

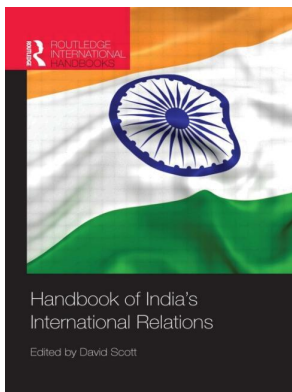
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India and the Indian diaspora

Ajay Dubey

Introduction

The diaspora is now recognized as an international influencer. Apart from its role in economic development, it plays an important role in bilateral relations between the host country and country of origin. It has emerged as a major driver for the foreign policy of countries with substantial overseas communities. Globalization enables it to serve as a resource both for the host and home country. It has created an environment for communities to look beyond rigid national boundaries for economic and cultural needs. Even developing countries have matured now to permit extraterritorial loyalties. Many of them are using their own diaspora abroad as well as the diaspora within their territory as an important resource to realize their national objectives. Cheaper and faster means of communication at a global level provide opportunities for different diaspora to network and come together. The emerging scientific and technological advancement and global media have further enabled the different diaspora and states to engage with each other.

India has its own particular global diaspora of over 25 million, spread over 196 countries. It includes foreign citizens of Indian origin, termed 'people of Indian origin' (PIO), and Indian passport holders who are based in foreign countries, termed 'non-resident Indians' (NRI). The Indian diaspora includes particularly significant groups in the Gulf (over 3 million) and in North America (around 4 million) consisting of various ethnic, linguistic and religious groups, reflecting the cultural diversity of India. Indian migration itself is widely varied in terms of historical context, causes and consequences, as well as in terms of social characteristics, such as level of education, caste and class, place of origin, religion and language.¹ Indian migrants migrated in different bursts and numbers. During ancient times they went as merchants and explorers from western India to Africa and the Middle East. From south-eastern India they migrated to Burma (now Myanmar), Indonesia and other countries of South-East Asia. A section of this Indian diaspora derived its livelihood from international trade, maintaining international kinship and economic networks. During this phase Indians also migrated to the Far East and South-East Asia as part of the cultural spread of Buddhism, and some south Indian rulers like the Cholas sent successful expeditions to the region. However, they are now more or less a lost diaspora.

The bulk of Indian migration took place during the colonial period, when the previous small-scale movement of Indian people turned into a mass migration.² They went broadly in

three different capacities, namely (a) the indentured worker in sugar colonies of the Caribbean, Oceania and Africa; (b) the *Kangani/ maistry* system to Malaysia and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka); and (c) free passenger Indians. The free Indians (called ‘passenger Indians’) went in a small number as traders, money lenders, etc. to anglophone, francophone and lusophone territories. In the latest phase, during the 20th century, Indians immigrated as skilled workers to industrialized nations in Europe, North America and Oceania, as well as semi-skilled workers to the Middle East. However, the latter were not given citizenship.

There are various ways in which the Indian diaspora is classified. The ‘old diaspora’ refers to all those who went before the independence of India, while the ‘new diaspora’ refers to those who went after independence. The old diaspora forms the bulk of the total Indian diaspora, migrating to Malaysia, Mauritius, Trinidad and Tobago, Fiji, Guyana and Suriname. The term PIO is used for those who have taken local citizenship, whether coming from the new or old diaspora. There are PIOs who went to countries in the Caribbean, Africa, Fiji, etc., and who migrated after a few generations to Europe, North America or Australia, and are called ‘twice migrants’. Indians living overseas who still have an Indian passport, even if they are overseas for many years, are the NRIs. Over 5m. Indians in the west Asian countries are in this category.

All these categories will be examined in this chapter, which aims to study the changes and continuity in the evolution of Indian policy towards the Indian diaspora. This includes examining the imperatives, experiences, experiments and attempts by the Government of India to engage the Indian diaspora.

India’s policy towards its diaspora

Indian policy towards the Indian diaspora has continued to evolve since colonial times, through the Cold War period, to the present day.

