

FROM CULTURAL DISSEMINATION TO NATION BRANDING: THE MULTIFACETED CONTRIBUTIONS OF INDIAN DIASPORA IN SHAPING INDIA'S PUBLIC DIPLOMACY¹

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Abstract

The Indian diaspora is a mosaic of individuals from various walks of life, spread across continents and cultures. From the early days of migration to the present, they have carried with them the rich tapestry of Indian traditions, values, and aspirations. Their presence in different parts of the world has not only facilitated the spread of Indian culture, cuisine, music, and dance but has also opened up channels of communication and understanding between India and the host countries. This cultural exchange has laid the foundation for a deeper appreciation of India's heritage and has helped dispel misconceptions, fostering a more nuanced global perception of the nation. However, the impact of the Indian diaspora extends far beyond cultural diffusion. They have become vital stakeholders in India's public diplomacy efforts, leveraging their influence, networks, and resources to advocate for India's interests on the global stage. Through their achievements in various fields such as technology, business, academia, and the arts, they have showcased India's potential and capabilities, acting as beacons of inspiration for the nation. Moreover, their active engagement in philanthropy, investment, and knowledge transfer has contributed to India's socio-economic development and strengthened its ties with the international community.

This article explores the intricate and dynamic relationship between the Indian diaspora and India's public diplomacy. It examines how their contributions have evolved over time, the challenges they face, and the opportunities they present for further enhancing India's global standing. By understanding the multifaceted role of the Indian diaspora, we can gain valuable insights into the power of diaspora communities in shaping national narratives and influencing international relations in the modern world.

Keywords: Indian Diaspora, Public Diplomacy, Cultural Dissemination, National Image
Public diplomacy is the practice of engaging with foreign audiences to strengthen ties, build trust, and promote cooperation. It is often seen as the transparent means by which a sovereign country communicates with publics in other countries to inform and influence audiences overseas for the purpose of promoting the national interest and advancing foreign policy goals. The term was coined in the mid-1960s by former U.S. diplomat Edmund Gullion, public diplomacy was developed in part to distance overseas governmental information

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activities from the term propaganda, which had acquired pejorative connotations. Over the years, public diplomacy has also developed a different meaning from public affairs, which refers to a government's activities and programs designed to communicate policy messages to its own domestic audiences.

By the late 20th century, public diplomacy was widely seen as the transparent means by which a sovereign country communicates with publics in other countries. Its aim was to inform and influence audiences overseas for the purpose of promoting the national interest and advancing foreign policy goals. In this traditional view, public diplomacy serves as an integral part of state-to-state diplomacy, involving official relations, typically in private, between leaders and diplomats representing sovereign states. In this sense, public diplomacy includes such activities as educational exchange programs for scholars and students; visitor programs; language training; cultural events and exchanges; and radio and television broadcasting. Such activities usually focus on improving the "sending" country's image or reputation in order to shape the wider policy environment in the "receiving" country.

Notably since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, public diplomacy has attracted increased attention from practitioners and scholars around the world. As distinct from the "narrow" traditional, state-based conception of public diplomacy, recent scholarship has offered a "broader" conception of the field's scope, developing the concept of a new public diplomacy. This view aims to capture the emerging trends in international relations where a range of non-state actors with some standing in world politics—supranational organizations, sub-national actors, non-governmental organizations, and even private companies—communicate and engage meaningfully with foreign publics and thereby develop and promote public diplomacy policies and practices of their own. Advocates of the new public diplomacy point to the democratization of information through new media and communication technology as a force that has greatly empowered non-state actors and elevated their role and legitimacy in international politics. As a result, a new public diplomacy is seen as taking place in a system of mutually beneficial relations that is no longer state-centric but rather composed of multiple actors and networks, operating in a fluid global environment of new issues and contexts.

The heightened interest in public diplomacy in recent years has been facilitated by conceptual developments in other fields. Marketing and public relations concepts such as branding have been incorporated by public diplomacy scholars to apply to countries, regions, and cities. Similarly, the concept of soft power coined by international relations scholar Joseph Nye has, for many, become a core concept in public diplomacy studies. Nye defines soft power as "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments." In other words, soft power is the degree to which a political actor's cultural assets, political ideals and policies inspire respect or affinity on the part of others. Thus,

soft power has come to be seen as a resource, and public diplomacy as a mechanism that seeks to leverage it.

Development History of Public Diplomacy

Early Origins: The concept of public diplomacy emerged in the mid-1960s, partly to distance overseas governmental information activities from the term "propaganda," which had acquired negative connotations; Cold War Era: During the Cold War, public diplomacy was used by the United States and other countries to promote their values and policies abroad. The United States Information Agency (USIA) was a key player in this period; Post-Cold War Era: By the late 20th century, public diplomacy was widely seen as an integral part of state-to-state diplomacy, involving activities such as educational exchanges, cultural events, and media broadcasting; Post-9/11 Era: After the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, public diplomacy gained increased attention globally. The rise of new media and communication technologies has empowered non-state actors and elevated their role in international politics; New Public Diplomacy: In recent years, the concept of "new public diplomacy" has emerged, emphasizing the involvement of non-state actors such as supranational organizations, sub-national actors, NGOs, and private companies in engaging with foreign publics.

Main Theoretical Viewpoints of Public Diplomacy

Soft Power: Coined by Joseph Nye, soft power refers to the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. Public diplomacy is seen as a mechanism to leverage a country's soft power; Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: Public diplomacy is closely related to the impact of public opinion formation on foreign policy execution. It involves shaping public opinion in other nations and understanding the impact of international affairs on domestic policy; International Public Relations: Public diplomacy shares similarities with international public relations in terms of goals, target publics, strategies, and tools. Both focus on long-term, complex interactions to build relationships with foreign publics; Cultural Diplomacy: This viewpoint emphasizes the role of public diplomacy in promoting cultural exchanges, understanding, and cooperation. It sees public diplomacy as a means to foster intercultural dialogue and long-term national goals; The interconnection among public diplomacy, cultural communication, and the construction of national image highlights that cultural communication serves as a crucial instrument of public diplomacy, while shaping a positive national image constitutes a significant objective of public diplomacy.

