

Nation and Identity : Global Mark of Indian Diaspora

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ABSTRACT

The ancient human migrations, the medieval resettlements of warring groups and the modern globalization are the different phases of human quest for the creation of new civilization and also their need for progress and development. Such human movements have generated the concept of diaspora which means human settlements away from their original home land. Thus, diaspora signals an engagement with a matrix of diversity of cultures, languages, histories, people, places, and times. The Indian Diaspora, as India itself, constitutes a diverse, heterogeneous and eclectic global community, representing diversity of forms, types, geographies and times of formation. It, therefore, requires diverse and distinct approaches to engage them and connect with India. The common thread that binds them together is the idea of India and its intrinsic values. Overseas Indians comprising People of Indian Origin and Non-Resident Indians, stretching across all oceans and continents have considerably added to knowledge, innovation and development across the globe by making significant contributions to their countries of residence. The present paper focuses on Indian diaspora as a globalisation and multiculturalism. It raises the question of a structural and historical distinction between the socio-cultural pluralism of societies like India and the ones overseas where Indian populations migrated and settled. The paper will look at the most recent development in Indian Diaspora.

Keywords : Diaspora, Globalization, Multiculturalism, Socio- Cultural Pluralism.

I. INTRODUCTION

The ancient human migrations, the medieval resettlements of warring groups and the modern globalization are the different phases of human quest for the creation of new civilization and also their need for progress and development. Such human movements have generated the concept of diaspora which means human settlements away from their original home land. Thus, diaspora signals an engagement with a matrix of diversity of cultures, languages, histories, people, places, and times. The Indian Diaspora, as India itself, constitutes a diverse, heterogeneous and eclectic global community, representing diversity of forms, types, geographies and times of formation. It, therefore, requires diverse and distinct approaches to engage them and connect with

India. The common thread that binds them together is the idea of India and its intrinsic values. Overseas Indians — comprising People of Indian Origin and Non-Resident Indians, stretching across all oceans and continents — have considerably added to knowledge, innovation and development across the globe by making significant contributions to their countries of residence.

“Diaspora” is the term often used today to describe practically any population which is considered “deterritorialized” or “transnational” that is, which has originated in a land, other than which it currently resides, and whose social, economic and political networks cross the borders of nation-states or, indeed, span the globe. To be sure, such populations are growing in prevalence, number, and self-awareness.

Several are emerging as (or have historically long been) significant players in the construction of national narratives, regional alliances or global political economies. Over the past twenty years, the term diaspora has proliferated as a way of making sense of how groups of people, defined through ethnicity, culture, religion, and homeland, have circulated and settled in a postcolonial and increasingly globalized world.

When we talk of Diaspora we begin with the Jewish context, where the persecution and expulsion led to the dispersal of Jews away from the homeland carrying with them the fond hope of returning to the motherland one day. The term is not new; it is a Greek word *diaspeirein*, meaning “dispersal or scattering of seeds”, once solely used to describe Jewish, Greek, and Armenian dispersions – what some scholars often describe as the “classic” Diasporas. The term was used by the Jewish people, denoting their world-wide dispersion outside their homeland, the Land of Israel. In Hebrew it was called *Golah or Galut*, meaning "Exile". Since the Jewish people refused to assimilate and were confronted with repression, they moved out of Israel (Comay, 1981:7). Jews survived due to migration, adaptation to the new countries and clung to their faith and traditions. Migration also extended the boundaries of the Jewish Diaspora. The model of Jewish Diaspora was followed by the Armenian, Chinese, African (slavery) and Indian communities. The difference with the Jewish Diaspora is that Indian communities have been dispersed owing to their chosen countries of migration. Despite some limitations of specificity of the concept of Diaspora, it is gainfully employed in the analysis of emigration and settlement of people beyond the boundaries of their homeland. Retention of the cultural identity in the host society is another important parameter of the concept Diaspora. There is already considerable literature on various Diasporas such as the Chinese, African and Caribbean besides the Jewish. Similarly,

research on overseas Indians is also being carried out today under the premise of Diaspora Studies.

