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Dedicated to the memory of
Late Professor Tapas Majumdar
(6 January 1929–15 October 2010)
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Preface

India Migration Report 2010–2011: The Americas (IMR 2010–2011) is a sequel to the India Migration Report 2009: Past, Present and the Future Outlook (IMR 2009). IMR 2010–2011 presents a picture of continuing migration between India and the North, South and Central Americas as well as the Caribbean. For more than half a century, India has been one of the largest source countries of migrants to the US and Canada. High-skill migrants, falling in various categories – professionals and technicians, students, and family migrants – have comprised the flows over time. The Indian population in these two countries exert considerable influence as diaspora groups. Quite a significant proportion of them are highly educated and affluent people who have attained important positions in the mainstream economic and socio-political set-up of the host country. Contrary to their position in North America, Indian migrants in South America and the Caribbean are not as highly skilled, educated or affluent. A majority of them had migrated much earlier as low-skilled workers recruited for plantations in the colonies. They formed the old diaspora in the Caribbean. In contrast, migration to the US and Canada led to formation of the new diaspora. This report is an attempt to trace Indian migration to the continents of North and South America and its different trajectories.

Migration of Indians to the Americas dates back to the nineteenth century when a large number of people migrated to the Caribbean as indentured labour. In North America, Indians arrived in 1890s, seeking work in lumber mills, railroads and agriculture, mainly in the west coast states of British Columbia in Canada, and Washington and California in the US. Major parts of this migration comprised unskilled and uneducated workers and remained largely unnoticed. It was the later waves of migration, comprising the highly skilled and educated, constituting the so-called brain-drain, which generated a lot of concern among the Indian public in general, and the academia and policy circles in particular. The present situation, however, is quite different from those of the 1970s and 1980s and even that of the 1990s. The twenty-first century has brought about certain noticeable changes. It has been interesting to see the US, traditionally a country of immigrants, tightening up its borders whereas Canada becoming relatively liberal in its immigration policy. In the US, the change can be attributed to heightened security concerns after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001, further consolidated by the severe economic instability that the recession of 2008 brought to the American economy.

In the context of these transitions, India Migration Report 2010–2011 intends to provide an overview of migration from India to major destination countries of the American continents as well as return migration of Indians and immigration of non-Indians from these countries to India. The focus is on putting together available information on various issues and concerns involving these migration patterns, and to analyse the major policies of some important countries in the contemporary contexts of migration from and to India.

The report comprises seven chapters. Chapter 1, ‘Indian Migration to the Global North in the Americas: The United States’, presents a detailed account of the trends of Indian migration to the US, providing existing data sets on flows and stocks of migration by socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the population. Chapter 2, ‘Indian Migration to the Global North in the Americas: Canada’ attempts to provide similar data sets on flows and stocks of migration of Indians for Canada, the other major country of their destination in North America. An epilogue to Chapters 1 and 2 provides a short commentary on the nature of data in these two chapters to the effect that they also include important comparative information on the patterns, trends, and magnitude of migration flows from the newly emerging global powers in the developing world, viz., Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS) and Mexico (coinning the term the “Rising Southern Economies”, or RSEs in short) to the US and Canada respectively. Chapter 3, ‘Emigration of Highly Skilled Indians to the United States: S&E Personnel (Students and Workers) and School Teachers’, is exclusively devoted to the case of migration of highly skilled S&E workers and students from India to the United States. In keeping with the pattern of assigning a specific chapter to the study of emigration of single-sector skilled professionals from India, viz., the health-sector professionals in the India Migration Report 2009, as a case study of emigration of education-sector professionals, a section of this chapter deals with migration of school teachers from India. Chapter 4, ‘Migration Policies in the Developed World of North America’, analyses the evolution of immigration laws in the US and Canada. It highlights the major Acts and Amendments which, having led to the formation of the existing immigration laws and policies in North America, have determined the present stocks and flows of Indian migrants to these two countries. Chapter 5, ‘Indian Migrants in the Global South in the Americas: The Caribbean
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and Central and South America', charts the Indian diaspora in the Caribbean countries like Trinidad & Tobago and Jamaica, as well as migration to and from Central and South America. The chapter presents existing data regarding stocks and flows, changes in the patterns of migration of Indians in the Caribbean countries, and the size and composition of Indian communities in some Central and South American countries like Mexico, Brazil, Surinam, Argentina and French Guiana. The chapter also discusses the traditional ties between India and the Caribbean region that developed with the indentured migrant labourers fleeing India to escape harsh living conditions of those times and in search of economic freedom.

Apart from the Indian diaspora, the Americas have also been home to various other diasporas of the world. Chapter 6, ‘Other Diasporas in the Americas: A Comparative Perspective’, provides brief sketches of other immigrant communities, viz., the African, British, Irish, Jewish, German, Japanese and Chinese, in comparison with the Indian diaspora in the region. In Chapter 7, ‘Immigration and Return Migration to India’, migration of people from countries in the Americas to India has been looked into. The prospect of migrating to the promising economies of China and India is emerging as a ‘counter dream’, noticeably for some Americans at a time when their own economy is undergoing an employment crisis. In addition, the chapter also discusses the direction and causal factors behind return migration of Indians from the Americas, and comments on the various schemes and programmes initiated by the Government of India to engage with the Indian diaspora.