Public Diplomacy and Cultural Communication

Cultural Communication as a Tool of Public Diplomacy: Cultural communication is a crucial instrument of public diplomacy. It involves the exchange of ideas, art, and information between states and their people to enhance mutual understanding and interest. Through cultural diplomacy, countries can showcase their cultural heritage, values, and traditions to foreign

audiences. This helps in building long-term relationships and fostering a positive image of the country; Long-term Engagement and Mutual Understanding: Cultural diplomacy, as a form of public diplomacy, emphasizes long-term investment and mutual understanding. It is not just about promoting one's own culture but also about engaging with other cultures and learning from them. This approach helps in overcoming cultural barriers and building trust among different nations.

Public Diplomacy and National Image Construction

Shaping a Positive National Image: One of the significant objectives of public diplomacy is to shape a positive national image. By influencing public attitudes and perceptions, countries can improve their reputation and standing in the international community. This is achieved through various public diplomacy techniques such as branding and advocacy; **Role of Government and Other Actors:** The construction of a national image is a joint responsibility shared by the government, media, and other social entities. Governments play a crucial role in communicating their country's values and policies to foreign audiences, while media and enterprises contribute through their international presence and communication efforts.

The Interplay Between Cultural Communication and National Image

Cultural Heritage and Positive Image: Cultural communication serves as a powerful means to highlight a country's cultural heritage and achievements. By showcasing its arts, traditions, and values, a country can create a positive image that attracts international attention and support. This positive image, in turn, enhances the country's soft power and influence in global affairs; **Overcoming Stereotypes:** Cultural communication can also help in overcoming negative stereotypes and misconceptions about a country. Through cultural exchanges and events, countries can present a more authentic and nuanced view of themselves to the world. This is essential in building a favorable national image and fostering international cooperation.

Indian Diaspora and India's Public Diplomacy

Concept and Scope of Indian Diaspora

The term "Diaspora" originates from the ancient Greek word "diaspeiro," where "dia" signifies "through" and "speiro" denotes "to scatter or disperse." In its original usage, "Diaspora" specifically described Jewish communities dispersed globally due to historical events. Over time, the term has been extended to encompass migrants or exiles from any country or ethnic group who have relocated due to factors such as colonial expansion, imperialism, trade, business opportunities, the pursuit of improved living conditions, and globalization. "Diaspora" emphasizes the enduring emotional attachment and sense of belonging that immigrants maintain toward their homeland or ancestral roots, reflecting deep-seated emotional and identity affiliations. While changes in nationality may alter certain aspects of personal identity, they cannot eradicate or modify this fundamental allegiance. As such, the theoretical framework of

"Diaspora," initially developed to address the experiences of Jewish communities, has since been expanded to analyze nearly all transnational migration phenomena and immigrant groups.

The Government of India and authoritative institutions define "Indian Diaspora" as individuals of Indian origin and their descendants who have emigrated from territories currently comprising India to reside abroad. This population is categorized into three primary groups: Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), who retain Indian citizenship but reside overseas, Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs), who hold foreign citizenship but possess Indian ancestry, and Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs), Individuals of Indian origin granted permanent residency in India. According to a report issued by the Ministry of External Affairs of India in May 2024, there are approximately 35.42 million Overseas Indians globally, consisting of 15.85 million NRIs and 19.57 million PIOs. These communities are distributed across over 200 countries and regions, with significant populations exceeding one million in the United States, the United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Myanmar, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Sri Lanka, and Kuwait. The Indian Diaspora is one of the largest in the world, they are highly diverse, comprising people from different regions, religions, castes, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Despite living in foreign countries, they maintain strong connections to their cultural roots, often celebrating Indian customs and traditions.

Strategic Role of Indian Diaspora in Public Diplomacy

The Indian Diaspora community has garnered substantial attention in both domestic and international academic research and public discourse. Additionally, the Indian government actively engages this diaspora to mobilize public support and advance national development objectives.

Their strategic role is multifaceted, encompassing cultural dissemination, image ambassadorship, and acting as diplomatic bridges.

Cultural Disseminators

The Indian Diaspora plays a pivotal role in spreading Indian culture, traditions, and values globally. Through various means, they promote India's rich cultural heritage, fostering cross-cultural understanding and respect. For instance, Indian festivals like Diwali and Holi are widely celebrated in countries such as the U.S. and the UK, creating a platform for cultural diplomacy. And China is no exception. Many Indians living in China gather to celebrate important festivals like Diwali. These celebrations not only introduce Indian customs to the Chinese public but also strengthen the sense of community among the diaspora. Such festivals create a platform for cultural diplomacy, allowing Chinese people to experience the joy and significance of Indian traditions firsthand. This helps in fostering mutual respect and understanding. These celebrations not only introduce Indian customs to the host societies but also strengthen the sense of community among the diaspora.

Indian classical music and dance are gaining popularity in China. Indian dance forms like Bharatanatyam and Kathak are taught in China through workshops and classes. For example, the Le Wu Bo Sa Indian Classical Art Center in China, founded by Jin Shanshan, has trained many students in Indian classical dance. This not only spreads Indian dance culture but also creates a new generation of performers who can further promote it. Yoga, an integral part of Indian culture, has gained immense popularity in China. Many Indians teach yoga in China, promoting not just physical fitness but also the philosophical aspects of yoga. This has led to a growing appreciation for Indian wellness practices. Some Indian diaspora in China are involved in teaching Hindi and other Indian languages, as well as promoting Indian literature. This helps in creating a deeper understanding of Indian culture and values. They use social media platforms to share their cultural experiences and traditions. This helps in creating a broader awareness and appreciation of Indian culture among the Chinese public. Regular community events organized by Indians in China, such as cultural fairs and exhibitions, provide an opportunity for the Chinese public to interact with Indian culture in a fun and engaging way. Through these diverse efforts, the Indian Diaspora in China plays a crucial role in promoting cross-cultural understanding and enriching the cultural landscape of both countries.