Much of the literature available on the Indian Diaspora pertains to Indian migration, their socioeconomic and cultural experiences, experiences of adaptation and assimilation in the host societies

As Kingsley Davis (1968) puts it in the Indian context, "...pressure to emigrate has always been great enough to provide a stream of emigrants much larger than the actual given opportunities." And Tinker (1977: 10) puts it, "there is a combination of push and pull: the push of inadequate opportunity in South Asia and the pull of the better prospects in the West."

Research on diaspora is currently conducted from numerous perspectives including anthropology, sociology, human geography, international migration, post colonialism, political economy and communications. A typical example of diaspora is given by the New Webster's Dictionary and Thesaurus of English language: "the dispersed Jews after the Babylonian Captivity; their dispersion" (New Webster's Dictionary, 1993:264). However, the terms diaspora and diasporic communities, today, are increasingly being used as a metaphoric definition for expatriates, expellees, refugees, alien residents, immigrants, displaced communities and ethnic minorities. The term diaspora has also been used to describe the experience of movement / displacement and to analyse the social, cultural and political formations that result from this movement / displacement.

Today, 'diaspora' is commonly understood to include Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) and Overseas Citizens of India (OCI), of which PIO and OCI card holders were merged under one category OCI in 2015. Broadly speaking, for the Indian government, the diaspora encompasses a group of people who can either trace their origins to India or who are Indian citizens living abroad, either temporarily or permanently.

As of 2016, the Indian diaspora comprised approximately 31 million people, of which PIOs were 17 million and NRIs were 13 million, spread across 146 countries in the world. The US, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, Myanmar, the UK, Sri Lanka, South Africa and Canada host an Indian diasporic population of at least one million each.

Concepts and Terms

In order to explain the theme of the paper certain conceptual notions and terms are used. There are conceptual issues on, globalization, multiculturalism, socio-cultural pluralism.

Migration, Emigration and Immigration

The basic question that arises is what has been the purpose of migration? Was it simply the sojourn or conscious settlement? In the European countries, the terms migration, emigration and immigration are considered synonymous, meaning "moving out from one country to another". However, these terms differ and give a different meaning. In The Concise Oxford Dictionary the term migration is explained as the "movements from one place to another", i.e., from one country to another country (1977:690), whereas the term immigration means, "coming as permanent resident into a foreign country" (op cit. 537). The term emigration expresses, "leaving one country to settle in another" (op cit. 338). In Social Sciences, "in communities which are encapsulated in larger and social units, migration has always been one possible mechanism for coping with internal and external problems" (Kasdan, 1970:1). This becomes a reason for the people to move out from their country to another. The driving force for migration is "expulsion" and "attraction", expulsion resulting always from shortage of food and other socio-economic factors. (Haddan: 1912). Since the immigration countries are known for their welfare and social system there is always an attraction to go there. The instinct to migrate can have various reasons. "Migration of people has been transmuted into mobility of individuals" (Park,

1950:349). The individual as the carrier of cultural baggage transports it into new cultural surroundings where he sorts out his experience and adapts himself in a new country.

Ethnicity, Ethnic group and forms of assimilation

Brief note on the concepts like 'ethnicity', 'ethnic group' would allow us to comprehend better on the theoretical approaches towards Indian Diaspora. Almost all the immigrant groups evolve into ethnic groups in the receiving countries to facilitate cultural conformity and survival in the host societies. They develop a distinctive cultural and social life, which is entirely different, from that of the dominant host. According to Greeley, "... for all practical purposes, we can equate ethnic group with immigrant group" (Greeley 1976: 21).

Jary and Jary (1995) in the Collins Dictionary of Sociology define an ethnic group as "a group of people sharing an identity which arises from a collective sense of a distinctive history." Infact every ethnic group has its own distinctive culture that includes norms, traditions, value systems, and a defined language for communication with and among the members of the group.

