

# Migration and Business: A Survey of Indian Communities in the Philippines

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Drawn from archival and library research as well as interviews and focus group discussions, this paper documents the presence of Indian communities in the Philippines. This is contrary to the popular belief that Indians in the country are either Sikhs or Punjabis only. The presence of Indian professionals lately, particularly those who are working in information technology-enabled services sector, as well as students, greatly changes the earlier perception. The existence of these communities further challenges the stereotype that Indians are solely engaged in microfinancing activities. Reality will tell, however, that a good number of Indians are owners of large-scale businesses ranging from textile production to contact centers and pharmaceutical distribution. By and large, these Indian communities and their businesses, dispersed in various provinces, have contributed to the development of Philippine society through job generation, distribution of quality but affordable drugs, and retail and wholesale services among others.

Keywords: Migration, Diaspora, Transnationals, Indian, Business

## Introduction

FOR DECADES, the Philippines has been the home of many Indian migrants. Through the years, they have established communities and business networks and forged ties with Filipinos in various parts of the country. It is commonly believed that only two prominent Indian communities exist in the country: the Sikhs and the Punjabis. However,

these two groups belong to a larger population of diasporic Indians that also includes Filipinos of Indian origin, and a small number of other Indian ethnic groups. There are also more recent arrivals consisting of transnational Indians, many of whom are information technology (IT) professionals and students.

This paper contributes to research on Indian migration in the Philippines and on Sikhs' negotiation of their identity in the country by documenting the growing presence of Indian communities in the archipelago. In particular, this paper argues that Indian migrants in the Philippines are not only engaged in microfinancing activities but also in large-scale businesses that have imprints on the development of Philippine society.

In documenting the Indian migrant experiences in the Philippines through the years, this study employs library and archival research; statistics drawn from online sources and Philippine government agencies; interviews with 12 informants, mostly business executives and/or business owners, that were done face-to-face or through email and phone correspondence; and focus group discussions that complement the interviews.

### **Diasporic and Transnational Characteristics**

Indian migrants in the Philippines are broadly categorized into two groups—the diasporic and transnational communities. This article adopts Thomas Faist's (2010, 9) simple explanation of the difference between diaspora and transnationalism. The term "diaspora" has often been used to refer to "religious or national groups living outside an (imagined) homeland" while transnationalism particularly pertains to durable ties across countries, not only in relation to migrants but also to social formations such as networks, groups, and organizations (*ibid.*). Migrants become transnationals, according to Portes (1997) as cited by Bhat and Narayan (2010, 15), when they build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders. They actively engage in multiple spheres of life in host countries, as well as in the countries of their origin. Such

involvement extends to and includes other countries where other members of their communities are dispersed. This process is facilitated by the forces of globalization; the continuous circulation of people, money, and information; and by other more effective means of communication across countries.

Cheran (2003, 4) posits that diasporas are the result of forced migration while transnational communities are the effect of voluntary migration. He further identified the characteristics of a diaspora, which include collective memory/memory loss, alienation and insulation, deterritorialization/reterritorialization, projects of investment, diasporic consciousness, and the concept of and desire to return (5).<sup>1</sup> Most of these characteristics are present in the case of Indian communities in the Philippines, who experienced economic stagnation and lack of job opportunities. Furthermore, these communities retained the memory of the British annexation of Sindh in 1843 and Punjab in 1849 (Rye 1981, 1) and later Partition-related problems in India.

Relatedly, Michel Bruneau (2010, 36) posits that a diasporic community forges a bond between, on the one hand, those who want to group together and maintain close social relations, and, on the other, groups that invoke a common identity even though they settle elsewhere. The bond among members of a diaspora can come in different forms: family; village; religious, sociopolitical, and economic ties; the shared memory of a catastrophe; or the trauma suffered by the members of diaspora or their forebears. Sikhs, Punjabis, and other Indian ethnic groups share similar bonds, and they belong to this type of community in the Philippines. Transnational communities, on the other hand, emerged more recently in response to the demand for labor (47). Furthermore, a transnational community is composed of immigrants whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international boundaries.

