys has a global presence and is known for its innovation and ethical business practices. Last, Shantanu Narayen has been the CEO of Adobe Systems since 2007. Under his leadership, Adobe has expanded its software offerings to include creative, marketing, and document solutions, influencing the digital media and marketing industries worldwide.

These Indian entrepreneurs serve as inspirational figures, driving innovation, job creation, and economic growth not only in India but also on the global stage. Their contributions span various sectors, shaping industries and leaving a lasting imprint on the international business landscape.

4. Political Engagement

4.1 Representation of the Indian Diaspora in International Politics

The representation of the Indian diaspora in international politics is an evolving and significant aspect of India's global diplomacy. Indian diaspora communities across the world have been increasingly engaged in political activities and have gained recognition and influence in the countries they reside in, as well as in shaping India's foreign policy. First, diaspora as a political force; one, the Indian diaspora, which numbers in the millions across various countries, has emerged as a potent political force. Many diaspora members are active participants in local politics in their host countries. Two, they have organised themselves into diaspora associations, lobby groups, and political action committees to promote their interests and concerns. Secondly, political representation in host countries, one, Indian-origin individuals have been elected to political offices

in several countries, including the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and various European nations.³¹ Two, prominent examples include Kamala Harris, the Vice President of the United States, and several members of the US Congress and Senate. Thirdly, role in shaping host country policies; one, Indian diaspora members often advocate for policies and issues that are of interest to both their host country and India. These can include trade relations, immigration policies, and strategic partnerships. Two, their involvement can lead to a deeper understanding of India's position and concerns among policymakers in host countries. Fourthly, cultural diplomacy and bilateral relations; one, the Indian diaspora contributes to cultural diplomacy by organizing events, festivals, and cultural exchanges that foster cross-cultural understanding and two, such activities can enhance bilateral relations between India and host countries and create favorable perceptions of India. Lastly, economic and investment ties; one, many members of the Indian diaspora have successful businesses and investments both in their host countries and in India and two, their economic influence can facilitate trade relations and investment between India and their host countries.

4.2 Indian Diaspora Organisations and their Advocacy Efforts

Indian diaspora organisations play a crucial role in representing the interests and concerns of the Indian community abroad, as well as promoting India's culture, heritage, and policies. These organisations often engage in advocacy efforts to influence policies and decision-making processes in their host countries, while also fostering connections with India. These organisations are playing a multifaceted role such as advocating for the interests of the Indian community in areas such as immigration, education, employment, and civil rights. They advocating for instrumental in promoting Indian culture, traditions, and heritage in their host countries through cultural events, festivals, and educational programs. In addition, many diaspora organisations foster economic ties between India and their host countries by encouraging trade and investment. They often facilitate business networking and trade missions. Lastly, some organisations engage in diplomatic efforts, facilitating dialogue between India and their host nations on issues of mutual interest, including trade agreements and strategic partnerships.

4.3 Indian Diaspora and its Organizations

One, the Indian-American Community in the United States is one of the most influential diaspora groups. The Indian American community has a growing presence in US politics. For example, Kamala Harris, of Indian and Jamaican descent, became the Vice President of the United States in 2021. Several Indian Americans hold congressional seats and state-level positions. In addition, Indian Americans have made substantial contributions to the US economy, particularly in technology, entrepreneurship, medicine, and academia. Silicon Valley, in California, is home to a significant concentration of Indian American tech entrepreneurs and professionals. In addition to this, the Indian American community actively promotes Indian culture through various cultural festivals, dance performances, and educational institutions like Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. Organisations like the Indian American Community Foundation (IACF) and the Indian American Forum for Political Education (IAFPE) advocate for issues like immigration reforms, civil rights, and closer US-India

