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Globalisation from Below and the
Global Indian Diaspora

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Globalisation discourse is a recurrent preoccupation of our time. It cuts across academic disciplines and sets in motion examinations and explanations rarely imagined earlier. Globalisation has become a grand context and enables conflicting claims to co-exist and co-evolve. Attempts at interpretation and discussion of globalisation are carried out even as the present world order is changing. While not denying the fact that globalisation discourse has reached its current crescendo mainly in response to the involvement of the United States of America in the international economy, we believe that there are different foci of global influence and similarly diverse modes of global resistance.

The globalisation that is most often celebrated by leaders of the world's rich nations, big corporate executives and economic bandwagon is actually globalisation from above. It has created several socio-cultural and economic ills and has provoked a worldwide movement of resistance wherein people have risen to counter the vices of this enlarged system of economic governance. Now, since the global dimension of social relations has linked people across the length and breadth of the planet, people all over the world are coming together to co-operate in standing against the menace. Globalisation

from below, made famous by Brecher et al (2000), provides a conceptual tool to look at resistance against corporate globalisation, which is destroying diversity, democracy and ecological balance.

This analytical paper examines the matrix of globalisation and diasporas, and delineates the 'Indianisation of the globe' and the advocacy of the global Indian diaspora from the perspective of globalisation from below. This standpoint allows past antagonisms to be left behind and replaced by interconnectedness and the appreciation of enriching diversity. It provides a very important viewpoint from which to analyse the global Indian diaspora. We find the diversity of India manifested in its diasporic population and Indian languages, cuisines, religions, cinema and 'ways of life' can be seen all over the globe, connected with the 'homeland' cultures and values and with other Indians around the globe.

It is beyond doubt that the Indian diaspora has grown from strength to strength and its maturity is conspicuous in its increasing involvement in issues related to India and Indians. The communication revolution and new information technologies have given impetus to the process. The efforts of the Indian diaspora have provided the spread of Indian culture and values and have also given rise to changes in the 'homeland'. The case in point is the *Narmada Bachao Andolan* (NBA) advocacy in India, discussed in the body of the essay. Rather than focusing only on advocacy for homeland issues, this paper contextualises 'globalisation from below' in the broader context of 'Indianisation of the globe'.

Globalisation is not new, but the present era that it characterises has distinctive features. It is in the same vein that the next section maps the nature of global reality and charts out the contours of the prominent debates around it. The thread of the discussion is followed in the section on globalisation from below. Transnational networks are the pivotal aspect of globalisation from below. They help people around the globe to understand and team up. In most cases people in the diaspora in different adopted countries come together to highlight and stand against the ills of globalisation from above in the 'homeland'. The diaspora also acts as the medium for the spread of 'homeland' culture around the world. The essay, therefore, highlights this aspect in its subsequent part. It also puts the global Indian diaspora into perspective and this is then followed by a discussion. The aim is to open up academic discussion on the theme and create

fertile ground for further investigation around 'homeland' advocacy and development, the possibility and necessity of which is increasing due to globalisation from below.

Mapping the Nature of Global Reality

Globalisation is a contested term and it represents a plethora of seemingly simple but actually complex phenomena. A key buzzword in today's world, it is generally used to describe the intensification of worldwide social relations that link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa (Giddens 1990). Therefore, globalisation has led to 'time-space compression' (Harvey 1989) because revolutions in information and communication technologies have enabled instantaneous communication around the globe and have brought more places and people into contact with one another. This in turn has an impact on economic as well as social spheres. Harvey states that the organisation of space defines relationships not only between activities, things and concepts, but also, by extension, between people.

The discourse on globalisation has grown both in amount and complexity. One perspective highlights its destructive effects on democratic processes, workers' rights, the environment, as well as the nation-state. Another proposes that growth in international trade has led to widely shared benefits and civilising effects. Yet another stresses that the extent and effects of globalisation have been exaggerated while others acknowledge the increased flow of technology, information, practices, free capital and transnational organisations. Globalisation has been praised or criticised for increasing or decreasing cultural homogeneity around the world and it is also seen as a condition of modernity; a new and distinct global age (Fiss and Hirsch 2005: 32).