Moreover, the diaspora organizes cultural events that showcase Indian art, music, and dance. These events provide a window into India's diverse cultural landscape, enhancing the global appreciation of Indian traditions. The presence of Indian restaurants, Bollywood movies, and traditional Indian attire in various countries further contributes to the dissemination of Indian culture.

Image Ambassadors

Members of the Indian Diaspora often serve as informal ambassadors, promoting a positive image of India in their host countries. Their success stories in various fields, such as technology, medicine, and business, highlight India's potential and talent. For example, Indian-origin leaders like UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris advocate for India's interests and enhance its international reputation. Additionally, the economic contributions of the diaspora, including remittances and investments, play a crucial role in India's development.

The Indian Diaspora also engages in philanthropic activities, supporting healthcare, education, and disaster relief in India. These efforts demonstrate their commitment to their homeland and further enhance India's image. The American India Foundation, for instance, funds various education and livelihood projects in rural India.

Diplomatic Bridges

The Indian Diaspora has emerged as a crucial force in fostering stronger bilateral relations between India and their host countries. Their multifaceted role as intermediaries extends beyond cultural exchange to encompass economic integration, political cooperation, and crisis management. This comprehensive

engagement not only benefits India but also enhances the global standing of both the host countries and India itself. They act as intermediaries, promoting trade, investment, and political cooperation. For example, the Vibrant Gujarat Summit actively engages NRIs for investment and development opportunities, fostering economic integration. The diaspora also lobbies for India's interests in foreign governments, influencing policy decisions and fostering diplomatic ties. The Indian Diaspora also plays a vital role in influencing policy decisions and fostering political cooperation between India and their host countries. In the United States, for instance, Indian-origin professionals and organizations have been actively involved in lobbying efforts. The US India Political Action Committee (USINPAC) has been instrumental in shaping U.S. policies towards India, advocating for stronger bilateral ties and supporting India's strategic interests.

A notable example is the Indo-U.S. nuclear deal in 2008, where the Indian Diaspora played a pivotal role in lobbying for its passage. Their influence helped secure U.S. support for India's civilian nuclear program, marking a significant milestone in Indo-U.S. relations. Similarly, in the Gulf countries, the Indian Diaspora has been influential in promoting India's interests, contributing to the strengthening of bilateral ties in areas such as trade, energy, and security.

In times of conflict or crisis, the Indian government often takes proactive measures to ensure the safety of its diaspora. For instance, during the Sudan crisis, India evacuated over 7,000 citizens, demonstrating its commitment to their welfare. Such actions not only protect the diaspora but also strengthen India's diplomatic standing.

Government Initiatives to Engage the Diaspora

The Indian government has implemented several policies and initiatives to engage with and leverage the potential of the Indian Diaspora effectively. The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD), celebrated biennially on January 9, honors the contributions of the diaspora and fosters connections with India. The PBD Convention includes events, seminars, and award ceremonies, recognizing the achievements of overseas Indians in various fields.

The Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) scheme allows people of Indian origin to apply for a lifelong visa to visit India without restrictions on the duration of stay. This scheme also provides benefits such as the ability to open bank accounts, buy property, and invest in India. The Know India Program (KIP) engages young diaspora members with Indian culture, heritage, and contemporary developments, fostering a sense of belonging.

The Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) offers financial assistance to Indians abroad during emergencies or distress, ensuring their welfare. Social Security Agreements with various countries also protect Indian workers, ensuring their rights and benefits.

The Indian government has recognized the significant potential of the Indian Diaspora in driving national development. Programs like "Make in India" are

designed to attract investment and expertise from the Diaspora, leveraging their global experience and resources to boost India's economic growth. This approach is supported by a range of policies and initiatives aimed at fostering a conducive environment for Diaspora engagement. Launched in 2014, the "Make in India" initiative aims to transform India into a global manufacturing hub by attracting foreign and domestic investment. For example, the government has streamlined regulatory processes and offered tax incentives to encourage Diaspora investment. As of 2024, the program has attracted significant foreign direct investment (FDI), with the Indian Diaspora contributing through direct investments and partnerships. This has not only boosted manufacturing but also created jobs and enhanced India's export capabilities.

Challenges and the Way Forward

Despite their significant contributions, the Indian Diaspora faces several challenges. Many laborers in Gulf countries face harsh working conditions, low pay, and limited rights. Integration issues, cultural and linguistic differences, and limited access to legal aid further complicate their situation. To address these challenges, the Indian government needs to strengthen consular services, implement stronger protections against labor exploitation, and ensure robust legal safeguards.

Engaging the diaspora through cultural, social, and economic programs can deepen their connections with India. Promoting Indian languages, traditions, and history can help preserve cultural identity among the diaspora. Encouraging investments and knowledge sharing from successful diaspora members can also contribute to India's development.

The Role of Overseas Indians in Cultural Dissemination

The Dissemination of Language and Cultural Symbols

Indian Diaspora play a pivotal role in the global dissemination of Indian languages and cultural symbols. Through family, community, and educational institutions, they promote Hindi and other regional Indian languages, while also introducing traditional Indian cultural symbols such as attire, religious icons, and culinary traditions. These efforts enhance cross-cultural understanding and appreciation.

The Dissemination of Language

Many Indian Diaspora maintain strong family ties and pass on their native languages to the younger generations. This is often done through daily conversations, storytelling, and cultural practices within the family. For example, in cities like Guangzhou, Indian families gather during festivals to celebrate and share their linguistic heritage. These gatherings not only preserve the languages but also create a sense of cultural continuity and identity among the diaspora. Community centers and cultural associations serve as hubs for language promotion. These centers offer language classes, cultural events, and workshops where Indians and locals can interact and learn from each other. In China, such centers have been instrumental in teaching Hindi and other Indian languages.

For instance, the Indian Cultural Association in Beijing regularly organizes language classes and cultural events that attract both Indians and Chinese locals, fostering a deeper understanding of Indian linguistic heritage.