The pre-independence period

During the colonial period the Indian National Congress (INC), the vanguard party of the Indian struggle for freedom, had concerns about Indians overseas. Indians operated under an indentured worker system, taken up under colonial rule to replace slave labour. The INC sent several delegations and workers to inspect the treatment of indentured Indian workers, protesting against colonial government policies and asking for improved status and conditions for indentured workers. Indian nationalists of all shades demanded improvements in working and living conditions of Indians settled abroad. The cause of Indians overseas was advocated by nationalist leaders, such as Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Mahatma Gandhi, V.S. Srinivasa Shastri, Jawaharlal Nehru, H.N. Kunzru, Acharya Kripalani and Ram Manohar Lohia. They repeatedly stressed the need to safeguard the interests of the people who had to leave the shores of India to cater for the economic interests of the United Kingdom. In Mauritius and Fiji, Mahatma Gandhi sent Manilal Doctor, while coming back from South Africa, to mobilize them.³ He advised them to actively participate in local politics and to demand a legitimate share in the governance and economy of their new home.

Indians also used the Indian diaspora around the world to push the cause of Indian independence. They were exhorted to identify with the Indian cause, as only a free India could hope to protect and safeguard their interests, and were visualized by Gandhi as a segment of emerging Indian independence opinion, a policy of *identification* in other words. One strand of Congress opinion (comprising C.F. Andrew, Shastri, Kunzru, M.M. Malaviya and B.G. Gokhale)

was mainly concerned with discrimination of overseas Indians in Africa and elsewhere, and wanted for them a parity with local white settlers. They visited worker recruitment centres and talked to workers about their problems. In succeeding years, the issue of discrimination of Indians in South Africa became a sentimental issue for Indian nationalists, given Mahatma Gandhi's earlier efforts there.

Jawaharlal Nehru, who from 1930 shaped the foreign policy of India within the INC, had different views. Nehru had long visualized the clash of interests of Indians overseas with local inhabitants. In 1927 he prepared a paper, *A Foreign Policy of India*. In this paper, for the first time, he categorically outlined the policy of the INC regarding Indian settlers in other colonial countries, the role that India wanted them to play in their country of adoption, and the kind of support that they could expect from India. He asked in the paper, 'what is the position of Indians of foreign countries to-day?', and argued that the overseas Indians had gone there as 'a hireling of exploiter' British Government.⁴ However, he suggested elsewhere that, 'an Indian who goes to other countries must co-operate with people of that country and win for himself a position by friendship and service [...] Indians should co-operate with Africans and help them, as far as possible and not claim a special position for themselves'.⁵

Nehru represented the left wing of the Congress party. He differed from the conservative wing, whose demands were confined to the betterment of Indians overseas. Nehru believed in co-operation between Indians and natives, advocating Indian support to a combined struggle of Indian settlers and natives in which the native cause would be paramount. As an exception, Nehru extended special support to Indian settlers in South Africa, reflecting Gandhi's earlier work there. In a message to the INC in Natal, Nehru wrote in 1939: 'India is weak today and cannot do much for her children abroad but she does not forget them and every insult to them is a humiliation and sorrow for her. And a day will come when her long arm will shelter and protect them and her strength will compel justice for them'.⁶ It is this duality between Nehru's policy and the presence of two wings (conservative and left) in Congress which helps us to understand the changes and continuities in Indian policy towards Indian overseas communities.

Post-independence period

Immediately after India's independence, the Indian Government was not in a position to assist in obtaining full justice for Indian settlers abroad. In fact, the problems of PIOs in different countries were so diverse, the positioning and status so different and the reach of India so varied, that a nascent Indian state did not find itself equipped or strong enough to address the diaspora issues head on.⁷ Besides, Nehru had other priorities like the mobilization of Afro-Asian countries to keep them away from Cold War rivalries.⁸ For such mobilization, the issues of the PIOs were not to be emphasized.