Through the 'Runaway World' (2003), a discussion on globalisation and its effects, Giddens divides scholars and advocates on globalisation in two camps, namely, skeptics and radicals. According to him, the skeptics believe that globalisation is a myth; an ideology rather than reality. They point out that the world has been hijacked by the 'neo-liberal' ideology that is spreading its tentacles, more so after the collapse of communism and the ensuing increase in influence of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). They assume that globalisation is the new form of reality which has existed

for a long time. The radicals, on the other hand, refer to significant transformations that have noticeable consequences, not only for the world economy, but also for basic institutions of society. Giddens places himself in the radical camp and acknowledges that globalisation is the culmination of the project of modernity. He traces globalisation to the origins of modernity in the sixteenth century and therefore defies his own argument and label of belonging to the radical camp (Buroway, 2000).

Buroway (2000) further argues that the skeptics are without texts and the radicals are without history and he attempts to restore the deficiencies of both ideology and history in his conception of 'grounded globalisation'. His conception of grounded globalisation is a foreground for his ethnography and what I draw here as an attempt to construct perspectives from 'globalisation from below'. The debates on globalisation remind me of the mythological story of seven blind men and the elephant. Each blind man touches parts of the elephant and describes it based on his partial understanding, thus adding to the others' ability to conceptualise the elephant. Similarly, each approach adds to the understanding of the nature of global reality.

The attempt in this chapter is not to deliberate on the voluminous debates on globalisation but to move beyond debates with the contention that the process of globalisation has preyed on democracy, diversity and environment. Although globalisation is not the product of some plot, but the actions and their consequences within it have reduced the power of people to shape their destiny, increased cultural homogenisation, and created havoc with the environment. The nature of global reality has also provided an impetus to join hands to stop the ills from being accentuated by global forces from above. The next section places its advocacy in particular time and place, delineates the necessity for globalisation from below, and lays down the contours of the enigma that it promises.

Globalisation from Below

The time was turbulent in the wake of the battle of Seattle and there was opportunity to sow seeds to highlight the spectre of globalisation and launch a worldwide social movement for people's connectivity to correct the ills propagated by globalisation from above. Brecher et al (2000) laid down the idea of globalisation from below and it has been

appreciated since then as an attempt to restore democracy, diversity and ecological balance. In a way, as they point out, the fundamental tenet of the movement is that everyone is entitled to participate in the social dialogue on the question of the world and its future. The underlying challenge is to raise the boat, not just the yacht; for everyone to live with dignity and to create a better future.

Gandhi (2002: 357-358) brings out two cases in point that help to contextualise the discussion. First is the *jal samarpan* (self-drowning) *satyagraha* (non-violent protest) called by the activists of the *Narmada Bachao Andolan* (NBA, Save the Narmada Movement) together with local *adivasis* (tribal villagers) and foreign activists in 2001. This movement was necessitated because the Gujarat government was about to close the gates of the Sardar Sarovar dam and, with monsoon waters to come, the tribal villages would be submerged. Another case can be taken from Quebec, Canada. The events unfolded as almost all heads of state in America were discussing the implementation of the proposed Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA). This proposal aimed to expand the North American Free Trade Agreement's (NAFTA) neo-liberal economic policies to the rest of the western hemisphere. In response, large-scale protests were organised cutting across national boundaries in what was called the People's Summit. Around 40 thousand activists gathered and tried to stop the FTAA proceedings.

Two incidents, in two different nation-states, sparked by two different issues; yet a common *modus operandi* and a common goal united them. Both actions were taken by people united across narrow boundaries of identity and affiliations, for the cause of people and the planet. Brecher et al (2000:15) quote Vandana Shiva, noted activist, who wrote in the wake of the battle of Seattle that

when labor joins hands with environmentalists, when farmers from North and farmers from South make a common commitment to say 'no' to genetically engineered crops, they are not acting as special interests. They are defending the common interests and common rights of all people, everywhere. The divide and rule policy, which has attempted to pit consumers against farmers, the North against the South, labor against environmentalist has failed.

