Chapter 1

The Maldives

Our global survey of the ubiquitous "overseas Indians" commences with a brief review of their presence in India's neighbourhood. Among all the SAARC countries, we will refer only to the Maldives group of islands as the complex web of our relations with the other countries of the South Asian region is outside the scope of our study of the Indian Diaspora.

1.2. There are an estimated 9,000 NRIs in the Maldives, according to the census figures computed in the year 2000. This must be considered a relatively high figure, considering that the total population of this country consisting of many islands and atolls in the Arabian Sea is only 269,000 according to the same census. The Indian Diaspora in the Maldives is mainly composed of doctors, teachers, engineers, accountants, managers and other such highly qualified professionals. They have helped the country in the development of its human resources in many sectors. There are also, in the Maldives, a large number of Indian skilled and unskilled personnel, namely, technicians, masons, tailors, plumbers and labourers. They are making a handsome contribution to the development of the country's permanent assets.

1.3. It is interesting to note that there is only one Maldivian citizen of Indian origin in this country. There is a good reason for this. Both historically and commercially, people from the southern coast of India, particularly from Kerala, had been in close and regular contact with the Maldives. But these contacts did not metamorphose into a composite socio-cultural group, perhaps owing to the exclusive Islamic identity of the Maldives and its people. The popularity here of Indian movies, music and various Indian products can be attributed to the fact that Indians from the west coast of India have been engaged in a thriving coastal trade with the Maldives for a very long time. The similarity of some words in the local *Dhivehi* language with Hindi words must indicate the historical process of interaction between the two neighbouring countries.

Chapter 2

Afghanistan, Central Asia and Iran

Afghanistan

In John Gunther's *Inside Africa*, published in 1939, he describes Afghanistan as "one of the most fascinating regions of the world", and the "far frontiers" of British India in the northwest as "a wonderful living museum of anthropological lore!"

2.2. Migration from India to Afghanistan had occurred during the last several centuries, mainly from undivided Punjab. The emigrants mostly belonged to the category of retail shopkeepers and general merchants dealing in clothes and other consumer items. They settled down in various parts of Afghanistan, particularly Jalalabad and Kabul. In 1990, it was estimated that there were about 45,000 persons of Indian descent in Afghanistan. Most of those persons had become naturalised Afghan citizens.

2.3. After the Mujahideen and the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, there was a large-scale migration of local residents out of Afghanistan to neighbouring countries, mainly to India. This resulted in a drastic reduction in the number of people of Indian origin in Afghanistan. Those still remaining in Afghanistan were estimated, by our erstwhile Embassy in Kabul, at about 1000. A majority of these PIOs was based in Jalalabad, numbering about 600, while Kabul had about 400 of them and a very insignificant number were scattered in other parts of Afghanistan.

2.4. These Afghan citizens of Indian origin, established their own places for religious worship, in the cities where many of them lived. There are Hindu temples and Gurudwaras in Kabul and Jalalabad, as well as some other towns in Afghanistan.

2.5. India did not have any official representation in Afghanistan while the Taliban were in power. The Hindu and Sikh communities suffered harsh discrimination during that period.

2.6. In April 2001, the Taliban regime issued an order imposing new restrictions on the minority communities of Hindus and Sikhs in Afghanistan. Male Hindus, as per this edict, were debarred from wearing either *salwar kameez* or white turban. They were directed to wear a black cap and put a red *tilak* on their foreheads when they went out of their homes as marks of identification.

Hindu women too, when going out of their homes, were asked to drape themselves fully in a yellow cloth and wear an iron necklace. All Hindus were also required to display a yellow flag on their houses. Muslims and Hindus were debarred from residing in the same house.

2.7. Many Afghan Hindus and Sikhs, had moved out of Afghanistan before 11 September 2001. Many of them are presently in Pakistan and have expressed a desire to migrate to India. As they are PIOs, they have been advised to apply for permission to do so through our High Commission in Islamabad. Such requests are processed through the Ministry of Home Affairs, which would authorise the grant of visas after due scrutiny. The Government of India has offered every possible assistance to Afghan refugees who have come to India.

2.8. According to press reports, during their recent visit to India in December 2001, the Afghan Minister for Interior Affairs, Mr. Qanooni met with Hindu and Sikh minorities in the Afghan Embassy in New Delhi.

Central Asia

2.9. The Indian community in Central Asia, which is comprised of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, numbers only 2732 out of a total population of 55.5 million. It consists mainly of NRIs. The Indian community in Central Asia consists mainly of students, businessmen, workers, and representatives/employees of Indian or foreign companies. There is a respectable presence in it of managers, entrepreneurs and traders, particularly in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. It is well regarded, having a higher per capita income than the national averages of the respective countries of its habitation. It has adapted itself to local conditions and has no problems with the local populations.

2.10. Out of the total Diaspora of 2732, 1127 persons are stationed in Kazakhstan. 900 are medical students. About 127 workers/managers are employed by Ispat International, a Soviet era steel plant that was taken over by the NRI businessman Shri L.N. Mittal. The plant, now called Ispat Karmet under Indian management, is a major success story. Indians also play an important role in other commercial activities and sectors such as pharmaceuticals. Besides Ispat Karmet, the following Indian companies have representatives in Kazakhstan – Ajant Pharma, Dr. Reddy's labs, Ranbaxy, Core, Lupin, IPCA, and USV. In addition, a project for setting up a mobile heating unit in Kazakhstan has been commissioned with ITEC funding. The Indian Cultural Centre in Almaty is active in projecting Indian culture. Several Indian cultural festivals have been held in Kazakhstan. The composition of the Indian community in Uzbekistan, currently around 690, has been changing over the years. The new arrivals are generally employees of multinational corporations, banks and hotels. They are employed as chartered accountants and management consultants and are well paid. About 20 Indians are employed by Indian pharmaceutical joint ventures in Tashkent. Some are working at a petrochemical complex in Karshi.

2.11. The Committee feels that the Indian community in Central Asia is bound to grow in view of its strategic and economic importance. The recommendations of the Committee would also apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to this region.

Iran

2.12. Relations between India and Iran have traditionally been very close. Historically, there have been many instances of movement of people overland between the two countries. In more recent times, around 1925, the first lot of Indians – about 180 families – went to the Iranian border town of Zahidan. They drove there from the western districts of the then Punjab province of India, in the company of truck drivers who used to transport goods to Iran. After their initial influx, these Indians gradually started settling down in the nearby towns of Zabol, Birijand and Mashhad. In 1950, some more Indians went to Iran and settled down en bloc in Teheran. They were predominantly Sikhs, but there were also some Gujaratis among them.

2.13. In the 1960s and early 70s, the Shah of Iran permitted immigration into the country of about a million expatriate professionals to run its essential services. Among the new arrivals were about 10,000 Indian doctors, engineers and teachers. However, most of them, except a few doctors, left Iran after the Iranian revolution which ended the Shah's rule. As of now, the number of Indians who have settled down in the country consists of approximately a hundred and fifty families in Teheran, thirty-five in Zahidan and only two in Isfahan. A majority of these people are engaged in various business activities. Several of the Indian women have married Iranians and now reside in different parts of the country including Mashhad. Some Kashmiri students are studying at the Imam Khomeini University in Qazvin, while a number of other Indians are pursuing theological studies at Qom.

2.14. Almost all the Indians in Iran belonging to the third and fourth generation of emigrants have continued to retain their Indian citizenship. Only about ten families among them have become Iranian nationals. Similarly, a majority of fifth generation Indian emigrants have also adopted local citizenship because of work and tax related problems.

2.15. The Indian community in Iran, unlike its counterpart in some other countries, maintains strong links with India. Several of its members own properties in this country and even send their children to study in Indian schools. Most of them seek marriage partners for their children in India. Their loyalty to their country of origin is really touching. It manifests itself in responding to national calamities and crises in India such as the Kargil incursions and the Gujarat earthquake with the spontaneous remittance of contributions for disaster relief.

Chapter 3

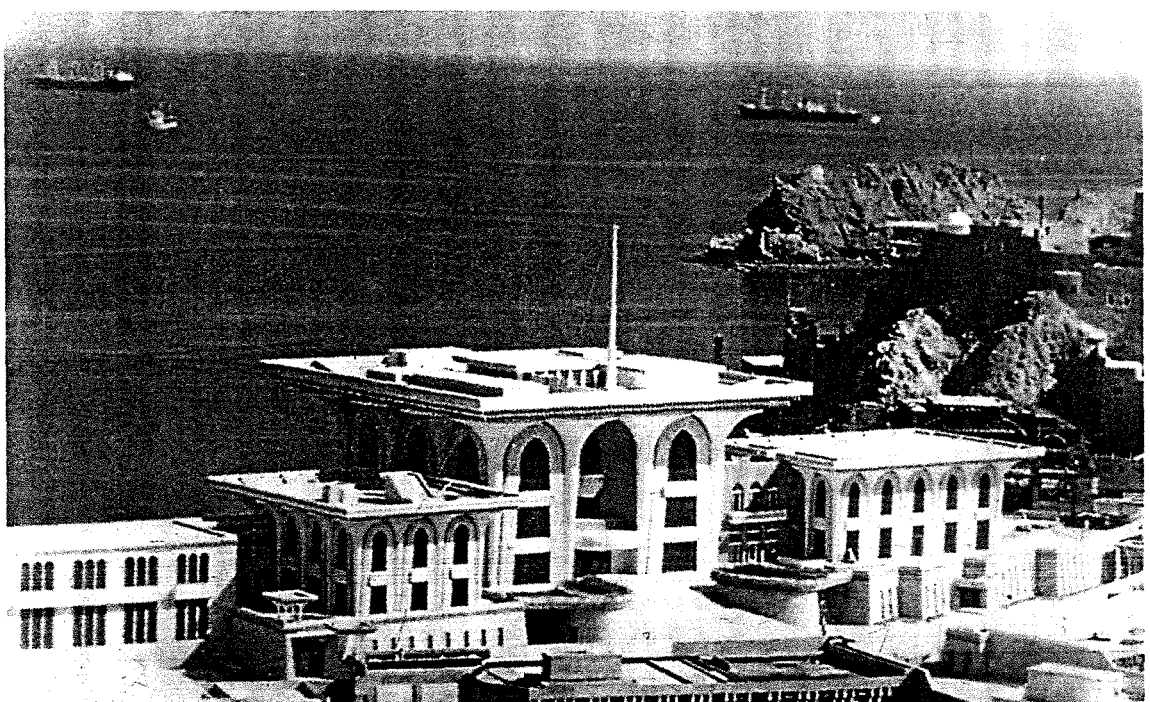
The Gulf Region



Late Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi laying the foundation stone of Indian Islamic Centre Building in Abu Dhabi in May 1981



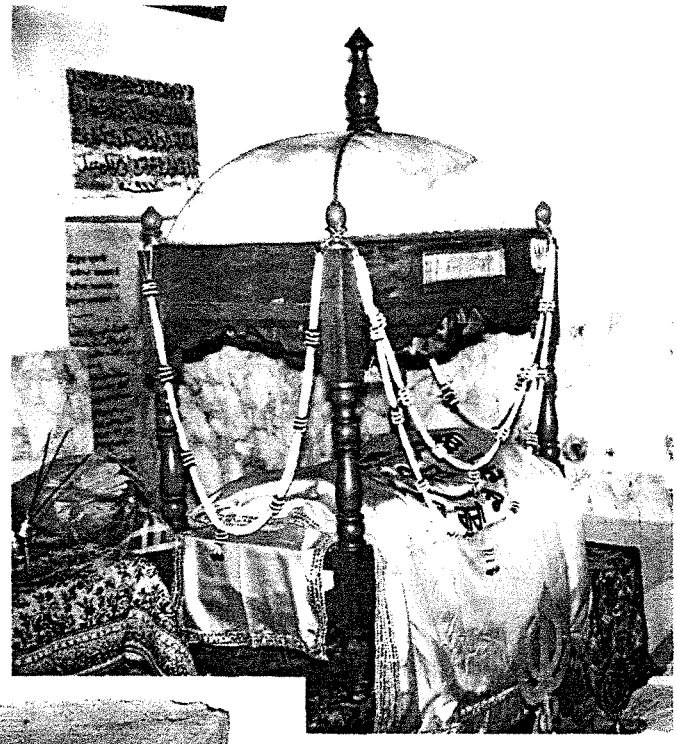
Visit by the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora on 12-13 January 2001, to a worker's camp, in Muscat, Oman – 3000 Indian Workers

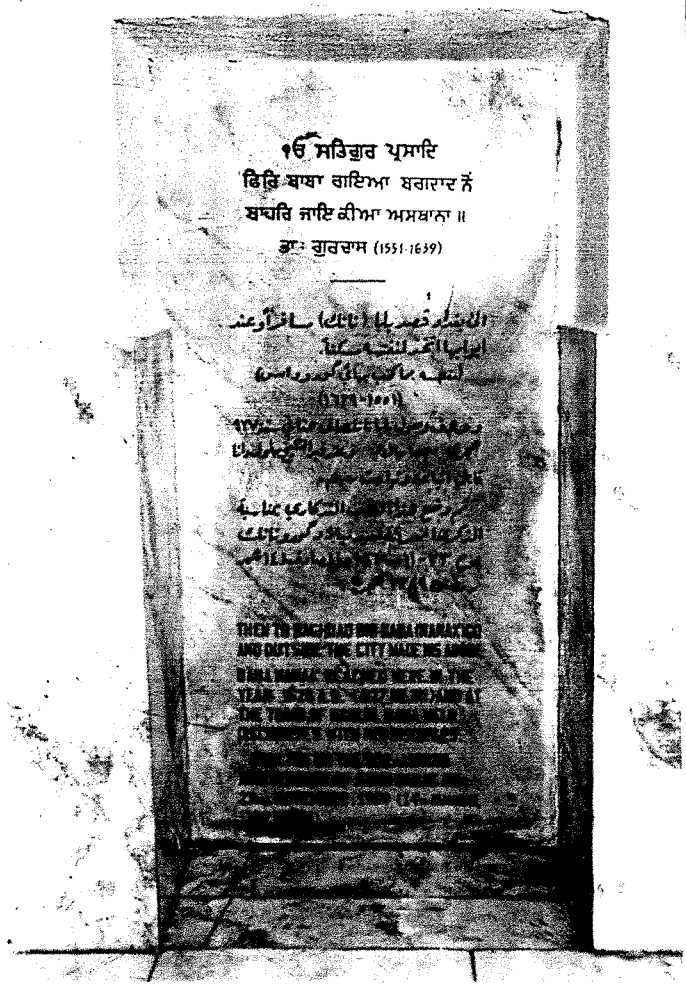


The Palace of His Majesty Sultan of Oman, Muscat, constructed by Shapoorji Pallonji & Co. Ltd.



The Indian High School, Dubai – the oldest and the largest school in the Gulf





Inside view of Gurudwara at Baghdad (Iraq)

Introduction

A few kilometres out of Dubai, the Burj Al Arab rises from the shifting sands of the Gulf region. The world's tallest all-suite hotel, its sail-like form towers 321 metres above a man-made island. This architectural wonder symbolises what can be achieved in the most inhospitable conditions, provided one has the financial means to source the latest technology and to attract the requisite skills and manpower. The Burj is also a monument to the economic miracle that has been taking place in this region over the last four decades.

3.2. In this chapter the High Level Committee examines the role that migrants from India have played in these stupendous developments, and the costs involved. The main characteristics that are commonly found in almost all the Gulf countries will be identified in the first section of this chapter. The present status of the Indian Diaspora in this region, and the problems encountered by it, are discussed in the next section. The chapter concludes with an exploration of the many demands and expectations of the Gulf-based Non-Resident Indians from their mother country.

3.3. The analysis contained in this chapter applies with equal validity to the prevailing conditions in Libya although, unlike the Gulf countries, it does not have a hereditary monarch as its Head of State. A similar situation prevailed in past years in Iraq as well. That country has not yet returned to normal after the Desert Storm operations of 1991.

Common Characteristics of the Gulf Countries

3.4. Hereditary monarchical regimes have traditionally administered all the Gulf countries. Even though some of them may have features such as an elected legislature (in Kuwait), or an Advisory Council (in Qatar), the executive and legislative powers invariably vest in the hereditary monarch in each of them. It is the Head of State who appoints Ministers and Advisory Council members. He can, therefore, presumably change them at his sovereign will.

3.5. The discovery of vast resources of oil and their exploitation since the late nineteen sixties is the basic and driving force that has been responsible for the phenomenal changes that have taken

place in most of these countries in the last four decades. Saudi Arabia, for instance, is credited with having 25% of the proven oil reserves of the world. Even tiny Oman has 10% of the same kind of wealth. Most of the other Gulf states have enough oil resources to keep their relatively small economies on the path to prosperity. On the other hand, Iraq and Libya have been blessed with considerable reserves of oil.

3.6. Where abundance of oil and natural gas is not the moving force, their absence has been compensated in other ways. Dubai, for instance, with little or no oil of its own, has adopted imaginative economic and financial policies such as the establishment of free trade and duty-free economic zones like the Jebel Ali Free Zone, the Cargo Village and its Airport Free Zone. With total exemption also of income and other taxes, Dubai has been able to achieve phenomenal economic development because of the impressive revenues earned by its citizens and the foreign nationals who have made their homes in this free enterprise emirate.

3.7. Foreign nationals are not permitted to own any business or immovable property in the Gulf countries. They are required to make a local citizen or entity a majority even if sleeping partner in their enterprises. This has facilitated the task of ensuring that the wealth generated in the region is very profitably invested in the development of world-class infrastructure. Five star hotels, as well as an abundance of duty-free shops and international festivals of all kinds, have led to the existence of an economic miracle throughout the Arabian peninsula.

3.8. Though the rulers are adherents of the 'Sunni' sect of Islam, there is a sizeable 'Shia' population in many countries of the region. Among the Gulf countries, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is foremost in adhering to a conservative, austere and doctrinaire form of Islam, referred to loosely as 'Wahabism'. The Saudi royal family has a special position as the 'Custodian of the two Holy Places' of *Makkah* and *Medinah*. With Islam as the state religion, the *shariat* is the basic law in all these countries and Arabic is the only official language. Adherents of other religions are not permitted to build their places of worship. However, group worship in private residences is not prohibited. The conservative social ethos of the Arab world has, however, not prevented the upwardly mobile younger generation from being infatuated by gadgets and artefacts of the industrialised western world.

3.9. The entire region is sparsely populated, Saudi Arabia and Iraq being the only Gulf countries with relatively large populations of almost 22 and 23 million, respectively. As for the others, the corresponding figures range from barely half a million to about two and a half. Consequently, with the frenetic development projects in hand, all the Gulf countries are short of manpower to keep their engines of growth in motion. This shortage is all the more endemic in the case of professionals like highly qualified doctors to man their well-equipped hospitals, as well as engineers, architects, chartered accountants, bankers, etc. There is also a tremendous dearth in these countries of highly skilled and even semi-skilled and unskilled workers. Such personnel are essential for the construction of the new housing, commercial and industrial structures now in progress, and for the implementation of numerous other infrastructure schemes.

3.10. To meet these demographic and skills shortages, the region has had to import hundreds of thousands of personnel from many other countries. Until the Gulf crisis of 1990-91, there were a large number of Palestinians working in the region. But they have not been allowed to remain there since then. Workers, initially from Egypt, and then India, and from the other countries of the South Asian subcontinent, gladly replaced the Palestinians in increasing numbers.

3.11. High-grade professionals in various disciplines, both economic and technical, are in great demand in this region. They are offered very attractive emoluments. The presence of highly qualified Indian experts is valued as it helps the socio-economic development, which is the ambition of all the Gulf countries. These highly paid professionals are also usually fortunate enough to be permitted to take their families with them to the Gulf as their monthly emoluments are more than the variously prescribed minima. Yet they too are forced to send their children back to their home countries or anywhere else as soon as their kids complete their high school education. This is not because most of the Gulf countries do not have adequate facilities for higher education in the English medium. In some of the countries, the reason for this is that adult children are not permitted to continue residing with their parents.

3.12. As the Arab nationals prefer employment in well-paid government positions, they have ensured that they would have the assistance of qualified foreign technicians and experts to perform the tasks that they themselves ought to be doing. Consequently, the number of expatriate white-collar workers in public sector undertakings and even in government offices has assumed alarming proportions over the past decade. Attempts are, therefore, now being made by the Gulf countries to train their own people to replace expatriates. Many of the regional governments have decided to fix a ceiling, which is not easily adhered to, for the recruitment of such foreign nationals. At the same time, they have tried to diversify their sources of recruitment in order to ensure that no single country would be able to threaten their national security.

3.13. The Republic of Korea used to be a valuable source of supply of skilled workers during the early period of influx of foreign personnel into the Gulf. But it is no longer in this league owing to its own rapid economic development.

3.14. There are no ceilings for the recruitment of domestic help such as housemaids, gardeners, cooks, bearers and such other personnel. In fact, there has been an unfortunate mismatch between the large-scale unemployment of such workers in their home countries and the enormous demand for them in the Gulf. The result has been a tendency on the part of employers in some of the countries of the region to treat their domestic help with scant regard for their welfare. Many employees have complained of harsh and unfair treatment. Female employees working as governesses and housemaids are particularly vulnerable in some of the Gulf countries. The situation is further complicated by the fact that in most cases maids and other domestic help are not covered by the local labour laws.

3.15. There is a reluctance on the part of most citizens in the Gulf to undertake any semi-skilled, unskilled or menial jobs and a huge foreign workforce has had to be recruited to develop infrastructure and other development projects. There is a wide range of variation in the living conditions and amenities provided by the employers. Some of the less fortunate workers, particularly those who are semi-skilled or unskilled, are accommodated in crowded labour camps in small rooms with four to eight bunker beds. The facilities provided to them such as toilets and kitchens are inadequate and unsatisfactory. Generally, the living conditions and amenities provided by the large corporations are better than the facilities extended by small companies and individual employers. Many NGOs and Gulf returnees emphasise the need for improvement in both working and living conditions of the semi-skilled and unskilled labour.

3.16. While, as already noted, the highly paid foreign professionals are allowed to have their families with them, this privilege is not available to other, less privileged foreign workers in the various Gulf countries. Difficult conditions of work, inclement weather, inability to participate in any social or cultural activities, concern for their families back home, and a troublesome feeling of emotional deprivation, have sometimes led to serious cases of mental depression and even suicide.

3.17. Citizenship is almost universally not granted by the Gulf countries to foreign nationals. It is only in Oman that aliens are eligible for local citizenship after having resided in the country for 20 years. Exceptions to the general embargo are to be found in one or two countries, where local citizenship is sometimes granted to ethnic Arabs from another Gulf country. In some others, there are a small number of persons of foreign origin who have been granted local citizenship. These are usually the wives of native citizens. Unfortunately, these women can be rendered into 'stateless persons', unless they are themselves from another Arab country, in the event of their being divorced by their husbands.