Ethnicity is defined as a 'shared racial linguistic or national identity of a social group', and we should note that 'racial attributes are not necessarily or even usually the defining features of ethnic groups.' (Jary and Jary, Ibid)

Pluralism, Cultural -Pluralism and Multiculturalism

In the European countries the groups of migrants are called "minority", "cultural minority" "ethnic minority" and are considered as a part of "Pluralism", "Cultural- pluralism", and "Multiculturalism". When a group is socially marginal in comparison to the majority host culture it is called a "minority" group. The term cultural or ethnic minority is considered synonymous.

The term "Multiculturalism" describes heterogeneous societies in which many cultures and ethnicities are represented. Multiculturalism has redefined the nation as comprising a culturally pluralist population. However, the increased linkages between countries, produced by accelerated globalization, have also engendered intricate transnational networks between Diasporas residing in several states. The telephone, internet, satellite television and other media help construct a web of connections among these transnations enabling them to maintain and enhance their cultural identities. The notion of a multi-cultural society is derived from the concept of "Pluralism". During the colonial times, in the colonies, the concept of Pluralism was developed. It implied a colonial inherently unstable society, where the dominant society (alien) minority exercises control over the indigenous majority. J. S. Furnivall, a Dutch administrator analyzed the societies in the Dutch East Indies (at present known as Indonesia) "A plural society exists when a country under colonial rule shows the following broad cultural, economic and political characteristics; a) Culturally, it comprises groups which are institutionally disparate and do not share the same basic values and way of life; b) Economically, these separate social entities have interaction mainly in the marketplace, in buying and-selling types of relationship; c) Politically, these disparate but economically interacting segments are held together by a superordinate authority-that is, the colonial rulers." (Furnivall, 1948). In other words, in the plural society, a poly-ethnic society is integrated with various ethnic groups in the market place under the control and domination of an administrative authority but allowed to observe the cultural diversity. There are also the contacts zones where interdependence creates contacts and vice versa. The contact centres are the meeting places, which could be in market, trade centres, plantation estates, towns, play grounds, religious and festive places, police bureaux and taxation departments of the government (Gluckman; 1958; Leach, 1954, 1961). In cultural-

pluralism there is a common feeling that all ethnic groups belong to the same country. The democratic political parties after the election decide which ethnic group or groups can create the government and become the governing authority. Cultural-pluralism is the principle of many democratic countries, such as, the European countries, India, South Africa, those in Europe and so on. The notions of Pluralism, Cultural-Pluralism and Multi-Culturalism are based on the concept of culture and interactional network between the members of an ethnic group. The important aspect is the concept of culture and interrelationship between its members of the ethnic group. One needs to recognize some of the reasons why social, political and economic relations between dominant and subordinate ethno-cultural groups within the plural societies almost inevitably involve competition and outright conflict (Bullevent, 1984).

Globalisation

Globalisation is a process that has a reach in every corner of the globe is a reality of today's world. *Globalization* is the word used to describe the growing interdependence of the world's economies, cultures, and populations, brought about by cross-border trade in goods and services, technology, and flows of investment, people, culture and information. Migration of people, services and capital is an integral part of globalisation. Trends in migration are also different as compared to earlier migratory trends across the world. This leads to the rise of the concept of trans-nationalism that involves flows of culture, capital and human beings across borders. Political boundedness in the form of nations and national territorial units have somewhere been enmeshed within the globalisation process and have at times become fluid. Identity formation of the different groups within this particular process is therefore diverse and different. The diasporic communities, such as the Indian Diaspora are one of the populations that straddle the globalisation process.

Identity

Identity is important for everyone. Most of us question at some point who we are and why we are here. For diaspora communities identity is often bound up with ethnicity, culture and religion. These are important factors for many people, but tend to take on more significance for those who are away from their country of origin or who belong to a minority ethnic group. Social scientists agree that the movement of people from one locale to another in the form of internal or international migration accentuates the importance of identity formation and construction in migratory spaces. The cultural production and manifestation of migrant identities as an integral part of transnational migratory domains is of scholastic value to the understanding of the layered and intricate social behavioural patterns that migrants continue to forge throughout the world. Social identity is socially constructed and given resonance or meaning within specific cultural genres and domains. The dispersal of various populations and their settlement in the receiving countries has attracted the attention of scholars from different disciplines in social sciences and humanities. Several of the studies have been country specific. Very few writers have taken comparative studies and offered theoretical paradigms for Diaspora Studies.

