



Indian Diaspora and their Cultural Relations in Ethiopia

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Abstract - The term Diaspora refers to the people or ethnic populations who have been forced or induced to leave their homelands, becoming dispersed and spreading their culture throughout the world. The Indian Diaspora, which includes people of Indian Origin and Non-Resident Indians is a heterogeneous community globally, just like India itself. Due to this diversity, engaging and connecting with them requires different and distinct approaches. The common thread that binds them together is the idea of India and its inherent values. Historically, the dispersion of people from India and the formation of Indian Diaspora communities have resulted from different waves of migration, spanning hundreds of years.

However, the Indian Diaspora in Ethiopia is comparatively smaller, with a population of less than 10000. Nevertheless, they have played a significant role in fostering India- Ethiopian cultural relations. The Indian diaspora has substantially impacted the culture and economies of Ethiopia and has earned a place of pride among the Ethiopian people. Within Ethiopia, the Indian Diaspora is involved in various professions such as entrepreneurs, traders, academicians, teachers, trainers, engineers, workers, managers, and administrators. Consequently, they play a leading role in the technological revolution taking place in Ethiopia. The contributions of the Indian Diaspora in various fields have greatly influenced India's image abroad. This paper primarily focuses on the cultural relations of the Indian Diaspora in Ethiopia through various platforms with locals. It also examines the programs and policies implemented by the Ethiopian Government to support the cultural relations of the Indian Diaspora in the country.

Keywords : Diaspora, Heterogeneous, Migration, Colonialism, mercantilism, Culture

Indian Diaspora and their Cultural Relations in Ethiopia - In the global era, cultural amalgamation has encountered a boost from the existing international institutions. In these circumstances, the study of diaspora acquires important space and becomes significant. In terms of language, identity, and status, any diaspora is very diversified, and its cultural, socio-economic, and political roles, along with the level of integration and assimilation, becomes crucial, as these cultural connections between two countries are preserved and protected. But today we see that, despite playing an important role in every corner of the world, diasporic members are viewed with a lot of speculation and reservation. In the African continent, there are around

three million people of Indian origin. A large number of Indians have settled in Africa after migrating in phases (Sinha 2019). In between 8000-10000, diaspora is living in Ethiopia. Considering diaspora as an important attribute of the connection between domestic and Ethiopian cultures. This has added new dimensions to the India-Ethiopia relationship.

The term diaspora comes from the Greek words *dia* (over or through) and *sperio* (dispersal or sowing). Diaspora implies dispersion or scattering in Greek. In the case of the Indian diaspora, India is the shared ancestral country from which individuals moved to various areas of the world for various reasons, voluntarily or involuntarily. As a result of such migration, the diaspora was founded (Lal 2007: 14-18). V.S. Sheth defines diaspora as "a scattering of people with a common origin, background, and beliefs" (Sheth 2003: 105). Transnational links and contacts have grown in importance as states' interdependence has grown. "Diaspora is a Greek term for a nation or a part of a nation separated from the rest of the nation," according to the Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences. The term 'diaspora' mainly refers to Jewish people who live outside of Palestine. The relationships maintained by the diaspora are symbolic. For academics, the term "diaspora" encompasses a variety of groups, including immigrants, guest workers, ethnic and racial minorities, refugees, expatriates, and travellers. Diasporas can form as a result of voluntary or forced migration, mass exile, or the movement of economically disadvantaged groups to other countries. Recent changes in the global political and economic order have resulted in large-scale population movements in practically every region (Sinha 2019).

Implications for India because of the diasporic community's link with the motherland, there is a chance of their repatriation from the nation of their adoption. Thus, migration gave rise to the diaspora. It is also obvious that the diaspora are ethnic minority groups who live in host nations but have significant emotional, sentimental, and material ties to their places of origin (Sheffer 1986: 3). The term has since been broadened to include any population that has migrated from its home nation and established itself in a foreign land. They selectively incorporate and synthesise themselves with their ancestors' roots and sense of history. Migration is a crucial driver of historical change in a globalising world when a diasporic population assimilates, acculturates into its host society, and tends to lose connection and ties with its land of origin (Gupta 2003: 2). As a result, the diaspora plays an important role in the establishment of ethnic identity, the moulding of ethnic relations, and the reconstruction of societies. They provide a comprehensive framework for analysing cultural changes and are consequently gaining importance in current history.

The Indian Diaspora, which includes people of Indian origin and non-resident Indians, is a heterogeneous community globally, just like India itself. Due to this diversity, engaging and connecting with them requires different and distinct approaches. The common thread that binds them together is the idea of India and its inherent values. Historically, the dispersion of people from India and the formation of Indian Diaspora communities have resulted from different waves of migration, spanning hundreds of years. These migrations were driven by a variety of reasons, including slavery during mercantilism, indentured labor under colonialism, and guest worker programmes in post-colonial times.

