

Topic: Socio-Economic and Philanthropic Impact of Gujarati International Migration
/Diaspora at Place of Origin: An Empirical Analysis of India

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Extended Abstract:

Gujarati is a well-known Indian diaspora that mostly emigrated as skilled, semi-skilled or businessmen to developed countries and African countries. This research paper examines the multifaceted impact of the *Gujarati* international migration or diaspora at the place of origin and how international emigration from Gujarat and migrant transnational networking have played a significant role in the developmental process at the place of origin. The impact could be easily seen by transferring the remitted amount of money at the household level and their strong social and community network ties across countries. Their socio-economic, philanthropic contribution and cultural linkages play very dynamic roles in changing the lives of households and left-behind families and communities. This paper is based on empirical data from rural and urban settings across districts, namely Kutch, Anand, and Gandhinagar of Gujarat. The empirical data revealed that some villages/towns are the most economically prosperous, getting the highest remittances and philanthropic contributions from emigrated Gujaratis from India. *Madhapur* is the wealthiest village in the Kutch district of Gujarat (India) in South Asia region. Results based on the empirical data and used mixed methodologies such as snowball sample data, case studies, interviews, narrative, key informant interviews etc. The research aims to widen our knowledge on the relation between Diaspora and development through the example of vast Gujarati diaspora and its impact on the development process of four districts of Gujarat namely- Kutch, Mehsana, Anand, and Gandhinagar

Key Words: International migration, Diaspora, Remittances, Philanthropy, Development

Introduction: Gujaratis have been known as renowned seafarers and traders from prehistoric times. The state's commercial and marine interests have been fuelled by its proximity to the Arabian Sea and a number of ports constructed along its coast. People of various origins began to leave their hometowns throughout the state, forsaking their conventional caste jobs (Ballard, 1978). The Gujarati diaspora has contributed significantly to Gujarat's development through a

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variety of means, including economic, social, and cultural contributions. The transnational social network of the diasporic community has also fostered linkages between Gujarat and the rest of the world, resulting in a dynamic movement of ideas, resources, techniques, and skills. Remittances and investments are one of the most immediate economic repercussions of the Gujarati diaspora.

According to the latest UN data published in the World Migration Report 2022, India had the most citizens residing abroad of any country in the world in 2020 as depicted in the chart below. As of mid-year, little fewer than 17.9 million people born in the nation were residing abroad. Mexico and Russia, both huge nations with large populations, finished second and third, with 11.2 million and 10.8 million people living abroad, respectively.

