

Exploring Role of Indian Diaspora in Indian National Movement

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Abstract:

Indian National Movement has a great significance in the history of India. It occurred because of the exploitative nature of colonial government. Colonial intervention occurred in almost every aspects of life of Indians during colonial period. Because of these interventions, Indian masses started agitations against colonial government. Many Indian reformers and leaders like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Dada Bhai Naoriji, Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Shyam ji Krishna Varma, Sohan Singh Bhakna etc. went to foreign and saw the freedom of the citizens. They impressed with the freedom enjoyed by the citizens of these countries. This feeling of freedom motivated Indian reformers and leaders to make India free from colonial government. These leaders organized movements to make India free, so that, Indians could also enjoy the same freedom. Many leaders such as Gandhi started his political career in foreign (South Africa) and devoted his life for the freedom of India. Many Indian leaders such as Shyam ji Krishna, Lala Har Dayal, Bhikaji Cama etc. travelled in foreign and started movements in the favour of Indian freedom struggle. They established many organizations like India Home Rule Society, India House Ghadar Party and Indian National Army and supported national movement.

Therefore, this research paper is an attempt to see the role of Indian diaspora in Indian national movement. This research paper has mainly two objectives. First the role of those reforms and leaders who visited in foreign and tried to reform Indian society and participated in Indian freedom struggle from the foreign. And, second, the role of those organizations which were established in foreign by the Indians during Indian national movement.

Key Words: Diaspora, Indian National Movement, Ghadar Movement, Indian Home Rule Society, Indian National Army.

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Introduction:

Indian National Movement was fought on two fronts. The first front was in India where the national movement was fought under the leadership of Indian National Congress and the other front was in overseas countries from where many Indians contributed in the Indian freedom movement.

Indian national movement was a long journey of Indian freedom. Agitation against colonial rule started just after the establishment of British rule in India. But, these agitations took nationalist shape after the establishment of Indian National Congress in 1885. The Indian National Congress provided leadership to the protest movements against colonial government. Most of the nationalist leaders of Indian national movement were Western-educated and they belonged to certain castes, communities, linguistic and economic groups. These leaders belonged from mainly three presidencies of India such as Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. According to Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, they were more concerned about creating their own elite society and culture. These nationalist leaders had not only limited goals but also unspectacular achievements (Bandyopadhyay, 2009). Moderate leaders such as Gopal Krishna Gokhle, Fhirozsah Mehta S.N. Banerjee etc. focused mainly on economic reform, constitutional reform and administrative reform. But main weakness of moderate leaders was that they could not influence the common people of India (Chandra, 2009). Moderate leaders were of the view that slowly British government would give rights to Indian. But, in 1907 Congress divided in two parts. The second part of nationalist leaders had not believed on moderate leaders. They were known as extremist leaders. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal and Arvind Ghosh etc. were main extremist leaders. Extremism emerged in India because of British policies and lack of success of moderate leadership. Extremist leaders made *Swaraja* as their primary aim. They focused on *Swadesi* and cultural revivalism. Partition of Bengal in 1905 became important cause for the rise of extremism in India. *Swadesi* movement was led by extremist leaders after 1905. But, extremist movement could not be more successful and till 1917, the extremist movement lost its power (Bandyopadhyay, 2009). The time when Gandhi came in Indian politics, was very important time because First World War was going on. In such situation, government did not want any challenge within the country. Therefore, government was ready to give some relaxations to Indians. *Champaran* peasant movement, *Kheda* movement and *Ahmedabad* mill strike, were the examples where, government agreed to give relaxations to Indians. On the other hand, government was not tolerating any violent movement. Extremist leaders planed a revolt against government on 19th February 1915 under the leadership of Rash Bihari Bose. When

government get information about this revolt through CID, it crushed this revolt. According to Chandra, 42 extremist leaders were hanged and 200 were sent in Jail (Chandra, 1998).