Present Status of NRIs in the Gulf Countries

3.18. The Indian Diaspora in the Gulf consists entirely of 'Non Resident Indian citizens' (or NRIs). A conservative estimate of their present number in the Gulf region, based on figures supplied by the Ministry of Labour (Table 3.1) and by Indian missions in that area (Table 3.2) would be at least 3 million. Their numbers make impressive reading even in terms of their percentage of total population in the countries where they reside.

Statistics collected by the Ministry of External Affairs reveal that the 'socio-economic profile' of Indian migrants to the Gulf has been shifting in a positive direction since the late 1980s. There has been an upward flow of professionals and white-collar workers. Apart from highly qualified persons such as doctors, engineers and architects, bankers and chartered accountants, many white-collar workers are now working in government offices or public sector enterprises. Others are engaged in the gold, electronics, motor spare parts or textiles trade, in the construction industry, or in managing hotels and restaurants. Nevertheless, semi-skilled and unskilled workers

Table 3.1: Estimates of Indian Migrants in the Gulf Region, 1975-1999

Country	1975	1979	1983	1987	1991	1999
Bahrain	1,725	26,000	30,000	77,000	100,000	150,000
Iraq	7,500	20,000	50,000	350,000	NA	NA
Kuwait	32,105	65,000	115,000	100,000	88,000	200,000
Libya	1,100	10,000	40,000	25,000	12,000	20,000
Oman	38,500	60,000	100,000	184,000	220,000	450,000
Qatar	27,800	30,000	40,000	50,000	75,000	100,000
Saudi Arabia	34,500	100,000	270,000	380,000	600,000	1,200,000
U.A.E.	107,50	152,000	250,000	225,000	400,000	750,000
Others	NA	68,000	21,000	21,000	10,000	130,000
Total	**266,255**	**501,000**	**916,000**	**1,096,000**	**1,505,000**	**3,000,000**

Table 3.2: Percentage of NRIs in the total population of main Arab countries in Year 2000

Country	Population	No. of NRIs	% of population
Saudi Arabia	21,500,000	1,500,000	7
U.A.E.	2,800,000	900,000	32
Kuwait	2,200,000	287,600	13
Oman	2,200,000	340,000	15
Bahrain	643,000	130,000	20
Qatar	525,000	125,000	24

still account for about 70% of the Indian migrants; while white-collar workers are in the neighbourhood of 20%, and professionals have a 10% share of the total.

3.19. For the professionals and the white-collar workers, life in the Gulf is not exactly a bed of roses. This is because of the peculiar socio-economic profile of the countries of this region. Their contacts and interactions with the local people are limited and mostly of a formal and impersonal nature. But they have enough monetary compensation to induce them to stay on in the Gulf for as long as they can. They are naturally drawn to their compatriots of a similar social status or background. A large number of Indian associations are thus to be found throughout the region, which are based on commonalities such as place of origin, religion, language or profession. During its visits to various Gulf countries, the High Level Committee found that there are as many as a hundred such associations engaged in cultural and recreational activities in Kuwait and the UAE, while relatively smaller numbers exist in Saudi Arabia and Oman. The Indian Art Circle in Kuwait has even constructed an auditorium with a seating capacity of 1,200 persons, in which regular cultural programmes and seminars are organised, and sometimes also performances by invited Indian artists. Similar facilities are provided to the community by Indian diplomatic missions. It may noted that the ICCR has no Cultural Centre in the Gulf countries.

3.20. The professional Indians and some of the white-collar workers are the only ones who qualify to have their families with them due to the high basic income norms set by the Gulf governments. To enjoy such a privilege in the UAE, for instance, the monthly earnings of an NRI must be no less than 4,000 Dirhams (currently equivalent to Rs.48,000), or Dirhams 3,000 plus accommodation. In Kuwait, the qualifying minimum is even higher, namely, Kuwaiti Dinars 400 or Rs.56,000 per month! As such salaries are not beyond the capacity of our professionals. They have taken the initiative of setting up a large number of schools throughout the region which follow the Indian curriculum and thus meet the educational needs of their children. There are no less than 38 such schools in the UAE, 15 in Oman, 9 in Kuwait and 7 in Saudi Arabia which are run and managed by Indian professionals.

3.21. As the Gulf region is not very far from India, these well-heeled NRIs are able to make frequent home visits to maintain regular contact with friends and relatives. Their usual complaint is of the rough treatment they receive at the hands of customs officials at the port of entry into India. With easy access to radio and satellite TV channels, they are also in close touch with political and economic developments in the country.

3.22. These NRIs pride themselves on their loyalty to Mother India. To substantiate this, they cite impressive figures of their ready response to occasional calamities faced by India, such as the Kargil incursions and the Gujarat earthquake, as also their readiness to invest in special bond issues like the recent India Millennium Deposit bonds. As to the latter, the Committee learned that local banks in the Gulf, as indeed elsewhere also, are not averse to giving loans to prospective purchasers of bonds, even up to 90% of their intended investment. This is done on condition that

the accruing income would be appropriately shared between both the parties involved. On the other hand, some of the persons that the Committee met in the Gulf countries openly admitted that they were not particularly interested in remitting their savings to India. They were under the impression that they could only park their funds in the rupee accounts of Indian banks. They were not willing to do this as the exchange rate of the Indian rupee had been constantly on the decline. It was clarified to them that deposits in an FCNR Account permit NRIs to maintain their deposits in India in various designated foreign currencies and with full rights of repatriation after one year. In any case, it appeared to the Committee that the impressive figures of the annual inward remittances to India from the Gulf are mostly the hard-earned savings effected by our unskilled and semi-skilled labour. For it is the latter who have no other place in which to keep their money, besides the fact that their families back home need every rupee that can be saved.

3.23. The living and working condition of the unskilled and semi-skilled Indian workers in the Gulf leaves much to be desired. A majority of these NRIs are young males. More than half their number have invariably gone from Kerala, while the remaining persons have mostly been from Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Over 60% of them have had little formal education. On arrival in their country of destination in the Gulf, they are usually fed and housed in barrack-like tenements and engaged as labour on construction projects. Most of them are unmarried. As recruitment normally takes place for fixed periods and for specific employment, there is a lot of turnover of these migrants, though many of them have been known to have gone back to the region after a while, with fresh job contracts.

3.24. An emigration permit issued by the Ministry of Labour is mandatory before unskilled or semi-skilled labourers are allowed to leave the country. However, possibly due to the large numbers involved, the detailed procedures that were being followed in the initial period of migration of such persons to the Gulf were discontinued some years ago. The Ministry of Labour is averse to our consular officers in the countries of emigration involving themselves in scrutinising the genuineness of job contracts on offer, or to satisfy themselves of the *bona fides* of the prospective employers before the grant of the mandatory permission to emigrate. This has only compounded the problems of these emigrants. There are many unfortunate cases of recruiting agents duping illiterate job seekers, often in collusion with the prospective employers. As per prevalent practice, the employee is required to hand over his travel document to the employer on his arrival. The document is kept in the custody of the employer, enabling him to exercise undue hold over the employee and to ignore or alter the terms of employment. This is possible due to the fact that no change of jobs is permitted without local official sanction and this is normally given only with the approval of the employer. Nor can a Gulf employee return home without a similarly obtained exit permit of the local government. The Committee was informed that there were some cases of bogus 'employers' in the Gulf countries who import labour with the sole purpose of hawking them to others at an attractive fee!

3.25. Among the hardships suffered by our migrant labour are the following:

(a) Employment agreements are sometimes ignored on arrival of labour in the Gulf and skilled workers are forced to work as unskilled persons.

(b) Employers sponsoring visas for labour sometimes do not receive them on arrival and leave them to fend for themselves.

(c) Several months of work may have to be devoted initially to the settlement of debts incurred in meeting the fee extorted from them by their recruiting agents in India.

(d) Salaries are often not paid when due; sometimes not paid at all for several months towards the end of the contractual period, resulting in workers being repatriated without full payment of their dues.

(e) Work permit fees (*iqama)* are deducted from their meagre salaries.

(f) Work hours are usually much longer than the generally recognised 8-hour workday.

(g) The employees often do not receive their legitimate overtime dues.

(h) Transportation arrangements of group of labourers from their camps to their worksites are often unsatisfactory.

(i) Medical facilities are inadequate and, in some cases, almost non-existent.

(j) Though a return passage to India after two years in the Gulf is expected to be a standard clause in job contracts, leave is often refused or postponed indefinitely.

(k) The mandate of the Labour Courts appears to be restrictive and it does not cover domestic help. The recourse to them is somewhat difficult and not within easy reach of an ordinary worker. Complaints in this regard were brought to the attention of the Committee. It is fortunate that some of our offices in the Gulf, like the Consulate General in Dubai, have been able to establish a regular consultation procedure with the local Labour Ministry officials. This has apparently helped in resolving many labour complaints.

(l) Naïve, vulnerable and gullible migrants have sometimes had to encounter dangers of a serious character. According to a report in *India Today* of 9 March 2001, as many as 24 persons from Kerala had been publicly beheaded last year on charges of narcotic smuggling, an offence that attracts execution under local laws.

(m) There have been cases of Indian women who were recruited as cooks or housemaids and were driven to desperation because of the ill treatment and molestation that they were subjected to. It appears that unscrupulous agents had managed to send them out under false pretences.

(n) Young girls are 'given away in marriage' possibly for a price to unknown persons from the Gulf.

(o) There are few recreational opportunities for the labour class of our migrants. Concern for their families left behind in India, difficult living and working conditions, insecurity of jobs has often led to depression and melancholia, resulting in suicide in extreme cases. Shepherds and agricultural workers have to work in remote areas with minimal or no contact with the outside world. This often results in serious psychological problems.

(p) Workers who want to return to India on completion of their contracts, or due to an unforeseen emergency like sickness or death in the family often find that exit formalities are inordinately delayed.

(q) On their return to India, illiterate workers, often with little or no knowledge of the facilities available to them under the Baggage Rules, are often harassed and exploited by the Customs authorities at Indian airports.

3.26. During its visit to Kuwait, the Committee found that our Embassy in that capital city had to set up a shelter for distressed women. It had done so with the willing and generous cooperation and financial support of local Indians. These unfortunate women had managed to escape from their employers as they could no longer put up with the harsh treatment that had been meted out to them. They were awaiting repatriation to India as soon as the Embassy was able to obtain exit permits for them, as well as financial contributions from local NRIs to meet the cost of air travel.

3.27. Out of a total of 294,000 Indian residents in Kuwait, about 113,000 of them are domestic servants and, of them, about 49,000 are housemaids. In view of the serious problems faced by housemaids, the Government of India had suspended their emigration to Kuwait in June 1999. The Committee learned that this had created some disaffection in Kerala due to the serious unemployment problems in the state. Government is working on lifting the ban and finalising modalities to ensure the welfare of maids.

3.28. In a note submitted to the Committee by our Embassy in Saudi Arabia, it was suggested that it is easy to be negative about the treatment of our labour in that country. The Saudi system had changed for the better over the years and employers were now much more sensitive to the needs of their workers, and that allowance must also be made for the fact that living and working conditions in Saudi Arabia are uniquely onerous and irksome. The note went on to state that in 1999 only 1,276 labour complaints had been received by our missions in Jeddah and Riyadh; and that that was a mere 0.08% of the total Indian population in the country. Similarly, only 163 maidservants had complained of ill treatment during the same period, which was a minuscule 1.6% of the 10,000 housemaids in the Kingdom.

Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora

3.29. Owing to paucity of time and of budgetary allocations, the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora was not able to visit all of the Gulf countries where NRIs are to be found. Accordingly, we decided to target only four of them, which either account for the largest number of our expatriates, or where local circumstances deserve special consideration. The countries selected by us for on-the-spot study were Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The innumerable problems and difficulties faced by Indian labour in the Gulf have been enumerated in the previous section of this chapter. What follows are the consequential demands, expectations and aspirations that were voiced to the HLC by various groups of representative Indians. It is the conviction of the Committee that the many plaints and solutions that were presented to it deserve careful consideration and early response as they represent urgent pleas for help and relief from our nationals. Our conclusions and recommendations on them would be found in a subsequent chapter of this report.

Demands and Expectations Pertaining to Migrant Labour

3.30. NRIs of this category expect the Government of India to evolve imaginative policies to safeguard their interests, including the following:

(a) Effective measures should be instituted by the Ministry of Labour to prevent malpractices by recruiting agents in India. There are many unscrupulous ones among them who exploit the prospective innocent emigrants and extract hefty sums from them as a fee for obtaining the necessary visas and work permits for them. They tempt them with exaggerated and sometimes even false promises of attractive jobs on offer. Very often this is done in collusion with counterparts in the Gulf countries.

(b) State governments should set up appropriate agencies, even at the district level, to advise prospective Indian workers about their rights and obligations. Such agencies should devise means to ensure that they are not exploited by recruiting agencies in India and by prospective foreign employers. Counselling should be given by such agencies about the dangers of even getting inadvertently used as drug peddlers, as this can attract capital punishment.

(c) The earlier practice should be revived of requiring our Missions in the Gulf countries to satisfy themselves of the genuineness of jobs on offer and the reliability of the parties offering them. A certified copy of each job contract should be kept in the custody of the relevant Mission. This would enable it to satisfy itself of the fulfilment or otherwise of the contractual obligations.

(d) Government should negotiate a 'Standard Labour Export Agreement' with all the Gulf countries prescribing such things as a minimum wage, free housing, medicare, a weekly day off, a limit on daily working hours, overtime allowance rates, return air tickets and compensation for on-the-job death or injury.

(e) The practice of employers taking into their custody the passports of their employees immediately on their arrival should be discontinued. This practice renders our workers helpless. An alternative system which meets the requirements of the local laws should also be explored.

(f) The consular officers in our Missions in the Gulf countries should pay frequent visits to the labour camps to acquaint themselves with the difficulties faced by the Indian workers.

(g) The officer dealing with Community Welfare in each Indian Mission should hold periodic meetings with his opposite number in the host country's Labour Ministry to resolve problems as they arise, without entailing recourse to the Labour Courts.

(h) The tenure of employment is uncertain in the Gulf countries. Our workers should therefore be given financial assistance and otherwise assisted in their resettlement through training and/or alternative employment, in the event of their services being summarily terminated and their being compelled to return to India.

(i) Employers in the Gulf countries sometimes refuse to comply with the normal system of financing the return fare of their labour to India at the termination of their contractual period. On the other hand, the prospective Indian emigrant has to deposit with the Protector of Emigrants a sum equivalent to the cost of repatriation to India. This amount should be transferred to the relevant Indian Mission, so that it can be utilised in the event that an employer reneges on his responsibility.

(j) Gulf returnees usually face considerable harassment from the Customs authorities at their port of entry into India. Remedial action should be taken to stop this.

(k) Airport Users Fees are levied on Indians going to the Gulf or returning from there, while no such fees are charged to domestic travellers at the same airports (Calicut, Cochin and Trivandrum). Other international airports in India do not charge any user fee. There is no reason for such discriminatory treatment.

(l) The airfares that are charged by Air India and Indian Airlines for a journey from the Gulf to airports in Kerala and other destinations in South India should be rationalised. There is no reason why a flight from Dubai to anywhere in South India should cost far more than a flight from Dubai to Delhi. The distance in the latter case is about 50% more than the former!

(m) Indian women are being recruited to work in the Gulf as cooks, housemaids, governesses for children, etc. As local labour laws do not apply to domestic help, they often end up becoming victims of physical violence, molestation, and even sexual abuse. Government should devise measures to protect Indian women from such humiliation.

Demands and Expectations of White Collar Workers and Professionals

3.31. The preceding section of this paper has been devoted to a consideration of only the demands and expectations of the labouring class among the NRIs in the Gulf. In this section, the materially different aspirations of our white-collar workers and professionals in this region will be examined. Their aspirations are obviously very different from those of the unskilled and semi-skilled workers. They can be considered under two different categories. On the one hand, these NRIs would like the Government of India to iron out the many difficulties that they have been facing - which are really a result of their socio-economic situation in the Gulf being far superior to what our labourers have had to endure. On the other hand, they have been raising a number of ambitious demands which, in their opinion, India should accede to because of the special services they claim to be rendering for their mother country. What follows is a list of their main expectations, some of which are also shared by persons who are still in India, but are hoping to join their ranks when they can.

(a) It is difficult for aspiring emigrants based outside Delhi to have their professional degrees and other certificates attested by the Home or HRD Ministries in Delhi. Without such attestation they are unable to secure suitable employment in the Gulf which would be commensurate with their actual academic qualifications. Provision should, therefore, be made for such certification to be given to them in their state capitals or in district headquarters.

(b) The age limit for recruitment to government jobs should be relaxed for young professionals who have to return from service in the Gulf for reasons beyond their control.

(c) Many NRIs experience problems in retaining possession of their properties in India because of illegal occupation by squatters. Practical measures should be devised to overcome such problems.

(d) Separate evaluation centres should be set up for the CBSE examination taken by children in the Indian schools in the Gulf.

(e) The teaching of Hindi should be promoted in these schools by reducing its course content. The Social Studies syllabus should also be streamlined to make it more relevant.

(f) Information of facilities available in India for higher education should be disseminated on the internet.

(g) Admission to professional colleges in India should be facilitated for the children of Gulf residents. In many states they are denied admission as they fail to satisfy the domicile requirement. Their permanent address in India as shown in their passports should be regarded as their place of domicile in India.

(h) There are few or no facilities for higher education for children in the Gulf countries where their parents reside. Universities in the western world are far too expensive. At present they are required to pay an exorbitantly high capitation fee, and that too in foreign exchange, by Indian colleges that agree to give them admission. This is not fair to the children and corrective measures should be taken to end this practice, especially as the earnings of Gulf-based NRIs are modest compared to their counterparts in the developed countries.

(i) As institutions like the IITs, IIMs and engineering colleges in India hold joint competitive entrance examinations, arrangements should be made to hold such tests at one or two centres in the Indian missions in the Gulf. It would otherwise be difficult for an aspiring student to come to India to take such tests.

(j) To overcome the current problems of higher education for NRI children, proposals had apparently been made by some Indians in Dubai and Oman for permission to finance the establishment of professional colleges in India. Institutions of this kind would be primarily, though not solely, for the benefit of NRI children. Such proposals should be favourably considered.

(k) The UAE authorities should be persuaded to permit the establishment in their territory of higher educational institutions affiliated to Indian universities.

General Demands and Expectations Affecting All NRIs in the Gulf

3.32. (1)Consular:

(a) All consular work in Indians missions should be simplified and also computerised in order to provide efficient and instantaneous services.

(b) Consular rules and procedures should be simplified and faster responses obtained from the passport authorities in India.

(c) The *tatkal scheme* for expeditious processing of consular services should be applied to NRIs in the Gulf without charging higher fees as they do not have ready access to their passports. Their travel documents are retained by their employers and only returned to them at the end of their employment contracts.

(d) There should be a similar reduction of all consular fees for the labour working in the Gulf.

3.33. (2)Economic:

(a) Financial instruments such as the IMD Bonds should become an annual feature to facilitate regular inflows of NRI funds. Half of such inflows should be devoted to the implementation of capital-intensive infrastructure projects.

(b) NRI should be associated with the implementation of such projects. They should also be associated in the building of social infrastructure projects like hospitals and schools.

(c) Bank frauds should be prevented in respect of FCNR and NRE accounts maintained by NRIs in Indian banks as deposits sometimes disappear without due authorisation!

(d) In appreciation of the large inward remittance of NRIs and their investment in special bond issues, they should be given special preferential treatment like duty free import of machinery for the setting up of industries, and also for trading in equities such as shares and debentures.

3.34. (3) Political:

(a) NRIs from all over the world should be permitted to exercise their franchise in Indian elections, both for Parliament and for the various state legislatures.

(b) In addition, they should be represented in the Rajya Sabha where two seats should be reserved for them. The President of India should nominate eminent NRI persons to these seats on the advice of the Prime Minister.

3.35. The catalogue of demands of the Gulf NRIs is rather long, but it contains many that are eminently reasonable. The HLC's responses to them are contained in the chapter entitled 'Conclusions and Recommendations'.

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Chapter 4

Countries of the Gulf Region

Introduction

This chapter supplements the analysis of the Gulf Region contained in the preceding Chapter 3 and contains short notes on the various countries of the Gulf region. In addition to the GCC countries, we have included brief sketches on several others as well. India has been the source of supply of some of the expertise and equipment, and also a considerable portion of the equally essential skilled, semi-skilled, as well as manual workers that have been instrumental in transforming this region in a relatively short time into prosperous economies. This is an area where, consequent on the discovery and exploitation of hydrocarbons during the last three decades, the Indian presence has increased manifold. Our purpose in presenting this chapter has been to provide a panoramic view, however sketchy, of this region where the principal issues described and discussed in the main chapter have arisen. A statistical table has been added below in order to give a comparative idea of the size of the Indian Diaspora in this region in the year 2001, when viewed against the total population of these countries.

Table 4.1: The Indian Diaspora in the countries of the Gulf and its neighbouring regions

Countries	Population	PIOs	NRIs	Stateless	% age of Population
Bahrain	643,000	NIL	130,000	-	20.22
Iraq	23,000,000	50	60	-	Insignificant
Kuwait	2,254,000	1,000	294,000	-	12.80
Libya	5,800,000	400	12,000	-	Insignificant
Oman	2,300,000	1,000	311,000	-	13.52
Qatar	525,000	1,000	130,000	-	23.81
Saudi Arabia	21,500,000	NIL	1,500,000	-	6.90
U. A. E.	2,900,000	50,000	900,000	-	30.00
Yemen	7,676,000	100,000	9,000	-	0.62

Bahrain

4.2. With a population of 643,000 and a total area of 691 sq. kms, Bahrain is the smallest of the GCC States. This island country is relatively less endowed with hydrocarbon resources than most of its neighbours. Nevertheless, its proximity to them and its central location in the Gulf have enabled it to flourish by developing a sophisticated telecommunications centre and by venturing into offshore banking. Its other distinguishing features have been an enlightened and modern education policy and a moderate policy towards non-Islamic religions. The trade and commercial activity generated by the discovery of oil in 1932, and especially the oil boom years of the early 70s, brought home the need to discard its earlier conservative policy towards foreigners and, instead, to permit the entry of a large expatriate community. Currently, they constitute nearly 50% of the total population of Bahrain.