They celebrate World Hindi Day in a variety of vibrant and meaningful ways, highlighting the importance and richness of the Hindi language. World Hindi Day is an annual celebration observed on January 10 to promote the Hindi language globally and highlight its cultural and historical significance. This day commemorates the first World Hindi Conference, which was held on January 10, 1975, in Nagpur, India. The conference was a landmark event that emphasized the importance of Hindi as a language of cultural and diplomatic relevance. The theme for World Hindi Day 2025 is "Hindi: A Global Voice of Unity and Cultural Pride." This theme emphasizes the role of Hindi in fostering international cultural and linguistic exchanges, and its growing influence in the digital era. Indian embassies and consulates around the world host events to promote Hindi and engage local communities. These events include seminars, cultural programs, and discussions about the role of Hindi in global communication. In countries with large Indian diasporas, such as Mauritius, Nepal, Fiji, Trinidad and Tobago, and South Africa, communities come together to celebrate the day with various events that highlight both the language and the culture.

Universities and cultural institutions sometimes host academic programs and lectures on Indian languages and literature. For instance, Yunnan Minzu University in China, there have been initiatives to promote Hindi through academic exchanges and language programs. The Indian Cultural Center in Beijing has organized seminars and workshops on Indian literature, inviting renowned Indian authors and scholars to share their insights. These programs not only enhance the academic understanding of Indian languages but also create a platform for cultural dialogue.

The Dissemination of Indian Cultural Symbols

During festivals like Diwali and Holi, Indians in overseas wear traditional attire such as sarees, lehengas, and turbans. These events provide an opportunity for locals to see and appreciate Indian clothing. For example, the Diwali celebrations in overseas feature traditional Indian costumes, attracting the attention of the Chinese people public. Additionally, fashion shows and cultural performances showcase the beauty and significance of Indian attire, further enhancing its visibility and appreciation.

Temples and cultural centers often display statues and images of Hindu deities. These religious icons are central to many cultural events and festivals. For example, during the Vasant Mela festival in Beijing, Hindu deities are prominently featured, allowing participants to learn about their significance. The architecture of Indian temples, with its intricate designs and symbolic elements, is also showcased through exhibitions and cultural exchanges, highlighting the rich cultural heritage of India. BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir built by Indian

CULTURAL DISSEMINATION, NATION BRANDING AND INDIAN DIASPORA

Diaspora is located in Robbinsville, New Jersey. It is the largest Hindu temple in the United States, covering 162 acres. The temple is built in the Nagaradi style using 68,000 cubic feet of Italian Carrara marble. BAPS Indian Temples in the United Kingdom is located in Neasden, London. It is one of the largest and most significant Hindu temples in Europe. The temple is built in traditional North Indian style. Its exterior is crafted from carefully selected stone, with intricate carvings depicting stories from Hindu mythology. It serves as a vibrant community hub where cultural events, religious festivals, and educational programs are held.

These temples not only serve as places of worship but also as cultural centers that promote Indian traditions and values. They play a crucial role in preserving and disseminating Indian cultural heritage globally.

Indian cuisine is not only a beloved culinary tradition but also a powerful cultural ambassador that transcends geographical boundaries. The packaging and promotion of Indian cuisine by overseas Indians, regardless of the country they reside in, serve multiple purposes and reflect deeper cultural, social, and economic dynamics. For Indian diaspora, food is a tangible and deeply emotional connection to their roots. It serves as a means of preserving and expressing their cultural identity in a foreign land. By sharing traditional dishes like curry, naan, and biryani, they are able to maintain a sense of continuity with their heritage. This is particularly important in the context of diaspora communities, where maintaining cultural traditions can help combat feelings of alienation and homesickness.

Indian restaurants and culinary events often act as community hubs for overseas Indians. These spaces provide a platform for social interaction, fostering a sense of belonging and community among expatriates. By organizing special events during festivals like Diwali or Holi, these restaurants create a shared cultural experience that strengthens bonds within the community. They also serve as meeting points for Indians from different regions, allowing them to share and celebrate the diverse culinary traditions of India.

Food is a universal language that can bridge cultural gaps. By introducing authentic Indian cuisine to locals in cities like Beijing and Shanghai, overseas Indians are facilitating cultural exchange and fostering mutual understanding. Cooking classes and workshops are particularly effective in this regard, as they provide an interactive and immersive experience. Locals who participate in these classes not only learn how to prepare traditional Indian dishes but also gain insights into the cultural significance and history behind the recipes. This hands-on approach helps demystify Indian culture and promotes a more nuanced understanding of its complexities.

The global popularity of Indian cuisine presents significant economic opportunities for overseas Indians. Indian restaurants are a thriving business in many cities around the world, contributing to the local economy and creating jobs. By packaging and promoting Indian cuisine, overseas Indians are tapping

into a lucrative market. The success of these ventures can also lead to the establishment of additional businesses, such as spice shops, food festivals, and cultural events, further boosting the local economy. By promoting Indian cuisine, overseas Indians are contributing to the global perception of India as a rich and diverse cultural entity. This can enhance India's cultural diplomacy efforts, fostering positive international relations and a favorable image of the country. The popularity of Indian cuisine can also lead to increased interest in other aspects of Indian culture, such as music, dance, and literature, creating a ripple effect of cultural dissemination.

Indian diaspora often adapts and innovates traditional recipes to suit local tastes and dietary preferences. This process of culinary fusion not only makes Indian cuisine more accessible to a broader audience but also reflects the dynamic nature of cultural exchange. For example, in some countries, Indian dishes are modified to be less spicy or to incorporate local ingredients. This adaptability ensures that Indian cuisine remains relevant and appealing while still retaining its core cultural essence.

Through these efforts, Indian Diaspora significantly contribute to cross-cultural understanding and respect. By sharing their languages, cultural symbols, and traditions, they create a bridge between different cultures. This not only enriches the cultural landscape of the host countries but also fosters a sense of global community and mutual appreciation.