People are becoming aware of the menace perpetuated by ruthless global tentacles and are joining hands in different nooks and crannies of the world to stand up against it. Globalisation from above has increased the power of global corporations in relation to local, regional and national governing mechanisms. An example to further elaborate this line of thought comes from Chomsky (1998), who points out that the United States of America controls and influences the economic policies of many countries. This, he argues, is done in the interest of the American corporations, rather than that of the people of those nations. He calls it 'industrial feudalism' where the state becomes a mechanism for "socialising risk and cost, and privatising benefits". Under the neo-liberal policies all the power and profit from economic arrangements goes to the private sector, and any risk or cost involved is borne by the society.

Chomsky (1998) postulates that all these are not born out of mysterious economic laws; they are human decisions subject to challenge, revision and reversal. They are also decisions made within institutions, state apparatus, or as private initiatives. If the text of Brecher et al (2000) is allowed to talk with that of Chomsky (1998), the underlying assumption that germinates is an opportunity to stem the tide and move towards 'civilising' globalisation. Brecher et al (p. 8) point out that more than half of the largest economies of the world are corporate and not nations. Government authority has been severely undermined by trade agreements such as NAFTA and by the WTO (World Trade Organization) and the international financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank.

Can we assume, then, that when the power of the state is undermined by the global corporate bodies and the state is used only in furthering their agenda, the power to put things straight lies with the people? Globalisation from below provides an opportunity to link several situations, specific to the milieu of people, against the hegemonic influence of globalisation. Since the conditions of oppression, and thereby resistance, are different in different places and times, they both assume different forms of mobilisation. As Brecher et al illustrate:

In the case of globalization from below, for example, we have seen significant mobilizations from French chefs concerned about preservation of local food traditions, Indian farmers concerned

about corporate control of seeds, and American university students concerned about school clothing made in foreign sweat-shops (p. 23).

While people have always crossed boundaries throughout history, the economic disruptions and reduction of national barriers under the aegis of globalisation have accelerated international migration. Although the immigrants add to diversity in their 'host' country, they have been subjected to exploitation and abused as scape-goats for the economic troubles caused by globalisation from above. Added to this is the fact that the original inhabitants have had their indigenous way of life disrupted and their economic resources plundered by the global corporations and governments.

Globalisation in the present form is unsustainable to the environment. As for the seriousness of the issue, one can not do better than bring to attention with Paul Brown (1996), who predicts that in the next 50 years the sea level will raise so fast that some low-lying island nations will disappear altogether. In the unprotected deltas of countries like Bangladesh, Egypt and Vietnam there are more than 30 million people living within three feet of the high-water mark. Similarly gruesome is the destiny of people who will suffer as crops fail. There are millions of people in dozens of sub-Saharan countries who are on the edge of starvation due to the prolonged drought of the early nineties.

Environmental destruction is changing the basic balance on which life depends. Global corporations' oil refineries, chemical plants, steel mills and other factories are the main source of green-house gases, ozone-depleting chemicals and toxic pollutants. Over-fishing of the world's waters, over-cutting of forests and abuse of agricultural land have been increasing. These activities have been driven by comparative cost benefits and have added to poverty in developing countries. Added to this is the rising debt trap and the arms sales in these countries. The situation is not rosy and transnational resistance strategies that provide impetus to globalisation from below is an option.

Transnational Networks, Diasporas and Advocacy

Transnationalism broadly refers to multiple ties and interactions linking people and institutions across the borders of nation-states.

Several forms of networks and associations have arisen and been intensified with the help of new information technologies, especially that of telecommunications, despite great geographical distances and the presence of international borders. Vertovec (2002) delineates that transnational practices and their consequent configuration of power are shaping the world of the twenty-first century. He argues that in some instances transnational forms and processes serve to speed-up or exacerbate historical patterns of activity; in others, they represent arguably new forms of human interaction. Transnationalism begins with defying marked borders and has deterritorialisation as its base.

Deterritorialisation is one of the central forces of the modern world and it is this fertile ground (Appadurai 1991) in which money, commodities and persons unendingly chase each other around the world. The deterritorialised population in the abiding sense of placelessness and timelessness pick up and carry with them ideas and images from the 'old home' to the 'new host' setting. Appadurai and Breckenridge (1989:iii) state that they piece together housing and language, electricity and ethnicity, clothing styles and state entitlement with remarkable energy, in ways tailored to the idiosyncrasies of their new locations. Deterritorialisation creates space that liberates people oppressed within the confines of the nation-state (Appadurai 1991). Deterritorialised groups face the challenge of defending their interests in the global order, not just in the host society but also in their countries of origin.