The IMR Initiative

The idea of bringing out India Migration Report annually was first mooted by us at the 20th Conference of the International Association of Historians of Asia (IAHA), hosted by the Jawaharlal Nehru University (14–17 November 2008). Subsequently, the plan was reaffirmed by a declaration at the closing plenary of the International Conference on India–EU Partnerships in Mobility: Data, Agreements and Policy, jointly organized by the Jawaharlal Nehru University and the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, Government of India, in New Delhi (February 21–23, 2009). The two conferences, which brought together academic experts from leading universities and organizations across the world and also some policy makers from India and a few select countries of the European Union, had deliberated upon various migration related issues. While delineating the future contours of engagement in academia and policy making on migration matters relating to India, the plan for starting the publication of an India Migration Report along the lines of the World Development Report and the Human Development Report, dedicating each annual edition to a particular theme, was announced. It is in keeping this promise that the maiden edition, the India Migration Report 2009: Past, Present and the Future Outlook was launched on 18th December, the International Migrants Day.

About the IMR 2009

The theme of the inaugural issue of India Migration Report 2009 was chosen with a view to taking stock, even if partially, of the trajectories that Indian migration had passed through, and to anticipating those that lay ahead in times to come. The Report was presented in seven chapters, covering several issues relating to international migration, primarily from, but also to India. The chapters dealt with concerns that have been on the minds of the researchers and policy makers in India for many years, for example, remittances, gender, migration of health professionals, and so on. At the same time, there were issues of more recent vintage, like terrorism, security and climate change. The report also discussed various policy perspectives across countries that were becoming asymmetrical and required coherence. Substantial quantum of data collected from various primary and secondary sources was put together. An important contribution of the report, apart from collation of data, was the model of the ‘migration cycle’, presenting various stages of international migration from the point of view of the migrant. It made an effort to bring to centre stage the interests and rights of the migrant and his or her family. Considering the constraints of time and resources, IMR 2009, which was the first ever published report for India on international migration, attempted to provide a comprehensive overview of migration from India to major destination countries across the world as well as immigration to India. The report aimed at putting together the issues and concerns of importance in contemporary contexts – both continuing and emerging ones. While writing the 2009 report, it was realized that the task ahead was enormous. However, the efforts devoted to the publication of IMR 2009 have been appreciated by readers and the report has met its desired expectations. The suggestions, comments and constructive criticisms IMR 2009 received from individuals, academics and the media have been very encouraging. It is satisfying that the report has been reprinted twice – the first time in March and the second in November, 2010.
The overwhelming response and media interest have brought IMR 2009 to the attention of many national and international organizations spanning academia, research and governance. The report was considered as giving ‘a new look at migration issues in India’ (*The Hindu*, 7 Jan 2010) and the ‘first of its kind’ (*Mint*, 15 Jan 2010). *Geography and You*, a development and environment magazine reported: ‘This report will help young Indians unravel what involves the migration of human capital to distant shores’ (Vol. 10, Issue 58, Jan–Feb 2010). It carried a full-fledged write-up on the report and, separately, an interview of the General Editor. The IMR 2009 has been considered ‘a well researched report on the migration question’ (*The Telegraph*, 15 March 2010). It has also been cited by the IOM’s *World Migration Report 2010* (p. 4, footnote 12).

Notably, the publication inspired a number of articles in the print media, e.g., *The Washington Post* (6 February 2010) – which elicited email queries from American academics, *The Wall Street Journal* (18 Feb 2010), *The Hindustan Times* (3 March 2010), *The Asian Age* (16 March 2010) and *The Deccan Chronicle* (16 May 2010). The press also reported our ongoing work on the preparation of IMR 2010–2011 (*The Asian Age*, 6 July 2010). The General Editor was invited to give a press conference at the Foreign Correspondents’ Club (FCC), New Delhi in February 2010. Overall, the feedback received from various dignitaries, senior academics and the media has been highly motivating and encouraging for the team.

Another important testimonial came with the Cambridge University Press taking up the publication of the subsequent issue of the Report which is the present IMR 2010–2011. In this connection, I must put on record my sincere appreciation of the persistent efforts and cooperation shown by the entire publication team of the Cambridge University Press India at New Delhi, and in particular the graciousness of its lead members in mediating between the two anonymous reviewers and us. The detailed comments and suggestions from the reviewers helped us a great deal in revising our initial drafts and I am grateful to them for sparing their valuable time and thoughts. I would also like to thank the members of my Research Team – all of them my graduate students – for their hard work and dedication. Leela P. U. and M. Ghani Haider also helped us in many ways to complete the manuscript in time despite many odds. I am hopeful that this second issue of the India Migration Report would meet the standards of IMR 2009 and receive similar response from the readers. The reader feedback would help us in our future plans of continuing with the IMR series: we plan to have the third issue of the Report on the continents of Africa and Europe, and the fourth issue on those of the Asia-Pacific.

We have expanded the International Advisory Board and I am grateful to the new members for their consent to come on board. However, we sustained an irreparable loss in the sad demise of its Chair, Professor Tapas Majumdar, mid-way through our journey to the completion of this Report. Without his unassuming guidance and incessant inspiration we suffered a sense of incompleteness. The sense of loss of course has been shared by many. Generations of Indian academics who have been his students and colleagues felt the same way, as reflected in the number of tributes paid to him through write-ups in the press and academic journals. We consider it our privilege to dedicate this Report to his memory.

Binod Khadria