

## THE EMERGENCE OF INDIA AS A GLOBAL SOFT POWER IN POWER POLITICS

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### **Abstract:-**

*India a land of composite cultures, religions and languages is known as the ancient civilization in the whole world. The Vedas and the philosophy of Buddhism are considered as the oldest example of India's soft power. It was Mahatma Gandhi whose nonviolence was a great inspiration and the biggest weapon to persuade the Britishers in the freedom struggle. India's nonviolence, tolerance, spiritualism values attracts people across the world. Due to this international image such big countries as United States, Australia and Russia are cooperating India in nuclear technology.*

*Several Indian Diaspora writers have contributed to the projection of India's culture, language, Landscape and values in their works. Further 'Bollywood' is the finest example of cultural openness and has all the traits to emerge as India's soft power of future. The Prime minister of India Mr. Modi is making an effort to harness the plenty soft power resources of India. His visits to foreign countries, his innovative ways to connect with foreign leaders, and other platforms have been effective. The declaration of an international yoga day by the UN on 21<sup>st</sup> June is the biggest step taken by him that displays universal harmony and peace and is a showcase of India's growing soft power.*

**Keywords:** *Soft Power, Hard Power, Power Politics, Nuclear technology, Diaspora.*

## THE EMERGENCE OF INDIA AS A GLOBAL SOFT POWER IN POWER POLITICS

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**I**ndia has one of the richest cultural traditions in the world. The cultural heritage of India lies in multiplicity of racist strands, languages, religions, philosophic systems, social structures and artistic expressions all webbed together in one wholeness.

The Vedas and the philosophy of Buddhism are considered as the oldest example of India's soft power. India's impression of being the land of knowledge, riches, fabrics and spices attracted traders and travelers for thousands of years. The spice trade between India and Europe led to the rise and dominance of Arab traders to such an extent that European explorer, such as Vasco de Gama and Christopher Columbus, set out to find new trade routes with India leading to the Age of Discovery.

India has a long history of civilization and cultural links with countries in Central Asia, South-East Asia and the Middle-East. India's rich cultural inheritance is its unique claim to global influence. With regard to culture, India has positioned itself internationally. According to an India born Nobel Laureate in Economics,

The culture of modern India is a complex blend of its historical traditions, Influences from the effects of colonialism over centuries and current Western culture - both collaterally and dialectically...the external images of India in the West often tend to emphasize the difference - real or imagined - between India and the West.(Sen24)

It was Mahatma Gandhi whose nonviolence was a great inspiration and the biggest weapon to persuade the Britishers in the freedom struggle. It is only since 1947 that India has been in a position to develop and exercise hard power. Soon after Independence non alignment and anti-colonial orientation came to define India's international personality.

Hard power is the power to impose; soft power is the power to influence. Soft power is the more effective and efficient concept in contemporary global politics because of its endurance and sustainability. Joseph Nye states that 'an organization's soft power is based on three resources: its culture, its political values and its foreign policy.' (84) He further argued that 'smart' states can increase their credibility and soft power capacity by their domestic and international performance. Soft power in this context is an extension of a nation's image abroad, but also a reflection of a nation's domestic image and vision. India's

nonviolence, tolerance, spiritualism values attracts people across the world. Due to this international image such big countries as United States, Australia and Russia are cooperating India in nuclear technology.

India is the world's largest democratic country and its democratic, federal and secular political model could be considered as an institutional model for other societies abroad. Democracy is the best form of governance for developing nations and it is central to India's international identity. The stability of India's democracy has demonstrated that unity in diversity is possible in a democratic format and there could be an institutional alternative to Western political systems.

India's large Diasporas also play a significant role for maintaining the diplomacy. Today millions of Indians are spread over distant lands. There are two groups which are classified on account of migration. The first group covers the Indians originally migrated as labourers for the British Empire in the 19th century, under the second group comes the richer and educated expatriates who found their way to the US, Canada and Australia in the last decades. These immigrants have excelled in fields like the IT, medicine, venture capital, engineering, construction etc.