The Role of the Indian Diaspora in National Image Construction The Construction of Image in the Economic Domain

Overseas Indian entrepreneurs have made significant contributions to the global business landscape through their innovative ideas, strategic acumen, and leadership skills. Prominent figures like Sundar Pichai and Satya Nadella have not only achieved remarkable success in their respective fields but have also played a crucial role in enhancing India's global economic image. Their accomplishments highlight the country's innovative capabilities and business acumen, attracting international investment and fostering global collaboration opportunities.

Sundar Pichai, the former CEO of Google, has been instrumental in driving the company's growth and innovation. Under his leadership, Google expanded its product portfolio significantly, including the development of Google Chrome, Android, and Google Drive. Pichai's strategic vision has also led to Google's dominance in the global search engine market and its expansion into emerging technologies like artificial intelligence and cloud computing. Pichai's success at Google has positioned India as a global leader in technology and innovation. His achievements highlight the potential of Indian talent in the tech industry, inspiring future generations of Indian entrepreneurs. Moreover, his leadership has attracted significant investment in Indian tech startups and fostered collaboration between Indian and global tech companies.

CULTURAL DISSEMINATION, NATION BRANDING AND INDIAN DIASPORA

Satya Nadella, the CEO of Microsoft, has transformed the company through a series of strategic initiatives. He has led Microsoft's shift towards cloud computing and artificial intelligence, making significant acquisitions such as LinkedIn, GitHub, and Mojang. Under his leadership, Microsoft has embraced open-source technologies and fostered a culture of innovation and collaboration. His success has enhanced India's reputation as a hub for technological innovation and business leadership. Also have demonstrated the potential of Indian professionals to drive global technological advancements. Additionally, his leadership has attracted investment in India's tech sector and created opportunities for collaboration between Indian and international tech companies.

Sunil Bharti Mittal is the founder and chairman of Bharti Enterprises, one of the world's largest telecom companies. His company, Bharti Airtel, operates in over 18 countries and has significantly transformed connectivity in underserved region. In 2024, Mittal acquired a 24.5% stake in the British telecom operator BT Group for \$4 billion, showcasing India's rising influence in global market. Mittal's success in the global telecom industry has positioned India as a major player in the telecommunications sector. His initiatives have attracted investment and fostered collaboration opportunities, bridging the digital divide in many regions.

Ylias Akbaraly, a prominent entrepreneur of Indian heritage, heads Groupe Sipromad, a diversified conglomerate operating in Madagascar. Under his leadership, the group has expanded into renewable energy, technology, real estate, and broadcasting. Notably, the acquisition of Thomson Broadcast in 2018 established Sipromad as a key player in the global broadcasting industry. Akbaraly's success demonstrates the potential of Indian entrepreneurs to thrive in emerging markets and drive sustainable growth. His initiatives have attracted investment and fostered collaboration opportunities in Madagascar and beyond. The success stories of overseas Indian entrepreneurs like Sundar Pichai, Satya Nadella, Sunil Bharti Mittal, and Ylias Akbaraly have significantly enhanced India's global economic image. Their achievements in the international business arena highlight India's innovative capabilities and business acumen, attracting international investment and fostering opportunities for global collaboration. These entrepreneurs serve as role models for future generations, inspiring them to pursue excellence on the global stage and contribute to India's continued growth and development.

Overseas Indians have played a significant role in shaping India's economic landscape through their contributions to international economic organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These individuals have leveraged their positions to advocate for India's economic interests, promote its image as an emerging economy, and foster international cooperation and investment opportunities.

Overseas Indians have held influential positions within the World Bank, contributing to its policies and projects. As a key player in global finance, the World Bank Group provides financial and technical assistance to developing countries, including India. Indian professionals within the organization have been instrumental in shaping development projects that align with India's economic goals. For example, they have advocated for infrastructure development, poverty alleviation programs, and sustainable growth initiatives that directly benefit India. Their involvement has also helped India access significant financial resources and technical expertise, enabling the country to implement large-scale development projects.

India has a long-standing relationship with the IMF, which has provided financial assistance during economic crises and offered policy advice to support economic reforms. Overseas Indians within the IMF have played a crucial role in this relationship. For instance, Raghuram Rajan, a prominent Indian economist, has held influential positions in both the IMF and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). As the Chief Economist and Director of Research at the IMF from 2003 to 2006, Rajan played a crucial role in shaping global economic policies. His insights into financial stability and regulatory frameworks were instrumental during a period of significant global economic challenges. Rajan's work at the IMF also helped strengthen India's voice in international economic discussions, highlighting the need for reforms and greater representation of emerging After his tenure at the IMF, Rajan returned to India and served as the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India from 2013 to 2016. During this period, he implemented several key reforms aimed at stabilizing the Indian economy and promoting sustainable growth. His experience at the IMF provided valuable insights into global economic trends, which he leveraged to shape India's monetary policy and financial sector reforms.

Arvind Subramanian is another notable Indian economist who has made significant contributions to international economic organizations. He served as the Chief Economic Advisor to the Government of India and has been associated with the IMF and the World Bank. Subramanian's research and policy recommendations have focused on issues such as trade, development, and climate change, providing valuable perspectives on how emerging economies like India can navigate global economic challenges. His work at the IMF and the World Bank has helped shape policies that benefit not only India but also other developing countries. Subramanian's advocacy for greater economic cooperation and his emphasis on sustainable development have positioned India as a leader in global economic discussions. Kalpana Kochhar, an Indian economist, has had a distinguished career at the IMF, where she has held various senior positions. Her expertise in macroeconomics and development economics has been crucial in shaping the IMF's approach to supporting economic growth in emerging markets. Kochhar's work has focused on issues such as gender equality, economic inclusion, and sustainable development, highlighting the importance

of these factors in driving economic growth. Her contributions have helped elevate India's profile in international economic forums, demonstrating the country's commitment to inclusive and sustainable development. Kochhar's work has also fostered greater collaboration between the IMF and India, leading to more effective policy implementation and economic reforms.