There is a serious need to study Diaspora analytically for valid reasons. We see a major shift in the overall scenario of the societies when a comparison is done between societies of the remote past and of the contemporary ones. The shift can be seen from changes in socio-cultural patterns, ways of life, and value systems to the rapid changes in the transport, scientific developments, and invention of the press and media advancements. The shift has an obvious impact on any kind of movement of population and formation of a Diaspora community. We should always note that not all migrations lead to the formation of the Diaspora communities.

Diaspora Studies

During the 1960s and 1970s social scientists studied the Indian community as one of the groups in a Colonial Plural and Multicultural European society. The notion of "ethnicity" and "diaspora" was not even known to them. Indians were studied as a segmented sociological ethnic group with their structural institutions of marriage, rituals and cultural varied forms (Bereton & Dookaran, 1982; Dabydeen & Samaroo, 1987; Klass, 1961; Krausz, 1971; Malik, 1971; Rauf, 1974; Singravelou, 1975, Speckman, 1965; Watson 1977). In Europe, there were hardly any studies on Indian groups. In Great Britain social scientists did research to understand Indian and Pakistani communities (Aurora, 1967; Eades, 1987; Kannan, 1978; Peach, 1968; Swinerton, 1975; Watson, 1977). There were studies on Plural societies, focusing on the plantation colonies of Mauritius, La Reunion, Fiji, Malaysia and African and Caribbean countries (Bendict, 1961; Gautam, 1986, 2000; Kuper & Smith, 1965; Morris, 1968). Since Indians were part of the Plural society the studies also included them.

The interest in the study of these communities strengthened, as we see great movements of populations across the national borders in this free-market economy, finally resulting in the formation of a multi-ethnic transnational society which is culturally pluralistic. A review of literature on the Indian Diaspora reveals that most of the analytical perspectives have their roots in the concepts of 'migration', 'culture', 'ethnicity' and 'nationalism'.

Tinker (1977) in his work looks at the Overseas Indians in two different approaches- Overseas Indians as recreating India in the land of adoption and seeing Indians as always victims of circumstance in the lands where they settle- and provides empirical proof for both to substantiate his study.

Kurian and Srivastava (1983) did a comparative study on the adaptive and adjustment patterns of the Indian

immigrants, and show how differences arise and vary with places of destination, in adjustment patterns, lifestyles and attitudes.

Singh's works (1982, 1984, and 1987) on the Indians in South East Asia, South Asia, and the Caribbean are explorative and provide us with empirical information. Singh (1984: 2) was interested in the historical migration, and settlement of Indians, and as a diplomat on the developments and 'effects on South Asia Cooperation, bilateral relations etc. and in the case of the Caribbean, Singh stresses the understanding of the East Indians as a major ethnic group in the Caribbean.

Chandan (1986) analyses how capitalism leads to the formation of immigrant workers in the receiving countries, and their resultant marginalisation. The immigrant is entangled between the two cultures and suffers from double consciousness, finally finding detached away from his or her own culture, language, and roots.

From the 1990s onwards, many publications on the Indian Diaspora, Indian identity and Indian groups have appeared in scientific journals and books. Certain scholars have used religion as a base for categorizing the Indian Diaspora. Terms of "Hindu Diaspora" (Desai, 1993; Jackson & Nesbitt, 1993; Rukmani, 2001; Vertovec, 2000), "Sikh Diaspora" (Agnihotri, 1987; Barrier & Dusenbery, 1989; Brack, 1988; Tatla, 1999), "Muslim Diaspora" (Werbner, 2002, Leonard, 2007) and other Diasporas has appeared. There has also been a trend to understand the regional identities of India, such as Telugu, Tamil, Malayali, Gujarati and Bhojpuri communities. Sometimes these identities are also known as diaspora. Some scholars have developed theoretical concepts regarding the Indian Diaspora, such as "Imagined Diaspora" (Anderson, 1983; Werbner 2002 i.e. an imagined cultural and structural boundary of ethnic contestation where the community is seen as transnational homogeneous

group. The concept was earlier used in defining the imagined community (Anderson, 1991). It is the social identity which results from social interaction. Social identity in a way is "ethnic identity", an outcome of social interactions (Barth, 1969). The image of India as a country of ascribed home of parents and forefathers is based on shared memories.