According to Yahya and Kaur (2011, 6), transmigrants are different from sojourners or diasporic peoples because the latter settle and become incorporated in the economy, political institutions, localities, and patterns

of daily life in the country where they reside, whereas transmigrants merely maintain connections, build institutions, conduct transactions, and influence local and national events in their destination countries. In the case of the Philippines, many Indian professionals are transmigrants who work in various international organizations and multinational corporations, which include a growing number of information and technology-enabled services' (ITeS) companies. One case is Blast Asia's founder and chief executive officer, Mr. Arup Maity, who says that the industry's growing demand and effective networking with Filipino businessmen enabled him to establish a software service provider company and attract mid-level professionals from India (Maity 2013). Another group of transnationals would be Indian students, many of whom are pursuing medical studies in the Philippines.

### **Indian Communities and their Economic Interests in the Philippines**

Table 1 shows that 63,000 Indians live in the Philippines<sup>2</sup> and that majority of them are part of Indian diasporic communities. According to available data, Indians are dispersed all over the country and comprise both the diaspora (Sindhi businessmen and Punjabi traders) and, more recently, the transmigrants (IT professionals and students).

Punjabis almost number 51,000 while Sindhis are tallied at 7,800 (Table 1). Punjabis came to the Philippines later than the Sindhis, but their population grew three times larger than that of the latter. Sindhis arrived in the late nineteenth century; the Punjabis, during the early twentieth century. The present Punjabi population grew 30 times larger than what it had been almost six decades ago. In 1951, there were approximately 1,300 Indians in Manila and 600 were living in other provincial towns (Legation of India in Manila 1952).

The tightly-knit group of Punjabis built its first *gurdwara* (Sikh temple) in Paco, Manila<sup>3</sup> in 1929 and established subsequently its own *Khalsa Diwan*.<sup>4</sup> Since their arrival in the early twentieth century, these Punjabis have been into retail businesses, specializing in the sale of dry

fruits, textile, garments, household appliances, and jewelry (Rye 1993, 149). They sold their wares in the villages (Santarita 2011, 529)<sup>5</sup> and to ensure a big profit, Punjabi businessmen usually bought these products in bulk (531).

TABLE 1: Total Indian Population in the Philippines

Communities	Metro Manila	Luzon	Visayas	Mindanao	Total
Sindhis	7,000	300	300	200	7,800
Punjabis	40,000	5,000	4,000	2,000	51,000
Students	200	50	NA	NA	250
MNCS & their families	1,000	50	NA	200	1,250
ADB, IRRI & others	2,000	200	NA	NA	2,200
TOTAL	50,200	5,600	4,300	2,400	62,500

Sources: Philippine-India Business Guide Book 2010; also Bureau of Immigration Report 2013.

Later on, however, these Punjabis learned to specialize in “bank on bikes” and “mobile market” enterprises. To ensure the continuity of their economic interests, Punjabi businesses diversified into microfinancing, which is known locally by Filipinos as *paybsiks* (Santarita 2011, 531), a Filipinized spelling of five-six.<sup>6</sup> Profits from these loans trickled in, albeit continuously, and became financial capital for the next interested debtor. As long as there were debtors in the Philippines, one could immediately see Indian businessmen eagerly waiting for customers. It is unfortunate that these Punjabis were frequent victims of robbery and even murder because they faced competition or were perceived to be wealthy. Despite these dangers, Punjabis and Indians in general continued to do business and give out loans.

The increasing patronage of local clients, including Filipinos, of *paybsiks* partially arises from the low priority that Philippine banking

institutions assign to small-scale and informal economic activities. Unlike established financial organizations, Punjabis did not require voluminous documents and collateral. Potential debtors thus found it easy to approach Punjabi lenders as doing so entailed less tedious, and to some extent, paperless transactions (532).

As for the Sindhis and Indians in general, they established enterprises in various Philippine cities. In the early 1950s, the majority of Sindhis in the country engaged in retail trade and were based in Davao, Vigan, Tarlac, Baguio, Cebu, Misamis, Laguna, Bataan, and Tacloban. According to Thapan (2002), these Sindhis found the local populations simple, friendly, and helpful. Living expenses in the provinces were also low. To set up a business, a Sindhi needed only as little as five to ten thousand pesos as capital, and the money invested in starting a retail business was nearly always earned in the Philippines. Many of those who ventured into the provinces already had some previous experience in Manila or elsewhere, usually as employees (29). Then and now, Sindhis engaged in the trade of consumer goods, principally textiles but also other general merchandise such as watches, electronics, optical products, and household and sports goods. Some are engaged in light industry and the manufacture of garments and textiles (Salazar 2008, 507–508). Thapan's findings are corroborated by the following cases in the cities of Baguio and Iloilo, respectively.

