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Abstract

Scientific Associations of Indian and Pakistani Diasporas in a Comparative Perspective: New Set of Actors for Development

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International migration of skilled and scientific professionals from less developed to the more developed nations have changed in the wake of globalization, resulting in the transformation of 'brain drain' into brain exchange, brain circulation, or brain gain. These later concepts have come into prominence as the diaspora communities have actively tried to forge backward linkages in the home countries with the purpose of sharing their vision, success, and gained knowledge for homeland development. Over time, there has been a gradual but noticeable increase in the number and size of such associations in almost all the destination countries. Lately, home countries too have reciprocated or made efforts to strengthen their relations with the diaspora.

Indian diaspora is one of the strongest and the third largest diaspora in the US, while Pakistanis are the second largest diaspora from the South Asia region, after Indians. Indian as well as Pakistani skilled diasporas have demonstrated developmental engagement for home countries, leading to strengthening of existing expatriate associations and formation of new ones - both kinds deriving distinct identities from the profession of their members. In the US, this occupational identity of diasporic associations is distinctly noticeable because of the fragmented nature of the diaspora communities.

Theoretically, any diaspora can play two types of role, i.e. positive or negative with respect to the home country. There are a few studies highlighting and analyzing the negative roles played by the Indian (Khalistani) and Pakistani (Muhajir) diaspora groups abroad that also have skilled and educated people as their members. However, the constructive or positive role of immigrants is of utmost importance since the diaspora can play a pivotal role because of the associations' capability in contributing to the betterment of the home economies. The highly skilled and educated Indian as well as Pakistani immigrant groups in the US have, in this respect, formed separate scientific associations which are playing important roles in the home countries for the past few years. These scientific associations of immigrants (formed by highly skilled immigrants on the basis of their occupation) differ from the other types in their vision, expertise and commitment to build the social infrastructure in the home country. There are two such specific

scientific associations, respectively of the Indian and Pakistani immigrants in the US, which are now actively involved in various development activities in their respective home countries. Of these, the Indian association has made micro level efforts of development in the Indian economy with its aims of promoting and enhancing entrepreneurship (leading to the creation of jobs), while the Pakistani association has been committed to sharing knowledge and promoting the networking needs of the entrepreneurs, executives and professionals in Pakistan, other than promoting trade and investment opportunities for the expatriate Pakistanis.

This evokes an inquiry into the study of these two Asian diaspora communities in general and their scientific associations in particular in the host country, and how the countries of origin can engage them in fruitful participation. In this context, this paper will examine the structure, activities, and roles of two specific scientific associations of Asian diasporas - one of Indians and the other of Pakistanis in the US in a comparative perspective. It would also explore the nature of these associations and their possible role in the development of home economies. The genesis of such scientific diaspora associations and the areas of their future cooperation and collaboration with their homeland for development would also be explored and investigated.