In understanding the configuration of 'home' and the 'host' milieu in the present global world of transnationalism and deterritorialisation, the terminological discussion of diaspora assumes importance. Broadly, transnational ethnic groups are referred to as diasporas and they are used to understand form of consciousness, mode of production and as social form. It is used to understand the social formation and cultural patterns of the present world defined, as it is, by the mass movement of people across political borders (Vertovec 1999). It is an ancient word although it has been given modern flavour with the passage of time (Gilroy 1991). Like the people who inhabit the spaces designated by this term, it is a transient and travel term (Mishra 1995). It has travelled from the ancient period and has acquired different meanings.

The term 'diaspora' originates from the word for 'dispersion' and was used to describe the Greek colonisation of Asia Minor and

the Mediterranean in the archaic period (800-600 B.C). The term essentially had a positive connotation although some displacement was due to poverty, over-population and inter-state wars (Cohen 1995:6). The Jewish use of the term in the pre-modern period overlaid the benign meaning (Cohen 1995) and, due to this, the notion of diaspora has been coloured with elements of forced exile, collective suffering and an infinitely strong and binding sense of identity as well as a great nostalgia for the mother country (Lal 1996).

In Jewish history it represents a concept which has meaning for different periods in the existence of the Jewish people (Ages 1973:3). The first diasporic experience of the Jewish people came well before the rise of Christianity and then, in their classical formulation, the Jews were seen to have been expelled from their homeland for the heinous sin of deicide. Having rejected the savior, the Jews were condemned to wander all over the face of the earth until such time as their crime is expiated. The age-old doctrine of Jewish homelessness has helped to define the typical marginalised consciousness and creativity that has become a recognised part of the diaspora syndrome (Ages 1973).

The negative connotation of the term has remained predominant in the common scholarly notation of the modern period. The horrific slave trade followed by the quasi-forced indenture of the Indians, Japanese and Chinese, as well as the harsh treatment of the Armenians by the nation-building Turks, all conform to the notion of 'victimisation'. In the post-World War II era the term also denotes various groups that were previously described as exile groups, overseas communities, ethnic and racial minorities (Vertovec 1999). The boom in information technology has bridged the gaps among diasporas (Patel 2000) and the current period of globalisation has enhanced the practical, economic and affective roles of diasporas (Cohen 1995). As will be brought out in the prologue of this essay, globalisation from below has further created circumstances wherein the negative and marginalised connotation of the diaspora will no longer be valid. Today, various diasporas shape the world as it is and will be in times to come.

Diasporas have assumed special significance in the national and international affairs of the contemporary world and globalisation has provided an atmosphere for this. Globalisation also facilitates the home and the host societies as a 'single arena of action' (Sheffer 2003)

and has made it possible for individuals and groups to participate directly in the global processes because their actions need not be mediated by the nation-state. Diaspora also offers numerous dislocated sites of contestation against the hegemonic and homogenising forces of globalisation (Brazier and Manuur 2003) in that it sets in different locations, and allows for the flow of, not just people, but also their ways of life.

The diasporas carry with them their historical baggage and even the immigration process entails what is elsewhere referred to as 'migratory capital'. The diasporic networks with the homeland and with co-ethnics throughout the world play a significant role in today's world (Hear 1998). These and several other issues necessitate a look at the Indian diaspora and its role in terms of globalisation from below. It must be pointed out, as does Brecher (2000:108), that neither globalisation from above nor from below represents a unified entity but rather a collection of diverse actors and forces with a variety of ends and means. The enigma of globalisation from below is "in drawing together sufficient forces" to connect people for valid causes.