Mearns (1995: 14) carried out an ethnographic study on the Melaka Chitties, Indian immigrants in Melaka, Malaysia. The author focuses on the 'wider link between identity thus developed out of various socio cultural processes and wider global or macro social processes in a plural society like Malaysia

Apart from the above two concepts, the idea of Multicultural society is gaining popularity today in the context of multi-ethnic societies like the United States. It is a situation where in every group, including the dominant, will accept the differences in the cultures, meanings, and value systems of the other groups.

When we think of the theoretical aspects for the Indian context, many sociologists have talked about different types of approaches to study Indian Diaspora. Sharma finds most of the existing literature on the Indian Diaspora falling under three broad kinds- historical, diplomatic and anthropological, and identifies two main perspectives underlying these studies (Sharma 1989):

- (a) The sociocultural perspective and
- (b) The political economy perspective.

The sociocultural perspective revolves around the issues like place of origin, destination, the resultant identity, "cultural continuity and change", "cultural identity and integration". This approach examines the phenomenon and the process from the following angles:

- (a) that overseas Indians tend to recreate Indian social structure wherever they go,

- (b) they tend to hold fast to their native culture in their lands of adoption,
- (c) their mode of adaptation is marked by a clear preference for economic integration more than cultural assimilation.

Indian Diaspora

The Indian diaspora(s) is a complex construct(s) and most scholars trace its beginning, in its modern definitional attributes, to the emigration of Indians during the British colonial period. In temporal order, the Indian diaspora is divided into two broad categories—‘old or exclusive diaspora of colonial capital and new diaspora of border in late capitalism’. ‘Old diaspora’ moved during colonial rule of India and it was dominated by contract (indentured) labourers who were taken to other British settlements such as Mauritius, South Africa, East Africa, West Indies, Guiana, Malaysia, Singapore, Burma and Fiji to work in the plantation sector or to serve as construction workers. This movement also included free migrants, such as petty traders, and auxiliary workers, such as washer men, milkmen and soldiers, as well as some financiers, such as the moneylending Chettiers who ventured to Southeast Asia. The origins of this diaspora can be traced primarily to Bengal, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh (UP), Andhra Pradesh and parts of western India. Indians in this category have now settled in these countries for several generations. To the descendants of these migrants, India as a diasporic home is largely an imaginary construct.

‘New diaspora’ is a product of Indian emigration post-1960, with migration of Indian professionals, doctors, engineers, scientists, academics, and now IT professionals to developed economies in Western Europe, North America and Australasia. This new diaspora includes the semi-skilled working class who went to the Gulf countries during the post-oil boom of the 1970s. This cohort includes low-wage workers in the West as well a large number of ‘illegal’ immigrants. The origins of this diaspora can be traced primarily to

Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, though this is a more pan-Indian diaspora. The connection to home is much more real for this diaspora because of frequent travels, social-cultural linkages, and inventions in communication technology. Both old and new segments of Indian diaspora feature almost all the traits of ‘home’ in terms of religious, social, cultural and regional diversities which have had a decisive influence on their relationship with India. Figure 1 shows the spread of people of Indian origin (PIOs) across the globe.

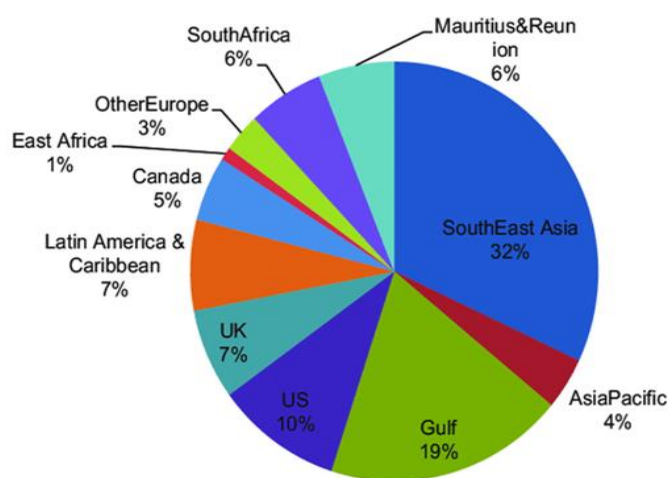


Figure 1. Percentage distribution of Indian diaspora (PIOs and NRIs). Source: HLC 2001.