In Baguio City, Indian businesses along with American, Japanese, Chinese, and Filipino enterprises, dominated the stretch from the present Malcom Square to Luneta Hill (currently occupied by SM City) [Cabreza 2011]. Since 1900, the said commercial area has hosted pioneer businesses that supplied the needs of growing communities of expatriates and migrant Filipinos. One popular shop among the Bagueños was the Fil-Indian Store located in Laperal Building on Session<sup>7</sup> Road (Baquirin 2003). Moreover, Pohumal and Bombay Bazaars were also famous destinations of shoppers from the city and the Cordillera region. People swarmed in these shops along G. Perfecto St. in Baguio City, especially during market day. From the recollection of old vendors in today's buzzing city market, other

important shopping centers were the Bheroomul Bazaar and Assandas Department Store (Molintas 2013).<sup>8</sup>

Indians arrived in Iloilo province in the early 1930s after the Pohumal brothers' trading houses floundered. Some of the former Pohumal employees set up their own businesses. The retail business in the province expanded until the mid-1950s and triggered the establishment of big businesses in the old district of Iloilo City. These Indian entrepreneurs specialized in textile and retail merchandise. One of the most prominent Indian-owned commercial establishments was the Diamond Shopping Center. These businesses, like those in other cities, became permanent fixtures of the urban landscape.

Aside from wholesaling, retailing, and microfinancing, Indians have also been involved in heavy industry production and, more recently, in

**FIGURE 1**  
Diamond Shopping Center in Iloilo City. Photo by Joeje Santarita.



the information technology sectors. A survey of these businesses will provide an idea of their extent and influence in the Philippines. One of the earliest Indian investors in the Philippines is the Birla Group of Industries, which includes IndoPhil Textile Mills, Inc., IndoPhil Cotton Mills, Inc., and IndoPhil Acrylic Mfg., Corp., whose factories have been operating in Marilao, Bulacan since 1975. The Indian-owned Global Steel Holdings Limited bought the Philippine-government-controlled steel company in 2009 and became the country's largest steel manufacturer, exporting 70 percent of its production. Global Steel Philippines Inc. is based in Iligan City, Northern Mindanao and was planning to export flat steel to Korea, Indonesia, Vietnam, and India (GMA News 2008).

Other flourishing Indian enterprises in the Philippines, particularly in Metro Manila, pertain to the food business. *Kashmir*, the oldest fine dining Indian restaurant in Manila, was established by the Advani siblings in 1974. Other prominent Indian restaurants in the metropolis are *Queen's Indian* in Manila; *Prince of Jaipur* in Taguig City and Quezon City; *India House* in Bel Air 2, Makati City, which offers Indian, European, and Arab cuisine; *Chah de Huti* in United Nations Avenue, Manila; *New Delhi Restaurant* in South Super Highway, Manila, among others. Some novelty/specialty stores cater to the unique gastronomic needs of Indians and Filipinos. These include *Little India Simron's Marketing and Trading Corporation* in Paco, Manila; *Talwar Grocery* on United Nations Avenue, Manila, which sells Indian and Pakistani spicy halal food; *Om Indian Specialty Grocery Store* on United Nations Avenue, Manila; and *The Taj* in San Antonio Village in Makati City.

It is worth mentioning that Indian businesses are not only concentrated in Metro Manila; they are also found in various islands of the Philippines (Table 2).

To date, these Indian-owned businesses continue to flourish and offer substantial economic support to the diasporic communities of Sikhs and Punjabis that operate them. Furthermore, the late 1990s witnessed