The presence of Indian Diaspora in international economic institutions has significantly enhanced India's global image. Their contributions have demonstrated India's capabilities in economic management, technological innovation, and business leadership. For example, the success of Indian professionals in the IMF and the World Bank has showcased India's talent pool and its potential to drive global economic change. Additionally, the active participation of overseas Indians in shaping international economic policies has positioned India as a key player in global economic discussions. This has helped counter any negative perceptions and highlighted India's progress and achievements on the global stage.

Indian Diaspora in international economic organizations have been proactive in advocating for India's economic interests. They have used their positions to highlight the potential of the Indian economy and the need for greater investment and collaboration opportunities. For example, Indian-origin officials have emphasized the importance of India's growing middle class and its potential as a global market. This has attracted significant foreign investment, with India receiving over \$100 billion in annual remittances, making it the largest recipient of such funds globally. These remittances have not only supported individual households but have also been invested in new assets and public welfare schemes, contributing to India's economic growth.

Image Building in the Field of Science, Technology, and Innovation

Overseas Indian tech talents have made remarkable contributions to the global technology sector, particularly in Silicon Valley and cutting-edge fields such as artificial intelligence, big data, and biotechnology. Their achievements have not only reshaped the global community's perception of India's technological capabilities but have also bolstered India's reputation in the international tech landscape, attracting additional tech talents and investments to the country.

Indian professionals have played a pivotal role in the entrepreneurial ecosystem of Silicon Valley. Since the 1980s, waves of Indian engineers and entrepreneurs have migrated to the United States, establishing a strong presence in the tech industry. Notable figures like Vinod Dham, known as the "Father of the Pentium Chip," and Vinod Khosla, co-founder of Sun Microsystems, have made groundbreaking contributions. By 1998, Indian-born entrepreneurs had founded 7% of all Silicon Valley startups, and by 2012, this number had risen to 13.4%. Today, Indian-origin entrepreneurs continue to dominate, with significant contributions in sectors such as biosciences (35%), computers/communications (28%), and software (33%).

Indian tech talents have also made significant contributions to cutting-edge fields such as artificial intelligence (AI) and big data. For instance, Ashish Vaswani and Niki Parmar, both Indian-origin scientists, were key contributors to the development of the Transformer architecture, which underpins modern AI models like GPT. Additionally, Aditya Ramesh, an Indian-origin researcher, led the development of Open AI's DALL•E model. These achievements highlight the role of Indian professionals in driving technological advancements. Indian-origin researchers and developers are actively involved in R&D centers across the globe. They contribute to advancements in AI, quantum computing, healthcare technology, and sustainable IT solutions. For example, many global companies have established R&D hubs in India, leveraging the country's talent pool to drive innovation. This has not only enhanced India's reputation as a hub for technological research but has also attracted significant investment in the sector.

The achievements of overseas Indian tech talents have significantly reshaped the global community's perception of India's technological capabilities. Their contributions have demonstrated that India is a leader in technology and innovation, capable of driving global advancements. This has attracted additional tech talents and investments to India, with many global companies setting up operations in cities like Bangalore, Hyderabad, and Chennai. The success of Indian-origin professionals in Silicon Valley has also inspired a new generation of entrepreneurs within India, contributing to the growth of its own startup ecosystem.

Image Building in Education and Academia

Overseas Indian scholars have made significant contributions to the global academic community, enhancing India's reputation in education and academia. Prominent figures such as mathematician Harish-Chandra and economist Amartya Sen have not only achieved remarkable academic success but have also inspired international collaboration and attracted global attention to India's educational sector.

Harish-Chandra (1923–1983) was a renowned Indian mathematician and physicist whose work has had a profound impact on the fields of representation theory and harmonic analysis. His contributions include the development of the Harish-Chandra homomorphism, a powerful tool that relates representations of semi-simple Lie algebras and groups. He received numerous accolades for his work, including the Cole Prize from the American Mathematical Society in 1954 and the Srinivasa Ramanujan Medal in 1974. Harish-Chandra's research laid the foundation for future advancements in mathematics and inspired generations of mathematicians worldwide.

Amartya Sen is an influential Indian economist and philosopher whose work has reshaped modern understanding of welfare economics and development. Sen's contributions include pioneering work on social choice theory, the capability approach, and the causes of famine. His book *Development as Freedom* (1999)

argues that development should focus on expanding human capabilities and freedoms, rather than merely increasing economic output. Sen received the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences in 1998 for his work in welfare economics and was awarded India's highest civilian honor, the Bharat Ratna, in 1999. His research has influenced global policy-making and inspired the creation of the Human Development Index (HDI) by the United Nations Development Programme.

The success of Indian scholars has inspired international students and researchers to engage in academic exchanges and studies in India. Institutions like the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) have become global destinations for higher education.

Indian scholars have collaborated with leading global institutions, fostering a culture of academic excellence and innovation. For example, Amartya Sen's work has influenced policy-making at the United Nations and the World Bank.

The international recognition of Indian scholars has bolstered the global perception of India's educational institutions. This has led to increased investment in education and research, further strengthening India's position as a hub for academic excellence.

The academic achievements of overseas Indian scholars like Harish-Chandra and Amartya Sen have had a profound impact on the global academic community. Their contributions have not only enhanced India's reputation in education and academia but have also attracted international talent and investment to the country. These scholars serve as role models for future generations, inspiring continued excellence and innovation in India's educational sector.

Image Construction in Social and Cultural Domains

Construction of the Image of Overseas Indians in International Cultural Exchanges

Overseas Indians have played a significant role in fostering international cultural exchanges, contributing to the construction of a positive image of India as a multicultural and inclusive nation. Through their active participation in cultural festivals, art exhibitions, and academic symposia, they present a friendly, open, and inclusive image that enhances mutual understanding and trust among nations and regions.

They are often the ambassadors of Indian culture in their host countries. They actively participate in cultural festivals, showcasing the rich diversity of Indian traditions, music, dance, and cuisine. For example, during events like the Holi or Diwali, overseas Indians organize vibrant celebrations that attract people from diverse backgrounds. These festivals are not only a celebration of Indian culture but also an opportunity to share its values of joy, unity, and inclusivity.