II. INDIAN DIASPORA AND DEVELOPMENT

Scholars have marked the period from 1991 as the time when the government began changing its attitude towards the Indian diaspora, commencing also an active engagement with them.

As the government began to recognise the economic potential of this diaspora, then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi refashioned the Indian economy and planning to include a more proactive approach towards this community. A Special Coordination Division in the Ministry of External Affairs was established in 1985 as the nodal agency to coordinate matters relating to Indians outside the country. The potential of this diaspora was officially recognised ‘as a reservoir of

skill, expertise, technology and investment for the benefit both of the country of their adoption and the land of their origin'. The government started approaching diaspora networks and supported initiatives such as the Global Convention of Overseas Indians (first convened in New York in 1989) aimed at bringing diasporic Indians across the world to a common stage.

In the summer of 1991, a significant change in development policy and orientation occurred when the government initiated a series of reforms in the wake of a severe economic crisis. These economic reforms not only redefined the character of the Indian economy but also rearticulated the country's engagement with the rest of the world and allowed for foreign intervention in its development strategy. Since a reliance on foreign sources was inevitable in order to meet demand for foreign exchange to fund crucial imports, the then Finance Minister Manmohan Singh turned to the diaspora or non-resident Indians (NRIs) as they were popularly called, for help. This elite segment of the Indian diaspora, mostly professionals located in North America and Europe, had acquired considerable wealth and resources and the Indian government wanted to tap their resources to bail out the economy. Though not as erudite and visible as their highly skilled counterparts in the West, Indian emigrants in the Gulf region had similarly shown their economic potential by contributing significantly to India's economy through the inflow of remittances, which had reached US\$3,289 million in 1991. This attempt by the Indian government to mobilise the resources of the Indian diaspora amended the perception of citizens at home towards this diaspora—they were now a 'valorised subject' rather than people who could not be trusted. This changed the nature of the relationship between India and this diaspora, from one that was essentially based on culture and emotion to one that was clearly pragmatic. When the right-wing-dominated Indian government conducted a series of nuclear tests in May 1998, the

response of the developed world was moral condemnation and the imposition of economic sanctions. The government approached the diaspora, particularly those who had acquired considerable wealth and positions of prominence in their countries of settlement, for support to top up depleting foreign exchange reserves. On an experimental basis, the government offered the diaspora a special investment opportunity in the form of the Resurgent India Bond 1998. This bond, oversubscribed by the diaspora. This Resurgent India Bond generated about US\$4.2 billion helped India withstand economic sanctions to a considerable extent. This encouraging response by the diaspora reinforced in the minds of the government and Indian citizens the enormous economic potential of the diaspora. The government subsequently began pondering seriously about drawing up a comprehensive and sustainable long-term strategy aimed at utilising the diaspora's resources for development.

A parliamentary committee was instituted by the government to outline the economic strength, cultural concerns and potentialities of the Indian diaspora and to determine the possible contributions they could make to develop India. In order to overcome its short-sightedness in its approach towards the Indian diaspora, the government started an NRI/PIO. An NRI is a person who is a citizen of India, holds an Indian passport, but resides outside India. A PIO is a person who holds a foreign passport (except Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, China, Iran, Nepal or Bhutan), but who, at any time, has held an Indian passport or whose father or grandfather was a citizen of India by virtue of the Constitution of India or the Citizenship Act 1955 with a division within the Ministry of External Affairs in 2000. This division was mandated to deal exclusively with issues relating to the Indian diaspora and to improve coordination among various government agencies to deal with diaspora-related matters in an efficient manner. In response to this long-felt need to understand the

composition, complexities and concerns of the Indian diaspora, the government established the High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora in August 2000 to study the diverse histories of this community and to suggest ways in which they could contribute to India's development. This was, according to the official narrative, the beginning of a new phase in India's relationship with her diaspora, with the motherland sensitive to the hopes, aspirations and concerns of its vast diaspora and with the government willing to take 'parental charge'.