In numerous ways, the Indian diaspora influenced Ethiopian life. They had an impact on food, clothing, dance, music, the arts, and architecture. In Ethiopia, there is a huge demand for Indian cuisine. Ethiopians have become well-known for their love of Indian cuisine. Textiles of Indian origin have had a tremendous impact on Ethiopian life and culture in a variety of ways. According to a recent study, cotton production began in the northern region of the Indian subcontinent and spread to southwestern Arabia, from where it was taken across the Red Sea to Nubia and Abyssinia during the first millennium B.C. The art of weaving, as well as the process for building the loom, originated in India. Michael Gervers, a Canadian academic, contends that an old pit-treadle cotton loom, initially invented in India and now widely used in Ethiopia, may have reached there by the same route as cotton itself. According to Gervers, the specific date of the cultural and technological shift associated with cotton weaving is unknown, though evidence points to the Middle Ages, if not earlier (Gervers 1983:39). The pit-treadle loom has long been abandoned in India, but while touring India, I came upon a 17th or 18th-century portrayal of Baba Kabir Das, a 14th-century Punjabi saint and scholar, weaving on such a loom at the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library in Patna. Throughout the years, Indian cotton and silk made their way to the Horn of Africa's interior. Although there is evidence that "cloth for making dresses" was exported as early as the sixth century at a location near the present city of Bombay (Pankhurst 1974: 213), specific information recorded by European explorers came considerably later. Before the Portuguese conquered the Indian Ocean, they observed that more than twenty varieties of cotton cloth and all kinds of silk materials were already being produced in the kingdoms of Gujirat and Cambay, while the Deccan produced large quantities of calico, a coarse cloth usually imprinted with bright designs. All of these textiles were sent to ports on the Red Sea's western shore as well as those in the Horn of Africa, where they were bartered for gold, ivory, horses, and slaves. Significant amounts of these Indian textiles made their way into Ethiopia's interior. The importation of Indian textiles increased in the 17th and 18th centuries. Another item produced in India that reached Ethiopia during this time period was ready-made garments. According to Jesuit missionary Emanuele Barradas, the silk textiles, brocades, velvets, and damasks were imported not in pieces but mostly as ready-to-wear articles of clothing cut in Moorish style, and the Abyssinians paid for them with gold nuggets "by weight" (Beckingham 1954: 43). They also traded grain, ivory, musk, wax, and slaves for garments with India. All of these textiles were sent to ports on the Red Sea's western shore as well as those in the Horn of Africa, where they were bartered for gold, ivory, horses, and slaves. Significant amounts of these Indian textiles made their way into Ethiopia's interior. The importation of Indian textiles increased in the 17th and 18th centuries.

India's contribution to the art of building and architecture, particularly the construction of castles in Gondar, has been widely debated, although no clear conclusions have been reached. However, it is probable that the Jesuits brought with them Indian craftsmen who succeeded in manufacturing lime from the indigenous calcium carbonate known as nora around 1619 (Beckingham 1954: 834, 187-88). Following that, mortar was used to build the royal palace at Gannata Maryam near Gorgora, as well as bridges and, subsequently, the castles of Gondar. It has been assumed that the latter's style must imitate Portuguese architecture, which is clearly incorrect. In reality, the majority of them are inspired by Indian Mogul architecture (Chojnacki 2003).

Indian teachers and businessmen settled in Ethiopia in the late nineteenth century. The majority of the settlers came from Gujarat. According to current statistics, more than 8,000 people of Indian descent live in Ethiopia. The relationship between India and Ethiopia has grown stronger. In modern historical terms, these relationships have expanded beyond early commercial transactions to include political, technical, and sociocultural exchanges (Banda 2021).

Since then, the relationship has gone through numerous stages. During Emperor Haile Selassie's reign (1941–1974), the connections were extremely close. The Emperor encouraged many Indian instructors to work in Ethiopia, particularly in rural regions, to help boost literacy levels. Relations between the two nations have been particularly amicable during Ethiopia's current democratic dispensation, which began in 1991 and has been followed by economic liberalisation programmes. During these phases, the leaders of the two nations have made high-level bilateral exchange visits. Emperor Haile Selassie, for example, visited India in 1956, 1959, and 1968. Ethiopia's leader, Haile Mengistu Mariam, also visited India in 1983. President Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan of India also visited Ethiopia in 1965. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh also visited Ethiopia in 2011. Ethiopia has also dispatched high-level delegations to India-Africa conferences held in New Delhi. Similarly, Addis Ababa hosted the India-Africa summit in 2011.

Indian and Ethiopian ties have happened at numerous levels in the post-Cold War era, both during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, leading to the signature of some of the following agreements: Air Services Agreements, 1993, 2004, and 2008; Trade Agreement, 1997; Agreement on Cooperation in Micro Dams and Small Scale Irrigation Schemes, 2002; Agreement on Cooperation in Science and Technology, 2007; Protocol on Foreign Office Consultations (2007); and the Double Taxation Avoidance Treaty 2011, to name a few. The Joint Trade Committee (JTC) agreement, agreed in 1997, has resulted in the two countries' trade connections flourishing. The volume of commerce in 2018/2019 showed the following figures: \$713 million in Indian exports to Ethiopia and \$53.6 million in Ethiopian exports to India. The primary Indian exports to Ethiopia include packaged pharmaceuticals, coated flat-rolled iron, and rice. Soybeans, dry legumes, and spices are the principal products for Ethiopia from India.

Aside from trade, the relationships can also be evident at the educational level. The two countries agreed on an Educational Exchange Programme in July 2007. This has resulted in student exchanges and academic expertise movements on both sides, assisting in the reduction of illiteracy and the promotion of new technologies in the twenty-first century. Cultural interactions have taken place between the two countries as well. Cultural and dance groups from both countries have travelled to perform as a result of this. The Gujarati Dance Troup, Bihari Dance Group, and Goa Dance Troup are among many who have performed in Ethiopia at some point. In 2013, the Ethiopian Embassy in New Delhi also opened a cultural centre, further cementing India-Ethiopia relations. All of these relationships have been made possible by the Indian government's outward-looking policy. Recently, the current Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, has advocated for "multi-alignment," which has aided in the improvement of India-Ethiopia relations.

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