Global Indian Diaspora: In Perspective

A comprehensive account of the situation in India calls for a study of the global Indian diaspora. Although people from India have migrated to different geographical locations at different points of time in that country's long history, it was migration which took place during the colonial and post-colonial periods that has led to the 'Indianisation of the globe'. The modern Indian diaspora throughout the world dates back from the third decade of the nineteenth century when mainly forced migration as indentured labourers under British imperialism took place. Subsequently, there has been twentieth century migration to the developed western countries, which has been, by and large, voluntary, industry and commerce oriented, with a more balanced sex ratio and a higher level of education among the migrants. There has also been twentieth century migration to West Asia but the laws there hardly permit the immigrants to become naturalised citizens (Jain 1989).

The Indian diaspora is the third largest and most spread out in the world after the British and the Chinese, although the former does not consider itself to be a diasporic population. The Indian diaspora is drawn from numerous differing regions of the mother country,

professes varied religions, lays claim to several castes and is involved in a wide range of occupations. They have managed to develop distinct identities and ways of life wherever they have settled. They carry their 'Little India' with them. Indian cinema, cuisine, cricket along with the Internet facility, has kept the Indian diaspora cemented together (Lal 1999). Their mode of adaptation is marked by a clear preference for economic integration more than for cultural integration (Sharma 1989). They have also benefited from local ethnic networking, the power of shared identity and other associational activities.

With the exception of the Jews, no other diasporic community has suffered as much harassment as the Indians. Their expulsion from Uganda under Idi Amin speaks volumes about it. Their experience of harassment and expulsion has got them into a habit of spreading out their investments and members of their families in different countries. As a result, Indian diasporic integration has gained momentum. The Indian diaspora is beginning to build up social, economic, cultural and other ties with their counterparts in India and with other overseas communities (Parekh 1993). The 20 million strong Indian diaspora is spread over many countries (Seth 2001:12) and has significant economic and political presence in a number of them.

According to Parekh (1993), the Indian diaspora constitutes around 70 per cent of the total population in Mauritius, almost 50 per cent in Guyana, 41 per cent in Fiji, 41 per cent in Trinidad and 35 per cent in Surinam. Their proportion is fast increasing in the developed nations as well. A Government of India report (also known as Singhvi Report 2001) put the number of Indians in Canada at 851,000, in the UK at 1,200,000 and in the USA at 1,678,765. The Indian diaspora is unique in many other respects. It is diverse in terms of religion, regions and castes, so much so that scholars consider it problematic to talk of a global Indian diaspora. They refer to Gujarati, Tamil, Bengali, Punjabi etc. Sharma (1989) points out that while dealing with non-Indians, the Indian communities abroad tend to project a pan-Indian identity. But, when it comes to interacting among themselves, and positioning oneself within the diaspora, the individual's regional, linguistic or religious identity takes precedence.

As the Indian diasporic demography increases, the usage and visibility of Indian language increases significantly. Oberoi (2000)

cites the example of Canada where the use of Punjabi increased with the growth in the Punjabi population in British Columbia. Members of the Punjabi community set about publishing newspapers, journals, novels, literary anthologies, and staging plays in the vernacular. The language is the first to go in the zero-sum relationship that the assimilation process offers the diasporics. Indians have retained their language, although with some attrition, wherever they have gone, be it Trinidad, Fiji, UK or USA.

Indian cuisine is gaining popularity and it is easy to locate an Indian restaurant in any cosmopolitan city of the world. It is assumed that Hindus are vegetarian and vegetarianism is associated with India (although a 1993 Government of India anthropological survey revealed that 88 per cent of the population was in fact non-vegetarian). Indian food is prepared in most Indian households and the choice exercised by teenagers of the 'other' food is considered to be due to the influence of western values on their lives.

Indian temples and places of worship can be found around the globe. For Indian immigrants, as for others, religion is one of the identity markers that help them preserve their individual self-awareness and group cohesion (Rayaprol 1997:16). Religion has served as a major symbolic resource in the building of the community and the professing of ethnic identity. The need to remain distinctive and preserve their 'Indianness' seems to have given impetus to ethnic networking. If the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) discusses issues that matter to the Indian diaspora worldwide, organisations like the National Association of Canadians of Origin in India (NACOI) in Canada and Americans of Indian Origin in America (AIA) in the United States, to name a few, help to fight discrimination and participate as residents and citizens in the 'host country' (Raj 2004).