Presently, the Indian Diaspora (including the NRIs and PIOs) is estimated to number over twenty million. To review the status of People of Indian Origin (PIOs) and Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) in the context of constitutional provisions, laws and rules applicable to them both in India and countries of their residence the government established in 2000 a High-Level Committee on Indian Diaspora. This committee aimed to study the role that PIOs and NRIs may play in the economic, social and technological development of India, by studying the characteristics, strengths and weaknesses of this community. In exchange for their contribution and based on the committee's recommendations, the Indian government reformed citizenship requirements in 2004 and eased the legal regime governing the travel and stay of PIOs in India.

Several Indian Diaspora writers as Amitav Ghosh, Salman Rushdie, Shashi Tharoor, Vikram Seth, V.S Naipaul, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, and Jhumpa Lahiri have contributed to the projection of India's culture, language, Landscape and values in their works. The most important thing about the Indians living abroad is that they have retained their emotional, cultural and spiritual links with the country of their origin.

India's film industry, 'Bollywood' is the finest example of cultural openness and has all the traits to emerge as India's soft power of future. While the successful export of cultural products such as Bollywood across the world has helped to raise awareness of Indian culture. It is today the world's largest film industry, surpassing Hollywood and has millions of fans across the world. Indian cinema has been the centre of attraction since

many years, especially in Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. The actors have gained wide popularity in foreign nations. 1970's superstar, Amitabh Bachchan, one of the greatest and most influential actors in the history of Indian cinema remarks: "Everywhere that Indians travel, overseas there is always a reference to our film industry... I think that's great form of recognition,' Bollywood is gaining ample popularity and recognition overseas." (Bollywood is gaining ample popularity)

Indian sports especially, cricket has proved to be a strong soft power resource for India. Indian Cricket Players are very popular in the world for their achievements. They have received several awards from foreign cricket boards, universities and association for their great achievements. Sachin Tendulkar, the very name is famous all over the world, and is regarded as the most accomplished batsman of modern day cricket. Others who have also made India proud are Sunil Gavaskar, Kapil Dev, Virender Sehwag, Anil Kumble and many others.

Further Sania Mirza has established herself as the most successful female Indian tennis player in history. In March 2010, The Economic Times named Mirza in the list of the "33 women who made India proud. (DAY IN PICS) 'She was appointed as the UN Women's Goodwill Ambassador for South Asia during the event held to mark the International Day to End Violence against Women on 25th November 2013.'(Sania Mirza, UN Women's Goodwill)

India's ability to share its culture with the world through food, music, technology and Bollywood soft power resources, helped to strengthen India's global status. Among the various commentators who have enumerated India's soft power resources, Tharoor is perhaps the most enthusiastic. Analysts often cite his famous passage below:

When India's cricket team triumphs or its tennis players claim Grand Slams, when a Bhangra beat is infused into a western pop record or an Indian choreographer invents a fusion of Kathak and ballet, when Indian women sweep the Miss World and Miss Universe contests or when Monsoon Wedding wows the critics and Lagaan claims an Oscar nomination, when Indian writers win the Booker or Pulitzer prizes, India's soft power is enhanced.(40)

Another one of India's most successful and long-lasting exports, Indian cuisine, with its distinctive use of spices, have become popular worldwide. There is hardly any major city around the world where you can't find more than one Indian restaurant. Chicken Tikka is a very popular dish in the United Kingdom. In an interview, the first Indian to receive two Michelin stars remarks:



I travel to India at least three to four times a year. It's always inspirational. There is so much to learn from India because each and every state is a country by itself and each has its own Cuisine. (Kocchar 2011)

India is one of the major exporter and supplier of handicrafts and gift products to the world market. Today, the crafts and craftspeople have a vital role to play in modern India – not just as part of its cultural and tradition, but as part of its economic future. However, while the exportation of these cultural products has certainly made aspects of life in the Indian subcontinent more familiar and accessible to people across the globe, it is not evident how this element of India's soft power has helped India to fulfill its foreign policy objectives in the last decade.