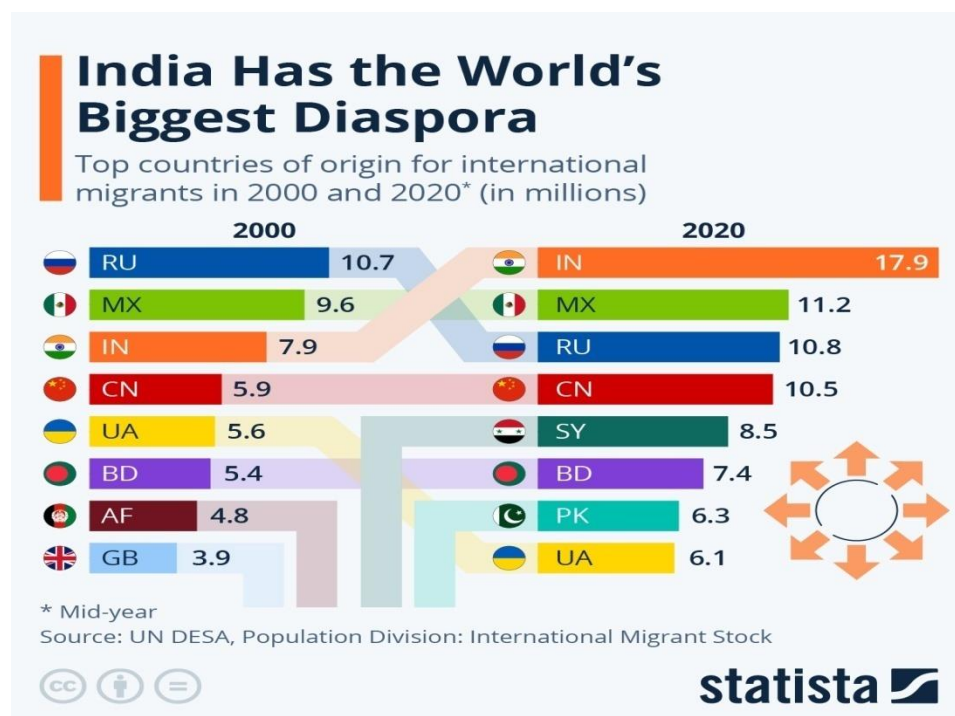


Figure 1.1: Top countries of origin for international migrants in 2020 and 2023.

Source: <https://www.statista.com/chart/30803/top-countries-of-origin-for-international-migrants/>

Thematic Literature Review & Theoretical Focus:

Diaspora and transnationalism have a complicated and dynamic connection, with both notions increasingly overlapping (Bauböck, 2010). This is especially true in the Jewish diaspora, where transnationalism plays a significant role in creating communal connections and identity (Bokser-Liwerant, 2014). However, the theoretical relationship between the two remains

ambiguous, raising concerns about the transition from a global social field to a diaspora group (Lacroix, 2018). Nonetheless, there is a rising emphasis on the transnational aspect of diasporic communities, which is directly related to migration and the formation of social fields beyond geopolitical boundaries (Vertovec, 2001). Thomas Faist (2010) studies the transnational method to migration studies that arose in the early 1990s, at a period when non-state actors were receiving more attention in the international arena. Both transnationalism and the notion of diaspora have separate genealogy since the first is from international relations, and the latter from a far older source, yet they are connected. Diasporas are viewed as a precondition for transnational communities, with the former emphasising identity creation and mobilisation and the other emphasising links and practises beyond time and space. Both Bahar (2020) and Brinkerhoff (2008) investigate the potential for diasporas to contribute to the development of their home countries, with Bahar emphasising economic gains and opportunities and Brinkerhoff discussing the various ways in which diasporas can contribute, such as remittances, investment, and knowledge transfer. Mohan (2002) and MacGregor (2008) present concrete instances of this potential, with Mohan emphasising the problems and opportunities connected with displacement and MacGregor emphasising the positive influence of skilled migrants on Somaliland's growth. These studies highlight the important role that diasporas may play in the growth of their home nations. Diaspora philanthropy is a factor of development process as it is viewed as a sort of resource transfer from migrants to their home countries. Household remittances, defined as the transfer of money and products from migrants to their family members at home, are a significant component of such resource transfers (Kapur 2004; Nayar 1994; Oberoi and Singh 1980). Remittances and diaspora philanthropy are critical components of the transnational connections that migrant populations retain with their places of origin (Elden 2005; Giddens 1990; Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Malkki 1992). According to the existing literature, Gujarati diaspora indulges more in social remittances in the form of charity, gifts, and relief during disasters. Remittances are defined as the fraction of international migrant workers' earnings remitted home that plays an important role in the economics of sending nations (Russell, 1986). Michele Tuccio and Jackline Wahba (2020) reviewed economic literature on social remittances as economic, social, and political attitudes and norms which are conveyed through migration. Financial remittances, on the other hand, are in the form of cash or products sent by migrants to their home countries. Migration is a complicated process that involves not just the exchange of money but also of ideas, practises, and social capital (Tuccio, 2020). These "social remittances" can have an impact on political landscapes, as evidenced by immigrants' influence on social movements and campaigns (Lacroix, 2016). The

contrast between individual and collective remittances, as well as their capacity to influence regional and national transformation, broadens the idea of these social remittances (Levitt, 2011). However, how these remittances are received varies, with financial remittances being more readily accepted than non-material ones such as democratic principles, Western work culture and so on (Gershoni, 2013).