ties. In 2020, the IACF actively engaged in advocacy for H-1B visa holders, lobbying for their rights and addressing concerns about visa restrictions.³² This advocacy had a significant impact on the discourse surrounding immigration policies in the US. Two, the United Kingdom has a sizable Indian diaspora community. The British Indian community has a long history in the United Kingdom, with significant migration occurring during the post-war period and later. The leader of Indian origin, Rishi Sunak, has held the current top political position, the Prime Minister of UK. In addition, the British Indian community has several MPs in the UK Parliament, for example, Priti Patel is the Home Secretary. British Indian entrepreneurs and business leaders have established themselves in various sectors, including finance, industry, and media. They contribute significantly to the UK's economy. Additionally, Indian culture, particularly cuisine, has become an integral part of British society. Indian restaurants are prevalent across the UK, making Indian cuisine a British favorite. Their organisations like the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) UK and the Indian Diaspora Forum (IDF) work to strengthen economic ties between the UK and India. The IDF, in collaboration with the UK government, organised the UK-India Week in 2019, which included discussions on trade, investment, and innovation.³³ This event facilitated dialogue between Indian diaspora entrepreneurs and British policymakers, contributing to economic cooperation. Three, the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) is a worldwide organisation representing the interests of People of Indian Origin (PIO). It operates in numerous countries, including Canada, the United States, Australia, and various European nations. It has been actively involved in addressing issues faced by PIOs in different countries, such as difficulties in obtaining Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) cards. Their advocacy efforts have led to policy changes aimed at simplifying the OCI application process and extending its benefits to PIOs. Three, the Gulf region, including countries like the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Oman, has also a sizable Indian diaspora, primarily comprising expatriate workers. Indian expatriates in the Gulf play a crucial role in various sectors, including construction, healthcare, and information technology. They contribute significantly to the economies of Gulf countries and remit billions of dollars to India annually. The Indian diaspora in the region actively promotes Indian culture through cultural centres, events, and festivals. *Diwali* and other Indian festivals are celebrated with enthusiasm. In addition, India's diplomatic relations with Gulf countries are influenced by the significant presence of the Indian diaspora. The Indian government engages with Gulf nations to safeguard the rights and interests of Indian expatriates.

These case studies demonstrate how the Indian diaspora wields influence in various countries and regions. Their impact spans politics, economics, culture, and diplomacy, highlighting the multifaceted nature of the diaspora's role in shaping both their host countries and India's global connections.

5. Challenges and Criticism

The Indian diaspora, like any other global community, faces various challenges and obstacles as they navigate life in their host countries and maintain connections with their Indian roots. First, the Indian diaspora is striking a balance between preserving their cultural identity and assimilating into the culture of their host

country. Maintaining cultural ties while adapting to a different way of life can be complex. Secondly, Indian diaspora members sometimes encounter discrimination and racism in their host countries. This can manifest in various forms, such as racial profiling, hate crimes, or workplace discrimination. Thirdly, immigration policies and visa regulations in host countries can pose challenges for the Indian diaspora, particularly for students and professionals seeking visas and work permits. Fourthly, access to quality education and professional opportunities can be limited for some members of the Indian diaspora, especially if they face language barriers or discrimination. Sixthly, building meaningful social networks and relationships in a new country can be challenging. The diaspora may experience social isolation or difficulties in forming connections with the local population. Seventhly, navigating the legal and administrative systems in host countries can be complex, particularly for issues related to immigration status, property ownership, and taxation. Eighthly, the younger generations of the diaspora may struggle with a sense of cultural disconnect, as they may not have experienced India firsthand and might have a limited understanding of their heritage. Lastly, some members of the Indian diaspora may face dilemmas related to dual citizenship or nationality, as India does not permit dual citizenship, which can affect their rights and obligations in both countries.

It is important to note that the Indian government has made efforts to address some of these criticisms and challenges over the years. Nevertheless, these issues highlight the complexities and ongoing discussions surrounding the relationship between the Indian diaspora and the Indian government's policies and initiatives.