4.3. Indians are known to have gone to Bahrain in pursuit of trade as early as 3000 BC when their ships plied from the Harappan settlements to Oman and Bahrain, on their way to Mesopotamia. Though several Indian families have been residing in Bahrain for many decades, only a few of them have been granted local citizenship. Of the total population of 643,000 persons, Bahrainis number only 391,000. There are nearly 130,000 NRIs in the country, mostly from Kerala and other South Indian states. They are not only the island country's largest expatriate community, but they also constitute over 30% of its total workforce. Our unskilled and semiskilled workers, numbering 65-70% of the NRI population in Bahrain, are employed in the contracting, construction, maintenance and service sectors. They enjoy a good reputation in terms of their conduct, loyalty, higher productivity and non-involvement in local affairs. Being a large expatriate community, it is not surprising that some among them can encounter consular problems like a change in contractual terms, non-payment of wages when due, disputes relating to remuneration or working hours, etc. In the case of the relatively small number of housemaids, estimated at around eight to ten thousand, there are occasional complaints relating to maltreatment and odd cases of assault. However, the overall situation is not alarming, either in terms of numbers or frequency.

4.4. Those engaged in retail and other business activities deal in miscellaneous items like provisions, hardware, jewellery, electronics, etc. Others have taken up jobs as storekeepers, chemists, carpenters, barbers, etc. The economic boom of the early 70s, which led to the quadrupling of oil prices, opened up increasing avenues for job opportunities, not only for manual workers, but also for a discernible number of Indian doctors, teachers, engineers, accountants, bank executives, architects and many other such high grade professionals. There is hardly any established Bahraini business organisation that does not have a senior or middle level Indian employee playing an important role in its operations.

4.5. The Indian community has established in Bahrain as many as 43 socio-cultural organisations including a *Keraleeya Samajam,* as well as five schools. Most of the associations have been brought under the umbrella of the CCIA (Coordination Committee of Indian Associations) which has been able to present a united front and organise joint functions on occasions like Republic Day.

The Indian associations are actively engaged in projecting Indian culture in Bahrain. They have also been active in varied social work such as running specialised institutions for mentally retarded persons and spastic children, rendering assistance to geriatric wards, giving donations to Bahraini philanthropic organisations, etc. The Bahraini government is very appreciative of such contribution of the community. Its liberal attitude towards non-Muslims in observing their religious practices, provided this is done indoors, has enabled the NRIs to build and maintain five churches, a Hindu temple and three *gurudwaras* in the country.

Iraq

4.6. At the end of World War I, what is now Iraq was awarded to Britain as a 'mandated territory' by the League of Nations. The British administration thereupon started taking Indians to this country to build its railways and ports, establish its post and telegraph department, its inland water transport system and various other public utilities. Some Indians began to man minor posts in Iraq as clerks, technicians and accountants, both in the government as well as in private organisations.

4.7. It was only as late as 1932 that Iraq finally became independent. The end of World War II saw the arrival in the country of the descendants of Indian pilgrims who had gone there some decades earlier and stayed on. This new wave of Indians was gradually absorbed in the country and became Iraqi citizens. They are now mainly found in *Najaf* and *Kerbala*.

4.8. There was considerable excitement in Iraq when it was discovered at the end of the 1960s that the country had enormous hydrocarbon reserves, just waiting to be exploited. With the rise in oil prices in 1973, Iraq began an ambitious programme of modernisation. This meant undertaking a number of infrastructure projects in the transport and communications sector, and in health, education, housing, etc. Indian companies were successful in winning a number of civil construction contracts. Thousands of Indian workers arrived in Iraq for the execution of those projects. Their number peaked to nearly 80,000 by the late 1980s. By and large, they earned a good name for themselves and for India by their hard work, skill and competence. They also got on well with their Iraqi colleagues, both socially and professionally. Unfortunately, their number began to decline during the protracted Iran-Iraq war and finally came to an abrupt end after Desert Storm in 1990. Presently, the number of Indians in Iraq, excluding members of the Indian Embassy, is estimated to be only around 50. Almost all of them are temporary residents. They are either UN officials or businessmen in search of trading opportunities under the UN's Oil-for-Food Programme. There are five Indian students in the country on Iraqi Government scholarships and also some employees of a few Indian companies who have continued their presence in the country despite the UN sanctions. Due to Iraq's severe economic crisis resulting from those sanctions, pension and other claims filed by former Indian workers with the Iraqi authorities continue to remain pending. There is no likelihood of their clearance until the sanctions are lifted and the situation returns to normal again. One Indian citizen has landed in an Iraqi jail where he is undergoing a prison sentence.

4.9. An Indian Central School, which was run under the supervision of our Embassy in happier times, has remained closed since the beginning of the Gulf war. A *gurudwara* where, apart from weekly gatherings, special religious ceremonies used to be held in former years with the permission of the Iraqi authorities, still continues to function.

Kuwait

4.10. Out of nearly 2.2 million persons currently residing in Kuwait, as many as 65% are foreign nationals. The Indian Diaspora constitutes the single largest expatriate community in the country, accounting for almost 20% of the total resident population. All of them are NRIs as foreigners do not normally qualify for local citizenship. Only foreign women married to Kuwaiti nationals are the exception to this rule. The exact number of Kuwaiti PIOs is not known. But it has been estimated that there are currently only about a thousand women falling in this category.

4.11. Prior to the Iraqi invasion of the country in 1990, the number of PIOs in Kuwait was approximately 170,000. With the commencement of hostilities, those who could do so left immediately on their own. Those who could not had to be repatriated through Air India's repeated sorties into the country. Interestingly, the size of the Indian Diaspora in Kuwait has increased to more that 294,000 since the expulsion of Iraqi forces from the country.

4.12. As in other Gulf countries, NRIs need the sponsorship of a Kuwaiti national or organisation for admission to the country. Being foreign nationals, they are also not permitted to own a business or purchase immovable property in their own name. The small number of Indian businessmen that reside in the country have successfully conformed to these regulations by forging the necessary partnerships with local persons or entities. Mostly engaged in foodstuffs, jewellery, garments and motor parts trading, they are very well off. As for the remaining Indians in Kuwait, while a majority are unskilled and semi-skilled workers, there are among them a sizeable number of professionals like engineers, doctors, chartered accountants, scientists, software experts, management consultants and architects, as well as skilled workers like technicians and nurses. Only about 14,000 have jobs with various government departments. As many as 120,000 have gone there as domestic servants, a large number of whom are housemaids and governesses working with Kuwaiti families.

4.13. Various segments of the Indian community have organised their own cultural associations. There are about 100 of them, each based on common interests, place of origin, home language or religion. The various groups regularly organize cultural functions featuring either artists from India or local talent. These functions are held either in the big Indian Arts Circle Auditorium that the community as a whole has set up, or in the smaller auditorium of the Indian Embassy. In addition to projecting Indian culture in Kuwait, such functions help in acquainting the community's younger generation with their land of origin. Another welcome feature is that nine Indian Schools have been established in Kuwait with affiliation to the Central Board of Secondary Education.

The Indian Embassy has been authorised by the CBSE to supervise the conduct of its board examinations in Kuwait.

Libya

4.14. The Indian community in Libya was almost 40,000 strong in the mid-1980s. The number of PIOs in this country has now come down to only about 12,000. Most of the local Indians are skilled or semi-skilled workers and they are non-matriculates. However, in addition to many doctors, paramedics and engineers, there are also several highly educated and qualified professors and academics in the faculties of the prestigious universities in Benghazi and Tripoli. A few professionals are also to be found in the oil sector.

4.15. The Indian community has set up in Libya an Indian Community Association that has chapters in the major centres of the country. The activities of the ICA include, *inter-alia,* promotion of Indian culture.

Oman

4.16. People-to-people contacts are believed to have existed between Indians and Omanis as early as the 7th century. Indian merchants were already undertaking commercial activities in Muscat in the 15th Century. At that time, the Indian community consisted essentially of traders and financiers from Kutch and Sindh. It was only in the 19th century that some Khojas also arrived here. They are presently well integrated in Oman, some of them even holding ministerial positions. Meanwhile, a few of the old Indian trading companies have developed into big business houses. The oldest Indian family in Oman has been in the country for at least eight generations.

4.17. Oman is possibly the only Arab country that is liberal in the grant of its citizenship to foreign nationals. Irrespective of his or her religion, any person who has lived in the country for at least 20 years is eligible to apply for citizenship. Almost a thousand Indians have so far been accorded such a status. Oman is also exceptional among the Gulf countries in the sense that the 'Basic Law of the State' which was promulgated in December 1996 guarantees freedom of worship to all its residents. Muscat has two Hindu temples where congregations are held regularly and *pujas* are performed every day. One of these two temples was apparently established over a hundred years ago. Two *gurudwaras* have been constructed recently in the labour camps. There are also seven churches in Oman to serve the various Christian sects that are found here.

4.18. Currently numbering around 311,000 persons out of Oman's total population of 2.3 million, the Indian community in this country constitutes a little less than 14% of its total population. It is the largest expatriate group in Oman, being 58% of its foreign population. The local Indian Diaspora is composed of almost equal numbers of unskilled (25%), semi-skilled (30%) and skilled (35%) workers. The balance (10%) is constituted of professionals such as engineers, bankers, financial experts and managers. There are almost 2,000 Indian doctors in the country. Unlike in other Gulf countries, the PIOs of Oman hold most of the middle and senior management positions in the

corporate sector, including a substantial number of posts of CEOs. Several Indians hold responsible positions in various ministries, government departments and public sector undertakings. Some Indians are employed in the local newspaper establishments, particularly the English language ones. Almost 80% of the Diaspora are from South India, with Kerala alone contributing as many as 60%. A large number of Indian companies are represented here, while several joint venture projects have already been completed or are in various stages of implementation.

4.19. The contributions of the Indian Diaspora in Oman to the development of the Omani community as a whole, and particularly so in the fields of commerce, healthcare, the construction industry and in communications is not only considerable but also widely acknowledged. The goodwill earned by it through its hard work and its commitment have added a very positive dimension to India's bilateral relationship with this country.

4.20. At the same time, the members of the Diaspora are conscious and proud of their cultural heritage and maintain very strong links with their motherland. This is manifested in the large number of cultural events organised by them, very often with the participation of visiting artists from India. As many as fourteen Indian schools have been established in the Sultanate, all of which follow the CBSE pattern, except one that is affiliated to the Kerala State Board. Several cinema halls in Muscat screen only Hindi and Malayalam films. Until 1994, the community had established no less than 25 separate Indian associations. They were based on linguistic or other such identities. With the promulgation of a decree by the government of Oman that only one social club would be permitted per community, it is now a happy consequence that the Indian Social Club is currently the only authorised representative of the Indian Diaspora in Oman. It organises cultural activities and also hosts visiting cultural troupes, besides undertaking philanthropic work. The community has always responded generously with financial and other contributions at times of national crisis, whether for earthquake relief in Gujarat or to alleviate the suffering of families of the Kargil martyrs.

Qatar

4.21. Most of the Gulf countries have a long history of Indian nationals having migrated there, usually for business, at least a couple of centuries ago. In the case of Qatar, however, the arrival there of numerous Indians seems to have started only around the mid-1970s. Again unlike its other neighbours in the region, Qatar has been a late starter in the commercial exploitation of its oil, as also in commencing its infrastructure and other development work with the help of labour and expertise from abroad. But the situation underwent a drastic change by the 1980s. The size of the Indian community began increasing rapidly and it is presently estimated as at least 130,000. According to a recent report of the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the number of Indian expatriates may have even reached a figure of 170,000 which is almost a third of the total number of residents in the country. This sudden and increasing influx of our nationals into Qatar is due to the high reputation they have built for themselves in this country for their sincerity, hard work and expertise, as well as their law-abiding nature. Practically every local establishment,

whether governmental, business or industrial, employs Indians in various capacities. It seems more Indians would be recruited if the necessary work permits could be obtained from the Qatari Government!

4.22. A major chunk of the Indian community is engaged in unskilled or semi-skilled work, which means that it may be considered as belonging to the low or middle income-earning group. A much smaller number, around fifteen to twenty thousand, consists of professionals such as doctors, engineers, chartered accountants and bankers. Some of them have even become entrepreneurs. This segment of the Diaspora must be regarded as well off, considering that the annual remittances from Qatar to India are estimated to aggregate around Rs.1,200 crores.

4.23. The local Indian community had established two schools in Qatar nearly three decades ago, to meet the educational requirements of its children. Both of them were affiliated to the CBSE as well as the Kerala streams of education. As they became insufficient to meet the growing needs of the community, two more have been added since last year - the Shanthi Niketan Indian School and the Modern Indian School. To begin with, they cater only to younger children, but higher classes for study upto the secondary level will be progressively added. Another high school, which will be managed by the UAE-based Varkey Group, is likely to come up later this year.

4.24. An Indian Cultural Centre that functions under the aegis of the Indian Embassy, serves as a cultural nerve centre for the Indian community. It has over 50 Indian socio-cultural organisations affiliated to it. The ICC is not only popular among the Indian Diaspora, but its activities win favourable notice from other expatriate groups and also from the local population.

Saudi Arabia

4.25. Upto around the late 1960s, the "India connection" was the most significant political, economic and cultural link between the people of the Arabian Peninsula and the outside world. During that period, the Saudi economy was still under-developed and most of its people eked out a marginal existence. Indian goods and merchants frequently traversed the waters of the Indian Ocean, the Gulf and the Red Sea, while Indian towns like Hyderabad and Bombay provided congenial homes to Arab businessmen.

4.26. In the wake of the oil boom in the Saudi Kingdom, there was a steady increase in the employment of Indian nationals in that country. By 1983 the number of Indian workers had increased from a mere 15,000 in 1975 to 270,000. It further rose to 650,000 by 1990. After the Gulf crisis of that year, Yemeni workers, who were then a million strong lost their privileged status of not requiring a visa to enter the country or a sponsor to work in it. There was a mass exodus of Yemeni workers from the Kingdom. This resulted in Saudi employers recruiting Indians in large numbers to replace them. Consequently, the Indian Diaspora in this country, numbering about a million and half persons, is the largest Indian passport-holding community abroad.

4.27. The Indian Diaspora in Saudi Arabia may be divided into three broad categories. There are, firstly, professionals like doctors, engineers, chartered accountants and managers who are employed both with the government and the private sector on the basis of specific time-bound contracts. They constitute no more than 5% of the Indian community. A somewhat larger non-professional group of 10% includes white collar staff employed as clerks, secretaries, accountants, store keepers, booking clerks, etc. Finally, there is the remaining 85% consisting of organised labour and technicians working on project sites and industrial establishments, as well as on operations and maintenance jobs. Outside these three main groups, there is the unorganised labour which includes a small number of illegal entrants who are either working in the country without legal sponsors or who had come to the Kingdom on *Haj* or *Umrah* visas and then stayed on to work there. Periodically, the Saudi Government declares an amnesty to flush out and deport such illegal residents.

4.28. The Indian community in Saudi Arabia has been well received and accepted at all echelons of the Saudi society, as is evident from an almost three-fold growth in its numbers over the last decade or so. It is regarded as a community that is vital to the development of the country and to the proper operation and functioning of its infrastructure and its industrial and agricultural establishments. The Saudi employer is convinced that Indians give value for money, that they are loyal and disciplined, and that they are dedicated workers. They are seen as peaceful persons, not given to illegal activities and well adjusted to the constraints of Saudi social life. A major plus point in their favour is the fact that a negligible number of them get involved in criminal activities of any kind.

4.29. Most members of the Diaspora in Saudi Arabia have been able to adapt themselves to their environment and to create for themselves and their families a social and cultural life that gives them some satisfaction, though it is usually based narrowly on their Indian regional identity. They play a positive role in their community life, assuming responsibilities for organizing social and cultural events, or participating constructively in school activities. The economic and educational profile of the Indian community is directly linked to its professional composition. There is no role for the expatriates in the Saudi political system.

4.30. The community has set up a number of International Indian Schools in Riyadh, Jeddah, Damman, Jubail, Taif, Buraidah and Tabuk. Approximately 32,000 students attend these schools daily. Most of them follow the CBSE pattern and have facilities for teaching upto Class XII.

4.31. The Indians in Saudi Arabia have been remitting to India annually about US$ four billion. This is the largest amount inward flow of foreign exchange from any single country. They have also been major contributors to the Resurgent India Bonds of 1998 and the India Millennium Deposits bonds of the year 2000. They responded generously to calls for assistance to the flood-affected people of Orissa last year and to the earthquake-affected people of Gujarat in January this year.

United Arab Emirates

4.32. After our extensive yet succinct *tour d'horizon* in the preceding pages, of many of the countries of the Gulf region, the Committee feels it may be adequate to summarise below the parallels that exist between the situation in the United Arab Emirates and its neighbouring countries. Simultaneously, an attempt will be made to show the differences that have set these Emirates apart from the rest of the region. We feel that an account on these lines would be able to indicate why the UAE has been so successful in mounting the express train of infrastructure and economic development and proceeding on its fast track in such a short time:

(i) The bilateral contacts between the UAE and India date back to the early 19th century when pearls and dates from the former and spices, provisions and clothing from the latter, were energetically traded to their mutual advantage.

(ii) Although some Indian trading families began settling down in places like Dubai, Sharjah and Fujairah around that time, it was only after World War- I that their numbers started increasing exponentially.

(iii) The various emirates that constitute the UAE do not permit naturalisation or permanent residence of foreign nationals in their territories.

(iv) Nevertheless, since the formation of the UAE in 1971, a small number of Indian emigrants have been permitted to hold UAE passports. They have been accorded some economic privileges, but they do not have any political role in the country.

(v) Only foreign wives of UAE nationals can aspire to local citizenship. But such a status would subsequently be forfeited in the event of divorce or the husband's death. Such an event would also render them into stateless persons if they happen to be PIOs, according to provisions contained in the Indian constitution and laws.

(vi) Unlike several of its regional neighbours, the UAE has not been endowed with limitless hydrocarbon resources to finance its economic development.

(vii) If it has been able to launch an ambitious programme of infrastructure and all-round economic development from the 1970s, this was the result of its imaginative schemes that began to fill its treasuries with the wherewithal for rapid development.

(viii) These schemes have already been referred to in Chapter 3. They included total exemption of income and other taxes, the setting up of sophisticated duty-free economic zones and, as the necessary infrastructure became available, the promotion of high-grade and exotic tourism with facilities that acted as a magnet to well-heeled persons from all over the world.

(ix) Massive infrastructure and development projects meant the induction of virtually tens of thousands of experts and labour – unskilled, semiskilled and skilled.

(x) India was an obvious choice to become a preferred resource country to meet most of these requirements. The inflow of NRI professionals and workers increased steadily until it peaked at 1.2 million persons by 1996. As a rule, three fourths of our personnel in the UAE were labourers, with the unskilled workers being half the number. A majority went from the southern Indian states, especially from Kerala.

(xi) Unlike the workers, the professionals (who constituted about a quarter of the total Indian community) were well paid and eagerly sought after, for their expertise and competence.

(xii) The Indian Diaspora in the UAE has been able to establish a number of socio-cultural associations based on regional, linguistic or religious grounds. They meet frequently at various functions organised by them which, apart from enriching their own lives, are able to project Indian culture to a wider audience in their host country.

(xiii) In addition to such activities, the community has established as many as 30 Indian schools following Indian curricular systems, for the benefit of its children. The local government's relatively liberal policy towards religions other than Islam has enabled the NRIs to build a few temples and gurudwaras where devotees can gather together in private for communal prayers. They have also been allowed to set up a number of cremation grounds, one or two of which have even been built at government expense, for the benefit of persons who are not permitted by their religion to bury their dead.

(xiv) The Indian Diaspora maintains a close relationship with India. It has always responded generously with sizeable financial contributions at times of national crisis such as the earthquakes in Latur and Gujarat, the cyclone in Orissa and the Kargil crisis.

(xv) With the progressive reduction in the volume of construction activity, the UAE government has begun to worry about the fact that three fourths of all the residents in the country are foreign nationals. It has become alarmed also that NRIs currently constitute over 50% of the country's expatriate workforce, followed by Pakistan with 22%. Accordingly, it has embarked on a policy of gradual '*emiratisation*' which is expected to result in local citizens forming at least 40% of the country's workforce by the year 2015.

(xvi) Alarm bells have started ringing already, as employment opportunities in the UAE will progressively start becoming scarcer for our people. This is not likely to affect our professionals and highly qualified personnel in the knowledge-based sectors, at least not in the near future. Nevertheless, it is learned that many of them have already started exploring alternative opportunities for more secure employment in one or other of the western developed countries.

Yemen

4.33. The people of India and Yemen have had deep-rooted historical, cultural and trade relations since ancient times. But in order to appreciate the current situation of the Indian Diaspora in this country, it is necessary to review briefly the recent history of Yemen. The UK had incorporated the port town of Aden into the British Empire in 1839 as a sentinel to guard the southern entrance to the Red Sea. Britain administered it from the then Bombay Presidency. During that period, many Indians migrated to Aden - mainly from Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka and Maharashtra. Britain finally withdrew from Aden in 1967, whereupon a leftist government took over and Aden and its adjoining areas came to be known as the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. Pursuant to the new government's socialist policies, the private properties belonging to members of the Indian community began to be taken over by it. This resulted in the hasty departure from Aden of many PIOs, either for India or some other country. But a large number belonging to the Bohra, Khoja and Kachchi communities decided to remain behind and gradually became Yemeni citizens.