Thus, during the 1950s and the best part of the 1960s, establishing any special relationship with the diaspora was not a priority of India's foreign policy. Independent India gave them little recognition, except the advice that they should strive hard to be the best citizens of their countries of adoption. Nehru did not deviate from his strongly held policy on Indian settlers abroad. His world view was guided by respect for national sovereignty, amicable international relations, non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations, and the pursuit of non-alignment. He adopted a policy of 'active dissociation' towards the Indian diaspora. Expressing his views in the constituent assembly of India on 8 March 1948, Nehru said:

Now these Indians abroad what are they? Are they Indian citizens – are they going to be citizens of India or not? If they are not, then our interest in them becomes cultural,

humanitarian and not political. Either they get the franchise of the nationals of the other country or treat them as Indian minus franchise and ask for them the most favourable treatment given to an alien.⁹

He advised Indian immigrants, 'if you can not be, and if you are not friendly to the people of that country, come back to India and do not spoil the fair name of India'.¹⁰ Nehru made it clear in 1950 that, 'in many parts of Africa – East, West, South – there are considerable number of Indians, mostly business people. Our definite instructions to them and to our agents in Africa are that they must always put the interest of indigenous populations first. We want to have no vested interests at the expense of the population of those countries'.¹¹ He expressed the same view repeatedly, saying of Indians abroad, 'if they adopt the nationality of that country we have no concern with them. Sentimental concern there is, but politically they cease to be Indian national'.¹² Nehru was very clear that any overt move by the Indian Government to support the PIOs in overseas communities would do more harm than good to them. He was not, though, against people-to-people contacts or non-governmental association.

However, during his worst political crisis, Nehru also talked about dual loyalty of Indians overseas. During the Indo-Chinese war (1962), contributions were welcomed from Indians living in East Africa to help boost its defence efforts. When questioned on this, Nehru told a foreign journalist that, 'Indians overseas have dual loyalty, one to their country of adoption and [the] other to their country of origin'.¹³ Conversely, India deplored it as an act of disloyalty when it found that Indians abroad were selling and promoting Chinese-made goods to the cost of Indian goods. Nevertheless, between 1960 and 1966 the gulf between India and Indian settlers abroad widened, as India came to believe that Indians were more of an obstacle than an asset in its diplomatic relations with Africa. In India's post-1962 diplomatic strategy it seemed a matter of fewer consequences if PIOs were to face some degree of discrimination overseas.

Nehru's policy of exhorting Indians to identify themselves with locals in Asia and Africa was not based only on his ideological commitment. In Kenya the presence of Indian settlers was larger than the European community, and European settlers wanted to keep Kenya as a 'white man's country'. A strong anti-Indian campaign was being pursued by whites in Africa, with several riots breaking out in Kenya, Uganda and South Africa involving Indians and Africans during 1944–49. If the African struggle were weakened and divided, there was every likelihood that white Kenyan settlers would have extended a South African model in East Africa. Therefore, it was necessary that Indian settlers join hands with blacks in opposing white settlers, even if thus sacrificing their short-term gains. The Caribbean Indians were so far off, that despite knowing about their problems and marginalization by the black diaspora community as well as by the colonial rulers, they were ignored by the Indian Government. Unlike the problems of Indians in Ceylon or Burma, the issues of Indians in the Caribbean created little pressure from the Indian leadership or the masses back home. The distance and absence of connectivity with India led to a noticeable neglect of the Indian diaspora in the Caribbean. The Nehru period saw the suppression, subjugation and marginalization of the Indian diaspora globally because Indians had, with a few exceptions, a minority status. Rivals and opponents of Indians in the host country noticed India's policy of active dissociation. They found the Indian diaspora helpless and unsupported by its mother country.

The policy that the Indian diaspora should focus itself on the countries where they had settled and to which it should be loyal started to change in the latter half of the 1960s, especially after Indian isolation following the Indo-Chinese war of 1962. In 1964, during Indira Gandhi's tour of the African countries, she continued to emphasize the loyalty and full contribution of

Indian settlers to the societies in which they lived, but she made it a point not to miss out Indian settlers, leaders and members of the community, even if they were small in number. She also called Indian settlers ‘ambassadors of India’. Similarly, while touring Fiji, Mrs Gandhi said, ‘I feel like a mother concerned about the welfare of a married daughter who has set up home far away’.¹⁴ This was a subtle departure from the earlier Nehru policy of active dissociation, as Indian settlers now became a useful instrument for generating goodwill towards India. Their unofficial position as ‘ambassadors of India’ implied that they were no longer excluded from policy considerations of India. This shift became more noticeable in many areas when Mrs. Gandhi became Prime Minister of India in 1966. By the second half of the 1960s there was an increasing realization that overseas Indians, whatever passport they might hold, should not be left completely outside India’s policy. This also suited India’s economic diplomacy in developing countries, where Indian settlers had the requisite capital and network to share with Indian economic initiatives in those countries.