TABLE 2: Indian Businesses in the Philippines

LUZON	
Food/ Restaurants	*Rama Mahal Bar & Restaurant in Sampson Road, Subic Bay Freeport Zone *Laxmi Fud Hauz in San Jose, Nueva Ecija *Bliss Cafe <sup>9</sup> in Baguio City
Stores	*Bhatti & Beins Buy & Sell Co, Indian & Filipino Grocery in Marilao, Bulacan *Bombay Bazaar in San Jose, Nueva Ecija *Neclam Mart in Vigan City, Ilocos Sur which specializes on electronic and sports wares
Printing Press	*Bismillah Printing Press in San Miguel, Tarlac City
VISAYAS	
Food/ Restaurants	*Indian Ocean Restaurant in Barangay Camputhaw in Cebu City *Snackees in Bacolod and Binalbagan *Tahkus in Bacolod City *PIZSAS in Bacolod City
Stores	*Agencia Bacolod in Bacolod City *Kewal Department Store in Bacolod City *Indian Emporium in Bacolod City *Agencia Zee in Bacolod City *Best Department Store in Bacolod City *Ravsons in Bacolod City *Amco in Bacolod City *MJG Marketing in Bacolod City *Amar Emporium in the cities of Bacolod, Talisay, Silay, La Carlota, Himamaylan, and Sibalay and the towns of Hinigaran, Binalbagan, etc. in Negros Occidental and Bais City in Negros Oriental *Glori Bazaar in Kabankalan City *Charles Department Store in La Carlota City
MINDANAO	
Industry	*Mittal-owned Global Steel Philippines *Bioseed Research Philippines Inc. <sup>10</sup>
Stores	*Indian Palace Store *Lachmi Shopping Mall *Love Bargain Bazaar

Source: Generated from interviews and field research.

the rise of the ITeS industry and triggered the advent of Indian professionals who collectively constitute the transnational community.

With the implementation of India's reoriented foreign and economic policy (Look East Policy) in 1992 and the active response of the Philippines to India's initiative from 2000 onwards, there occurred a gradual but significant increase in Indian migration to the Philippines. Indeed, human capital and investments from India have been rising since the first decade of the twenty-first century. The said process of transmigration was facilitated by global developments such as capital accumulation uncertainties, which, in turn, adversely affected social and economic conditions in countries of origin and destination; insecurity of immigrants brought about by deteriorating race relations and the political atmosphere in the West; and the growth of global cities which serve as hubs or nodes of human capital, among others (Yahya and Kaur 2011, 7).

Based on the Philippines' Bureau of Immigration's (BI) statistics, 21,476 Indian migrants entered the country between 2004 and 2010, 42 percent of whom are considered part of the Philippine workforce. The rest are either dependents of these workers or students. This computation is based on the BI's registry of Alien Certificate of Registration (ACR). Indians who hold a visa by virtue of a Republic Act (RA), Presidential Decree (PD), Executive Order (EO) or other provisions as shown in Table 3, are counted as manpower in the Philippines. According to these categories, approximately more than 9,400 Indians work in various companies in the Philippines.

Aside from running businesses, some Indians also work as consultants and officials of the Asian Development Bank, International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), United Nations, World Health Organization (WHO), International Organization of Migration, and International Finance Corporation World Bank (IFC-WB). A good number are also employed as managers or employees of multinational companies in several sectors: finance, food and beverage, communications and information technology, industrial and agricultural, manufacturing, education, pharmaceutical, and others

TABLE 3: Registered Indian Nationals in the Philippines, 2004-2010

Law/ Visa	Description	# of Indians
<b>Immigrant Status</b>		
RA 7919	Naturalization law	4,929
Sec 13	Allows for Quota or Preference Immigrant Visa	516
PD 419	Allows Indian non-immigrants to acquire permanent residence	2
Subtotal		5,447
<b>Non-immigrant Status</b>		
Sec 9G	Pertains to pre-arranged employee	3,680
Sec 9A	Temporary business, pleasure or of health	8
Subtotal		3,688
<b>Special Immigrant Status</b>		
Sec 47 (A) 2	Warrants the admission of businessmen as special non-immigrant under Commonwealth Act No. 613	200
SCWV	Special Clark Working Visa	45
SIRV <sup>11</sup>	Special Investor Resident Visa - A special visa for those who can invest at least US \$75,000.00	19
SSWV	Subic Special Working Visa - A form of SVEG except that the recommendation and approval for the issuance come from the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) and that the investment is located in Subic area in Zambales	14
SIRV EO226	Omnibus Investment Act of 1987	11
EO 758 (SVEG)	A special visa issued to a qualified non-immigrant foreigner who shall actually employ at least ten (10) Filipinos in a lawful and sustainable enterprise, trade, or industry	10
RA 8756	Incorporated the Omnibus Investment Act	4
Sec 47B	Refugees	3
CEZA <sup>12</sup>	Granted to foreigners doing business in the Cagayan Economic Zone Authority	1
Subtotal		307
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		<b>9,442</b>

Source: Bureau of Immigration, Republic of the Philippines

(Hathiramani 2006, 115) [Table 4].<sup>13</sup> Few expatriates reside in the Philippines but notable among them are the families employed at Global Steel, which numbered around 100 (PHIndia 2014).