India is fast emerging as a major economic power. Although there is talk of India also being an important "soft power" the fact is we are far from achieving that status. According to a soft power survey carried out by Monocle, a British lifestyle magazine, the top ten soft power countries are Germany, UK, USA, France, Japan, Sweden, Australia, Switzerland, Canada and Italy. India is not there.

To increase its international control, India will have to use its soft power in a more systematic and planned manner. India's relatively neutral, non-threatening image, nuclear weapons notwithstanding, makes India a uniquely attractive power partner for countries. The high economic growth rates since the liberalization process in 1991 have certainly increased India's international attractiveness; the recent global successes of Indian information technology firms such as Infosys Technologies and Wipro, the achievements of other Multinational companies such as the Tata Group and the Reliance Group; and the now global reputation of the Indian Institute of Management (IIMs) and Indian Institute of Technology (IITs) have contributed to the development of a new image of India as an economic powerhouse.

The Prime minister of India Mr.Modi is making an effort to harness the plenty soft power resources of India. His visits to foreign countries, his innovative ways to connect with foreign leaders, his use of facebook and other platforms have been effective. The declaration of an international yoga day by the UN on 21<sup>st</sup> June is the biggest step taken by him that displays universal harmony and peace and is a showcase of India's growing soft power.

Mr.Modi personally led nearly 36,000 people in performing asanas at Delhi's Rajpath, an event that set a new world record. While yoga is one of India's most important gifts to the world, the UN's decision to celebrate the day is an appreciation of India's soft power, The External affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj comments: 'The colour of the skin,

religious or political affiliation and nationality did not matter for hundreds of thousands who performed yoga, they were all united by the power of yoga,'(India's Soft Power? Cultural nationalism?)

India has over the last decade attempted to make better use of its soft power assets. The "Incredible India" campaign was launched in 2002 by the Tourism Ministry and, like its name, made an immediate impact on the tourism industry of the country. The tourist influx of the country increased manifold in the subsequent years. 'Atithi Devo Bhava' was initiated in 2005 to improve the relation between host and the visiting foreigners. The primary aim of the campaign has always been to encourage tourism in the country, and develop India's economy. The famous actor of Bollywood, Aamir Khan is the brand ambassador for its immensely successful Incredible India campaign and is spreading the message of "Atithi Devo Bhava" (guest is god). As a brand ambassador, Aamir Khan has the task of promoting the rich cultural heritage of India and ways to preserve and enhance it.

Likewise the famous superstar, Amitabh Bachchan is currently the brand ambassador of Gujarat Tourism. Gujarat is one of the most industrialized states in the country. There are many Indian and global companies located in Gujarat and the area has seen double digit GDP growth in past decade. It is also known as "Growth Engine of India". It offers a wide spectrum of Tourism sectors which sing in the glory of Gujarat's rich culture and heritage. The 'Khushboo Gujarat Ki' campaign by celebrity Amitabh Bachchan has played a major role in increasing the tourism in Gujarat.

The Indian government has explicitly incorporated a 'cultural' element into its foreign policy. The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) has set up 22 cultural centres in 19 countries whose activities ranging from film festivals to book fairs and art exhibitions, aim to present an image of India as a plural multicultural society. The Indian government has also encouraged the use of Hindi abroad by organizing an annual and rotating World Hindi Conference and by offering Hindi classes in its different centre's.

The Indian government's efforts over the last decade have certainly helped to promote a new and modern image of India abroad. The increase in foreign direct investments in recent years is partly due to these publicity campaigns that promoted India's soft power capacities.

In addition to soft power, smart power strategies play an important role in the contemporary international system. India should find the right mix between soft and hard power in order to achieve real influence, or what Nye, have termed "smart power". For India to continue to be an attractive power, and most importantly for it to present a more compelling development model, it will also need to continue to improve its internal economic performance a more equitable and efficient society, a global economic power,

and an economy that commands a major share of the global wealth, especially from global trade and investment.

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