Testing pro-diaspora policy

During the 1970s and 1980s Indians surfaced globally as a literate and skilled diaspora that created no problems for their host countries. The oil boom of the 1970s also enabled a large number of Indian low-paid workers, the NRI diaspora, to go to the Gulf region in large numbers, where they remained employed for a long period, even though they had no chance of settling or acquiring local citizenship.¹⁵ As a result, they were obliged to repatriate all their earnings and savings to India. This benefited India’s foreign exchange reserves, which were a scarce resource at that point in time. The Government of India moved strongly on this, creating better banking for the repatriation of foreign exchange and raising the interest rates on foreign exchange deposits. It took up the issue of the welfare of its migrant workers in west Asian countries and introduced a policy of compulsory registration of recruitment agents of labourers to avoid the exploitation and deportation of the workforce. Given the economic and political importance of these workers, the Indian policy-makers took an increasing interest in them. This class of the Indian diaspora maintained and continuously nurtured links with India.

In comparison with the NRI component of the Indian diaspora, the experience of PIO communities was very different. During this period, Indian policy-makers continued to follow a ‘hands-off’ policy so far as migrants to the USA, Europe and regions outside west Asia were concerned. India also tried to test its pro-diplomacy policy in 1967, when Jomo Kenyatta started a policy of Africanization in Kenya. It backfired badly, as it did also in the face of Idi Amin’s expulsion of East Africa Indians from Uganda in 1972. The advent of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Government to power in 1977 saw some policy changes. It reiterated that Indian foreign policy would try and attain the right balance between pursuing its diplomatic goals and the issues concerning overseas Indians.

Globalization and a policy of ‘pro-active association’

Since the early 1990s, the relationship between India and the Indian diaspora has dramatically changed. The adoption of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in 1990 and preponderance of Indians in the global IT revolution played a very important role in that change.¹⁶ The emergence of the new Indian elite in the Western world during the 1980s (especially in the USA, Canada and the United Kingdom), resulted in India showing a keen interest in the new diaspora in order to attract their remittances and investment. Most importantly, India’s collapsing economic system in the early 1990s led to a foreign exchange crisis. The Government

realized that it had to change its economic strategy very quickly. The crisis brought to the fore the country's relationship with Indians overseas, especially NRIs, as India weighed its options on how to increase the flow of foreign currency into the country again.

India started to take a proactive interest in Indians overseas. NRIs in North America and Europe were then seen as the cash-rich diaspora who could be approached to help the country by parking their funds in overseas Indian bank accounts. Successful attempts were made to secure the involvement of the affluent NRIs in setting up industries and to tide over the foreign exchange crisis through attractive financial instruments, like Resurgent India Bonds which tapped into US \$4,200m. in 1998.¹⁷ The double launch of those bonds enabled India to continue economic reform without recourse to IMF loans and conditions. This was a clear and crucial demonstration of diaspora power.

The buoyancy in the Indian economy was clearly visible in the second half of the 1990s, and restored the faith of a large section of the Indian diaspora in the Indian economy. In turn, India realized the importance of its diaspora and started a dialogue with expatriate Indians.¹⁸ The international fame and stature acquired by Indians abroad also enhanced the status of the diaspora in the eyes of its mother country. Their industry, enterprise, educational standards, economic strength and professional skills were widely acknowledged within India.