Important Findings:

- J.H. Khan (2008) like many others gives three qualities of Gujarati Diaspora that makes them stand apart from other Indian Diasporas, like their “entrepreneurial spirit”, “commercial networks” and “their aptitude for business” which established Gujarati diaspora communities as one of the most prolific and upward moving Indian diaspora communities.
- During the British rule they migrated to serve as clerks, and traders for the British in their colonies in East Africa and many of them later further migrated to UK in the 1960s and the 70s. There was a further migration of Gujaratis to other industrial countries in North America, Europe and Australia by professionals and also as unskilled labourers. Some Gujarati migration also took place to Antwerp, Belgium of the Gujarati diamond merchants of mostly the Jain community in the 1970s as it was a known international market for diamond trading.
- One of the most prolific business communities of Gujarat is the Patidar community of the Patels that historically belong to the Charotar area of Gujarat or the district of Anand. This area has a high percentage of families with emigrated family members. This community is also closely related to the Swaminarayan sect of Hinduism and is highly influential religious Indian diaspora that contributes in many ways in the development of their home districts and villages and Gujarat. Other Gujarati communities that migrated to East Africa for trade were the Lohana and the Visha-Oshwal communities.
- The Government of Gujarat has opened a dedicated site that caters to the non-resident Gujaratis, <https://nri.gujarat.gov.in/>. It is run by the Gujarat State Non-Resident Gujaratis’ Foundation with the General Administration Department of the Government of Gujarat. The sites contain a registration form for Non-resident Gujaratis or NRGs and various information that they could need. It also has a link for a “Vatan Seva Contribution” that helps NRIs to contribute to hospitals, schools and in other such places.
- The Swaminarayan or BAPS Temple has its members across the world in the Gujarati diaspora community and who maintain contact and exchanges with each other and their

homeland. An example of Gujarati diaspora engagement with their homeland is through different diaspora societies and foundations that contribute to Gujarat and India. The Vishwa Gujarat Samaj (VGS) organizes an event to felicitate Gujarati people who have contributed to India and the world every year with an award and prize money. The VGS also contributes to the development of Gujarati society in rural parts of Gujarat like farmers and to improve the water supply in villages (Indian Express, December 26, 2021).

- The 2001 Bhuj Earthquake is a great example of the Gujarati diaspora's transnational links. The whole Gujarati community and organizations worldwide came together to organize funds to help the victims of the earthquake and also in the rebuilding efforts (Bhat 2018) (Singh, Didar and Rajan 2016).
- Diaspora Philanthropy is thus connected to the idea of remittances. The diaspora's philanthropy in both direct and indirect ways contributes to the development of the region and part of the process of development and part of the transfer of remittances from abroad to the homeland, household remittances, defined as the transfer of money and products from migrants to their family members at home, are a significant component of such resource transfers (Kapur 2004) (Nayar 1994) (Oberoi and Singh 1980).
- There are many different Gujarati communities in Kalol (Gandhinagar), there is a lot of migration from these communities, but it is mostly scattered across Africa, the Arab Gulf, UK, US, Canada and Australia. The Patel community has a consistent migration pattern to the USA that is a few decades old. The Patel diaspora community has built a very developed area on the outskirts of Kalol. It has clean roads and many banks and shopping outlets. Most of the houses there are immigrant households and majority of the migration has taken place to Canada and USA.
- In Kutch district it was seen that many emigrated belong to the urban areas of Bhuj, semi-urban village of *Madhapar* and the rural villages of *Sukhpar*, *Mankuwa*, *Kera*, and *Baldiya*. The migration from the city of Bhuj is not very prolific. Most of the migration has taken place by the Kutchi Leva Patel community and their villages. They first went to African countries and then to the United Kingdom. They have a large diaspora population in Kenya, Tanzania, and the UK. Madhapur, a village of the Patel community is termed the "richest village in Asia" and the previous richest village in Asia, *Baldiya* is also in Kutch.



Picture: 1 A hospital built by the Gujarati diaspora during the Bhuj Earthquake, Mankuwa, Kutch, Gujarat



Picture No.2: The New Ram Mandir being built by the Diaspora in Nardipur, Nardipur, Gandhinagar district, Gujarat



Picture:3 The Hospital built by the Gujarati diaspora, after the Bhuj Earthquake, Sukhpar, Kutch, Gujarat,



Picture:4 A discussion with a group of diaspora members who had gathered in the public playground built by the diaspora in evening, Madhapar, Kutch, Gujarat