Indian Diaspora before Independence:

The year 1905 was a turning point in the history of Indian freedom struggle because this year witnessed great political changes not only in India but also in the world. In India, Bengal was divided in two parts in this year and for world, Japan defeated Russia in the same year. In 1905, the Bengali people did the first nationalist mass movement against the British government. Therefore, the leading Indian intellectual Benoy Kumar Sarkar pointed out that the year 1905 was the beginning of a new age for India (Sarkar, 1922). In the same year, *Swadeshi* movement emerged in Bengal and many protest movements occurred. British government reacted with the hard hand to repress *Swadeshi* movement. Because of this reaction, many educated Indians left India and went in various countries and led the Indian freedom movement from those countries (Tine, 2007).

Overseas Indians played very important role in Indian national movement. British had established many colonies in many countries of Africa, Asia and American continents. British transferred many Indian peoples in different colonies. These Indians were sent into different colonies as worker but some of those Indians were well educated and started their trade in those colonies. In this way, they had earned lots of money. During 20th century, Indian leaders went to the different colonies and met with Indian Diasporas and requested them to help in the Indian national movement. Lala Lajpat Rai went to Canada and United States of America and requested Indians to participate in Indian freedom struggle. Because of this, these Indians focused towards Indian nationalist movements (Jaffrelot, 2007). Till 1914, North America had become the home of Panjabi diaspora. A large Panjabi population settled in this part of America from Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur district of Panjab. Most of them were peasants and solders of British army. Those Punjabis who had worked as an army personal, they had got opportunity to understand the conditions of their contemporary world. These Indian faced many problems in these colonies because; the white men did not like these Indians. Many Indians settled in Canada but Canadian government made many kinds of rules for the Indians. Indian diaspora did not like such kind of treatment and decided to support Indian freedom struggle (Chandra, 1998).

In 19th and 20th century, a large number of Panjabi populations settled in America and in Canada. They went there in the search of better job opportunities. Many of these Punjabi people were former solders of British army in Singapore and Hong Kong. They believed that British government would treat them in better way but the Great Britain

announced that every Indian would be treated equally in all its colonies. In this way, these soldiers faced discrimination, injustice and inequality. The first group of Sikhs entered in Canada in 1897 when they were on an official trip. Many of them were settled in Canada and they invited their relatives and friends. Till 1906, Sikhs were keeping on emigrating in Canada unnoticeably but after 1906, Canadian government stopped their emigration. This became the cause of manifestation of Ghadar Movement (Nahal, u.d.).

South Africa was also one of the most important colonies of British empire. When British established their colonies in South Africa, they sent Negroes there. These colonies needed more workers; therefore, British officers requested British Indian government to send more labourers. The first batch of Indian indentured labourers reached at Natal on November, 16, 1860. After that, a large number of Indian labourers were sent in South Africa from India. Indentured labourers were called 'coolies' in South Africa by the Europeans (Gandhi, 1928). These Indians belonged to various parts of the country like United Province, Bihar, Maharashtra, Coromandel Coast, Malabar, and Orissa. Many of them were sent directly from India whereas; some of them were those labours who were already working in different colonies. According to Hugh Tinker, 1.3 million Indians were shipped out of India as indentured labourers between 1830s and 1917. More than one and half lakh Indians workers were sent only in Natal. During 20th century, total Indian population in South Africa was 3 percent of the total population of South Africa (Tinker, 1974). At the time of First World War, a large number of Indians were recruited in British army. A. K. Tiwari is of the view that the total number of Indian soldiers who were sent to the various part of the world during First World War was about 5, 52000 (Tiwari, 2019).

Leadership of Indian Diaspora in Indian National Movement:

The leadership of Indian diasporas played significant role in Indian National movement. Many Indian leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, B.R. Ambedkar, Rash Bihari Bose, Mohan Singh, Tarak Nath Das, Lala Lajpat Rai, Lala Hardayal, Subhas Chandra Bose, V.D. Savarkar etc. went to the different parts of the world and saw the freedom, enjoyed by the citizens of those countries. These leaders dreamed to make India free from the colonial rule.