These developments brought about a remarkable shift in the Indian Government's policy towards the Indian diaspora. From the policy of active dissociation, there was a shift to a policy of pro-active association with the Indian diaspora. Under the new economic policy of the Narasimha Rao Government, a number of special concessions were made to encourage NRIs to invest in the Indian stock exchange, set up new industrial ventures or deposit their savings in Indian banks. Admittedly, the break from the Nehru tradition did not happen quickly enough, as there remained blockages associated with repatriation of profits amidst bureaucratic 'red tapism'.¹⁹ Nevertheless, all this made it clear that India was engaging its diaspora who had left in the post-independence period, mostly to developed countries. The NRIs, therefore, became synonymous with the new diaspora who had gone to advance their economic standing, and not those who left the country as indentured labourers, petty traders or free passengers under colonial rule. The latter group was not much focused on, as far as economic priority was concerned. The attention towards the older diaspora was largely cultural, patchy and patronizing, whereas the new concern of India was largely economic and political.²⁰

Under the changed domestic and international situation, India decided to urgently and seriously engage its diaspora. When the BJP came to power in 1998, the Government extended the policy of cultural support to the diaspora both at the state and civil society level, something of a policy U-turn.²¹ In contrast to Nehru's policy of active dissociation of overseas Indians from Indian foreign policy, the BJP stood for a pro-active and overt association with the Indian diaspora for foreign policy objectives. The NRIs were in greater focus, as they were encouraged even more than before to invest in India, with general relaxation across the board for them. India's overt association policy helped to organize the first ever conference of parliamentarians of Indian origin in New Delhi, organized by the Indian Council of International Co-operation. This shift was clearly visible by 1999, when the Chennai Declaration of the BJP stated:

We believe that the vast community of NRIs and PIOs also constitute a part of the great Indian family. We should endeavour to continually strengthen their social, cultural, economic and emotional ties with their mother country. They are the rich reservoir of intellectual, managerial and entrepreneurial resources. The government should devise innovative schemes to facilitate the investment of these resources for India's all round development.²²

The Indian diaspora policy acquired greater momentum with the BJP-led Indian Government taking new initiatives to engage the diaspora. In his address to the sixth Convention of the Global Organisation of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) in Delhi, in January 2001, India's Prime Minister communicated candidly enough about his Government's plan: 'We do not merely seek investment and asset transfer. What we see is a broader relationship; in fact, a partnership among all children of mother India so that our country can emerge as a major global player'.²³ Vajpayee added that his Government would assist the overseas Indian community in maintaining its cultural identity and in strengthening the emotional, cultural and spiritual bonds that bind them to the country of their origin, but that the Government would always encourage PIOs to keep 'their political commitment to their adopted countries'.²⁴ The GOPIO convention was attended by around 200 delegates from several countries.

The Singhvi Committee recommendations and implementation

Vajpayee established a committee headed by L.M. Singhvi, a BJP member of parliament, to suggest policy recommendations on the Indian diaspora to the Government. The Singhvi Committee consequently produced a report recommending certain initiatives to engage with Indians overseas, including: a) improvement of the PIO card scheme; b) observation of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (non-resident/diaspora Indian day) on 9 January (the day Mahatma Gandhi returned to India from South Africa) every year; and c) setting up the institution of a Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award (PBSA) award for eminent PIOs and NRIs.²⁵ Apart from such general recommendations, the other issues that were covered included special PIO counters at airports, the welfare of Indian women married to NRIs/PIOs, and problems of overseas Indian labour. There were also sector-wise recommendations under the headings of culture, economic development, tourism, education, health and the media. There were various spin-offs arising from the Singhvi Committee recommendations.

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, set up in 2003, was the first step towards the implementation of the Singhvi Committee report. It had 1,904 foreign delegates, including the Prime Minister of Mauritius, and 1,200 domestic delegates. For Singhvi this meant that, 'today, by common consent, the Indian diaspora is a force to reckon with and constitute what I termed long ago as the national reserve and resource of India', whilst for the Minister of External Affairs, Yashwant Sinha, it reflected two converging trends whereby, 'I believe that we have every reason to be optimistic about India, the Indian diaspora, and our partnership. Today is only the beginning [...] The Indian diaspora has today come into its own. Similarly, India too has arrived on the world stage'.²⁶ Manmohan Singh's address to the third Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (2005) was soaring:

If there is an Empire today on which the sun truly cannot set, it is the empire of our minds, that of the children of Mother India, who live today in Asia, Africa, Australia, Europe, the Americas and, indeed, on the icy reaches of Antarctica. Our honoured Chief Guest today, His Excellency Jules Rattankoemar Ajodhia is the Vice President of distant Surinam, that lies half the globe away! [...] Yet, there is a unifying idea that binds us all together, which is the idea of 'Indian-ness'.²⁷

The January date for the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas has a symbolic significance, for it was on 9 January 1915 that Gandhi, often called the first Pravasi Bharatiya, returned to India after two

decades in South Africa where he led a struggle for Indian freedom. On 9 January representatives of Indians overseas (both PIOs and NRIs) assemble together, with the Government of India conferring Bharat Samman decorations on the high-profile ones among them, and new policy pronouncements are made. This buttresses the varied Pravasi Bharatiya Divas gatherings also held around the world.²⁸

The Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award

The highest honour conferred on overseas Indians, the PBSA is conferred by the President of India as part of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Conventions organized annually since 2003. The award is made to an NRI or PIO who has excelled in their field, or has established and run an organization or institution that has enhanced India's prestige in the country of residence.

The PIO card

On the basis of an interim report by the Singhvi Committee, the Government of India announced the PIO card scheme, which provided substantial advantages to PIOs compared with other foreign nationals, whereby by paying a one-time fee of \$1,000, they could get multiple entry visas for 20 years. PIO cardholders have almost all the commercial rights of an Indian citizen, except in the case of the purchase of agricultural property. The card provides visa-free access to India, with cardholders having many rights similar to NRIs except voting rights. In response to the long and persistent demand for 'dual citizenship', particularly from the Indian diaspora in North America and other developed countries, the Government started the Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) scheme. At the 2006 Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in Hyderabad, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh presented the first OCI card, also referred to as the 'dual citizenship card'. It is available to the diaspora in all countries allowing dual citizenship, except Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Post-2004 diaspora measures

The Congress-led Government that succeeded the BJP Government has carried the process further for strengthening ties with the diaspora, establishing a fully fledged Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs under a separate Minister. The new MOIA introduced several measures, like posting welfare officers in Indian missions, establishment a 24-hour helpline, the provision of legal advice in the Indian missions in the Gulf, and a toll-free phone number for women. The MOIA has also signed a Memorandum of Understanding and agreements with several Gulf countries to safeguard the interests of Indian workers there.²⁹

Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre

The Government also launched an Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre, a one-stop shop to help overseas Indians invest in India. It intends also to establish a Diaspora Knowledge Network by creating a database of overseas Indians who would act as a knowledge diaspora and whose knowledge resources could be utilized through the ICT platform. The main objectives of the Network are: to build sustainable development institutions into a brain trust or brain circulation that will help identify innovative projects on the ground in various sectors in India; and to find suitable partners among the transnational Indian community for market-based solutions.

'Know India' programme

The Know India Programme is a project of the MOIA that aims to associate closely with the younger generations of the Indian diaspora. It provides a unique forum for students and young professionals of Indian origin to share their views, expectations and experiences, and bond closely with contemporary India. This includes a three-week comprehensive orientation programme organized by the MOIA and implemented in partnership with a state government and through the logistical support of the Nehru Yuva Kendra and the Confederation of Indian Industry.

Scholarship programme for diaspora children

The objective of the scholarship programme, introduced in the academic year 2006/07, is to make higher education in India accessible to the children of overseas Indians and promote India as a centre for higher education studies. Under the scheme, 100 PIO/NRI students are awarded a scholarship of up to \$3,600 per annum for undergraduate courses in engineering, technology, humanities, liberal arts, commerce, management, journalism, hotel management, agriculture, animal husbandry and others.

Gender issues

The MOIA has also taken a series of steps for the welfare and well-being of Indian women going to other countries to work in different capacities. Special attention has been paid to cases reported by Indian women deserted/abandoned by their NRI husbands. The Ministry has started a scheme to provide legal and financial assistance to such Indian women. Several inter-ministerial meetings, seminars and awareness campaigns have been organized, and efforts have been made to incorporate overseas Indian women's associations to help such Indian women find a solution to their problems.