It is also interesting to highlight the growing number of Indian IT professionals in the country. Their arrival paralleled the rise of the ITeS industry in the Philippines, especially with the growth of contact center companies and other software service provider enterprises. These Indian firms are estimated to have a combined capacity of 49,000 seats (Wallace 2009, 16)<sup>15</sup> or working stations in the Philippines. Out of these job opportunities, several mid-level positions are currently occupied by Indian engineers and college graduates. In 2013, there were 20 registered Indian-owned ITeS companies.<sup>16</sup>

Out of 20 Indian contact center companies operating in the Philippines, 11 primarily serve as delivery sites and/or back-office facilities of Indian-owned companies based in the cities of New Delhi, Haryana, and Mumbai (Pena 2013). These companies include Aegis People Support Inc., Aditya Birla Minacs (ABM), Drishti, First Source Solutions Limited (FSSL), Genpact, Infosys BPO Limited- Philippine Branch (IBLPB), Intelenet Global Philippines, Inc. (IGPI), InterGlobe Technologies Philippines, Inc. (IGT) [Maity 2013],<sup>17</sup> iQor, iTouchPoint (ITP), Tata Consultancy Services (Philippines), Inc. (TCSPI), and Wipro Spectramind Ltd. (WSL). These Indian-based/owned ITeS companies spread their operations across 58 sub-locators all over the archipelago. Majority of these—almost 84 percent—are concentrated in the island of Luzon, particularly in Metro Manila, while 12 percent operate in the Visayas, and the rest are in Mindanao.

Moreover, pharmaceutical companies with Indian interests in the Philippines have contributed to the health of Filipinos, serving as facilitators and distributors of especially generic drugs from India. Sandhu Pharmaceuticals Limited is a distributor of medicines that can help improve child health, and address gynecological and chronic ailments among Filipinos (HLN Philippines n.d.).

TABLE 4: Indians Working in Various International Organizations based in the Philippines

Sector	Organization
<b>Finance</b>	Aventis, Citibank, Citi Financial, Citigroup, Hongkong Bank, Standard Chartered Bank, American Orient Company Philippines Inc., Compass Philippines, Philippine American Life Insurance Company, Muntinlupa Diagnostic Inc., State Bank of India, New India Assurance Company, Ltd, Lloyds
<b>Food and Beverages</b>	Cadbury Philippines, Pillsbury Philippines, Nestle, Proctor and Gamble (P&G), Dole Philippines, Diageo Philippines (J. Walker),
<b>Communications and Information Technology</b>	Ambergris Solutions Philippines, Inc. (presently known as Telus International), Genie Technology Inc., Magnetron Technology Philippines Corporation, Oracle Philippines Corporation, Sutherland, Technopaq Inc.
<b>Industrial and Agricultural</b>	Biostadt Philippines, <sup>14</sup> ArcelorMittal
<b>Manufacturing</b>	Indo Phil textile Mills, Johnson and Johnson, RK Manufacturing, Inc.
<b>Education</b>	M. Gandhi International School, Satya Sai International School
<b>Pharmaceutical</b>	AAA Pharma, Ambica International Trading; Claris Labs; Eon Pharmatek, Inc.; Genpharm, Inc.; HLN Phil Trading, Inc.; Huge Pharma International Corp.; Indian Drug Distributor; IPCA Lab; Khriz Pharma Trading, Inc.; National Bio Tec; Raptakos Brett and Co.; SMHP Marketing; Synmedic Labs; T. Chotrani; Torrent Pharma (BFAD n.d.); and Ajanta Pharma Philippines, Inc (Ajanta Pharma n.d.)
<b>Others</b>	Renaissance New World, Gulf Oil, Global Sources, Metro Railway Transit, Barber Ship Management, Makro, Alcatel, UPS Philippines

Source: Generated from interviews and field research.