Mahatma Gandhi went to South Africa in 1893 as a lawyer. Gandhi saw exploitative nature of colonial government in South Africa. Many Indians were facing exploitation of the colonial government. Gandhi had gone in South Africa only for few days but he stayed there for more than 20 years. Between 1894 and 1906, Gandhi led his movements in South Africa like moderates. But, in 1906, Gandhi started Satyagraha movement in South Africa against

Black Act in which every Indian had to do registration. Gandhi successfully forced colonial government to give relaxation to the Indians from Black Act. In this way, Gandhi's political career started in South Africa. Gandhi formulated certain principles and new methods in his political life such as, *satyagraha*, *ahimsa* and non-cooperation. Gandhi used these new principles and methods for the first time in South Africa (Chandra, 1998).

After coming back to India, Gandhi used his non-violent methods in Indian freedom struggle which were not used by his contemporary Indian nationalist leaders. Gandhi did not participate in movements just after coming back to India. He tried to understand the nature of Indian society and the condition of Indian masses. Therefore, he travelled in various parts of India to know the real situation of the country. In this way Gandhi tried to understand the pulse of the nation. Gandhi knew the importance of religion therefore; his many political ideas and methods were influenced by his religious ideas. After 1917, Gandhi became an important figure in Indian political history because of his philosophy of nonviolence and its practice. Gandhi's political philosophies such as idea of truth, non-violence, *satyagraha*, *sarvodaya* and constructive works etc. made him leading leader at that time.

Lala Har Dayal was born in a Hindu *Kaisth* family of Delhi in 1884. He got higher education from Oxford University and did double M.A. in English and in History. He published a newspaper which was titled 'Bande Mataram'. Before joining *Ghadar* movement, Lala Har Dayal worked as faculty member at Stanford University for some time. He was known for his nationalist activities in America. He motivated many students of California University to join Indian national movement (Ghadar Centennial Commemoration, 2013). He had settled in the Western America and became the general secretary of the *Ghadar* party. He decided to lead Indians in America for the freedom of India. In May, 1913, 'Hindi Association' was established in Portland. In the first meeting of this association Lala Har Dayal urged Indians to not fight against Americans but to fight against British. He was of the view that Indians were facing problems in different countries because India was under control of British Empire. Indian people accepted his suggestions and formed a committee and published a newspaper '*Ghadar*'. This newspaper became famous in different countries and motivated Indians to be unite and fight against colonial government. Lala Har Dayal successfully led Indian nationalist movement from America but in March, 1914, he was arrested, therefore, *Ghadar* movement became slow (Chandra, 1998).

Subhas Chandra Bose was one of the most important leaders of Indian freedom struggle. He joined the Indian National Congress in 1921 and with the help of remarkable leadership ability; he was soon elected as general secretary of Bengal presidency. He was

elected as the president of the Indian National Congress in 1938 and 1939. But, when Mahatma Gandhi did not accept him as president in 1939, he left Indian National Congress and formed 'Forward Block'. Throughout his political career, Bose had only one goal that was India's liberation from British rule. To fulfil his goal, Bose went to Singapore in July, 1943 and met with Rash Bihari Bose. Rash Bihari Bose handed over him the control of Indian Independence League. Subhas Chandra Bose for the first time, lead the Indian national army with the help of thirteen thousand army personals. He met with many leaders from the different countries such as Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin and asked for their support for the freedom of India. Bose anticipated that British would be driven out of India and India would become a prosperous country under a free Indian government. Bose had power to mobilize common masses. He addressed students of Tokyo University in 1944 where, he presented the real image of India. He said that people of different countries consider India as the country of three things: Snakes, *Fakirs* and *Maharajas*. He was of the view that this image of India before foreigners was because of British propoganda. He said that India is a land of great culture and is known for its rich philosophy (Singh, u.d.).