Art exhibitions featuring Indian artists are another platform where overseas Indians present a positive image of their homeland. Exhibitions of traditional Indian art forms, such as miniature paintings, sculptures, and contemporary

works, provide a window into India's rich artistic heritage. These events often include interactive workshops and lectures, allowing participants to engage deeply with Indian culture and fostering a sense of connection and appreciation. Cultural exchanges initiated by overseas Indians play a crucial role in breaking down stereotypes and building bridges between different cultures. By sharing their traditions and values, they create an environment of mutual respect and understanding. For instance, Indian film festivals held in various countries showcase Bollywood movies that highlight Indian social issues, family values, and cultural nuances. These screenings are often followed by discussions and interactions, providing a platform for open dialogue and cultural exchange.

Academic symposia and conferences are another important avenue for fostering mutual understanding. Overseas Indian scholars and professionals participate in international conferences, presenting research and insights that reflect India's contributions to various fields. These events provide an opportunity for global collaboration and knowledge-sharing, enhancing the perception of India as a nation that values education and intellectual pursuit.

The active involvement of overseas Indians in international cultural exchanges has significantly contributed to the construction of India's positive image as a multicultural nation. Their efforts highlight India's rich cultural heritage, its values of inclusivity, and its contributions to global culture and knowledge. This positive image attracts international students, tourists, and professionals to India, fostering further cultural exchange and collaboration. For example, the India International Centre (IIC) in New Delhi is a hub for cultural and intellectual exchange, hosting events that bring together people from diverse backgrounds. Similarly, the Taj Mahotsav, an annual cultural festival held in Agra, showcases the best of Indian art, music, and dance, attracting visitors from around the world. These initiatives are supported by the efforts of overseas Indians who promote such events globally, enhancing India's reputation as a welcoming and culturally rich nation.

Construction of the Image of Overseas Indians in Global Social Welfare Activities

Indian Diaspora have made significant contributions to international social welfare through charitable donations, volunteer services, and environmental conservation efforts. Their activities reflect the social responsibility and humanitarian values of the Indian community, enhancing India's reputation within the global community.

Charitable Contributions

Overseas Indians are known for their generous charitable contributions, which have had a profound impact on both their host countries and India. In 2024, several prominent Indian philanthropists collectively donated over Rs 32,501 crore (\$4 billion) to various causes. For example, the late Ratan Tata bequeathed Rs 10,000 crore to the Ratan Tata Endowment Foundation, supporting education, healthcare, and marginalized communities. Similarly, Abhishek Lodha

transferred significant shares of his company to the Lodha Philanthropy Foundation, which focuses on women, children, the environment, and Indian culture.

Indian Americans have also been major donors in the United States, contributing over \$1.5 billion in 2023. Since 2008, individuals of Indian origin have donated approximately \$3 billion to US universities. These contributions highlight the philanthropic spirit of the Indian diaspora and their commitment to improving education and healthcare globally.

Volunteer Services

Overseas Indians actively participate in volunteer services, contributing their time and skills to various social causes. The Organisation for the Welfare of Overseas Indians (OWOI) provides numerous volunteer opportunities both in India and internationally, including event coordination, outreach, and mentorship programs. These initiatives help build a sense of community and belonging among overseas Indians while also supporting those in need.

In addition, organizations like the American Indian Foundation (AIF) have mobilized the Indian-American community to provide relief during natural disasters and support long-term development projects in India. For example, AIF launched the #RebuildLives campaign in 2020 to support migrant workers affected by the COVID-19 lockdowns. These efforts demonstrate the commitment of overseas Indians to social welfare and their ability to mobilize resources effectively.

Environmental Conservation Efforts

Environmental conservation is another area where overseas Indians have made significant contributions. Nikhil Kamath, co-founder of Zerodha, donated Rs 120 crore (\$15 million) to the Rainmatter Foundation, which focuses on climate change and sustainability. This donation highlights the growing awareness and commitment of overseas Indians to addressing global environmental challenges. Other initiatives include the work of the Indian diaspora in promoting sustainable practices and supporting environmental projects in their host countries. For example, the Indian American community has been actively involved in conservation efforts in the United States, leveraging their expertise and resources to drive positive change.

The social welfare activities of overseas Indians reflect the values of social responsibility and humanitarianism deeply rooted in Indian culture. Their contributions have enhanced India's reputation as a nation committed to global welfare and sustainable development. By supporting education, healthcare, and environmental initiatives, overseas Indians have fostered goodwill and trust between India and other nations.

Moreover, these activities have inspired a new generation of philanthropists and volunteers, both within the Indian diaspora and in India itself. The growing trend of strategic giving and impact investing among overseas Indians is testament to their commitment to creating lasting change. This trend is likely to

continue as more Indians abroad seek meaningful ways to contribute to social welfare and environmental conservation.

The involvement of overseas Indians in international social welfare endeavors is a testament to their commitment to social responsibility and humanitarian values. Through charitable contributions, volunteer services, and environmental conservation efforts, they have made a significant impact on global welfare. These activities not only enhance India's reputation within the global community but also inspire others to engage in similar initiatives. As overseas Indians continue to contribute to social welfare, their efforts will further strengthen India's position as a leader in global humanitarianism and sustainable development.

The Interactive Relationship of Indian Diaspora in Cultural Dissemination and Image Building

Indian Diaspora play a pivotal role in the propagation of Indian culture and the construction of India's global image, with a profound interplay existing between these two phenomena. This relationship is evident not only in the positive reinforcement of India's image through cultural diffusion but also in the reciprocal feedback loop where image-building enhances cultural outreach. Through this dynamic bidirectional interaction, Indian Diaspora have significantly bolstered India's global influence while simultaneously reinforcing the attractiveness and recognition of Indian culture on an international scale.