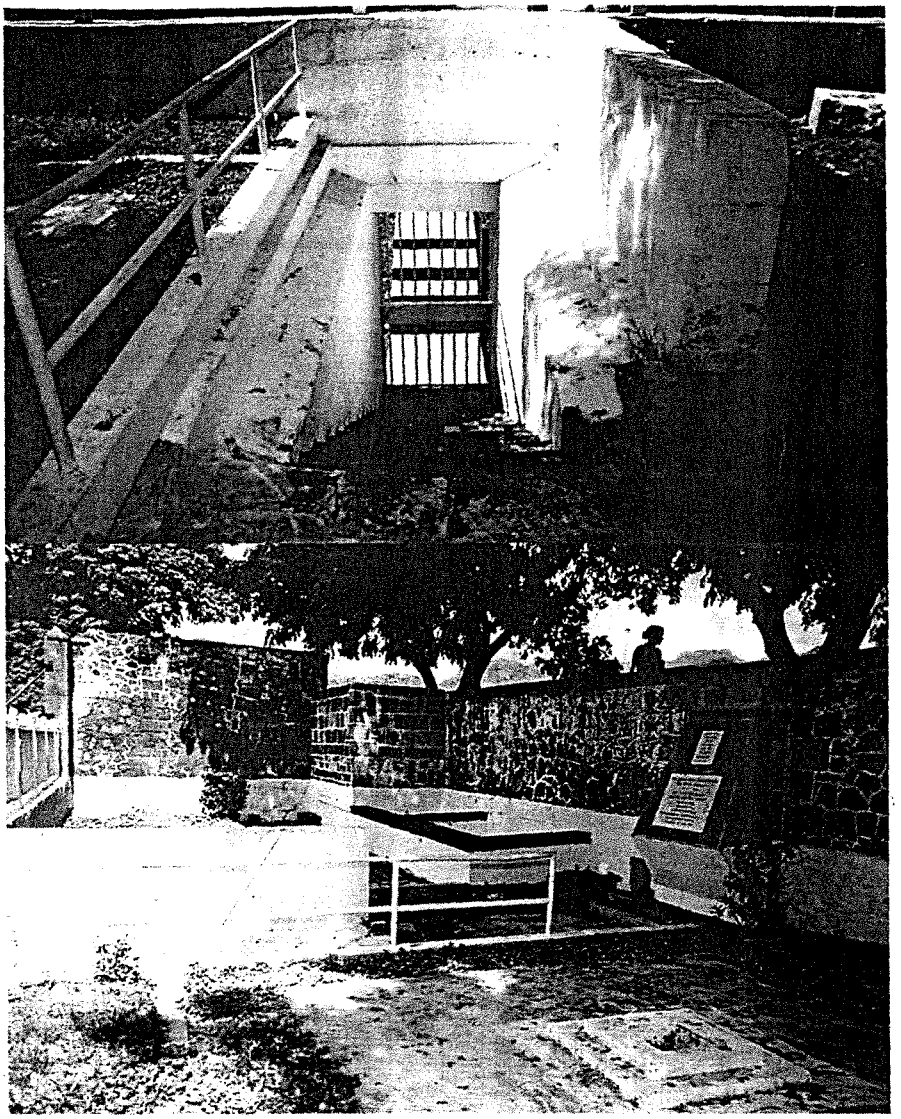
4.34. Meanwhile, the northern part of Yemen, had ended its internal civil strife and become the Yemen Arab Republic. In 1990 the two parts of Yemen decided to merge together and became the Republic of Yemen. Presently, out of a total population of over 17,6 million, the size of the Indian Diaspora in this country is estimated at a hundred thousand. Of them, only about 9,000 are NRIs. They and the PIOs are concentrated in and around the relatively bigger towns like Aden, Sana'a, Mukalla, Haraz, Seyun, Taiz, and Hodeidah. Many of the NRIs are academics and professionals. The majority consists of white-collar workers, nurses and paramedical staff, as well as skilled and semi-skilled workers and housemaids.

4.35. The Indian Embassy in Sana'a has installed a statue of Gandhiji in Aden's Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Hall with the collaboration of the locally based Indian Association. A school named 'The Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Indian Embassy School' is run in this hall for the benefit of the children of NRIs and PIOs. As many as ten Hindu and Parsi temples have survived in Aden since the time when it was still a British colony. But most of them are now objects of neglect because of the small size of their remaining congregations. As these properties are strategically located, they have become attractive targets for illegal encroachment and demolition. The Indian Ambassador in Sana'a is continuing his *démarches* with the Yemeni government to secure protection for these endangered sites. In cooperation with several western Ambassadors, he had succeeded last year in persuading the country's President to restore similarly endangered Church properties.

4.36. Various proposals have been made by our Embassy in Sana'a to provide better services to the Indian community in Yemen. These include the strengthening of its Consular Section; the opening of a branch of any nationalized Indian bank in Aden or Sana'a; and increased shipping services between Indian and Yemeni ports. These proposals are currently under Government's consideration.

Chapter 5

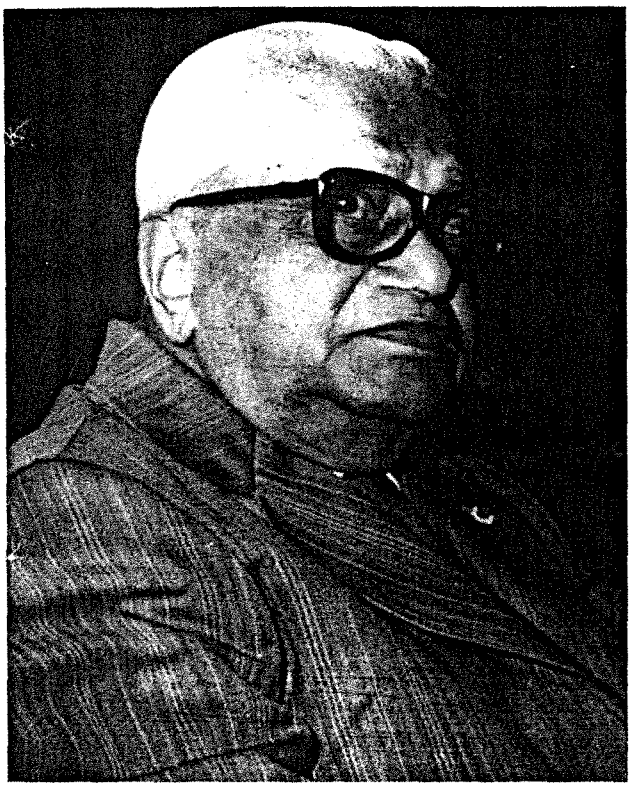
Mauritius



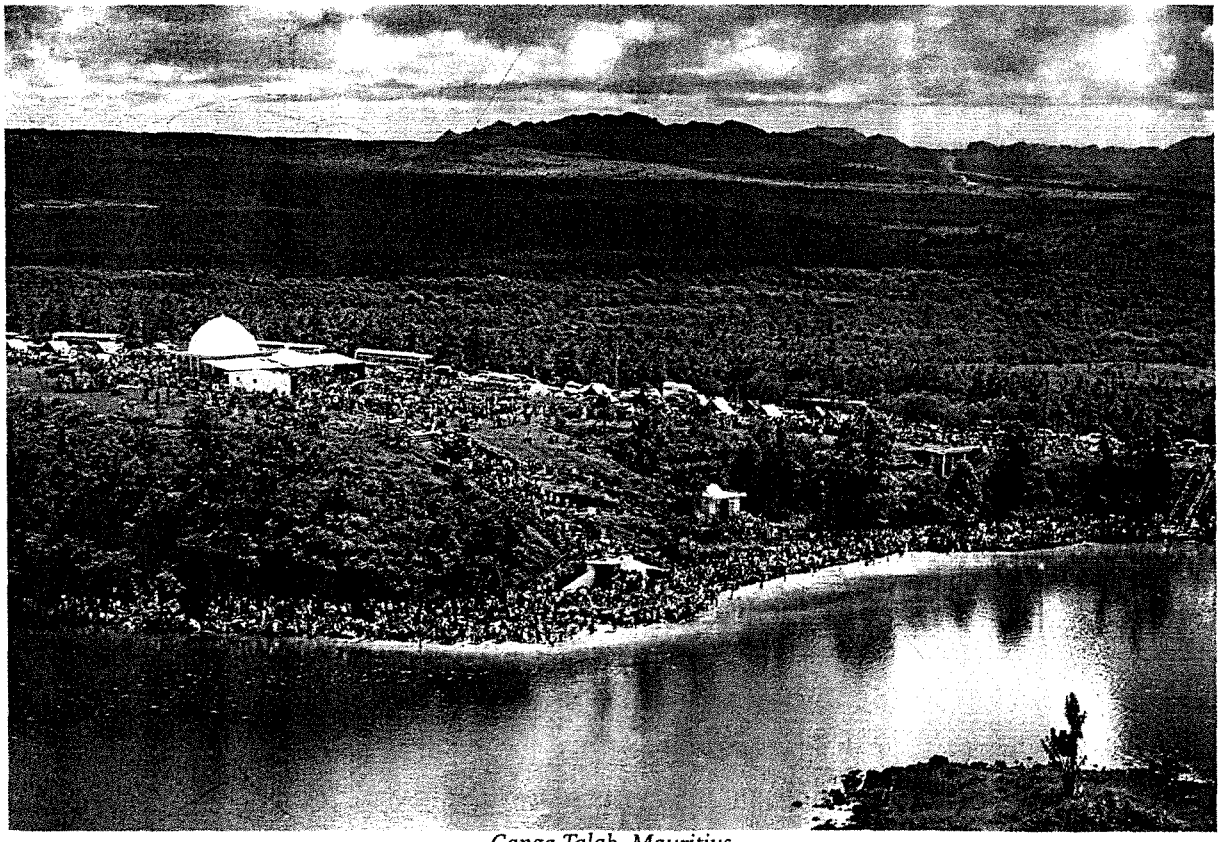
Apravasi Ghat, Mauritius. It commemorates the arrival of Indian indentured labour and represents the place where the ships used to land and also where Indians used to be kept in a sort of quarantine till they were assigned to the respective sugar estates .The inscription at the site reads as under:

THE UNKNOWN IMMIGRANT

History turning a blind eye bore him not witness
History standing mute told not his full story
He who first had watered this land with his sweat
And turned stone into green fields of gold
The first immigrant He, son of this land
He was mine, he was yours, he was our very own



Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam,
First Prime Minister of Mauritius
of Indian Origin



Ganga Talab, Mauritius

It would not be an exaggeration to say that among all the countries in the world in which the Indian Diaspora is located, Mauritius must be regarded, for more than one reason, as unique and distinctive.

5.2. One of its special characteristics is that it is the only country where Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) currently constitute an overwhelming majority – almost 70% of the total population.

5.3. Another important factor is that, unlike in Fiji and the numerous countries of mainland Africa, there are no indigenous people in Mauritius for the PIOs to contend with. Thus there is no competition here with ancestral claims and traditional rights to land and status. The only original natives of Mauritius were, apparently, the almost mythical *dodo*. But the Portuguese and the Dutch, who were the earliest settlers in Mauritius, had successfully eliminated that bird during their sojourn on the island.

5.4. Here too, as in the Caribbean, there are of course several other, permanently settled, immigrant ethnic groups. But the numerical majority of the PIOs has enabled the ethnic Indians to capture the commanding heights of the political pyramid in the country. It had inherited, at the time of its independence, the Westminster system of 'first past the post'. It would be relevant to note here that the government has already decided to establish a Constitution Reform Commission to look into the possibility, *inter alia*, of introducing a new system of elections that could be a mix between proportional representation and the Westminster pattern.

5.5. This chapter will outline, initially, the circumstances that have lead to the sizeable, current Indian presence in Mauritius. It will then briefly review the many changes that have been taking place in this island in recent years. Following that would be an examination of the current situation confronting the local Indian Diaspora, including its social and economic characteristics, as well as the differences within its own linguistic and regional groups. After discussing the *inter se* relations between PIOs and the other ethnic communities in Mauritius, the chapter will conclude with a discussion of the relations between the Diaspora and India, which many of the PIOs still regard as their 'mother country'.

Brief Historical Background of the PIOs in Mauritius

5.6. The earliest Europeans to discover the island of Mauritius were the Portuguese. This was around 1510. But they were casual visitors on their way to other places. The first real, though rather sporadic, settlers were the Dutch who arrived here in 1598. Their main contribution was to give the island its name – after Prince Maurice of Nassau. But they left in 1710 when they thought they had discovered greener pastures in what is now the Cape of Good Hope.

5.7. The French arrived in Mauritius five years later, whereupon this 'emerald island' became the *Isle de France* and the harbour town built by them was christened as Port Louis – after their then – ruling king, Louis XV. The French occupation of Mauritius lasted a hundred years. It was during this period, in fact as early as 1729-31, that around 300 artisans were inducted from India for the development of this newly acquired colony. These recruits were mainly from Pondicherry, which was then a French possession, as well as from other neighbouring parts of what is now Tamil Nadu. Many of them appear to have been Catholics. Through natural increase and also through subsequent conversion of later Tamil arrivals, their numbers have grown since then to form a sizeable element in today's Tamil-speaking minority in Mauritius.

5.8. At the end of the Napoleonic wars, France ceded to Britain the island of Mauritius and a few other smaller ones near it like Rodrigues. The French presence in these islands had lasted a little more than a century. It had been long enough for French language and culture to have left a permanent mark on the country's population. This was duly recognised by the British who agreed to preserve the French heritage in the country when they formally annexed these islands in 1814. It is surprising that they did not bother to acquire Réunion which, along with a few other French-owned islands near it, is currently regarded as a *département* of France.

5.9. The next Indian arrivals consisted of some prisoners who were dumped on the island by the British-Indian government during 1816-1820, to serve out their terms of rigorous imprisonment. As in Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago and other Caribbean countries, the substantive Indian settlement of this country began only in 1834 with the induction of indentured labour into Mauritius, to work in the cane fields of the British planters. This operation started after Britain had formally eschewed the obnoxious system of slavery and, by the time it was terminated in 1920, it is reported that as many as 420,000 Indians had been transplanted to the island.

5.10. After completing their indenture the PIOs in Mauritius had to face, from the British and French planters, the same kind of resentment as was being meted out to their compatriots in South Africa and the West Indian countries. This was possibly in direct proportion to the relative prosperity that they gradually acquired through their hard work and adventurous spirit. In addition, similar to the situation in the Caribbean, here too they had to compete with former African slaves, as well as with the Creoles who became the colonial administration's preferred group for favourable treatment.

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5.11. With the steady increase in the size of the PIO population in Mauritius, the British discriminatory policy towards them was further refined. When the approaching end of the imperial period heralded the organisation of local elections on the island, attempts were made by the British rulers to ensure that a united Indian community would not gain any real power. After separating Muslims from Hindus in the electoral rolls, the Tamils and the Telugus were encouraged to demand separate seats for themselves in the legislature. Credit must go to the statesmanship of Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam and his generation of Indian leaders that these attempts at *divide et impera* failed. Mauritius graduated to independence on 12 March 1968 under a government lead and dominated by the PIOs.

Mauritius As It Is Today

5.12. A little more than three decades have passed since the advent of freedom. Mauritius takes legitimate pride in having transformed itself from a poor, mono-crop, developing country into a mature republic that claims to put its 'national interest' at the forefront of its objectives. The economic and financial policies of Mauritius have enabled it successfully to board the bandwagon of globalisation and achieve immense progress in many sectors, especially in garment manufacture which, though fully dependent on imported fabrics, is the mainstay of the manufacturing sector. Industries of various kinds in its Export Processing Zone account for over a quarter of its GDP. The Avoidance of Double Taxation Agreement with India, which was widely debated recently in the Indian press, has enabled foreign investors to set up offshore companies on the island and take full advantage of the ADTA's provisions. Consequently, Mauritius now ranks among our largest foreign investors.

5.13. Sugar has ceased to be the main fountain of its economic health. It is now said to contribute only 7% of its GDP and 20% of its gross export earnings. Franco-Mauritian sugar barons still dominate this sector as they also own most of the sugar mills, while 'Indo-Mauritians' have had to content themselves with much smaller plantations.

5.14. Profiting from its location in the Indian Ocean not far from the African continent, and from nature's bountiful gifts of balmy weather, sea and sand, it has successfully transformed itself into a tourist paradise, providing employment and a better life to its rainbow population. First world infrastructure has been put in place to attract the most demanding globetrotters. Recent years have recorded over half a million tourist arrivals in the country per annum. The coastline is dotted with five star hotels. Franco-Mauritian sugar barons and British businessmen currently own most of them, while only a very small number belong to PIOs, or are operated by them under franchise agreements. A new development has been the growing presence of Indian-owned hotels or chains such as 'The Oberoi' and 'The Radisson'.

The Indian Diaspora in Mauritius

5.15. While the PIOs of Mauritius do not want to forget their Indian roots and their history, there is a strong compulsion in them to affirm and define their Mauritian personality. Unlike many of the

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first generation PIOs in the western world who continue to have close links with India and have been clamouring for dual citizenship, there is little or no demand for such a status from among the ethnic Indians in Mauritius. On the other hand, there is considerable interest among them to acquire a PIO Card. But they have so far been reluctant to do so as they consider its current price of $1,000 as much too exorbitant. They have represented to the HLC that the cost of such a card should be slashed down to an affordable level. They have also represented that the PIO scheme, as presently conceived, would not be of much interest to them for another important reason, namely, that its application is restricted to only four generations of PIOs. As most of the ethnic Indians in Mauritius are descendants of indentured Indian labourers who had arrived in the island more than a century ago, the stipulation of four generations since emigration from India to qualify for a PIO card automatically renders them beyond the pale!

5.16. There is little doubt that the majority of the PIOs of Mauritius nurse a nostalgic sentiment for the land of their ancestors, which they subconsciously regard as their 'motherland'. This is evident even at the highest levels of Mauritian society, although it seems also to be tempered with a feeling that they are happy to be where they are. In a special issue of the ICCR's French language journal published in 1999, President Cassam Uteem described his first encounter with the land of his ancestors. He recounted, in the following words, his official visit to India in December 1996 in an article contributed by him to the first volume of the ICCR's *Rencontre avec l'Inde,* which was devoted to the Indian Diaspora in Mauritius. 'When I touched the soil of India for the first time,' he wrote, 'I had the firm conviction that there was between this land and me a very special bond, a mystical link. I was filled with sentiments that came to me, and which still come to me today, as difficult to describe as they were confused and intense.' A brief visit to Doobhawan, the village of his forebears in the Azamgarh district of Uttar Pradesh, seemed to have evoked second thoughts in his mind. After spending a tearful and awkward time with his tearful and silent fifth cousin, he appears to have agreed with his daughter's whispered assessment on the way back from the village: 'Aren't you happy that your ancestor Sookhari decided to go away to work as an indentured labourer in Mauritius?' For, in his own words, 'modernity had stopped several dozens of kilometres short of the village. Maybe drinking water and electricity were on their way in. Poverty had not prevented the villagers from building places of worship, even if they had to content themselves with sleeping under the stars'. This presidential pronouncement is a concise depiction of the general sentiment towards India shared by most Mauritians of Indian origin. They are proud of their Indian ancestors for what they had achieved in their new country in the face of suffering and deprivation. But their own present and future lies in their adopted land.

5.17. The cultural evolution of the Indian Diaspora in Mauritius is a fascinating example of how migratory societies cope with their new environment. Fiercely attached to their culture, the early Indians in this country preserved what they remembered of it. For the Hindus among them, who formed the majority, this was through the recollection of Indian classics such as Tulsidas's *Rama Charit Manas* and the more popular *Hanuman Chalisa.* With *dhal* and *dholak, ektara* and *ghungroo,* they consoled themselves reciting them, or hearing them sung, after each day of labour in the cane fields. A

make shift temple was invariably constructed in every plantation. Folk dances and folkloric music was part of the life of the indentured Indians, whatever their religion, in the new and strange land in which they found themselves. Belonging to the poor and uneducated working classes, they often carried with their bundled belongings, only imprecise memories of the customs and traditions that their families back home had handed down to them. The various rites of passage through life – birth, marriage, death – and the recurring festivals, were all observed by them in their mutated form, to be passed on in turn to their own children and grandchildren in the fullness of time. Thus, in subsequent years, the Hindu pilgrim's purificatory dip in the holy waters of the Ganga evolved into a novel local custom. In preparation for *Shivaratri*, pilgrims from every corner of the island congregate at Grand-Bassin - a volcanic rock formation in which some Ganga water had apparently been added - carrying their *kanwars* on their shoulders. After collecting some water from this *Ganga Talaw*, they return to their homes to perform *abhishek* in their *shivalayas*. *Ram Nawmi, Durga Puja, Diwali, Karwa Chauth, Phagwa* (the local name for *Holi*, as it comes in the month of *Phalgun*) are all observed by most ethnic Indians with due pomp and ceremony. It is not only the North Indian festivals that are widely observed and celebrated in Mauritius. *Varsha Parappu,* the Tamil New Year has been included in the list of public holidays. In the same way, *Ugadi,* the Telugu, Marathi and Kannada New Year, is also part of the same list.

5.18. The continuing and widespread influence of the culture and traditions of Bhojpuri migrants to Mauritius is of course both natural and clearly visible as they form the largest component of the local Indian Diaspora. Their influence is reflected across the board in practically every facet of life of the 'Indo-Mauritians' – their rites and rituals, dietary habits, culinary specialities, the making of *mithais*, the use of spices, the style of clothing and jewellery, folklore, religious practices and so on. Commonly used words from the Bhojpuri language (in their local adaptation) are not only understood and in common parlance by the other PIOs but also by the Creoles, and even by those whose mother tongue is English or French. Words like *batchara* and *tamassa, roti* and *faratha, bhajiya* and *samoussa,* are in general circulation.

5.19. Religious practices among the ethnic Indians cover practically the whole spectrum that is to be found in India. Here in this island are to be found followers of every possible Hindu sect. Among them may be mentioned the Sanatana Dharma and the Arya Samaj, the Ramakrishna and Chinmaya Missions, Shivananda Yogashram and Brahmakumari Raja Yoga Centre, Sai Baba Mandirs and Sat Chit Anand Society, Kabir Panths and Guru Singh Sabhas, Maharishi Maheshyogi's TM Centres and ISKCON. Various Muslim sects are also found here. Adherents of the Islamic faith are represented on the island by Shias and Sunnis, Bohras and Ahmedis, Memons, followers of the 'Sunnat Jamaat' and also of the 'Tahwide'. And then there are, as already noted earlier, the Indian Christians that the French took to Mauritius during their administration of parts of India, and the descendants of the original migrants.

5.20. At present, there is no Indian-language newspaper or periodical in Mauritius. When the High Level Committee visited Mauritius, it was happy to note that, with the encouragement of our

High Commissioner, a Hindi weekly called *Jana Vani,* had been scheduled to make its appearance very soon.

5.21. All the TV and Radio stations of Mauritius regularly broadcast Indian language programmes. The Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, for instance, devotes as many as 12 of its daily schedule of 24 hours to such programmes. These are transmitted to it by satellite from DD World. Similarly, two channels of the local FM Radio devote 40 hours each day to Indian language features received by it from All India Radio.

5.22. Nearly all the local cinema theatres regularly screen Indian films, while a group calling itself 'The Bhojpuri Boys' stages musical performances in Bhojpuri on a regular basis. There are also theatre groups in Mauritius who perform plays in Hindi and Bhojpuri.

5.23. It is because of all these factors that Mauritius is sometimes referred to as *Chhota Bharat.* It would, however, be a gross misjudgement to take this appellation too seriously. For Mauritius is also the home of a minority that is not of Indian origin, a minority that is an important part of the body politic, which means that the PIOs have had to adapt themselves, without losing their basic identity, to life in a multi-racial environment.