Narendranath Datta, commonly known as Swami Vivekananda was born on 12th January, 1863 in Bengal. He associated with Brahma Samaj and met with Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa in 1881. Vivekananda is considered as the father of Indian spiritual nationalism. He travelled in Asia, America and Europe. He participated in World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in the fall of 1893. On September 11, 1893, Vivekananda delivered his world's famous lecture in the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. He stayed more than three years in United States of America and England. He delivered many lectures in these countries. In 1897, he returned India. He founded Ramakrishan Mission and served Indian people. He again went to the West in 1899 for a year. He passed away in 1902 in the age of just 39. Vivekananda taught the lesson of peace and spirituality to India as well as the world. Vivekananda introduced the world with the Indian spirituality. He provided moral and spiritual base to the Indian national movement (Gokhale, 1964).

Mohan Singh was an officer of British Indian army. He fought against Japanese army in the Second World War but when he saw that British army was about to defeat, he supported Japanese army. More than 45 thousand Indian soldiers were arrested by the Japanese army in the Second World War. Mohan Singh organised these army personals and created Indian national army. Quit India movement provided a new energy to Indian national army because many young Indians joined it. In December 1942, Mohan Singh was arrested. After him, Subhas Chandra Bose became the chief of Indian national army (Chandra, 1998).

Bhimrao Ambedkar was born in an untouchable family in Maharashtra. He went to USA for higher education. He studied in abroad for more than ten years. He studied at Columbia University from where, he got his PhD degree. He got DSc degree from London. During his residence in abroad, he tried to understand about Indian social system. After coming back to India, Ambedkar started social reform movements. He started *Mahar Satyagraha* to uplift the conditions of *dalits*. He participated in all three Round Table Conferences and advocated for the rights of lower caste Indians. Because of his efforts, Poona Pact came into limelight. This was the first time when lower caste people got reservation in India. When Indian became independent in 1947, Ambedkar became the chairman of the drafting committee of Indian constitution. Ambedkar is called as the father of Indian constitution because of his role in constitutional committee (Shahare, 1988).

Shyam ji Krishna Varma(1857-1930) was also one of the most important leaders among them who were contributing for the freedom of India from abroad. He belonged from Gujarat. He led the Indian freedom struggle from Europe from 1893 to 1914. He founded the India House in London in 1904 which became the centre for Indian revolutionaries like Savarkar, Madam Cama, and Madan Lal Dhingra etc. Shyam ji Krishna Varma was deeply influenced by Swami Dayananda Saraswati and became the first president of Bombay Arya Samaj. He worked as an assistant professor at Oxford University (Sundaram, 2015). Shyam ji Krishna Varma published a monthly magazine named 'Indian Socialist' in 1905. This was the time when *swadesi* movement was going on against colonial government in Bengal. Through his magazine, Krishna Varma published critical writings against British government in India. An organization named 'Indian Home Rule Society' was formed by Krishna Varma. He owned a house in Highgate which is known as 'India House'. This house was mess-cum-hostel for Indian students. Many revolutionary leaders like Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, were stayed in this India House (Bakhle, 2010).

Madam Bhikaji Rustom Cama was a revolutionary lady of Indian national movement. She was born on 24th September, 1861 in a rich *Parsi* family. She received English education in her childhood. From her young age, she had nationalist thinking. Madam Cama was of the view that the British had cheated India and spread worst form of imperialism. Madam Cama participated in several social activities. She hoisted Indian tricolour-flag in Germany in 1907 and said;

'This flag is of Indian Independence! Behold, it is born! It has been made sacred by the blood of young Indians who sacrificed their lives. I call upon you, gentlemen to rise and

salute this flag of Indian Independence. In the name of this flag, I appeal to lovers of freedom all over the world to support this flag' (Kamat, 2019).

After Germany, she went to America and met with Indians. She introduced Indian diaspora in America with the oppression of the voice of educated Indians in India. She visited in England and continued movements with the help of Shyam ji Krishna Varma.