Another Indian-owned business, Glenmark Pharmaceuticals Ltd., established its presence in the country in 2003 through its subsidiary Glenmark Philippines, Inc. It collaborated with the largest Philippine drug distributor, Metro Drug, to widen the distribution of Glenmark's dermatological products (Glenmark 2006). Ahmedabad-based Torrent Pharmaceutical Limited set up in 2004 Torrent Pharma Philippines, Inc. (Torrent Pharmaceuticals n.d.) while Reliance Life Sciences of India forged in 2005 an alliance with Ambica Philippines, forming Ambica Biotechnologies (Ambica Philippines n.d.).<sup>18</sup> In 2007, Dr. Reddy commenced its operations in the archipelago through a partnership with Britton Marketing Corporation (BMC)[The Economic Times 2007]. In the same year, Emcure Pharmaceuticals Limited sealed an agreement with the Philippines' MacroPharma Corporation to distribute medicines used in renal diseases, including antirejection drugs for renal transplants, and in anticancer therapy (Philippine Embassy 2007). Lastly, the Punjab-based PBL partnered with FVSCI to provide the Filipinos an access to valuable vaccines (Panacea-Biotec 2007).

The commencement of local operations of numerous Indian pharmaceutical companies in the Philippines as early as 2003 was a welcome development for Filipinos. Direct distributorship, along with minimal hauling and transportation expenses, lowers the cost of drugs in the country, dovetailing with the *Botika ng Bayan* (People's Pharmacy) program of the Philippine government. The success of these Indian-owned businesses and the continuing presence of communities that support them have been, undoubtedly, facilitated by their networks and businesses.

### **Indian Communities and their Social Capital**

The ability of Indian communities to adapt to several changes through the decades is reinforced not only by their economic but also by their sociocultural capital. For instance, the mere establishment of *gurdwaras* or Sikh temples in the Philippines was already a turning point in the evolution of the Indian, particularly Punjabi, community in the

country. These institutions provide Punjabis with avenues to strengthen not only their communal base but also their ethnic identity (Rye 1993, 763). At present, more than 20 *gurdwaras* all over the Philippines serve various purposes: as de facto Indian food shops,<sup>19</sup> as *langar* (open kitchen) to its members and the destitute, and as function halls for all social and solemnized activities like weddings, betrothals, and baptismal ceremonies. Through the years, the *gurdwara* both acted as a means to strengthen spiritual bonds within the community and as a bulwark against exogenous pressures on their faith.

The various print media available in selected cities of the Philippines attest to the level of the Indians' cultural capital (Santarita 2011, 167). This form of cultural capital, according to Bourdieu (1986, 243), is considered objectified when agents or migrants utilize anything that is transmissible in its materiality, such as writings, paintings, monuments, and other instruments of identity negotiation. Indians in the Philippines are updated and well-informed about their community through broadcast and online/new media. These include the magazine, *Dateline India*; Philippine Seva Foundation's publication arm, *Samachar*; the online web-based media, *Sindhi Tattler*; PHIndia.info (formerly RPIndia.info); and namastemabuhay.com. These publications, aptly epitomizing Bruneau's idea of iconographic capital, have considerable importance for both diasporic and transnational communities, helping them thrive in their chosen or designated localities (2010, 36).

Moreover, the educational attainment of many Indians also allowed them to raise their social status. Given the high value that Philippine society attaches to education, Indians transformed their degrees from leading universities and colleges in the country into additional social capital. Many of the Indian students are studying in reputable private universities in the Philippines such as Ateneo de Manila University, De La Salle University, the Asian Institute of Management<sup>20</sup> (Hathiramani 2006, 115) and the Davao Medical School Foundation, Inc. in Davao City.

Indians have also relied partly on their social assets for their survival. The presence of networks such as the Filipino Indian Chamber of Commerce (FICC), Saturday Lunch Group of the Sindhis, the *Khalsa Diwan* of the Punjabis, and the India Philippine Welfare Club have helped Indians engage smoothly with various sectors of Philippine society. *Khalsa Diwan* has gradually assumed greater social importance. It also acts as an avenue to resolve conflicts among members through mediation, social pressure, and moral persuasion by some elders and its executive committee members. As a result, different sectors began to exert pressure to influence its decisions. As for transnationals, particularly those from IT-related fields, they seek help, from the Indian diasporic community and even Filipino networks, especially during the early stages of their stay in the Philippines, as well as established small self-help groups. These networks also partly handle arrangements for the accommodation and employment of Indian transnationals, complementing the assistance provided by the intermediaries of Indian multinational corporations.