6. Role of Indian Diaspora in India's International Relations

The Indian diaspora plays a significant and multifaceted role in shaping India's international relations. Their influence extends across various domains, including diplomacy, economics, culture, and politics. Firstly, cultural diplomacy, promoting Indian culture, Indian diaspora communities act as cultural ambassadors by promoting Indian traditions, festivals, music, dance, cuisine, and languages in their host countries. This fosters cross-cultural understanding and enhances India's cultural influence globally and it actively organises and participates in cultural events and festivals, facilitating cultural exchanges between India and host nations. These events strengthen people-to-people ties and display India's rich cultural heritage. Second, economic engagement, investment and trade, the Indian diaspora, particularly business leaders and entrepreneurs, play a vital role in promoting economic ties between India and their host countries. They invest in India, facilitate trade, and contribute to economic growth and it send significant remittances back to India, providing essential financial support to families and contributing to India's foreign exchange reserves. Three, political influence, political representation, individuals of Indian origin hold political positions, influencing their host country's policies toward India. They often advocate for closer ties between their host country and India. It also engages in political advocacy and lobbying efforts to promote India's interests, such as trade agreements, immigration policies, and strategic partnerships. Fourth, diplomatic relations, people-to-people diplomacy, the Indian diaspora serves as a bridge for diplomatic relations, facilitating connections between Indian officials and influential individuals in host countries. The Indian government actively engages with the diaspora through

initiatives like *Pravasi Bharatiya Divas* and the *Overseas Citizenship of India* (OCI) programme, fostering stronger bonds and encouraging diaspora contributions to India's growth. Fifth, soft power projection, cultural soft power, the Indian diaspora contributes significantly to India's soft power by promoting Indian culture, art, literature, and spirituality. This enhances India's attractiveness and influence on the global stage. In addition, the achievements of diaspora members in various fields, such as technology, medicine, academia, and entrepreneurship, exemplify India's success stories and innovation, bolstering India's image as a land of opportunity and talent.

7. Future Prospects

The future prospects of the role of the Indian diaspora in shaping India's international relations and further strengthening India's soft power are promising and multifaceted. As the diaspora continues to grow and evolve, its influence is likely to expand in several ways. First, the economic diplomatic tools such as trade and investment and new fond start up ecosystem Indian diaspora, with its significant economic influence, will likely continue to foster investment and trade relations between India and their host countries. Their role in facilitating business partnerships and investments will become even more critical. Diaspora entrepreneurs and professionals will contribute to India's burgeoning start-up ecosystem. Their experience and networks in innovative fields will help India maintain its reputation as a hub for technology and innovation. Second, political influence, representation and lobbying efforts of the Indian diaspora continues to engage in politics in their host countries, more individuals of Indian origin may hold influential political positions. This will lead to increased advocacy for India's interests and strengthening of political ties. Diaspora organisations will become more sophisticated in their lobbying efforts, advocating for favorable policies in areas such as immigration, education, and trade that benefit both the diaspora and India. Third, in cultural diplomatic efforts such as preservation of culture, organising cultural festivals and cultural exchanges the Indian diaspora will play a crucial role in a globalised world. Traditional arts, languages, and practices will continue to find new audiences and appreciation. The cultural festivals, events, and exchanges will grow in scale and frequency. They will serve as platforms for promoting mutual understanding and goodwill between India and host nations. Fourth, in soft power projection, global impact of Bollywood and Indian cinema will maintain their global appeal, reaching new audiences and contributing to India's soft power as a cultural and entertainment powerhouse. In addition, the popularity of yoga and *Ayurveda* will continue to rise, with Indian diaspora members playing a role in promoting holistic wellness practices and philosophy globally. Fifth, in the academic engagement and skill transfer, the Indian diaspora members in academia will collaborate on research, knowledge exchange, and educational partnerships between institutions in their host countries and India. Additionally, the diaspora will continue to play a vital role in transferring skills, expertise, and knowledge to India in various fields, contributing to its human capital development. Sixthly, in maintaining people-to-people ties, the Indian diaspora will strengthen people-to-people ties between India and host countries, fostering a deeper understanding of India's culture, values, and opportunities. Lastly, in addressing

global challenges and solving them, the Indian diaspora may play a more active role in addressing global challenges such as climate change, healthcare, and poverty alleviation, leveraging their expertise and resources.

Overall, the Indian diaspora's future prospects in shaping India's international relations and strengthening its soft power are bright. Their increasing engagement and contributions across various sectors will continue to enhance India's global influence and play a pivotal role in its diplomatic, economic, and cultural relations with countries around the world.

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