Role of Overseas Organizations in Indian National Movement:

Indian independence in 1947 was the result of a long freedom struggle. This freedom struggle was fought in India and from overseas. Many Indians were migrated in various countries in the form of indentured labourers. They had various problems so they started protest movements in those colonies. They formed many organizations to fight for their rights. Shyam ji Krishna Varma established Indian Home Rule Society in London in 1905. Krishna Varma also established India House in London. Both organizations were opened for Indian Students but were used for revolutionary activities. Bhikhaji Rustom Cama joined Indian Home Rule Society. After some time, she moved to Paris and started Paris Indian Society and published '*Bande Mataram*' magazine. Taraknath Das formed Indian Independent League in California (USA) in 1907. Lala Hardayal formed *Ghadar* party in USA and in Canada in 1913. These organizations played significant role in Indian national movement. Mohan Singh formed Indian national army in Singapore in 1942 (Ghadar Centennial Commemoration, 2013).

Ghadar Party and its Role in Indian National Movement:

The idea of *Ghadar* party came in the mind of some Indians who settled in America and in Canada. In July 1912, Indian mill workers assembled at Portland. They decided to establish Pacific Coast Hindustan Association. On 1st November, 1913, the *Ghadar* Party came into existence in San Francisco (Upadhyay, 2014). *Ghadar* party was mainly dominated by the Punjabis however; it also included Indians from various parts of country like Darisi Chenchiah and Champak Raman from South India, Vishnu Ganesh Pingle and Sadashiv Pandurang Khankhoje from the West India. Taraknath Dash and Jatindar Lahiri belonged to the East India. Indian Muslims also joined the *Ghadar* party. Maulvi Barkatullah was an important active Muslim member of *Ghadar* party from central India. The name '*Ghadar*' became popular when *Ghadar* party published a journal with the same name '*Ghadar*' (revolt). The headquarter of *Ghadar* party was known as '*Ghadar* Memorial' (Lal, 2013) Sohan Singh Bhakna was appointed its president, Babu Guru Dutta became its general secretary, Pandit Kashiram was appointed its treasurer. They showed their solidarity with Indians. Although, the *Ghadar* movement emerged in the North America yet its influence

was in India. *Ghadar* party wanted to make India free by hook and by crook. Its primary goal was to inculcate *Ghadar* thinking in the mind of Indian people and attack on British establishments (Nahal, u.d.). According to Chaman Lal, the *Ghadar* movement in India failed because in February 1915, more than hundred members of *Ghadar* party were killed. Its hundred members were imprisoned for long term and were sent to the 'Kalapani' (Lal, 2013).

Inder Singh is of the view that the *Ghadar* movement was the movement which generated remarkable courage, determination and valour of overseas Indians to make India free from the British colonial government. The members of *Ghadar* movements tried to influence Indian people through the *Ghadar* magazine. This magazine was published in Urdu, Punjabi, Hindi, and Tamil. This magazine was sent in various countries like Canada, Hong Kong, China, Malaya, Singapore, Egypt, Burma, Turkey, Afghanistan and the Philippines because many Indians were settled in these countries also. The British government was aware of the popularity of *Ghadar* magazine. The British government tried to stop its circulation mainly in India. The British government realized that imprisonment of Har Dayal would help in the end of *Ghadar* movement; therefore, they forced American government to arrest him. But, soon Lala Har Dayal was released on bail. After getting bail, he left America and went to Germany. In the absence of Lala Har Dayal, a vacuum created in the movement. But the *Ghadar* movement kept on active for long time (Inder Singh quoted in *Ghadar* Centennial Commemoration, 2013).

Indian Home Rule Society and India House in London:

Indian Home Rule Society and India House were established by Shyam ji Krishna Varma in London. Both organizations played significant role in Indian national movement because they provided shelter to the revolutionary Indians in London. Krishna Varma published a monthly journal 'The Indian Sociologist' to propagate revolutionary ideas among Indian diaspora in England. Its copies were distributed not only to India but also to various countries where Indian diaspora was living. According to the Oxford graduate, the aim of this paper was 'to enlighten the British public with regard to the grievances, demands and aspirations of the people of India and its unrepresented millions.' Shyam ji Krishna Varma was of the view that India could not get independence without the leadership of educated Indian intelligentsia. India House became the well-known place for Indian revolutionaries because many young Indians who visited in England joined India House. V. D. Savarkar visited in England in 1906 and joined this organization. Later, he was known as the father of the Hindutva nationalism. Many other leaders like M. K. Gandhi, Lala Har Dayal, Lala Lajpat Rai and Asif Ali joined this organization (Tine, 2007).