5.24. The glossy brochures published by the Mauritius government to extend a welcoming mat to prospective tourists depict the country as a multi-cultural society of people from different continents, professing different religions and speaking different languages. And that it is, nevertheless, an outstanding example of unity in diversity. Is this an altogether correct representation of the country's composite personality? And does it tell the whole story of what is to be found on these islands? How does the Indian Diaspora figure in this miraculous transformation of the country from a constituent of the Third World to the status of a Newly Industrialised Country, as it likes to describe itself?

The PIOs in a Multi-ethnic Mauritius

5.25. Sociologists and anthropologists writing about Mauritius have rightly wondered whether multi-ethnic countries can really become stable and meaningful nation states. The HLC was able to observe, even though its visit to the island was limited to two full days, that the various racial groups of Mauritius lead their own independent lives and retain the essential core of their customs and traditions. Their separate lifestyles are differentiated on the basis of their racial origin. French continues to be the principal language of formal discourse. It is also the medium in which the major newspapers are published. Creole (which is sometimes described as mutated French using a simplified African syntax, plus many common nouns from Bhojpuri) has become a *lingua franca* for all the races in their mutual discourse. Nevertheless, English is the official language of Mauritius! Most of the PIOs speak Bhojpuri. They are equally proficient in Creole, French and also in English. The commitment of the Mauritians of Indian origin to maintaining their linguistic heritage is manifested by the fact that Mauritius has already twice hosted the World Hindi *Sammelan.* At the 1999 World Hindi Conference in London, it offered to host also the World Hindi Secretariat and

a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed to this effect between the Governments of Mauritius and India.

5.26. As far as the PIOs are concerned, the home language spoken by them and the particular region from which their ancestors migrated to Mauritius have led to the formation of separate socio-cultural sub-groups in the community. In the limited time at its disposal, the HLC was constrained to interact separately with a number of neatly segregated elements of the PIO community. It met with representatives of the Gujarat Cultural Society, the Mauritius Andhra Maha Sabha, the Arya Maha Sabha, the Hindu House, the Mauritius Tamil Temples Federation and the Human Service Trust.

5.27. The Committee was informed by the first of these groups that there are only 800 persons in Mauritius whose mother tongue is Gujarati and that, of them, only its 200 Hindus are members of the Gujarat Cultural Society. They wanted the Government of India to finance the organisation of Gujarati classes for them and provide them with Gujarati textbooks and newspapers. They were the only group that expressed interest in acquiring dual citizenship.

5.28. For its part, the Mauritius Andhra Maha Sabha proudly announced that the 50,000 Telugu speakers in Mauritius had established 85 branches of their organisation all over the island and had constructed as many as 50 temples where Telugu priests strictly observed traditional forms of worship. They had also successfully canvassed the Mauritius Government to declare *Ugadi* as a public holiday in the country.

5.29. The Hindu House claims in its Souvenir Magazine that it is 'an abode for all Hindus, irrespective of caste, creed, school of thought and linguistic differences'. Its membership is open as a birthright to any Hindu. And that its aim is 'to generate a vertical integration as opposed to a horizontal compartmentalisation which is characteristic of Hindus nearly all over the world.' But the HLC was surprised to find that the Tamil Temples Federation did not find a place among its members. It was even more surprised at the explanation given to it, namely, that this was because the Tamils were 'not really Hindus' and that many of them had even converted to Christianity.

5.30. The Arya Mahasabha had been established in Mauritius as long ago as 1910. Like the Hindu House, it aspires to be 'an umbrella for all the Hindus' because of its *rapprochement* with the different associations of the Sanatanist School, which are also involved in various activities. The Arya Mahasabha is involved in many humanitarian activities through its multi-layered structure. These include the *Ved Prachar Samiti* and the *Purohit Mandal*, the *Yuvak Sangh* and the *Mahila Mandal*. It runs a *crèche*, a rehabilitation centre for drug addicts and some 200 schools where Vedic studies are imparted to its pupils.

5.31. The Committee also met with representatives of the TTF. They informed it that only about 15,000 of the 80,000 Tamils of Mauritius are Catholics, while the majority had continued to be orthodox Hindus. Nevertheless, there was a gaping divide between all the Tamils and the rest of the PIO community. Like the other linguistic groups that the HLC had met, the TTF had its own 'wish list'

that it wanted the Committee members to sponsor on its behalf. This included a Bharat Natyam teacher and a flutist, a Carnatic music vocalist, and even a big Nataraj to be installed at its new centre, which is currently under construction.

5.32. The Mauritians of Indian origin have succeeded in co-existing in a relatively harmonious manner with the other ethnic communities in the country – with the Franco-Mauritians, the Creoles, the Africans and the Chinese. The first of these racial aggregations, being descendents of the French planters who had ruled the country before the advent of British rule, have retained their cultural influence in the country, even though they have lost political power. The Creoles are of mixed African and French origin. The Africans (or 'people of colour') are descendants of former slaves. They are a vibrant people with a colourful lifestyle and a dialect, as described earlier, derived from a mixture of French and African languages, as well as a touch of Bhojpuri. The Chinese are a small group mostly engaged in trade.

5.33. Special note must be taken of the Franco-Mauritians as they, along with several British businessmen, continue to dominate the economy of the country. They still have a monopoly over the agricultural sector, domestic and external trade, the banks and the services sector. The Franco-Mauritian hold over the country's economy extends also into the realm of tourism and manufacturing, besides controlling the main local newspapers.

5.34. Though Mauritians of Indian origin currently wield political power owing to their numerical preponderance, they have not yet been able to transform that power into sufficient economic strength. They own barely 10% of the island's big companies. Notwithstanding the general growth in the country's economy – its transition from mercantile trade in the 18th century to a plantation economy in the 19th, and then to industrialisation in the 20th – the PIOs still remain at the lower end of the economic ladder. Unlike in Malaysia, where the government, always under the control of an indigenous majority has openly legislated in favour of *bhumiputras*, PIO administrations in Mauritius have, however, refrained from taking steps to change the *status quo*. It is true that some of the PIOs have improved their economic status considerably and that many of them are professionals, or part of the higher bureaucracy. But many more of them continue to be agricultural workers and small farmers.

5.35. The two main political formations – the MSM of Sir Aneerood Jugnauth and the LP of Navinchandra Ramgoolam - have been alternately forming governments in Mauritius since the exit of Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam from the political summit. Both of them are Hindu political parties, but neither has been able to muster enough seats in Parliament after the recent elections to form a government on its own strength. Meanwhile, Paul Béranger (leader of the Creole-dominated MMM) had been able to negotiate a power-sharing agreement with Jugnauth. In accordance with their pre-poll pact, it had been decided that Sir Aneerood would be Prime Minister for the first three years of the coalition's tenure of five years; Paul Béranger, for the remaining two years. Thereupon, Jugnauth would be elevated as President. The consequence of this pact is that Béranger will be succeeding Sir Aneerood as Prime Minister a little over two years from now.

5.36. While we express no opinions on issues in the internal political discourse of Mauritius, we note that some sections among the Mauritians of Indian origin have expressed reservations about the possible impact of the above pre-poll pact. This was evident from a report published on Monday, 23 April 2001 in the French-owned newspaper, *le Mauricien.* The paper highlighted the main substance of its report in a box at a prominent place on that page, in the following words:
La question du pouvoir politique qui s'échapperait entre les mains de <la communauté hindoue> et celle d'une insécurité qui menacerait cette <communauté> ont été les thèmes dominants, hier après midi, à Cassis, ou une foule s'été réunie pour une Maha Yaj (grande prière) dans la cour de la Hindu House. Lors de la partie réservé au messages, le mouvement Voice of Hindu (VOH) *a soutenu que <les Hindous doivent conserver le pouvoir politique>. Quant aux représentants des autres associations, ils ont tous évoqué le* Hindu bashing *qui, selon eux, est pratiqué par le gouvernement actuel. Ils affirment aussi que les Hindous ne se sentent plus en sécurité. D'ou l'urgence, selon eux, de la constitution d'une plate-forme commune <pour lever la tête et défendre les intérêts de la communauté>.*

[The following is a free translation of the above passage: **'A crowd gathered yesterday afternoon for a Maha Yagna in the courtyard of Hindu House at Cassis. The question of political power escaping from the hands of the *'Hindu community'* and of the insecurity that would then threaten this 'community' were the dominant themes aired at this meeting. In the course of their interventions, the association called Voice of the Hindu insisted that 'Hindus should retain political power'. As for the other associations, all of them conjured up an image of *Hindu bashing* which, according to them, was being practised by the present government. They also insisted that the Hindus (of Mauritius) were no longer secure. From that it followed, according to them, that it was necessary to constitute immediately a common platform 'to lift up one's head and protect the interests of the community.']**

5.37. In its article on this subject, *Le Mauricien* then reported that among the several thousand PIOs gathered together in the courtyard of 'Hindu House' were representatives of various Mauritian-Indian associations. It mentioned the *Voice of the Hindu,* the *Mauritius Arya Revived Pracharini Sabha,* the *Mauritius Sanatan Dharma Temples Federation,* the *Mauritius Andhra Maha Sabha,* the *Gahlot Maha Sabha,* the *Hindutva Movement,* the *Mauritius Hindu Ekta Sangh and* the *Marathi Prem Wardhak Mandali.* The article then proceeded to say that after performing a *maha yagna,* numerous persons representing the myriad segments of the community took the floor. According to the paper, Ajit Gopal, speaking for the *Voice of the Hindu,* said that 'Hindus should enjoy three fundamental powers to ensure their security, namely, *dharmic shakti, financial shakti* and *political shakti.* It was unfortunate that the Hindus were about to lose *political shakti* which is of the greatest importance these days'. He thereupon urged his audience 'to open their eyes, raise their voices and demonstrate that they had the courage in their veins to avoid losing political power'.

Several other speakers apparently spoke on similar lines. *Le Mauricien* then referred to what the President of *Hindu House* had had to say as the last speaker. According to the paper, he had appealed to the gathering for *'jat pat'* action to avoid the danger lying in wait for them. He had announced that 'a strategy would be discussed and put in place very soon to ensure that Hindus throughout the country could be sensitised into becoming united and vigilant.'

5.38. Commenting on this meeting in a satirical editorial in the same issue of *Le Mauricien,* Gilbert Ahnee (who is its Chief Editor and is himself of Indo-French extraction) wrote that the underlying cause of the agitation by the Hindu organisations was the colour of Béranger's skin. He denounced such attacks as racial, if not even racist, and wrote that they were 'odious and unacceptable' in a country that advertises itself, if only in its tourist brochures, as 'a rich mosaic of cultures and traditions'. He was confident that this agitation would also die out soon, just as an earlier one had fizzled out when a Mauritian of Indian origin - Raj Dayal – had been suspended from his post of Commissioner of Police!

Demands and Expectations of Mauritian PIOs from India

5.39. India's policy towards the PIOs in Mauritius must be crafted carefully, taking into account the various considerations outlined in this paper. The High Level Committee's reactions to PIO demands and expectations would be elaborated in the 'Conclusions and Recommendations' chapter of this Report. It would, however, be useful at this stage to catalogue the various 'suggestions' that were formally presented to the HLC when it paid a courtesy call on H.E. Mr. A. V. Chettiar, the country's Vice President, on 20 April 2001. He proposed that the Government of India should consider implementing the following measures for the benefit of ethnic Indians in Mauritius:

1. Visa-free access to India for NRIs and PIOs for a specific period;
2. Educational and health facilities for them in India;
3. The right to transfer money to, and acquire property in India;
4. A special Ministry or Department in Delhi to look after NRI and PIO affairs; and
5. A special desk in every Indian Embassy or High Commission abroad to deal with the NRIs and PIOs in the countries where they are located.

5.40. On the other hand, Mr. Dhundev Bauhadoor, a Mauritian citizen and current President of GOPIO (Global Organisation of Persons of Indian Origin), presented the HLC with a longer list of proposals. These are summarised below:

1. Announcements made by our Ministers of External Affairs and of Finance at the GOPIO Convention in New Delhi during January 2001 to review the $1,000 fee for the PIO Card should be implemented expeditiously.
2. Similarly, the four-generation eligibility for PIO cards should also be reviewed.

3. A 'PIO University' should be set up in India where children of PIOs from different parts of the world, as well as local Indians, could study in one campus. This would facilitate the dissemination of Indian cultural values to the younger generation of PIOs. A detailed proposal prepared by the GOPIO team in Malaysia, relating to technical and financial implications of this proposal, would be submitted to the authorities in India for discussion at their convenience.

4. The Government of India should promote and propagate *Ayurveda* all over the world. With regard to Mauritius, its assistance is requested by the Hindu Service Trust to establish an *Ayurveda* Hospital with *Panch Karma* facilities.

5. Cultural Centres like the Mahatma Gandhi Centre and the Indira Gandhi Centre for Indian Culture in Mauritius should also be set up in such priority countries like Malaysia, South Africa, Madagascar and La Réunion.

6. The ICCR should provide to PIOs more books, magazines and other relevant literature in various Indian languages through our Missions abroad.

7. The HLC should look into the administrative hurdles in the way of providing to schools in Mauritius, textbooks in Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu and Marathi.

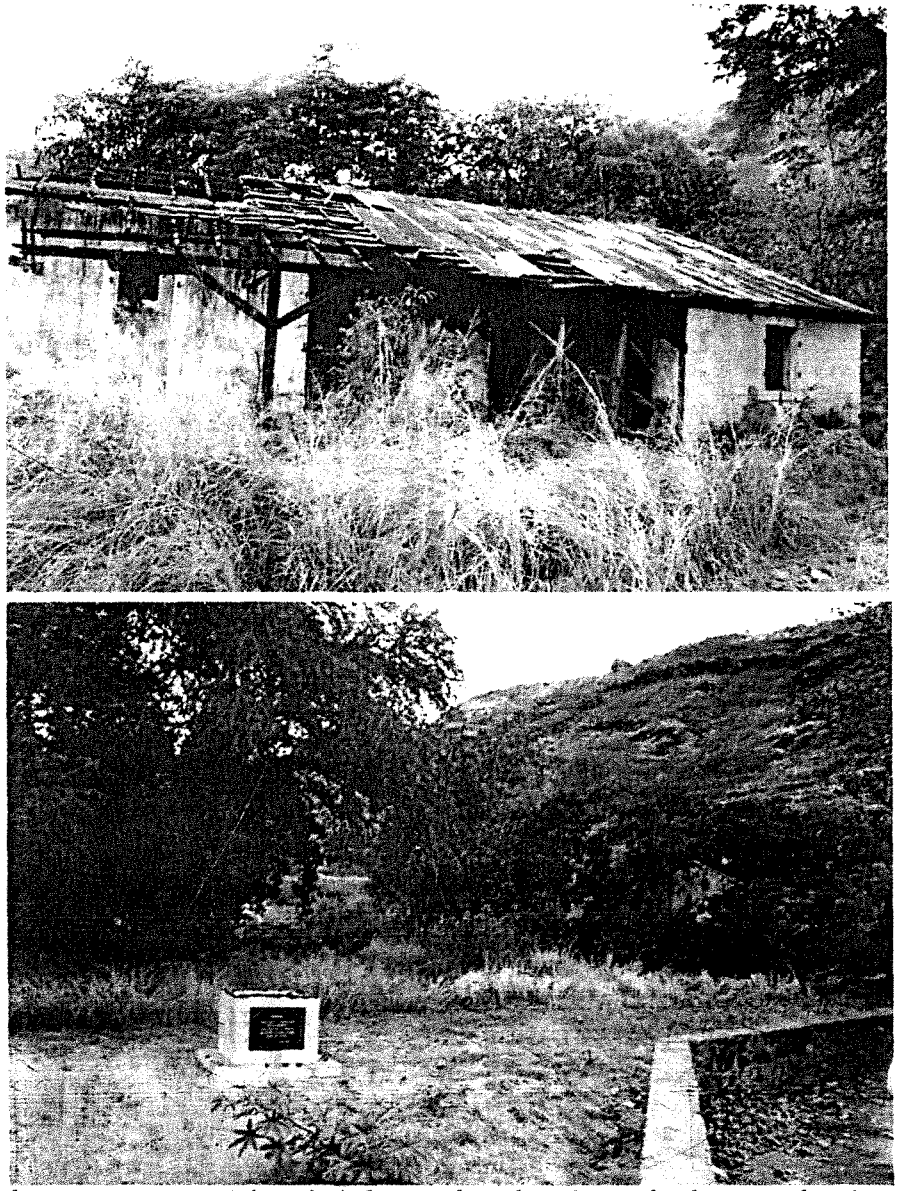
8. India should assist Mauritius in the tourism, textiles and IT sectors; and also in fashion design and cinema.

5.41. The Conclusions and Recommendations Chapter of this Report would be considering the feasibility, or otherwise, of implementing the above proposals, as well as the manner of their implementation.

O

Chapter 6

Réunion



Grande Chaloupe Lazaret,St. Denis(Reunion),the site where the indentured Indians were kept in quarantine after their arrival and before they were sent to work on sugarcane plantations.
The English translation of the inscription on the plaque is as under:

HOMAGE
On this Thursday,30th
October,1997
Day of Dipavali,
we bring the light to the
first engaged
Indians who died at
this site.

Tamij Sangam



Temple Pandiale du Colosse (Draupadi Temple), Saint Andre, Réunion

Réunion has the unusual distinction of having been known by different names at different times in its chequered history. During the colonial period, it was initially called 'Mascarene' in honour of a Portuguese explorer named Pedro Mascarenhas. He was the first European to have 'discovered' it during the early 16th century. In later years it became, successively, the 'Ile Bourbon' or 'Ile Bonaparte', depending on the current political regime in France, the colonial power that had occupied it in 1640. Unlike in the case of Mauritius, at the end of the Napoleonic wars, the victorious British occupied the island for only five years and then gave it back to France! It was the latter who eventually gave it its present name.

6.2. Réunion is also unique in that it is now technically part of metropolitan France. It is a *Département Outre Mer (DOM),* meaning an Overseas Department of France with its own French *préfet* to administer it. Like any other French prefecture, it also has its elected representatives of a central and several regional councils. Thus it is no longer a French 'colony' and all of its inhabitants are citizens of France. But it is interesting to note that a French visa would not enable a foreign national to visit this island. French consular officers all over the world are still required to obtain a separate authorisation from Paris to facilitate such visits.

6.3. This chapter will start with an examination of how and why an Indian presence was first introduced into this tiny Indian Ocean island, which is more than 4,000 kms. from Mumbai and only a comparatively short distance away from the African mainland. The next section will deal with the growth and evolution of the Indian community in Réunion. The final part of this chapter will describe the present status of the PIOs and their recent attempts to explore their roots. They appear to have undertaken this task with a view to reasserting their Indian ancestry in an official milieu that, unlike in the colonial period, has become more tolerant of religious and cultural diversities. Embarking on such a cultural renaissance, many members of the Indian community have made known their desire to see a responsive and co-operative attitude on the part of their 'mother country' to their diverse demands and expectations from it. An attempt has been made to catalogue their aspirations in the concluding part of this chapter.

Genesis of the Indian Presence in Réunion

6.4. The French started the colonisation of Réunion as long ago as 1646, when a dozen or so adventurers

volunteered to go there. Legend has it that this all-male group soon imported some women from Goa and, in course of time, a small foundation had been laid for the future, sizeable Indian presence on the island. Whatever the truth or otherwise of this belief, history books record only that the colonists were able to acquire a large number of African slaves, whether from Madagascar or the African mainland, to work on the coffee plantations that were being set up in 1715. When a cyclone destroyed the coffee fields in the early 19th century, the planters turned to sugar cane, which soon became the primary cash crop on the island. By the time France abolished slavery in 1848, the population of Réunion had grown to over 100,000. Out of that number, some 62,000 were African slaves. Fearing disruption of the plantation economy, some of the planters persuaded their former slaves, with sweet words and other inducements, to continue working with them. But more than 35,000 of the former slaves decided to celebrate their newly decreed freedom by deserting their former masters.

6.5. As in the case of the British colonies, the French settlers thereupon decided to recruit indentured labour from abroad. Their preferred source was India, where they had already set up a small colonial empire with Pondicherry as its main base. As the supply from this limited area was not sufficient to meet their growing needs, they entered into protracted negotiations with the British to recruit labour from British India. On 25 July 1860 a Franco-British Convention was signed in Paris, which allowed 6,000 Indian labourers to be recruited annually for work in Réunion under the indenture system. With the success of these negotiations began the sordid tale of recruiting thousands of Indians, as well as some other nationals. A time span of five years was fixed as the contractual period. It was agreed that after the expiry of that term, a return passage would be provided. There were also provisions to protect the labourers against ill treatment. Between 1848 and 1860, no less than 37,777 Indians, 26,748 Africans and 423 Chinese had been inducted in this manner – for a period of five years in the case of Indians and Chinese; for ten in the case of Africans.

6.6. Most of the Indian indentured workers were from the region in and around what is now Tamil Nadu. The official view was that they had voluntarily tried to escape from difficult conditions at home. Whatever the truth of that assertion, it was a grim fact that what they were going to face in Réunion was not going to be very much better.

6.7. Around 1850, there was a parallel stream of voluntary migrations to the island. Numbering around 40,000 persons, they consisted of merchants, traders and artisans from Gujarat. Most of them appear to have been Muslims, though not all of them. The migration of these persons was similar to that of the 'passenger Indians' who were setting out for South Africa around the same time. With their business acumen and their better educational background, they were able to settle down quickly in their new country to pursue their respective vocations. While the Muslims migrants set up various commercial enterprises, the Hindus appear to have had in their midst a large number of jewellers, among whom the Patair family appears to have been the foremost.

Growth and Evolution of the Indian Community

6.8. During the 19th century and until the First World War, the Indian immigrants were considered merely as foreign workers. They had few or no civic rights and the colonial government was not particularly interested in their welfare. Only after 1920 were they granted French nationality. The proclamation of Réunion as an Overseas Department of France in 1946 meant equal opportunities for the Indian migrants in various fields, including education, business, and even participation in the civic administration of towns and cities, besides eligibility for election to the House of Deputies in Paris. With the granting of these fundamental rights, they had become full-fledged French citizens. This meant that they could now participate in all avenues of life, in the same way as the indigenous French nationals on the island.

6.9. In the decades after 1920, the PIOs profited from their enhanced civic and political status to try and reconstruct their shattered lives. They also wanted to fathom the full meaning and significance of their newly acquired 'Indo-French identity'.