Lal (1999) is of the opinion that the Indian diasporic community's activities and organisations have done some intense lobbying, often in the form of attempting to have some 'great' Indians memorialised. A school has been named after Mahatma Gandhi in Jersey City, and the same city has renamed a portion of one of its streets after Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (a prominent *dalit* leader and the chief architect of the Indian Constitution). Lal (1999) reports that statues of Gandhi are to be found in numerous American cities, including New York and Atlanta, and the US Congress has recently approved the

construction of a memorial to Gandhi in the diplomatic enclave of the capital city. This site is not far from where the memorials to Lincoln, Roosevelt and Washington are built.

The Indian diaspora has formed voluntary organisations to meet the challenges of globalisation. Various advocacy groups for the NBA are praiseworthy. Indian diasporic organisations have always advocated the cause of the 'homeland' from the time of India's struggle for independence (*Ghadar* revolt) to Punjab militancy (in the 1980s) to the present era. In 1987, the National Federation of Indian American Association (NFIAA) mobilised the Indian diasporic community, with apparent success, to persuade the Congress to withdraw the sale of sophisticated AWACS planes to Pakistan. These are examples to better understand the case in point.

The Indian diaspora has also managed to build effective transnational business networks that stretch from the place of origin to the place of settlement. Basu (2002) examines the transition of ethnic Indian entrepreneurs from immigrants, local market operators, to global market layers. According to her, this has changed the pattern of business behaviour in India, among its diasporic community, as well as the process of globalisation. More successful Indian diasporic entrepreneurs have gained competitive advantage by developing international business links. Most fast growing businesses in the IT sector have established outsourcing arrangements with Indian firms.

Several diasporic Indians have carved out a dominant space in the knowledge-based technologies and economies. Gururaj Deshpande, Sabeer Bhatia, Kanwal Rekhi, and the most recent one L.N. Mittal, to name a few, have been listed among the world's richest in *Fortune 100* and *Forbes*. Indian born Amartya Sen and Jagadish Bhagwati have established coveted academic status in the world. Literary writers like Jumphah Lahiri and Shauna Singh Baldwin have won accolades and have successfully presented a mosaic of cultural life, in the homeland and their adopted land, to their readers (Sheth 2003).

India is credited with the making of the most films each year and the Indian diasporic population is kept connected with the motherland film industry as increasingly the storylines of these movies are based on diasporic populations/contexts, or are at least geared towards their tastes. Indian grocery stores do not just sell Indian ethnic eatables but also lend Indian movies. Indians abroad, like UK-based Gurinder Chadha, US-based Mira Nair, and the

famous M.N. Shyamalan, have made their mark on the celluloid screen and are globally acknowledged. The Indian diasporics have contributed to the rising profile of India worldwide. 'Yankee Yogis', like Madonna and William Defoe, chant Indian devotional *bhakti* songs and meditate while performing yoga.

Yoga has become a respite for thousands in the West. Spiritual centres, *ayurveda*, healing and massage therapies, herbal cosmetics and vegetarianism have begun penetrating mainstream western culture. Not to be forgotten is the spread of Indian religion around the world; the best example of this is ISKON as well as the numerous temples and Gurudwaras found in foreign locales.

The Indian diaspora, covering virtually every part of the globe, is also an important factor in India's external relations with a large number of countries. It is a valuable asset and has a potentially great role to play in the multi-faceted development of India. Sheth (2003) acknowledges that, viewed as a whole, the Indian diaspora and the globalisation process seem to have reinforced each other. Economics, 'infotainment', the internet, and IT-enabled services have deepened the process. Interface through telephone, satellite, the internet, worldwide web, e-economy, etc. are transforming the perception and attitude of the world community. Distinguished from most other diasporas, this 'new' Indian dotcom (com is actually derived from the Hindi/Urdu world 'kaum', meaning community) community marks a vibrant interface with globalisation.

This section thus gives some information on the Indianisation of the globe and sets the background for examining globalisation from below and the global Indian diaspora. It is not possible to document various labyrinths that might be discussed within it but the examples placed in the next section will create fertile ground for discussion in academia and give further boost to advocacy for all round development.

