

# Breaking Links: Post-partition Indian Migration to Thailand

Ruchi Agarwal

Mahidol University International College, 999 Buddhamonthon 4 Road, Salaya, Nakorn Pathom  
73170, Thailand  
ruchi.aga@mahidol.ac.th

**Keywords:** Diaspora, Hinduism, Thailand

**Abstract.** Thailand has long been a destination for South Asian migrants as well as a second home for an Indian diaspora. Recent migrations such as occurred in the post-partition period have been relatively understudied, however. In this paper, I focus upon the migration to Thailand in the late 1940s in order to understand how recent arrivals influenced and integrated into existing transnational communities. I am specifically interested in the trajectories of individual migrants and the public representation and organization of Thailand's evolving Indian diasporic community.

Southeast Asia has long historical relations with India dating back to over 2000 years. Coedes (1968) in his book “*Historie ancienne des etats hindouises d' Extreme-Orient*” give a detailed account of these relations between India and Southeast Asia. The result was the spread of Hinduism into the region over many centuries along with an untold number of South Asian practitioners. Indian settlement in Southeast Asia, documented from as early as the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, has contributed greatly to the development of the national culture of the countries in this region.

As a result of the historical linkage between South and Southeast Asia, Indians moving to Southeast Asia are not entirely ‘foreigners’. This paper explores the trajectories of the more recent Indian diasporic community, specifically those that settled in Thailand in the late 1940s. I attempt to analyze the aspirations of the newer migrants and their social life outside of their homeland. The first part of this paper will begin with an understanding of diaspora in general followed by a brief history of Indian diaspora in specific countries in Southeast Asian region followed by a detailed account of the Indian diaspora in Thailand. This paper is based on past literature written on Indian diaspora, personal observations, and interview with Indians residing in Bangkok.