Indian National Army and Indian National Movement:

Second World War was a turning point for the Indian national movement because many Indian soldiers participated in this war. Indian soldiers were fighting in various countries in the favour of British government. But unfortunately, in 1942, Japan defeated British Indian army in the North Malay. Captain Mohan Singh and his 40,000 soldiers (Current Intelligence Study Number 24, June 8, 1945 suggests that the number of soldiers was 70,000) surrendered before Japanese army. Japanese army suggested Mohan Singh to fight against British government for Indian independence and handed over Indian soldiers to Captain Mohan Singh who took charge of Indian army and founded Indian national army. Meanwhile, Subhas Chandra Bose visited Japan in February, 1943 and was welcomed by Indians. He took over charge of Indian national army and gave his famous slogan 'Dilli Chalo'. Japan handed over Andaman Nicobar to the Indian national army (Sajiva, 2017). Subhas Chandra Bose set-up the provincial government for free India in October, 1943 in Singapore. Till 1944, Burma had become headquarter of the Indian national army because; a large number of overseas Indians were settled in Burma. When Japanese captured Burma, about half million Indians remained there. Indian were engaged in various works in Burma like most of them were labourers, some of them were merchants and had heavy financial stake holders in the country. They supported Indian National Army with a source of funds (Current Intelligence Study Number 24, June 8, 1945).

Japan was also in the support of Indian independence therefore, in early 1942, Japan launched a campaign to mobilize Indian prisoners of war in Shanghai, Hong-Kong and Singapore to join Indian national army and fight for the freedom of India. Due to this campaign 16000 war prisoners joined Indian national army. The first encounter between British Indian army and Indian national army took place a few miles north of Buthidaung in Arakan. Indian national army successfully captured a divisional headquarter. Japanese soldiers entered in Indian boundary and reached at Imphal but they could not win because many Japanese officers died because of diseases. Indian national army could not sustained its victory for long time because Japan did not support it for long time due to the engagement in Second World War (ibid, 1945). In 1945, Subhas Chandra Bose was died in an aeroplane accident. His death became one of the most important causes behind the defeat of Indian national army but this army brought independence one step ahead.

Conclusion:

Indian national movement emerged in India because of the exploitative nature of British colonial government. British conquered Indian territories because they wanted to get more economic benefits. After the battle of Plassey, British government controlled over Indian bureaucracy. British had many colonies in various countries. India was not only a big market for British goods but it also had a large resource of labourers. Due to this, British Indian government sent many Indians in various countries as indentured labours. With the passes of time, these overseas Indians had become economically strong and they influenced local governments. When these overseas Indians came with the contact of educated Indian leaders, they supported Indian national movement. Along with this, many educated Indians reformers and leaders visited in England, America and Canada and saw the freedom enjoyed by the people. These reformers and leaders contributed in Indian national movement. On one hand, thinkers like Vivekananda and Ram Mohan Roy focused on the logical base of Indian philosophy. They worked for social reform within the Hindu society which was dominated by many unnecessary social rituals. And, on the other hand, leaders like M. K. Gandhi and B. R. Ambedkar focused on social reforms within the lower caste. Dr. Ambedkar is considered as the pioneer of social reform within the subaltern section of Indian society. Gandhi gave a new philosophy to the Indian political leadership. Subhas Chandra Bose, Lala Hardayal, Mohan Singh etc. adopted extremist method to get independence from the colonial government. They felt that Indian could not get independence without using force. In this way, we mainly see the use of three kinds of ideologies in Indian nationalist movement. The first ideology provided spiritual base to the national movement, second ideology provided strong political base to the national movement within the Indian masses and, the third ideology provided extremism to the Indian national movement. Many Indians settled in various countries and formed various organizations. These organization played significant role in Indian freedom movements. These organizations provided place for the revolutionaries Indians in foreign.

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