Tracing roots

The MOIA also launched a 'tracing roots' scheme in October 2008. Under this scheme, the Ministry facilitates PIOs in tracing their ancestral roots in India. For this purpose, the Ministry has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with an organization called INDIRROOTS. PIOs who wish to trace the roots of their ancestors in India can do so with the help of this programme.

Besides these, other policy instruments devised are the India Development Foundation, which helps channel contributions from NRIs to philanthropic activities in India in a wide range of activities; and the establishment of the NRI/PIO University, the Internship Programme for Diaspora Youth, aiming to associate closely with the younger generation of the Indian diaspora. Furthermore, the Ministry intends to leverage the resource of prominent youth organizations with an all-India profile, such as Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, for meaningful engagement with diaspora youth during India's development process, as well as reinforcing the cultural, emotional and professional ties with their country of origin.

Conclusions

The Indian Government's interaction with the diaspora is in line with global trends. The global view of migrants has been changing in recent years, with migrants no longer perceived as

economic refugees. Today, Indians overseas, particularly in developed countries, are seen as a potential resource for the country due to their success and achievement in the countries of their adoption. With 25 million PIOs, India is no longer restricted to the subcontinent. They may be just over 2% of India's population, but their estimated collective resources are substantial. The diaspora has gained in importance over the years, and the more prosperous overseas communities have acquired substantial political influence in their adopted countries and have emerged as useful assets for their home countries.

A growing and rising India needs to engage its diaspora for its global positioning, with Vasant Moharir's sense at the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas—Europe of, 'the role of Indian Diaspora in accelerating India's transition as a Global Power'.³⁰ India's diaspora policy needs to treat its Indian diaspora as a 'strategic' resource. It needs to have policies and instruments for engaging its diaspora globally, which would give it global visibility and goodwill. An assessment of India's diaspora policy would show that it has acquired greater momentum and magnitude, but it is still both lopsided and short-sighted. The narrow focus on the dollar-rich diaspora in North America is not broad enough. A global focus on the Indian diaspora will give India strategic assets and opportunities to play a global role in times to come. The captive Indian diaspora in west Asia and the opportunities for Indian workers in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries gets only cosmetic policy support. The real issues facing these sectors and the opportunities in the regions are not being addressed either by engaging these countries or by policy support. Some of the Indian diaspora is in non-anglophone regions like the francophone and lusophone areas. There is no policy designed and extended to those whose identity and culture have been eroded substantially under the assimilative policies of France. There is a strong urge in these communities to restore their identity and link with India. In countries like Malawi, where indentured Indians went, even today they are stateless and need support from India. They do not even figure in the bulky official report of the Singhvi Committee. Indian policy needs to design a strategy and set of initiatives to broaden its focus and include the PIOs who form the bulk of its diaspora. In this context, India can learn from the experiences of other countries with a large diaspora. In other words, a comparative understanding of the diaspora as a player in international relations and as a resource for home and host countries will provide a better insight into a new diaspora policy for India.

Notes

- 1 C. Bhat, *India and the Indian Diaspora – A Policy Issue*, University of Hyderabad: Department of Sociology, 1998.
- 2 See J. Mangat, *A History of the Asians in East Africa*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969; H. Tinker, *A New System of Slavery*, London: Oxford University Press, 1979; K. Sadhu, *Indians in Malaya: Some Aspects of their Immigration and Settlement 1786–1957*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969; Y. Ghai and D. Ghai, *The Asian Minorities of East and Central Africa*, London: Minority Rights Group, 1971.
- 3 H. Tinker, 'Odd Man Out: The Loneliness of the Indian Colonial Politician. The Career of Manilal Doctor', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1974.
- 4 J. Nehru, 'A Foreign Policy of India', 19 September 1927, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, New Delhi: Orient Longman, Vol. 3.
- 5 *Ibid.*, pp.353–68.
- 6 J. Nehru, 1939, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1976, p.618; cited in government press release, K. Rana, 'Overseas Indians', *Features* (Press Information Bureau), 13 January 2003, pib.nic.in, written by Rana with regard to the first Pravasi Bharatiya Divas gathering held in January 2003.
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