On 18 August 2000, a High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora (HLC) was created by the government with former diplomat L. M. Singhvi as its chairman; he also served as additional secretary of the newly created NRI division of the Ministry of External Affairs. The HLC's main tasks were to:

- ✓ study the characteristics, aspirations, attitudes, requirements, strengths and weaknesses of the Indian diaspora and their expectations from India;
- ✓ study the role that the PIOs and NRIs may play in the economic, social and technological development of India;
- ✓ recommend a broad but flexible policy framework and country-specific plans for forging a mutually beneficial relationship with PIOs and NRIs and for facilitating their participation in India's economic development.

The government established the Ministry of Non-Resident Indians' Affairs in May 2004, later renamed the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, as the nodal ministry for all matters relating to the Indian diaspora. Positioned as a 'service ministry', its mission is to 'establish a robust and vibrant institutional framework to facilitate and support mutually beneficial networks with and among overseas Indians to maximise the development impact for India and enable overseas

Indians to invest in and benefit from opportunities in India'.

In order to draw upon the experiences and knowledge of eminent members of the Indian diaspora, the MOIA instituted the Prime Minister's Global Advisory Council of Overseas Indians in January 2009. This council was to provide inputs for policy formulation, programme planning and the direct involvement of the prime minister in the processes involving the Indian diaspora.

A large number of diasporic Indians, particularly those in the Gulf region and Southeast Asia, work as low-skilled workers and face a number of challenges including fraudulent methods of recruitment by employers who exploit them. The MOIA has started an Overseas Workers' Resource Centre to provide support services for intending emigrants.

The government invoked certain cultural symbols to appeal to the diaspora and to emphasise their sense of belonging to India. One such cultural metaphor was reference to India (their country of origin) as the 'motherland'. Such rhetoric was to remind the diaspora not only about their belonging to India but also of their loyalty and obligations to the motherland. The most visible spectacle of these cultural symbols is the PBD (Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas), or the day to commemorate diasporic Indians, an event organised annually since January 2003. The choice of 9 January as the date to celebrate the PBD had high levels of symbolism; Mahatma Gandhi, now designated as the greatest diasporic Indian, returned from South Africa on this day in 1915.

Another symbolic cultural initiative of the Indian government was the introduction of the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards (Honour of the Diasporic Indians). These awards are presented by the president of India during the PBD, in appreciation of the significant contributions by individuals or

organisations of the Indian diaspora. These awards apparently have helped to enhance India's prestige in the countries of residence of the recipients of these awards. These awards have been conferred on many individuals and organisations, including several academics (Jagdish Bhagwati, Meghnad Desai, Bhikhu Parekh and Dipak Jain) and politicians such as Malaysia's S. Samy Vellu.

Another significant step by the government to foster the feeling of belonging in Indians outside India was by granting voting rights to Indian passport holders staying abroad; this was done by passing the Representation of Peoples Amendment Act 2010. This amendment allowed the NRIs to get their names included on the electoral roles, thereby enabling them to participate in electoral processes in India.

Most Recent Development

In the United Nations "International Migration Report 2015", India had the largest diaspora population in the world with 16 million individuals born in the country but living outside of it. It's a 100 percent increase from the 8 million in 2000, with an increasing number making their way to the United States where Indians make up the second largest immigrant group after Mexicans.

Government of India create policies to encourage the diaspora to contribute to India's growth through philanthropy, knowledge transfers, and investments in innovation and assistance in other development projects.

With this in mind, the Narendra Modi government has launched a string of initiatives and repackaged old schemes such as the 'Know India Program' (KIP). The last three years saw the launch of Head Post Offices as passport centres enabling thousands more to apply for a passport. For those looking to go abroad, training centres and orientation programmes are provided to

train future employees on relevant skills and minimise culture shock.