6.10. Meanwhile, another new phase had been heralded in their lives with the independence of India in 1947. This marked a revival in them of their sub-conscious and deep-seated Indianness. The era of empires and colonial domination was fast being replaced all over Africa and Asia by the dawn of independence in one country after another. Even their closest neighbour, Mauritius, was soon to attain freedom. The PIOs of Réunion did not aspire to see a similar transformation in their island home, as they had become equal citizens of metropolitan France. Nevertheless, there was a gradual awakening in them of their Indian origin and a desire to revive their ancient culture, or at least to enrich the local scene with the special traits of their inheritance. They also now wanted to translate their newly acquired civic and political rights into a gradual and increasing participation in local and other elections. Mr Jean Paul Virapoulle is a fine example of PIO participation in the island's civic and political life. He is currently Mayor of Saint André and First Vice President of the General Council of Réunion. There are other examples also of this kind, such as those of Mr Saminadin Axel Kichenin and Mrs Nadia Ramassamy who are, respectively, Second and Third Vice Presidents of the same General Council, while Mrs Denise Nilameyom is Deputy Mayor of Tampon.

6.11. The High Level Committee was able to witness the manifestation of this new sentiment when, during its brief visit to Réunion, we were taken to see the place where the first Indian indentured labourers had been landed on the island, at La Grande Chaloupe. We learned there that on 13 April last year, the *Tamij Sangam* had marked the anniversary of that historic occasion. At that memorial meeting, many speakers had recalled with great emotion how their ancestors had embarked on their long voyage to the island with dreams of a better life ahead of them. But soon the voyage itself had turned into a nightmare. It was much longer than what they had been lead to believe. They had been piled one on top of the other on the open deck. With the unhygienic conditions on board, total absence of medical assistance, and lack of nourishing food, many of them had suffered grievously and the weaker ones had died before arriving at their destination.

As for the others, they were put up in barracks at a place called *Le Lazaret,* which is literally the French word for a hospital or pest house, from there to be released, after the stipulated period of quarantine, to the tender mercies of their future masters. The *Tamij Sangam* has decided to mark this anniversary every year and also to maintain respectfully the much-neglected graves where their ancestors had been hurriedly buried when their dead bodies arrived on the island.

The Present Status of the PIOs

6.12. 'Malabar' is a generic term used for all Indians from South India. Tamils constitute the largest group among the Indian community. The HLC was informed that, as per figures estimated in March 1999, they number approximately 180,000 which is a little over 25% of the country's total population of 709,468. Their main occupation is agriculture. Except for the Muslims who came to the island from Gujarat, all the other Indians had been routinely categorised as Catholics, more or less by force. Many of them appear to have been converted to that faith during the indenture period. In recent years, however, there has been a revival of Hinduism among members of the Tamil community. This has led to the establishment of many temples and *ashrams.* An interesting feature, peculiar to Réunion, is the simultaneous observance by some of them of Catholic and Hindu rites, a practice that has earned them the sobriquet of being 'socially catholic and privately Hindu'. A generous local explanation of this phenomenon is that 'it is a manifestation of the Hindu religion, which is tolerant of other religions and has the capacity to co-exist with them'.

6.13. Reference has already been made earlier in this chapter to the 40,000 Muslim and Hindu PIOs from Gujarat. When Pondicherry became part of the Indian Union in 1958, France offered its citizenship to all the residents of this former French colony. Not all of them responded to this offer. While some decided to migrate to France, others preferred to go to Réunion, possibly because of its proximity to India and also because of its balmy weather. At present, there are about 150 families of Pondicherrian origin in the island. Most of them have joined the island's civil services.

6.14. There are about 60 Indian nationals in Réunion. Construction workers imported from India have built almost a dozen Hindu temples on the island. The HLC visited the oldest among them. It had an impressive structure. An interesting feature of that temple was that one of its many parts honoured Arjuna and Draupadi. There are also several privately maintained shrines in Réunion, dedicated mostly to Shiva. A number of spiritual teachers have been invited by the PIOs over the years to make the island their permanent home and guide interested persons in the tenets of Hinduism. Among them are the Swamis Advyananda at the *Arsha Vidya Ashram,* Premanand Puri at the *Maison de L' Inde,* Pranavananda at the Chinmaya Mission and Nilamegame at the *Maison Sérénité.*

6.15. Even some cooks have come from India to man the local Indian restaurants and provide the PIOs with authentic Indian culinary delicacies.

6.16. The Indian community is very active in promoting Indian culture, if only for their own satisfaction and enjoyment. Several PIO associations are enthusiastically engaged in sponsoring cultural programmes of Indian dance and music, painting and literature. Among them, the prominent ones are Natyakalamai, Oubasanaa, Saraswati, Shakti, Shruti and Vanni. They have invited a number of Indian artistes from time to time to stage concerts before appreciative local audiences. We were overwhelmed to witness a Bharat Natyam performance in our honour by students of Leela Armoudam, a student and admirer of Leela Samson. Children trained by another local teacher, Linda Sellom, gave a creditable rendition of Mohini Attam at the same function.

6.17. Tamil New Year, Deepavali and Navratras are celebrated with enthusiasm and serenity on an elaborate scale all over the Island. Eid is also celebrated in a befitting manner. The local authorities including the Office of the *Prefet*, the Departmental Office of Culture, the Regional Directorate of Cultural Affairs, the Regional Council, the General Council and the various municipalities extend financial as well as logistic support for these PIO activities. The National Conservatory of Réunion teaches Indian music and dance. From time to time, the Cultural Intervention Centre of Saint André itself organises Indian cultural programmes.

6.18. A majority of the Indian community appears to have utilised the available opportunities for education. They have easy access to all the local educational institutions to study and pursue their academic career. Such facilities are available to them for primary, secondary (known as colleges), senior secondary (known as Lycee) and university level education. In some schools Tamil is taught as an optional language.

6.19. We were happy to learn from the Consul General that the PIOs - a community consisting of agriculturists, businessmen, and academics, civil servants and politicians - are well established on the island. They carry on their respective occupations without any undue interference from the local authorities. They have apparently been contributing effectively to the overall development of the island, with a cordial and friendly relationship with the rest of the population.

6.20. From its reactions with officials of the local administration, the HLC could observe for itself that the Indian community in Réunion is held in high esteem and is well integrated into the mainstream of the local society, of which it has become an integral part. The different elements of the PIO community - Hindus, Muslims and Christians - live in close harmony and have no differences whatsoever on account of their religious or regional origin.

Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora

6.21. In general, it may be observed that the PIOs in this island have mainly educational and cultural expectations from India. The following are some of the issues in which they would be appreciative of a positive Indian response:

(1) The French Embassy in New Delhi and the Consulate General of France in Pondicherry sometimes delay the issue of visas to Indian artistes who are invited by the PIOs or PIO associations in Réunion to participate in cultural activities organised by them on the island. It would be helpful if the concerned authorities could be persuaded to expedite the disposal of such visa applications.

(2) A large number of PIOs in Réunion are enthusiastically engaged in promoting Indian culture on the island. It would encourage them greatly if an Indian Cultural Centre could be set up here, to undertake the various kinds of programmes that the Centre in Mauritius is currently engaged in. This suggestion should be considered favourably, irrespective of the 'House of Civilisations' project which is under the active consideration of the Regional Council of Réunion.

(3) Similarly, an institution like the Indira Gandhi Centre for Indian Culture in Mauritius should be set up here to promote the teaching of Indian languages like Tamil and Hindi, as well as Indian history and philosophy.

(4) Indian television programmes should be telecast on the local TV channels, namely, Tele Réunion RFO, Tempo RFO and Antenne. The current practice of viewing them through the South African channels is very extensive.

(5) The University of Réunion currently has an exchange programme with the University of Pondicherry. Similar links should be established with the Universities of Chennai and Bangalore.

(6) The Government of France should be requested to facilitate the establishment of a suitable agency in Réunion to process requests for adoption of children from India by childless local PIO parents. Such an agency exists in France but not on this island.

(7) The local cities of Saint Denis and Saint Pierre should be twinned with Chennai and Pondicherry respectively.

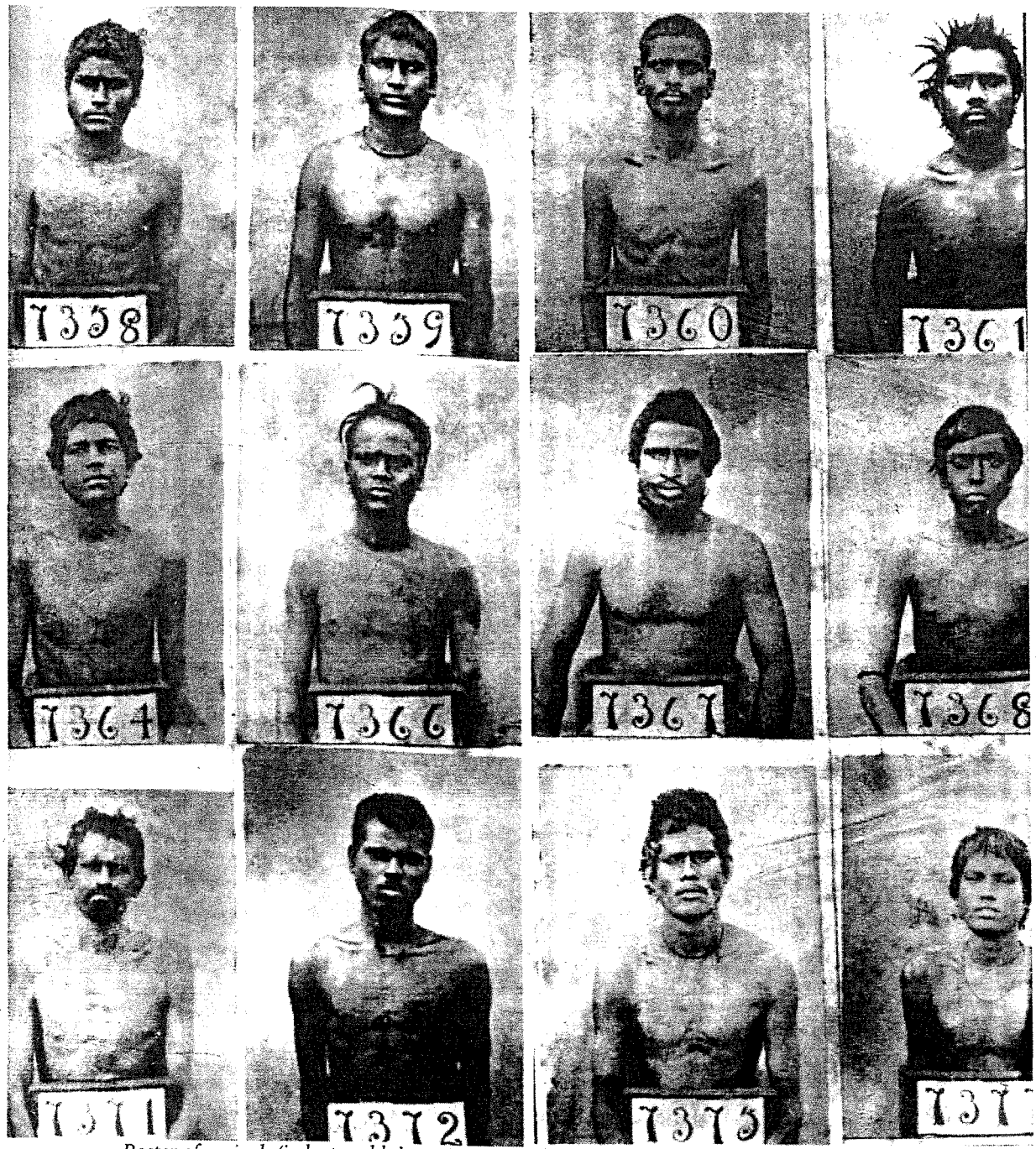
(8) Musical instruments should be gifted to some of the PIO associations in Réunion.

(9) A grant should be given to promote the development of the site at La Grande Chaloupe.

(10) Grant of financial assistance in the publication in French of selected religious books and works of noted Indian scholars should be made.

Chapter 7

South Africa



Roster of arrivals/indentured labour in S. Africa who were identified by their numbers only
(Photo Courtesy: Book titled "From Cane Fields to Freedom")



Mahatma Gandhi and Kasturba Gandhi with fellow settlers at the Phoenix Settlement, Natal, South Africa (1906)



Railway Station, Pietermaritzburg where Mahatma Gandhi was thrown out of the train en route to Johannesburg on 7 June 1893



Indians working in the cane fields in S. Africa

The history of the Indian Diaspora in South Africa is a fascinating saga of suffering and triumph, alternately following each other over the last hundred and forty years. As long ago as 1904, while the indenture system of importing Indian labour on a contractual basis was nearing the end of its turbulent course, the then Governor of the British Colony of Natal, Lord Milner, thought it right to describe the Indians as 'strangers, forcing themselves upon a community reluctant to receive them.' The irony of this statement would be apparent if juxtaposed against the persistent demand, in earlier years, of the British settlers in Natal for large-scale imports of cheap labour from India to shore up their sinking economy. And then again, many years later, in 1948, even before the architect of apartheid, D. F. Malan, came to power in a self-governing British dominion called the Union of South Africa, his Afrikaner National Party had already made its policy towards the Indian migrants crystal clear. It had declared in its election manifesto that 'Indians are a foreign and outlandish element which is inassimilable'. Continuing in the same vein, the manifesto had proclaimed the party's determination to repatriate as many Indians as possible! To what extent, if at all, were such statements warranted, or were they merely expressions of a racist attitude against the Indian settlers – both under Britain's Crown Colony of Natal and also subsequently under the Boer regime that followed it in South Africa?

Early History of Migration of Indians to South Africa

7.2. Contrary to the common belief that Indians had first gone to South Africa as indentured labourers in 1860, they had in fact already arrived there much earlier, in 1653. Dutch merchants, returning home from their voyages to India and the East Indies, had taken them to the then Dutch Cape Colony and sold them as slaves to the early Dutch settlers. There they were made to work as domestic servants, or to join the African slaves who were already toiling on the newly established farms. Between 1653 and the early 19th century, there were already as many as 1,195 Indians in the Cape, forming 36.40% of the slave population imported into the colony.

7.3. Most of these Indian slaves had been shipped from Bengal or the Coromandal coast. They were unable to preserve their distinct identity in the Cape as 'Indians'. They married slaves from East Asia, other parts of Africa, or from the indigenous Khoikhoi and San inhabitants. Their progeny subsequently became known as 'Malays'. This term was, in time, loosely applied to all the Muslims

in the Cape, irrespective of their geographic origin. Later on, however, in apartheid's four-fold classification of South Africa's population, they came under the appellation of 'Coloureds'. Naturally, therefore, the chapter of the Indian slaves, and that also of the Indian servants who accompanied British officers on vacation in the Cape after it had become a British colony in the 19th century, does not find its way into the general history of Indian migration to South Africa.

7.4. On the other hand, the Indian presence in that country owes its origin to the British Parliament's passing the Act of Abolition in 1833, whereupon slavery was banned throughout the British Empire. The immediate consequence of this was that the African slaves of British settlers in the Natal Colony decided to desert their former masters *en masse*. Their erstwhile tormentors began to feel the pinch of having to bend their own backs to manual labour! After considerable efforts to persuade the reluctant British authorities in India to replicate in South Africa the system of indentured labour that was already being implemented in Mauritius, the colonists finally succeeded in their endeavour. Thereupon, a group of Indian 'coolies', comprising 342 men, women and children arrived at the port city of Durban on board the *S. S. Truro* on 16 November 1860. They were the first of 384 such arrivals of 'human cargo' containing as many as 152,184 unfortunate persons that were going to be shipped to South Africa over the next 51 years. Of them, 62% were men, 25% women and 13% children. According to a 1985 report of Dr. Frene Ginwala, who is currently Speaker of South Africa's Parliament, two thirds of these emigrants were Tamil and Telugu speaking Hindus from the then Madras Presidency, a predominance that has persisted in subsequent years, as well as from Mysore and surrounding areas. The rest of the migrants had gone mainly from what are now Eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal. If the vast majority of the indentured labourers were Hindus, less than 12% were Muslims, while some 2% were Christians. Most of them were illiterate, but they all carried with them memories of their traditions, customs and rituals - which they then strove to preserve as best as they could. They spoke a variety of languages - Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Urdu, as well as dialects from Bihar and UP which would later merge to become a sort of local version of Bhojpuri, very different from what is found in Mauritius with its distinctly French and Creole influence.

7.5. The initial purpose of importing the Indians had been to tend the sugarcane and sisal plantations of the British settlers. The indentured labourers were bound by contract for 5 years. A carrot was held out to them in the form of a second contract for a further 5 years, with the offer after that of a free return passage to India, or grant of some land. The land grant was eventually dropped in 1891. The standard practice in the plantations was to work the labour from dawn to sunset, Sundays included. After providing them with meagre rations and the barest accommodation in crowded barracks, the planters were insensitive to all their other needs. Their main concern was to economise costs. They saved on rations by reducing them on the slightest pretext. They refused the workers permission to leave their estates, especially to complain to the authorities about their ill treatment. They grudged them even their meagre wages and often found ingenious excuses to minimise them. Arbitrary "justice" was often meted out to them in the form of fines or whipping. In brief, the conditions under which the indentured labourers worked were inhuman and akin to

slavery. This was one of the main reasons for the high number of suicides among them. Nevertheless, the majority of these Indians remained in South Africa, as they had practically banished themselves from their own country by going abroad when crossing the seas (*kalapani)* was taboo and attracted severe *prayaschit.*

7.6. Their hard labour in the plantations lead to a miraculous transformation of the Natal Colony's faltering economy. This was recognised by the Wragg Commission, which had been appointed in 1885 to enquire into the general condition of the Indian population of Natal. It affirmed in its report that 'the stay of Indians in Natal was, in fact, a great boon to the colony'. Nevertheless, the white settlers continued to treat them as mere 'units of labour'. So inhuman and degrading was the treatment meted out to them by the unsympathetic colonists that Henry Polak described the Indian emigrants as 'helots of the Empire', while Hugh Tinker rightly termed the system of their indentured labour in his monumental book about them as 'a new system of slavery'. In 1911, Gopal Krishna Gokhale declared in the Legislative Council in Delhi that the indentured recruitment of Indians for work in South Africa was 'a monstrous system, iniquitous in itself, based on fraud and maintained by force'.

7.7. While their initial recruitment had been for work in the plantations, Indian labour was also later distributed to the railways, dockyards, coal mines, municipal services and domestic employment. Even though they were not happy with the racist laws and taxes, only about 23% of Natal Indians had returned to India by 1911, when the much abused indenture system was finally terminated. Most of them had stayed on in Natal and only a few thousands had moved to the Transvaal (now called the Guateng Province) before the imposition of a total ban on such internal migrations. Meanwhile, many of the erstwhile 'coolies' had acquired little plots of land and become kitchen gardeners and hawkers, retailing their produce in headloads to the grateful housewives of the White community. Gradually they had practically monopolised the supply of maize, tobacco and garden produce in the coastal belt.

7.8. Their success had prompted the entry into the colony of 'free passenger Indians'– so called, because they had paid for their fares as passengers on board a steamship bound for South Africa. The new immigrants were a community of traders, both Hindu and Muslim, who hailed mainly from Gujarat. They set up retail shops and started to compete effectively with the much more expensive stores run by the white settlers In course of time, they constituted around 10% of Indian immigrants. Much later, teachers, accountants, priests, lawyers and other professionals arrived, also mostly from Gujarat. These developments lead to much recrimination and jealousy against the Indians – all of whom were unceremoniously labelled as 'coolies'. This resulted in referring to leading members of the community in derogatory terms such as 'coolie merchant', 'coolie doctor', 'coolie barrister' and the like.

7.9. The colonial administration sought to curb the activities of the Indians by enacting a whole compendium of discriminatory laws against them, with a view to boxing them in and curbing their enterprise and economic progress. The Transvaal, for instance, subjected their trade to a

registration fee of 25 rands; prohibited them from becoming licence holders in any enterprise connected with mining; restricted their property rights to segregated wards; subjected them to the carrying of passes; and forbade them from walking on the pavements. The Orange Free State excluded them altogether by a law in 1895, while the Cape subjected their immigration into that province to an education test. Nevertheless, by June 1886, there were already more 'free' Indians in the Natal Colony than indentured Indians. They were free from their contracts, but not free to join the political process, or to vote as equal citizens of their adopted country.

Barrister M. K. Gandhi's Sojourn in South Africa

7.10. A new chapter of Indian emigration to South Africa began in May 1893 when Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, a young Indian barrister from Porbander, arrived in Durban. Abdul Karim Jhaveri of Dada Abdullah & Co. had secured his services in a £40,000 legal suit against a rival Indian firm in Pretoria. The young Gandhi's arrival coincided with the determination of the Whites to put an end to 'the Indian merchant menace'. This campaign had been directed against the ex-indentured labourers who had started working in other sectors of the economy, and especially against the more prosperous 'passenger Indians' who had become the principal rivals of the Whites in trade and commerce. In addition to the restrictions and prohibitions already enumerated above, the entire Indian community was also being subjected to a long list of petty indignities to humiliate them. They were not allowed to sit on 'European' benches in public parks or bathe in beaches reserved for Europeans. Nor could they enter a restaurant, tearoom, barber's shop or a hotel as they did not have the 'uniform of a white skin'. Instead of admiring the energy and productivity of the Indian immigrants, which had brought prosperity to their colony, the White settlers were outraged by their very presence in their midst. They resented the far-sighted perseverance and skill of the Indians, their economic lifestyle, their food habits, their pride in their customs and traditions, and their attention to the education of their children - all of which had ensured that the Indian community would continue to prosper.

7.11. With his legal training, Gandhi insisted that the colonial government should strictly implement Queen Victoria's Proclamation of 1858 in which she had promised her Indian subjects equality with all her other subjects throughout the Empire. Accordingly, his fight for non-discriminatory treatment was waged only on behalf of the Indians. He apparently felt that the native Blacks would want to fight their own battles. Despite his youth, with his newly minted philosophy of non-violence and *satyagraha*, Gandhi was able to provide the Indian community the leadership and inspiration that was needed to resist the racist policies of the Whites. He started the *Indian Opinion*, a weekly newspaper, to give expression to the feelings and aspirations of his fellow Indians, and as an instrument to guide them in their struggle for equality and fair play. He also set up the Phoenix Settlement near Durban and, later on, the Tolstoy Farm outside Johannesburg, to provide shelter for the families of those who followed his advice and peacefully courted arrest and detention. It was during his sojourn in South Africa that the Natal Indian Congress was established on 22 May 1894, and later also the forerunner of the Transvaal Indian Congress. A

mass movement of labourers, traders and industrial workers followed him in his courageous fight against the discriminatory laws that restricted even their movements. They could not, for instance, cross from Natal into the Transvaal, the new British colony where gold had recently been discovered. Nor had the White administration shown any respect for Indian customs and traditions.