The Promoting Role of Cultural Dissemination in Image Building Cultural Attraction and Image Enhancement

Cultural dissemination has significantly enhanced India's global appeal and image recognition by presenting its rich cultural symbols and diverse artistic expressions. The Indian diaspora has deepened the world's understanding of India's cultural heritage and unique charm through activities such as celebrating traditional festivals (e.g., Diwali and Holi), organizing art exhibitions, and promoting Indian classical music and dance. This form of cultural outreach has not only challenged and transformed stereotypical perceptions of India but also elevated its global reputation. For instance, the international popularity of Indian classical music and dance, along with the global proliferation of yoga, has substantially reinforced India's standing as a cultural powerhouse.

The Synergistic Effect of Cultural and Value Dissemination

The integration of cultural and value dissemination has significantly shaped the international community's perception and evaluation of India. The diaspora of overseas Indians has played a pivotal role in portraying India as a nation actively embodying universal values, such as family cohesion, respect for tradition, and harmonious coexistence. This interplay and reinforcement between cultural and value dissemination have bolstered India's global image through diverse mechanisms. For instance, the worldwide influence of Indian cinema not only highlights India's cultural diversity but also communicates the core values of Indian society, thereby enhancing the global appeal of Indian culture.

The Feedback Effect of Image Building on Cultural Dissemination Enhancing Global Attention and Interest

A positive national image has significantly elevated India's global visibility and appeal, thereby creating substantial opportunities for cultural dissemination. As India's advancements in technology, economy, and culture gain widespread recognition, international interest in Indian culture is correspondingly increasing. For instance, the achievements of Indian-origin entrepreneurs such as Sundar Pichai and Satya Nadella not only highlight India's technological capabilities but also stimulate global curiosity regarding the cultural origins and values underpinning these successes. This heightened curiosity encourages a broader exploration of India's cultural practices, traditions, and core values, effectively fostering the dissemination of its rich cultural heritage.

Strengthening Cultural Identity and Pride

A positive national image significantly enhances the cultural identity and pride among overseas Indians, encouraging them to engage more actively in cultural dissemination efforts. When the global community acknowledges and values India's contributions, it inspires overseas Indians to enthusiastically share their cultural heritage. This heightened sense of pride fosters richer and more impactful cultural activities, such as increasingly frequent and spectacular music concerts, dance performances, and art exhibitions. For instance, as international appreciation for Indian classical music and dance continues to expand, overseas Indians have successfully organized a greater number of high-quality events, thereby further promoting cross-cultural exchange and mutual understanding.

Facilitate cross-cultural communication and understanding

A positive national image serves as a catalyst for cross-cultural dialogue and fosters mutual understanding. When India is recognized as a culturally diverse and inclusive nation, other countries are more inclined to participate in cultural exchanges with it. This favorable international reputation establishes a robust platform for cultural collaboration, academic partnerships, and strategic alliances. For instance, the increasing global interest in Indian literature has facilitated the translation of numerous works by Indian authors into foreign languages, thereby disseminating Indian narratives and perspectives on a broader scale. Likewise, the significant contributions of scholars of Indian origin to international policy-making create new avenues for cultural engagement between India and the global community.

Facilitate cultural investment and foster collaborative partnerships

A positive national image serves as a powerful magnet for cultural investment and international cooperation. As India's global reputation continues to strengthen, international organizations, cultural institutions, and artists are increasingly inclined to engage in collaborative projects with India. These partnerships provide invaluable resources and platforms for the dissemination of culture. For example, the establishment of Indian cultural centers worldwide creates dedicated venues for cultural exchange and education. By hosting

workshops, exhibitions, and performances that highlight Indian culture, these centers foster a deeper understanding among local audiences. Furthermore, international artistic collaborations, such as joint productions by Indian and foreign theater troupes or dance companies, significantly enhance the global influence of Indian cultural expression.

Enhance cultural symbols and preserve traditions

A positive national image amplifies the significance of cultural symbols and traditions. When India's cultural heritage is globally acknowledged and esteemed, its importance within overseas Indian communities is also enhanced. This enhancement motivates overseas Indians to be more diligent in preserving and promoting these cultural elements, thereby ensuring their sustained relevance and outreach. For instance, as Indian festivals such as Diwali and Holi gain increasing global recognition, overseas Indians organize more elaborate and culturally rich celebrations. These events not only introduce Indian customs to a wider audience but also reinforce the cultural significance of these festivals within the overseas Indian community. Similarly, the growing international appreciation for traditional Indian attire, such as the sari and turban, has encouraged overseas Indians to wear these garments more frequently during cultural events and even in daily life, further expanding their influence and appeal.

Establish a positive feedback loop

The mutual reinforcement between image building and cultural dissemination establishes a positive feedback loop, progressively amplifying their respective impacts. As India's international image continues to improve, the potential for cultural dissemination expands, fostering greater global recognition and appreciation of Indian culture. This heightened appreciation, in turn, further enhances India's reputation and stimulates increased interest and investment in cultural exchange initiatives. This symbiotic cycle not only sustains but also accelerates the growth of Indian cultural influence, thereby solidifying India's position on the global stage.

The symbiotic relationship between the Indian diaspora and cultural dissemination, as well as national image building, constitutes a pivotal force driving India's ascending influence on the global stage. Cultural propagation elevates India's international standing by highlighting its profound cultural heritage and diverse artistic expressions. In return, a favorable national image fosters greater opportunities for cultural outreach, thereby amplifying the global reach of Indian culture. This reciprocal interaction not only enhances India's global appeal and recognition but also establishes a robust foundation for cross-cultural exchanges and collaboration. As India's image continues to strengthen, the potential for cultural dissemination will expand, creating a virtuous cycle that propels the worldwide diffusion of Indian culture and fortifies ties between India and the global community.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Indian diaspora has played a pivotal role in shaping India's public diplomacy by promoting cultural understanding, enhancing the nation's global image, and contributing to its socio-economic development. Their multifaceted contributions have positioned India as a leader in various domains, fostering international cooperation and goodwill. As the Indian diaspora continues to engage in cultural, economic, technological, and social initiatives, their efforts will further strengthen India's global standing and contribute to its ongoing progress. The future holds great promise as the Indian diaspora continues to bridge cultural divides, drive innovation, and advocate for India's interests on the global stage.

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