A number of policies were announced keeping in mind the protection of welfare and interest of Indians abroad. For example, the 2014 Minimum Referral Wages (MRW), applicable only to Emigration Check Required (ECR) countries, increased the minimum wage of Indian workers employed as industrial workers, domestic servants, cleaners and labourers. To partially reduce the risk of vulnerability from fraudulent contracts, nurses for example can now only be recruited through one of the six state government placement agencies. Furthermore, in 2015, the Ministry of External Affairs launched the e-migrate system that requires all foreign employers to register in the database. These policies are a step in the right direction but have faced criticism from countries like the UAE who claim it is a "breach of our sovereignty". The successful KIP, launched in 2003 by Atal Bihari Vajpayee, has been refashioned to include more participants and sessions every year. If in 2006 India hosted 55 participants across two sessions, in 2017 it hosted 160 participants across four sessions. The incumbent government also launched a website that enables participants to apply online. The programme is aimed mostly at *Girmitiya*[1] youth and provides an opportunity for them "to better understand and appreciate contemporary India, foster closer ties with the land of their ancestors and enhance their engagement with India"

The website for the 15th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2019 was jointly inaugurated by the Hon'ble Minister of External Affairs, Smt. Sushma Swaraj and the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Shri Yogi Adityanath on 15 September 2018, which launched the commencement of online registration for participation in the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention 2019. Government of Uttar Pradesh is the partner state for the convention.

In reverence to the sentiments of the larger diaspora community to participate in Kumbh Mela and Republic Day celebrations, the 15th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention is being organized from 21 to 23 January 2019 instead of 9th January. The Convention will be held at Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. After the Convention, participants would be given the opportunity to visit Prayagraj for Kumbh Mela on 24th January, 2019 and witness the Republic Day Parade at New Delhi on 26th January 2019.

On 21st January, 2019, the inauguration of the Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas will be held in partnership with Ministry of Youth affairs and Sports. Government of Uttar Pradesh will also organize the State PBD - 2019 on 21st January, 2019. On 22nd January, 2019, Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention. On 23rd January, 2019, the Valedictory Address will be delivered and Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards will be conferred by Hon'ble President, Shri Ram Nath Kovind.

III. CONCLUSION

As of 2017, 17 million Indians live outside the country, and at least 5 million of them are in the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia and 2 million in the United States of America, as per the United Nation's Report, 2017.

Approximately 28 million Indians present in over 30 countries (Ministry of External Affairs, India, 2017). India is being hailed as an "emerging" power, but what we are really witnessing is a re-emergence. Before the 18th century, India was a dominant player in the world economy. At their peak, India and China together accounted for close to 50 per cent of world GDP. Today, it is the interplay of democracy, demography and the Indian diaspora that makes the story of re-emergence significant.

India will have unique answers to four debates facing the world at the beginning of the 21st century: Economic development versus liberal democracy, pluralism versus fundamentalism, the effects of globalization, and the effects of a diaspora on the original and host countries.

There is an essence to India, which tells us that behind the diversity of life, there is a spiritual reality called unity. India represents "diversity in unity," a centrifugal state reined in by only the very loosest and most fragile of bonds.

Since the Indian diaspora is formed on the force of ethnicity and the Indian diasporic identity, the same pattern can be used to have emotional- cum- practical renewal of relations with India. As European citizens, the Indian Diaspora is strengthening the force of ethnicity in demanding recognition of their feelings towards India. They are not to be seen as the forgotten children of India but as an objective lobby which wishes to see the prosperity of India and of their respective countries.

Overall we see great transformations in the cultures of the migrating populations. Though their physical or geographical position is de-localized, their social and cultural position is still attached to the old memories of the culture from which their living patterns have emerged.

IV. REFERENCES

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- all contact with India, unlike the latter who are generally still connected to their home country. Information on policies and programs related to diaspora is taken from various dates of Press Information Bureau website, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, Government of India.
- [2]. Our father of nation, Mahatma Gandhi, had arrived from South Africa on 9th of January, 1915.
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