7.12. By the time Gandhi finally left South Africa in 1914, this exemplary *Pravasi Bharatiya* had obtained some concessions from the Premier, Field Marshal Jan Smuts. They included frustrating and delaying the Government's efforts to register Indians in the Transvaal; abolition of the £3 poll tax; and formal recognition of Hindu, Muslim and Parsi marriages. But the future Mahatma's real legacy to succeeding generations of resistance workers in South Africa, and that included also the majority Blacks, was to rid them of their fear of imprisonment and torture. Though most of the restrictive legislative measures against Indians remained when Gandhi finally left South Africa on 18 July 1914, he had sown the seeds for future generations to fight courageously against injustice and racial discrimination in South Africa. But Field Marshal Jan Smuts, who had come to admire greatly Gandhi's courage and ideals, did not really care much for his policies. In the event, racism continued to rear its ugly head in the country with increasing viciousness for a long time after that.

The Beginning of Collaboration between Indian and Black South Africans

7.13. Scores of laws continued to be enacted to restrain and cripple the economic progress of the Indian emigrants and to compel them 'voluntarily' to leave the country. It is worth noting here that, between 1885 and 1941, as many as 61 pieces of anti-Indian legislation had been, or were going to be enacted, and more were to follow. But in the meanwhile, there was a momentous development that had a far-reaching effect on the status and position of the Indian community, namely, the Cape Town Agreement of 1927 between South Africa and the then British Government in India. Both parties had agreed in it to encourage and facilitate the repatriation of Indians. As a *quid pro quo*, South Africa had solemnly undertaken, in terms of the Agreement's 'upliftment clause', to improve the lot of those that decided to remain in the country.

7.14. Very few Indians opted for repatriation. Pretoria soon forgot or ignored what it had agreed to. The same old discriminatory measures were continued by it, culminating in the 'Pegging Act' of 1943 and the 'Ghetto Act' of 1946. These two infamous laws were the proverbial 'last straw' and the Interim Government which had by then been formed in India under Jawaharlal Nehru, decided to snap all diplomatic and trade relations with South Africa. It also took the 'Indian Question' to the United Nations. But in South Africa, the Indian emigrants came to the conclusion that their future would be considerably eased if they were to adopt whatever they could of the western way of life. The result of this decision, undeterred by various arbitrary acts of omission and commission on the part of the apartheid government, are more than evident today in the life style of the Indians in South Africa.

7.15. Meanwhile, the character of the Natal and Transvaal Indian Congresses (NIC & TIC) had changed dramatically. A second generation of locally born persons had assumed the leadership of both these organisations. Dr. Y. M. Dadoo had become undisputed Indian leader in the Transvaal; and so also Dr. G. M. ('Monty') Naicker in Natal. They were imbued with the conviction that the future of the Indians did not lie in fighting the racism of the whites on a compartmental basis. It had to be a multi-racial joint struggle of all the oppressed people of South Africa and, particularly so, in conjunction with the indigenous Blacks who formed the overwhelming majority of the country's population. This realistic and wise policy resulted in what came to be known as the 'Three Doctors Pact' which was concluded in 1947 by Drs. A. B. Xuma, Y. M. Dadoo and G. M. Naicker - Presidents, respectively, of the ANC, the TIC and the NIC. These three organisations soon launched the 'Defiance Campaign', which was a joint passive resistance movement. It resulted in over 8,000 Blacks and Indians being arrested and imprisoned. In 1955, at a place called Cliptown near SOWETO, the 'Freedom Charter' was endorsed by the Blacks, the Indians and also by the Coloured people. It proclaimed 'that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, Black and White'. Steve Biko, hero of the Black Consciousness Movement, had already defined the term 'Black' as any person who was 'not White' and that was the meaning attached to it in the Freedom Charter.

The Apartheid Government's Policy of 'Divide and Rule'

7.16. The apartheid regime reacted in alarm to these developments. It tried to sow discord among the non-Whites. Its carefully crafted policy of 'divide and rule' envisaged differential treatment being accorded to each of the three racial groups. For instance, some contemporary witnesses of the Durban riots of 1949, which had pitted Blacks against Indians, suspected that it must have been at least encouraged, if not also instigated by White agents! But the strategy of separating the Indian community from the other two oppressed races was not always consistently followed. The impartial oppression of all the non-Whites continued unabated. The Asiatic Land Tenure and Representation Act of 2 June 1946 (commonly called the 'Ghetto Act', which has already been referred to in an earlier paragraph) was soon followed in 1950 by the impartial and equally infamous Group Areas Act. In a monogram published by her in 1985, Dr Frene Ginwala wrote that between 1966 and 1984, no less than 83,691 Coloured and 40,067 Indian families had been moved under that law, to new locations. Many more were to follow. As for the Blacks, they had been relegated to ten so-called 'homelands' located in the most inhospitable parts of the country, from where they had to obtain special passes to re-enter their own country!

7.17. On the other hand, special efforts were simultaneously launched to put the Indians in a relatively more privileged position *vis à vis* the Blacks. It is ironic that in 1962, a year after Prime Minister Verwoerd had declared the withdrawal of South Africa from the British Commonwealth, the Indian immigrants were finally granted the status of permanent residents and thus admitted to South African citizenship. This was a little more than a century after the docking of the *S.S.Truro* in Durban harbour! Local Affairs or Consultative Committees were established in Natal and the

Transvaal, with the loudly proclaimed objective of giving the Indian South Africans a voice in matters affecting them. In 1973, state-financed education was made compulsory for Indian children up to the age of 15. Two years later, the obnoxious inter-provincial travel and residence barriers were relaxed. A state-sponsored Indian Development Corporation was established in 1977 and permission was granted to set up an all-Indian New Republic Bank to promote the growth of Indian entrepreneurship. These diverse measures facilitated the increased participation of Indians in secondary industries. Weaving and clothing factories, footwear manufacture, garages and service stations, tyre retreading shops, furniture making establishments, printing presses, bakeries, food preparation units and super bazaars, as well as many other such small scale industries sprang up to give gainful employment to thousands of Indians. It is not surprising, therefore, that many of the descendants of former indentured labour and of 'free passenger Indians' that had followed them to South Africa, were now much better off than they had ever been before. In contrast, the majority of the Blacks stayed where they were, at the very bottom of the social pyramid.

7.18. Perhaps the most unpopular of the dirty tricks thought up by the apartheid government to break the unity of the non-Whites was the 1982 decision to amend the constitution. A Tricameral Parliament was going to be set up with separate chambers for Whites, Coloureds and Indians. There would be no place in it for the Blacks. White political supremacy would be continued as the other two chambers would only be in innocuous charge of their 'own affairs' like education, health and social welfare, but with little financial resources and no policy-making powers. The NIC and the TIC launched a massive campaign to persuade the Indian community to defeat this project by not participating in the elections to the Indian chamber. However, a relatively small number did exercise their franchise and some of them became MPs and even Cabinet Ministers, with fat salaries and all the other perks of office. For them, the temptation of 'proximity to the centres of power' was too much to resist, even though they earned the resentment and scorn of their fellow Indians.

Current Status of the Indian South Africans

7.19. It was not surprising, therefore, that the indigenous Blacks felt a growing resentment against the ISAs due to the preferential treatment given to them by the government. It did not matter to them that the two Indian Congresses had continued to march in step with the ANC and its *Umhkonto we Swizwe* ('Spear of the Nation'). Nor that the NIC and the TIC were part of the UDF (United Democratic Front) that was fast making South Africa ungovernable for the regime. Nor again, that so many of the ISAs had, like their own Black heroes, borne the most horrendous torture in apartheid's infamous Robben Island. It was the relative prosperity of the PIOs that marked them out as objects of envy and resentment by the majority community. The contrast between Indian Phoenix and Black KwaMashu, for instance, which confront each other across a highway, was as clear as daylight. With apartheid's policy of separate and unequal development, the only areas of contact between Blacks and Indians were unfortunate ones - as across a shop counter between

trader and customer; in a domestic situation between housewife and maid; or in a work environment between supervisor and manual labour.

7.20. From 1984, the UDF (which was a broad coalition of student groups, youth congresses, civil associations, women's organisations, church societies and trade unions), later joined by the ANC and the two Indian Congresses, grew in strength. Its joint action programme of demonstrations, strikes and sit-ins threatened the country's economic collapse. After the replacement in 1992 of the uncompromising President P. W. Botha by the pragmatic Frederik Wilhelm de Klerk, the political climate in South Africa underwent a dramatic change. While the tortuous negotiations for the end of apartheid ran their course with all their many ups and downs, ending in the birth of Mandela's New South Africa, it was a period of anxiety for the Indian community. It was only the politically active persons among them, such as members of the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress, who were emphatic that the transition would be peaceful and orderly. They were sure that their contribution to the common struggle was well known to the African leaders. And that, therefore, there was little to fear for the future.

7.21. That was not, however, the general feeling of the community. There was considerable concern among them that the simmering resentment against them of the general Black population, due to the superior status of the Indians in apartheid days, would be translated into reprisals once White rule was ended. Even if some of the well-heeled Indians could conceivably leave South Africa for distant shores if local conditions were to become intolerable, the vast silent majority would stay on in the land of their birth, as they knew no other. For them, India was 'no more than a geographic expression'. They too would weather the storm as best as they could, even as their ancestors had faced the dreadful years of indenture and white domination. Sensing the prevalent mood among the Indian community, Mandela and his senior colleagues in the ANC went out of their way, as the date for the first free elections drew near, to reassure them that there would be no reprisals. But apparently this was not effective enough. It is generally believed that most of the PIOs voted for de Klerk's National Party in the first non-racial elections in 1994, in the hope that a united opposition of all the minority parties against preponderant Black domination would be the best guarantee for their common future. A similar performance was repeated in the next general elections of 1999, when most of the ISA votes were again cast in favour of the newly formed, White-dominated Democratic Alliance.

7.22. The all-forgiving, statesman-like, newly elected President Mandela seemed to take the ISA attitude in his stride. Ahmed Kathrada, his old friend and companion since before their incarceration on Robben Island, continued in the President's inner circle to advise him. The Cabinet had many Indian faces in it. Abdulah Mohamed ('Dullah') Omar was Minister of Justice. The Transport portfolio was given to Mac Maharaj. Water Affairs & Forestry went to Kadar Asmal. Jay Naidoo was Minister without Portfolio, but entrusted with overseeing the implementation of the ambitious RDP (the government's Reconstruction & Development Programme). Essop Pahad and Vali Moosa were Deputy Ministers, respectively, for Foreign and Provincial Affairs. Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim,

Aziz Pahad, Mohamed Valli Moosa and Billy Nair were elected to the all-powerful ANC National Executive.

7.23. In May 1999, Thabo Mbeki became President of South Africa after the second general elections. By then, the official attitude towards the ISAs appeared to have undergone a subtle change. Several of the old Indian names did not figure in the new Cabinet. Only Kader Asmal (for Education) and Vali Moosa (for Environment and Tourism) had been included in it.

7.24. Nelson Mandela had once said: "India came to our aid when the rest of the world stood by or gave succour to our oppressors. When the doors of international councils were closed to us, India opened the way. You took up our battles, as if they were your own. Now that we have been victorious, it cannot be said too often that our victory is also India's". Both Mandela and Thabo Mbeki, his former Deputy, had been generally sympathetic towards the Indian minority in view of the sacrifices made by them during the struggle against apartheid. Both of them had reassured them that they too belonged to the country's majority. But the poor and lower middle class Indians had not been able to perceive any of the socio-economic benefits that they had hoped for.

7.25. It was not surprising, therefore, that in the months prior to the December 2000 local elections in the KwaZulu Natal Province, it was generally anticipated by ANC leaders that the Indian community's votes were likely to be cast mainly in favour of the Democratic Alliance Party. As that party had been formed by a group of Whites who had left the National Party, President Mbeki could not hide his disappointment. He is reported to have said at an election rally on 26 November: "Why does the Indian population in Durban which, for a century, was very active in the struggle for liberation, vote for the party of apartheid?' KwaZulu Natal's Transport Minister S'Ndebele, also of the ANC, was even more blunt when he declared that those Blacks, Coloureds and Indians who voted for other parties would have problems as far as the delivery of services from the government was concerned. This raised a hue and cry and was criticised by the opposition parties. Despite its electoral rhetoric, the attitude of the government continued to be correct towards the Indian community and Loggie Naidoo was nominated as Deputy Mayor of Durban.

7.26. If the official policy towards the Indian South Africans had seemingly displayed a subtle, yet dramatic change in 1999, the general attitude of the Blacks towards them seemed to have altered even before that. The *Indicator* (a newspaper published in Lenasia by Ameen Akhalwaya) had reported in October 1992 that this Indian township near SOWETO had been 'in the grip of unprecedented fear due to an upsurge of violent crime by Blacks against Indians'. Were the Indian South Africans being gradually targeted for reprisal and, if so, why? Was it only because of the relatively preferential treatment that had been accorded to them during apartheid days, resulting in their higher social and economic status? Or were there any other reasons as well? The economic disparity separating the Indians from the Blacks may have been an important factor in the resentment felt against them by the indigenous people of South Africa. It is true that 'Millionaires Rows' abound in various Indian townships – like Winchester Drive in Durban's Reservoir Hills; Mbeni Heights in Chatsworth, near Durban; and Seal Crescent in Lenasia, not far

from Johannesburg. But they do not reflect the correct overall picture of the Indian community as there are still many places like Malagazi near Isipingo and Hill Heads Estate outside Verulam, where thousands of Indians live in wood and iron shacks without plumbing, without electricity, and without sewage disposal. In fact, when the High Level Committee visited South Africa in January this year, prominent members of the local Indian Diaspora informed it that 65 to 70% of the PIOs are still living under the poverty line. The unemployment rate is also high in the community. According to some estimates, one to two percent of Indians (between 10,000 to 20,000) has tested HIV positive. But in spite of the grim reality of their general poverty, there have been frequent instances of violence directed against the community, as indeed also against the Whites.

7.27. Such all-too-frequent eruptions of anti-Indian sentiment among the Blacks are no doubt due also to the feeling ingrained in them during apartheid days that the ISAs had been exploiting them by sharp trade practices, an allegation that is not entirely correct. But perhaps a more important reason for inter-racial antagonism is the social aloofness and cultural superiority, even arrogance, that some Indians apparently still find it difficult to overcome or conceal against their Black compatriots. Perhaps even more important, is the fact that economic deprivation seems to have been transmuted into ethnic animosity and directed against relatively softer targets. Meanwhile, the richer members of the Indian community have been living in 'gilded cages', protecting themselves behind iron grills and electronic alert systems. It is relevant to take note here of a recent public opinion poll conducted by the *Southern African Democracy Barometre*. This survey revealed that 56% of all the ISAs who responded had manifested their 'apartheid nostalgia', by their lack of faith in the democratic transition that had taken place in the country!

7.28. The HLC found ample evidence in South Africa to corroborate the fact that the PIOs in this country are South Africans, first and foremost. The fact that they look like us, very often eat the same kind of food, and have many of the cultural values that we cherish, does not make them a little more Indian than South African. A century and a half of existence in an alien land, and four or five generations of acculteration in a dominant White society, has diluted their Indianness. Ms. Ela Gandhi, MP (ANC) and a granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi, clearly summed up her Indian South African identity when she said: "I am a South African; a very proud South African. The Indianness comes in at the level of culture, the way we eat, the kind of things we eat, the kind of things we appreciate - like music, drama, the language we speak. We only enrich our country by having all these different tastes and habits. What I am basically saying is that that is where the Indianness stops". And it is only right and proper that this sentiment should be generally recognised and respected.

7.29. The Indian Diaspora in South Africa numbers at least a million people. More than 75% of them live in KwazuluNatal. Durban, the capital of this province, accounts for a considerable part of the largely urbanised Indian population in this country. In its meeting with representatives of the Indian community in Johannesburg and Durban, the HLC was informed that the remaining 25%

of the ISAs are dispersed in the rest of the country, with the old Transvaal accounting for most of them. The South African Indians represent a variety of Indian characteristics. This is not surprising because of the miscellany of languages, religions, costumes, food habits, and other traits that they have inherited from their Indian ancestors who had migrated to South Africa from different regions and communities of India. Accordingly, they reflect the rich and diverse texture of the land of their origin.

7.30. During the tallying operations for the 1990 census, as many as 94.93% of the ISAs had declared English as their 'home language'. Among all the Indian languages, it is only Gujarati that is still generally spoken, and that too among themselves, by persons whose ancestors had come from Gujarat. But it is said that many children of Gujarati families are known to resent having to spend time at Sunday schools learning a language that they consider of little use to them in their daily lives.

7.31. Interestingly, a little over 39% of the community had declared in 1999 that their religion was Hindu. But then it was a form of Hinduism that was being practised by people who had rid themselves of traditions and customs like *jaati* and *sati, gotra* and *sutra, kutum,* endogamy and dowry. The ruthless ironing out of mutual differences during the indenture years, when their ancestors had been forced into co-existing with people from whom caste or tradition would have kept them apart in their earlier Indian environment, had resulted in forging for their descendants a new identity.

7.32. Various Christian sects, and particularly the Pentecostal Church, appear to have made some inroads into the Hindu community, with the result that there are now almost 13% of the ISAs who belong to one or other of the Christian groups. And as a reaction to this development, various Hindu sects have activated themselves, such as the Arya Samaj, the Divine Life Society, the Ramakrishna Mission, Sai Baba Samitis and the ISKCON. The last of them organises a very popular *rath jatra,* pulled by jeeps, along the Durban sea front every year, to coincide with the festival in Puri.

7.33. Muslim ISAs constitute around 20% of the ISA population. The Central Islamic Trust is very active in South Africa. The destruction of the Babri Masjid in December 1992 had a ripple effect in the fire-bombing of the Shree Pretoria Hindu Seva Samaj Temple at Laudium near Pretoria. But all the local Muslim leaders publicly apologised to the Hindu community, ascribing the vandalism to the thoughtless act of criminal elements or *agents provocateurs.* The President of the Islamic Council of South Africa even went to the extent of saying that both communities should display restraint and caution and not allow the inter-religious strife in India to destroy the harmonious relationship between them in South Africa. Inter-caste marriages are quite common among Hindus and Muslims, though not inter-communal ones between the two communities.

7.34. Western influence is predominant in social, cultural and familial relationships. But it is important to note that there is wide consensus among the ISAs for increased cultural interaction with India. In common with other large, long-established overseas Indian communities, the Indians in South

Africa have a deep emotional bond with the culture of their 'mother country'. Our classical dance and music continue to evince widespread interest in them. There are a number of local cultural groups that are trying to attract PIOs to attend classes conducted by them. At the same time, Bollywood stars are quite popular. A radio station relays Hindi and Tamil *filmi ganas* round the clock, together with a lot of pop music. The opening of Indian Cultural Centres in Durban and Johannesburg was enthusiastically welcomed as a meaningful response to the interest displayed by local PIOs to preserve and develop their cultural heritage. Some among them would even like to see the establishment here of the kind of institutions that have been set up in Mauritius, namely, the Mahatma Gandhi Institute and the Indira Gandhi Centre for Indian Culture. Such an initiative, they feel, would showcase our culture to all the races in South Africa and thus enhance the Indian community's standing in the country. They would also welcome the organisation in this country of a 'Festival of India' as such an event would be able to present their 'mother country' in a proper perspective and thus disabuse their Black compatriots of their distorted and derogatory perception of India.

7.35. Recently, the Diaspora's feelings towards India were clearly exhibited when they contributed a large amount of money and material for the relief of victims of the Gujarat Earthquake. But unlike the PIOs in North America and Western Europe, there is no interest in South Africa in acquiring dual citizenship. In fact, there is a fear that gaining such a status might only prejudice their local position with the Black majority who would then be able to accuse them of divided loyalties.

7.36. Many ISAs would be interested in visiting India, if only to trace their roots. There are demands for direct Air India flights to Durban. But there is resentment that foreign citizens of Indian origin are subjected in India to higher fares on domestic airlines and hotels, and also higher entry fees at museums and tourist spots.

7.37. The long history of Indian philanthropy in South Africa seems to be ignored or forgotten by a Black majority that has to face life in the raw because of its poverty and deprivation, neither of which has disappeared with the dawn of the New South Africa. But it must be recorded here that many ISAs have been responsible for numerous public-spirited activities to alleviate the suffering of the poor and deprived Blacks. Whether it is Indian doctors offering lower cost medical attention to African patients, or Indian businessmen building schools for Black children or raising bursaries for Black university students, there have been innumerable instances of the Indian Diaspora's concern for their unfortunate compatriots. Apart from individual instances of generosity, many Indian organisations have had an unblemished record of pursuing a humanistic programme, strongly motivated by their belief that alleviating human suffering is itself a kind of spiritual offering to God. Mention may briefly be made here of organisations like the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, the Aga Khan Foundation, the Divine Life Society and the Ramakrishna Mission, the Zakaat Association of South Africa and the A.M.Lockat Charitable Trust. Many other names could form part of this Roll of Honour.

7.38. The Committee found ample evidence of the cardinal truth that the PIOs in South Africa are a class by themselves, totally different from their counterparts in other countries. Unlike the large number of persons in the Diasporas in North America and the UK, the PIOs in South Africa are not generally prosperous. Unlike the situation in the Caribbean or Mauritius, here they have to contend with the rights and expectations of an indigenous population that does not easily condone any kind of superior social status of immigrants. And unlike the Indian Fijians who have faced an almost identical situation, the Indians of South Africa have been able successfully to resist the onslaught of an alien administration that treated them with scant regard. Here they made common cause with the indigenous people. Along with them, they bore tremendous hardships and suffering in the fight against apartheid and shared their triumph when it was finally routed. But now they face another challenge - of finding their feet once again in a difficult environment.

7.39. There is a feeling among some members of the community that the South African Indians are going through a crisis of leadership. No single person seems to have emerged so far to assume such a role, or be commonly accepted as suitable for it, even though the PIOs do not lack in talent or imagination. At the same time, there is growing recognition of the fact that the community must try to integrate, and be seen to integrate, with the Black majority. That is, of course, easier said than done. The exclusive nature and stereotype vision of the ISAs makes integration a difficult task. There is also the ominous fact that they are currently reeling under a crime wave that is targeted against them by the Black majority, if only because they are the easier target.

7.40. Thus it would be right to conclude that the Indian South Africans are once more faced with a critical and complex situation in their long and turbulent history in the land of their adoption. It is a totally different situation from the one that had confronted their forbears in the same country. No doubt their ancestors had to overcome many challenges. Initially, they had to submit themselves to hard labour and servitude without due appreciation. That was followed by mindless racial oppression. And finally, they had to wage a relentless fight against the evils of apartheid that they completed in partnership with all the oppressed people. But now it is a totally different ball game. The present generation of ISAs has to find the *modus vivendi* to co-exist and live harmoniously with an indigenous population that does not fully appreciate or accept their relative prosperity and their alien ethnicity. It even suspects them of disloyalty against the indigenous majority because of their making common cause with the former White oppressors of both of them, out of a mistaken feeling that their safety lies in forging a common front with other minority groups.