Globalisation from Below and the Global Indian Diaspora

The portrayal of the Indian diaspora is contextual when seen from the standpoint of its efforts against the hegemonic and homogenising influence of global forces. To begin with, it adds to the diversity and richness of the host society. The global spread of the Indian diaspora and, on its wings, Indian culture and values, gives hope of alternative ways of life against the subversive Western Anglo-Saxon Protestant

(WASP) values prevalent in most developed countries. The first generation to arrive immerses itself and its resources in initiatives that focus mainly on building community networks in the new locale, as well as fund raising for places of worship, seniors' community centres, etc. Subsequent steps deal with social problems in India, often with a focus on sub-regional issues, depending on the geographic origin of the Indian participants.

Activism largely concentrates on struggles in the Indian subcontinent, covering India-Pakistan relations and human right issues. Signposting the discussion in the above section, one can argue, as Ajay Gandhi (2002:360) writes that Indian diasporic advocacy has historically been weighted towards political struggles and that progressive activism concerned with development and related issues have come to the forefront only recently. People's involvement and success in transnational networking within the context of globalisation from below has made the latter possible.

Gandhi (2002) correctly points out that there was a high level of aid in response to the Gujarat earthquake in early 2001 which was missing when the south-eastern state of Orissa was hit by a cyclone in late 1999. The most illuminating case comes from advocacy around the Narmada movement as people of Indian origin from all walks of life gathered in Manhattan in support of the Narmada Solidarity Coalition of New York. The most visible signs of solidarity in the United States and United Kingdom were organised through the use of transnational communication networking made possible by the internet. Such protests, ably supported by the Indian diaspora, have changed the nature of negotiation between international corporate interests, the Indian state and pro-poor agencies.

The most important role that the fertile ground of globalisation from below can provide is in the personal efforts of individual actors. Most often people educated youths moving out from India are seen as creating 'brain drain'. The efforts of these people in the diaspora start a phenomenon that can be called 'brain gain'. Sending remittances is one case and is well highlighted by the media and the academia. Let us point out meagre effort of writing petitions against the ills of globalisation when done from below. These may be seen as a petty effort but they are the harbinger of the change that Indian society is needs. The brain drain has become the brain chain and brain gain. Several alumni groups of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and the like

have sprung up that try and understand the effects of global influence in Indian society as well as engage themselves towards positive changes. Their initiatives are an example of symbolic global discourse and efforts under globalisation from below.

After adjusting in the 'host' milieu, people of the Indian diaspora contribute to opening schools and donate for various social causes in their villages/towns of origin. People in the diaspora know the condition in the homeland. They also know the various international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that perpetuate corporate hegemony in India. People in the diaspora, therefore, act as a 'conscience' and a bridge to stop any unfair use of the socio-economic condition in India by the corporate funded NGOs.

The relief operation that followed the tsunami last year provides another example of people's connectivity and willingness to actively support causes of concern in the homeland. The involvement of the Indian diaspora in India's development is less when compared to China. But it is assumed that with several encouraging steps by the government and increasing connectivity among the people in India and in the diaspora, things will move in positive direction.

Epilogue

In this paper, an attempt has been made to open up discussion on the broader contours of diaspora and development with transnational networks aiding globalisation from below. While the formation and life experience in diaspora is the product of globalisation, life in diaspora can also be a site to understand the corporate globalisation. Being at the intersection of 'home' and the 'host' milieu, people in diaspora have the enigma to act as a catalyst of change. The process starts with the provision of multiple sites of resistance against corporate globalisation that is characterised as globalisation from above. The emergent network society gives leverage to further connectivity and solidarity to understand and stand up against the ills perpetuated under the neo-liberal agendas.

Diaspora is both an alternative and intermediary at a time when the role of nation-state is being relegated. People in the Indian diaspora can and do act as a catalyst of change across the globe with the spread of Indian culture, values and of late business enterprise. They are also the catalyst of change in India, especially by providing modes of resistance against corporate globalisation and against

'excesses' of the state. They do engage in 'homeland advocacy' and development by using their transnational links and networks.

The attempt in this paper is not on descriptive analysis and factual details, although we have brought forth some examples to substantiate our argument. The purpose is to provide a novel gaze to the study of globalisation and social change in India as well as to multi-faceted capacity of Indian diaspora and global studies. It would initiate further discussion, debate and research across disciplines, we hope.

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