Aside from religious organizations, Indians also established organizations in selected areas of the Philippines to help protect themselves from exploitation by Filipinos and their Indian cohorts. Kidnappings and extortion have occurred among Indian migrants, but most of these cases were not reported to the police (Bansal 2007, 2013).<sup>21</sup> These self-help movements were the Punjabi Lovelink Club in Manila and the Indian Welfare Association in Dagupan. In Bacolod City, Indian businessmen formed the Indian Economic Association, as well as religious committees based in an Indian temple located in Barangay Taculing (Santarita 2008, 533). In Cebu, there is the Cebuano-Indian Friendship Association on Gochan Street. Apart from ensuring their physical safety, these organizations also serve economically struggling members of the Indian community in the Philippines.

Moreover, social capital is not only confined within local or national borders. The migrant social network has proven to be an effective means to provide job security and survival assistance to new migrants and even old settlers. New global transportation and communication linkages in fact even facilitated greater and more frequent movement of Indian spouses,



religious teachers, and cultural productions and publications into the Philippines. Social networks are becoming transnational because of the increased flows not only between India and the Indian communities in the Philippines but also across all the nodes of Indian diaspora in the world (Dusenbery 2008, 272).

### **Conclusion**

Several observations can be made regarding the presence of Indians and their communities in the country, especially in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

First, the Indian communities in the Philippines are broadly categorized into two groups: namely, the diasporic and transnational migrants. Contrary to the popular belief, however, Indian communities in the country are determined not only by ethnicity but also by their settlement patterns how they settled in society.

Second, the documented presence of Indian migrants in the country began as early as the twentieth century. These migrants, particularly the Sindhis and Punjabis, trickled into the Philippines to look for better jobs.

Third, migration networks and other forms of social capital served as a vital support system to Indian migrants and helped ensure the continuity of their businesses in the country throughout the years. From peddling and trading, Punjabis and Sindhis ventured into wholesaling, food/restaurant, textile and steel manufacturing, and other enterprises. Early waves of migrants, their descendants, and their established businesses did not stay in Metro Manila. A good number of them went to various cities and provinces all over the country and put up businesses there.

Fourth, the rise of the ITeS industry in the archipelago attracted Indian IT professionals, who now serve in various mid-management level positions in the Philippines. As expatriates, they receive salaries higher than their counterparts in India. This small yet significant group breaks the common Filipino stereotype that Indians are only into peddling and microfinancing.

Fifth, although Indian-owned companies constitute merely five percent of ITeS players in the country, they employ thousands of Filipinos. The number of vacancies offered by Indian ITeS companies in the country has been increasing. Since 2000, around 50,000 jobs have already been generated for Filipino contact center agents.

Sixth, the existence of Indian pharmaceutical companies in the Philippines and the visible presence of their representative offices in the archipelago, facilitates the distribution of affordable and quality medicines to less privileged Filipinos across the country.

Lastly, Indian migrants in the Philippines contribute to the revitalization of Indian-Philippine relations. They help explore and exploit potential and existing economic opportunities in the country. In fact, they are efficient gatekeepers in emerging partnerships between India and the Philippines in the fields of energy, medicine, and military technology, among others. In India, they effectively liaise for the Philippines, mediate transactions between Filipino and Indian businessmen who are only in their initial stage of cooperation, and help both parties penetrate markets.

By and large, Indians in the Philippines are growing communities whose influence has been undeniably felt through the years. They succeeded in penetrating the Philippine socioeconomic sectors through business diversification strategies and wise utilization of various networks. Given their business acumen and competitiveness, Indian communities in the country will continue to grow and serve as one of the important sectors in the development of Philippine society.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Projects of investment refer to the belief of migrants that they should collectively be committed to the maintenance, preservation and/or restoration of their homelands. Diasporic consciousness is defined as the continuing efforts of members to relate personally to the homeland and maintain a unique ethnonational or ethnocultural consciousness.
- <sup>2</sup> There are 26 million Indians living outside the South Asian subcontinent. Out of this, 4.6 million thrive in Southeast Asia and almost half of them are in Myanmar.
- <sup>3</sup> Rye (1981) mentioned 1924 as the commencement of the Gurdwara's construction.

- <sup>4</sup> It is the oldest among the Indian organizations in the Philippines. It is also the largest religious institution of which 85% Indian-Filipinos are its followers.
- <sup>5</sup> The commodities being sold range from tumblers, glassware, umbrellas, ready-to-wear clothes and garments, pillows and anything that was requested by customers.
- <sup>6</sup> For every 500 pesos, one hundred pesos interest is collected as interest per month. Installments are done on daily basis of both principal and interest computed for 30 days.
- <sup>7</sup> It is unfortunate that the Bombay Bazaar was demolished in the late 1990s. This business capitalized on their dedicated service with courtesy and satisfaction.
- <sup>8</sup> These shops sold toys, underwear, garments and other merchandises. Assandas also sold remote control cars and expensive watches until the late 1980s.
- <sup>9</sup> Shanti Ward is the Indian owner and chef of the well-patronized vegetarian restaurant, Bliss Café, at Hotel Elizabeth, Gibraltar St., Baguio City.
- <sup>10</sup> Bioseed is a subsidiary company of DSCL Group of Companies based in India. Established in 1993 in General Santos City, the company specializes on research, production, processing and marketing of hybrid corn, rice, cotton, and vegetable seeds (Bioseed n.d.).
- <sup>11</sup> SIRV of the Omnibus Investments Code of 1987 allows special immigrant status to any alien who is at least 21 years of age, who has not been convicted of a crime involving moral turpitude, who is not afflicted with any loathsome, dangerous, or contagious disease, who has not been institutionalized for any mental disorder or disability, and is willing and able to invest at least US \$75,000.00 (Philippine Portal 2009).
- <sup>12</sup> Under CEZA, any foreign investor who establishes a business enterprise within the Zone and who maintains capital investment of not less than US \$150,000 shall be granted, along with his or her spouse, dependents, and unmarried children below twenty-one (21) years of age, a permanent resident status within the Zone. The responsibility and authority to grant such permanent resident status is delegated to the Cagayan Economic Zone Authority (CEZA n.d.).
- <sup>13</sup> Data come from interviews with (Gidwani 2013; Sethi 2013; Prasad 2013; Chatlani 2013; Sudhakar 2013; Dhavan 2013; Mirpuri 2013).
- <sup>14</sup> Biostadt has been operating in the Philippines since 1988 by doing development activities. It initiated selling activities in 1993 with Shell chemicals (subsequently Cyanamid) distributing its products. However, Biostadt finally started direct marketing activities since 1997. Today, Biostadt has a team of 50 agronomists (provided with two-wheelers) supervised by Fourteen Field Managers (provided with 4-wheelers) based all over the Philippines. Biofield's head office is located in Greenhills area of Metro Manila with 15 staff working to support the whole business (Battacharya 2013).
- <sup>15</sup> A 'seat' in the contact center industry refers to a working station of an agent assigned in one of the three or four shifts within the 24/7 service of one contact centre. This working space enables an agent to transact with the outside world via interactive voice response (IVR) technologies, email, speech recognition, and web channels.
- <sup>16</sup> In 2008, ten companies were registered.
- <sup>17</sup> Blast Asia is locally established software service provider established in the Philippines by Mr. Arup Maity. The company employs 100 personnel.

- <sup>18</sup> Although the company provides Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA)/ Ribonucleic Acid (RNA) based diagnostics services, it also engages in the distribution of pharmaceutical goods ranging from human insulin to dermatological cream, anticancer medications, as well as ‘Tenderils’ baby care merchandise. The latter is a product of the India-based company, Krauter (Krauter Babycare n.d.)
- <sup>19</sup> A personal observation while conducting the interviews and focus group discussion in Iloilo and Manila Sikh temples last 2006 and 2013.
- <sup>20</sup> In 2006, there were 200 Indian students enrolled in the Asian Institute of Management.
- <sup>21</sup> Some of these kidnapping cases led to murder. These unfortunate events even reached the attention of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs and eventually led to the passing of guidelines discouraging people, especially from Doaba, Punjab to go to the Philippines. Most of the respondents suspected that aside from the opportunistic Filipinos, the culprits might also be their kin and kiths because of competition. There were reported cases in Mindanao, Iloilo, Bacolod, Baguio, and other provinces. Most of the respondents requested that their identity remain anonymous (Bansal 2007; 2013).

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