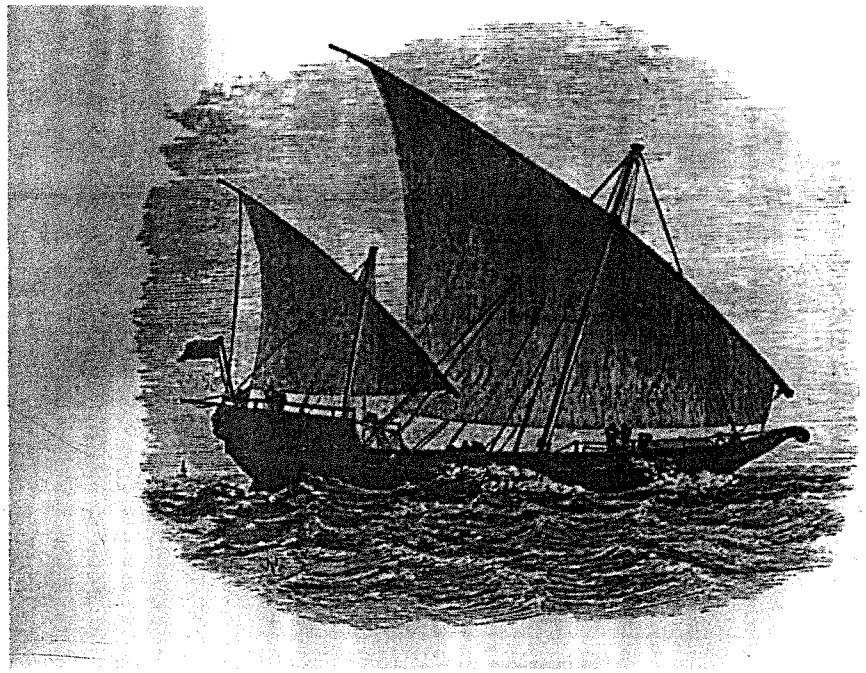
7.41. Nelson Mandela is once reported to have said that the Indians in South Africa should "be part of a solution and not themselves become the problem". The integrity of the Indian Diaspora in South Africa will be judged by its ability to subject its values to the test of whether they unite people on the basis of their ethnic identity or of their common humanity. It remains to be seen if the Indian community can achieve this integrity, which, in turn, will depend on the quality of the leaders, and role models who will emerge from among the Indian community in the new South Africa. It is time again for South African Indians to overcome tremendous odds and make genuine

efforts to join the mainstream. The basic precondition for success in such an endeavour would be their ability to integrate themselves with the black majority, not ethnically but in the diverse fields of human endeavour – social, economic and political. They have to accept with grace the inevitable process of increasing Africanisation and make even more meaningful contributions to improving the living conditions of South Africans in general. They have to join in the struggle to alleviate poverty, which continues to be race-bound and also affects the Indians. Non-racialism, for which so much has been sacrificed, will not be adequately advanced without the integration of Indians into the mainstream of South African society. Their future depends on their ability to realign themselves to the multi-cultural melting pot of the African Renaissance. And they should be seen to be doing so.

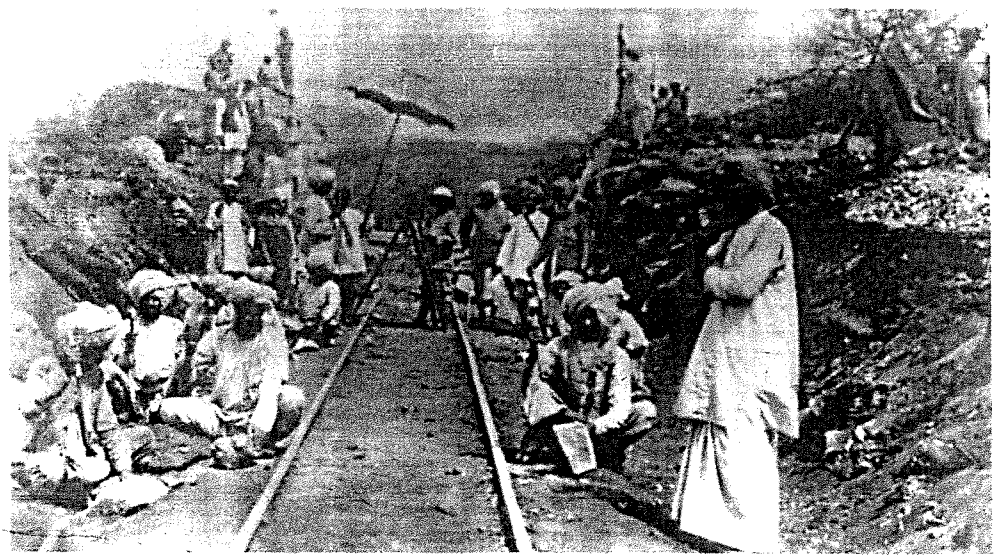
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Chapter 8

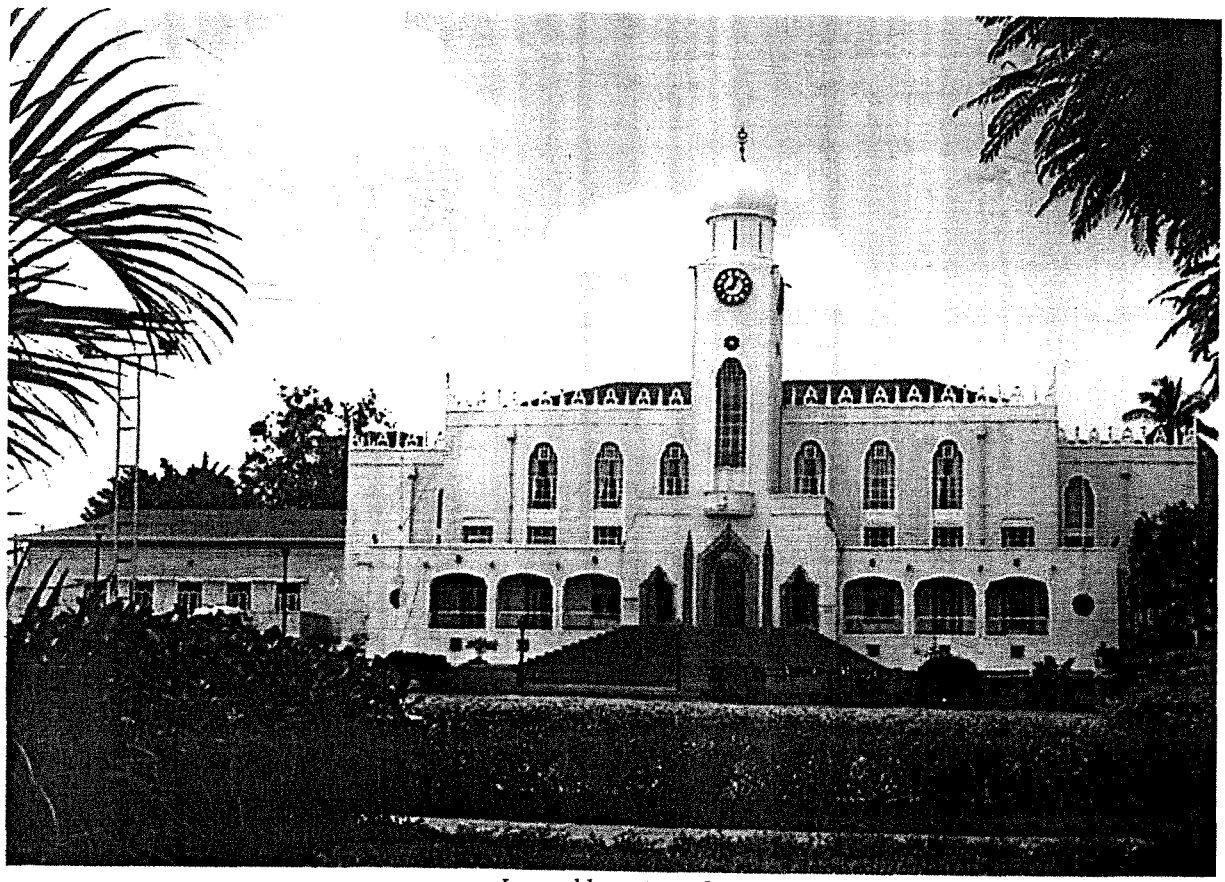
Other Countries of Africa



Bugala or Dhow in which the Indians reached the shores of Mombasa



Indian workers surveying land after laying tracks, in Kenya. 31,983 workers went from India to Kenya between August 1896 to December 1901. 2,493 died in the construction, that is, four workers died for each mile of railway line laid; more than 38 dying every month during the entire six years. A further 6,454 workers became invalid



Jamaatkhana, Uganda

Introduction

Various parts of the vast African continent have played host to Indian settlers in modern times for almost a hundred and fifty years. They found themselves transplanted there, whether voluntarily or otherwise, mainly following the British colonial empire's extension into the numerous constituent countries of Africa. This chapter deals only with the status of the Indian Diaspora in one region of what is usually referred to as 'Black Africa' or 'Africa South of the Sahara'. Owing to the special characteristics of the history of PIOs and NRIs in what was once the East African Community - comprising of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania - it is the Diaspora in those three countries that forms the subject matter of the first part of this chapter. As the Indian presence in South Africa has been considered separately in the High Level Committee's report, it will not be discussed here. Nor will other parts of Black Africa be dealt with as the size and the current status of the Indian Diaspora in those countries do not warrant detailed consideration. However, we end this chapter with brief notes on the Indian settlers and their descendents in many of those countries. A comparative table about them is on the next page. The Maghreb region of North Africa, with its independent Arab states and with the limited Indian presence in them, is also outside the purview of this chapter.

A Brief Sketch of Indian Emigration to East Africa

8.2. Most accounts of the Indian presence in East Africa normally start with a reference to *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*. Written during the first century A.D. by an anonymous author, this epic work is a kind of merchants' guide to the Western Indian Ocean. From this and other such writings, it is evident that Indian merchants had been plying their trade through the Indian Ocean during the days of ancient Babylon. They had even established trading posts along the coast of East Africa. But these historical facts are not of any direct relevance to a discussion of the Indian Diaspora that is to be found in this region during the contemporary period.

8.3. As in South Africa, the saga of the Indian settlers in East Africa is a mixture of success and frustration. Their induction into this part of the burgeoning British empire of the 19th century

Table 8.1: The Indian Diaspora in other countries of Africa

No.	Country	Population	PIOs	NRIs	Stateless	% of Population
1	**Algeria**	30,200,000	5	40	Nil	Insignificant
2	**Angola**	12,000.000	45	250	Nil	Insignificant
3	**Benin**	4,590,000	450	Nil	Nil	Insignificant
4	**Botswana**	1,500,000	3,000	6,000	Nil	0.66
5	**Cameroon**	15,863.000	250	Nil	Nil	Insignificant
6	**Cape Verde**	437,500	4	Nil	Nil	Insignificant
7	**Chad**	7,068,300	125	Nil	Nil	Insignificant
8	**Côte d'Ivoire**	16,000.000	30	270	Nil	Insignificant
9	**Djibouti**	460,000	280	Nil	Nil	Insignificant
10	**Eritrea**	3,317,611	30	1,723	Nil	Insignificant
11	**Ethiopia**	63,500.000	34	700	Nil	Insignificant
12	**Gambia**	1,200,000	135	Nil	Nil	Insignificant
13	**Ghana**	19,400,000	2,000	1,800	Nil	Insignificant
14	**G' Bissau**	1,315,822	25	Nil	Nil	Insignificant
15	**Kenya**	28,600,000	85,000	15,000	2,500	0.36
16	**Madagascar**	14,800,000	25,000	3,000	1,000	Insignificant
17	**Mali**	10,109.000	20	Nil	Nil	Insignificant
18	**Mauritius**	1,186,000	704,640	11,116	Nil	60.35
19	**Mozambique**	16,500,000	20,000	870	Nil	0.13
20	**Namibia**	1,700,000	32	78	Nil	Insignificant
21	**Nigeria**	125,000,000	8,000	17,000	Nil	Insignificant
22	**Réunion**	709,468	220,000	55	Nil	31.00
23	**Senegal**	9,000,000	13	8	Nil	Insignificant
24	**Seychelles**	81,000	2,000	3,000	Nil	6.10
25	**Sudan**	29,000,000	300	1,200	Nil	Insignificant
26	**Tanzania**	32,000,000	85,000	5,000	Nil	0.28
27	**Tunisia**	9,200,000	Nil	70	Nil	Insignificant
28	**Uganda**	21,500,000	7,000	5,000	Nil	Insignificant
29	**Zambia**	10,200.000	1,000	3,000	Nil	Insignificant
30	**Zimbabwe**	11,900,000	15,000	1,200	Nil	0.10

Note: The figures reproduced in this table are based mainly on inputs that the Committee had received from Indian Missions and Posts abroad.

began in the late 1860s with the export of over 30,000 Indians – mostly Sikhs from the Punjab – on three year contracts to provide labour for various public works. [There is some doubt about the exact number: 37,747 Indians, according to Professor Robert G. Gregory, an internationally recognized authority on this region; but only 31,983 according to the National Museum of Kenya!] They were recruited to help open the interior of that vast and thinly populated territory whose extensive resources had yet to be fully explored and tapped. The jungle had to be cleared and tracks laid for a railway line of over 580 miles from the port city of Mombasa on the Kenyan coast, all the way to Uganda's distant capital of Kampala, nestling on the shores of Lake Victoria. There was also an important geopolitical motivation involved in this. It was felt that with Uganda's pre-eminent status as source of the River Nile, whoever controlled its upper riparian waters, could easily control the Sudan and Egypt. In that way, the sea route through the Suez Canal to India, "the brightest jewel of the British crown", could also be safeguarded.

8.4. The hardy Sikhs, with their indomitable spirit, earned for themselves the title of *kala singhas* (or black lions) for their courage. Several thousands died as they ventured into the thick forests, teeming with lions and other wild animals, while others returned to India on the expiry of their contracts. Only some 7,000 chose to remain behind.

8.5. Meanwhile, with expanding economic opportunities, they were joined by large numbers of 'free' emigrants, both Hindu and Muslim, mainly from the Gujarat coast. These enterprising persons were the counterparts of the 'passenger Indians' of South Africa. In the following decades, they too played their part in opening up the interior - by setting up little trading posts far from the White-occupied urban centres. They are credited with having thus converted East Africa from a traditional barter society into a money economy.

8.6. Only Tanganyika, now called Tanzania, (and the Sultanate of Zanzibar) had escaped the British colonial net. A latecomer to the European partition of Africa, Germany made amends for itself after it was admitted to the comity of great nations. During the 'Scramble for Africa' in the late 19th century, a rebellious and unwilling Tanganyika became part of the new German Empire, which then imposed its will on this territory with 'blood and iron', crushing every sign of rebellion. As Julius Nyerere wrote in his *Freedom and Unity,* no less than 120,000 natives were slaughtered by the colonial administration to suppress the Maji Maji rebellion of 1905. Germany's defeat in the First World War resulted in the League of Nations awarding Tanganyika to Britain with the mandate to lead it on to eventual independence. But that was far from the mind of the new occupying power, which also resisted every sign of revolt. As in neighbouring Kenya and Uganda, Indian settlers followed the British colonists into Tanganyika, this time mainly from the Sultanate of Zanzibar, which had for long years boasted of a large Indian presence.

PIO Activities During the British Colonial Period

8.7. Wedged-in between the ruling Whites and the numerous indigenous Blacks, the emerging socio-political and economic situation of the Indians was a delicate one in the various countries of East

Africa to which they had migrated. Accordingly, Indian political leaders consistently followed the policy of advising them to integrate themselves in their newly adopted homelands, so as to be accepted completely by the native population. For his part, Jawaharlal Nehru never tired of advising them to become nationals of their countries of permanent domicile and to make common cause with the indigenous people. In the event, this had resulted in their adopting British citizenship throughout the three countries of East Africa during the colonial period, even though they had continued to retain their Indian lifestyle and did not mix freely with the African Blacks. It had equally meant their adopting the nationality of their respective countries of residence when each of them attained independence.

8.8. The Indian community grew in numbers and became more prosperous. As early as 1900, the first step was taken in Asian political activity by the formation of the Mombasa Indian Association on the initiative of L.M.Savle, who was known as 'a fiery Maratha who hunted elephants and ran a small business'. He was joined in this enterprise by three of the wealthiest Indian businessmen in East Africa – Allidina Visram and the brothers Alibhoy and Tayabali Jeevanjee. In the following years, similar associations were formed in Nairobi and nearly all the urban centres of Kenya. The PIOs of Uganda and Tanganyika followed these examples and started their own organisations in other parts of East Africa, though the latter were not as numerous as the ones in Kenya. The year 1914 saw the establishment in Mombasa, of the East African Indian National Congress with branches in the two other countries.

8.9. In the years following World War I, a new batch of younger and better educated PIOs, lead by Manilal Ambalal Desai, encouraged and instigated the indigenous Africans to join them in their political 'quest for equality'. This soon resulted in the formation of the Kikuyu Central Association in 1924. A foundation had thus been laid for joint action against the colonial powers.

8.10. Meanwhile, the PIOs had opened another front in the struggle for humane treatment by forming trade unions. Makhan Singh and Pio Gama Pinto were the two outstanding leaders of this movement, which soon included the Black Africans. The establishment, in 1935, of the Labour Trade Union of Kenya (LTUK) set the stage for the first successful combination of Indians and Black Africans in the fight for their rights on the labour front. It was not only in Kenya that such joint action was being launched. It was also to be found in the other two countries of East Africa.

8.11. Very soon, a third instrument of resistance was forged, namely, an increasingly articulate and combative Fourth Estate. Single-sheet newspapers had been published initially, in Gujarati, to keep the Indian community informed and alive to the injustices being heaped on them. In later years, these rudimentary papers were overtaken by English language ones, which aimed at reaching out to a European readership and thus bringing to its attention the inequitous treatment that was being meted out to both the Indian emigrants as well as the indigenous Blacks. Pranlal Sheth, Chanan Singh, Fitzval de Souza and Pio Gama Pinto were some of the heroes of this journalistic movement. Among them, the last-named (who was assassinated in later years for reasons that

were never publicised) cooperated with African leaders like Oginga Odinga, Tom Mboya and James Gichuru in founding the Kiswahili organ *Sauti ya Kanu* (Voice of KANU).

8.12. The British planters, ensconced in their White Highlands, and the colonial administrators of the three East African territories were not amused by the multiple efforts of the Indians to form, along with the Blacks, a common front of resistance against them. They blamed the PIOs for their role in contributing to the political awakening of the indigenous Africans by introducing them to the latent power of journalism and organised labour. The striving of the Indians for a more meaningful political role for themselves and for the Blacks had played no small part in frustrating a Colonial Office plan to grant self-government to the Whites of East Africa. Such a decision may have resulted in establishing a regime that could have evolved, in time, into a clone of apartheid South Africa. Consistent and vigorous attempts were made to create dissension between the two non-White communities – perhaps not on the scale perfected in South Africa, but sufficient to create mutual animosities. Unfortunately, the socio-cultural aloofness of the PIOs and the intellectual hauteur displayed by some of them, provided a handy weapon to the Whites. The latter accused the PIOs of 'make-believe cocktail integration' with the Blacks; cast aspersions on their business practices; and advised the Africans to question their real motives. At one stage, a rumour was spread that the hidden agenda of the Indians was to carve out an independent Indian territory in East Africa - an idea that a liberal-minded Englishman had apparently broached at one time as expiation for the East India Company's misdeeds in India! A good example of White strategy was to be found in a British Government White Paper of 1923, which declared that Kenya was primarily an African territory and that it was the considered opinion of His Majesty's Government 'that the interests of the African natives must be paramount'.

8.13. Nevertheless, all the White expressions of sympathy for the indigenous Blacks did not, in the long run, achieve their desired objective. By 1950, the cup of African resentment was overflowing. Beginning in 1952, it manifested itself in Kenya in the form of the Mau rebellion that was spearheaded by the Kikuyus. Solemn oaths of bloody vengeance against the Whites were administered at secret meetings, followed by numerous acts of murder and carnage directed against the White settlers. It was a critical moment for the Indians who had now become greatly worried about the future course of Kenya. Most of them appear to have sympathised with the Kikuyus, even if they kept out of any personal involvement in the raging violence. On the other hand, some of them volunteered to join the Home Guards and the Police Reserve to participate in the suppression of the Mau Mau. Considerable credit must be given to Apa Pant, independent India's first Commissioner in Nairobi, and to Pio Gama Pinto, both of whom had won the confidence of Kikuyu leaders like Jomo Kenyatta and Senior Chief Koinange, that the Blacks did not vent their anger against the Indian community in Kenya. Though the Mau Mau movement was finally suppressed, it had set the independence clock ticking. An emaciated Britain, already suffering from post-World War blues, soon agreed to let go of its grasp on its colonies in East Africa.

Post-independence Developments in East Africa

8.14. In retrospect, one may wonder whether the colonial ploy of *divide et impere* had succeeded. Or maybe the separate paths for independence taken by the Blacks and the Indians of East Africa were a result of their innate temperamental differences. The three countries of this region finally became independent in the early 1960s.

8.15. The transition was relatively peaceful for the PIOs in Tanzania under the wise leadership of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere who was determined to build a harmonious multi-racial society. With his conviction that *ujamaa* or 'familyhood' must be the basis of his philosophy of African Socialism, like Mandela he denounced all forms of racial discrimination. If he initiated a limited form of affirmative action in the first three years of his country's independence, it was only to ensure that its predominant population of Blacks would have adequate representation in the civil services. But by 1964 he had already discarded this policy, declaring that 'it would be quite wrong for us to discriminate between Tanzania citizens on any grounds other than those of character and ability to do specific tasks'. Meanwhile, he had already nominated Asian leaders like the Hon. A. Y. A. Karimjee and Amir Jamal to important official positions soon after becoming Prime Minister of independent Tanganyika in December 1961.

8.16. But the situation was more complicated in Kenya. While the Kikuyus of that country had launched the Mau Mau movement in October 1952 to hasten the transition to freedom, the Indians had held back from it due to their negative reaction to the violence that was being perpetrated. When Kenya finally became independent in 1963, with their memories still fresh with the movement's excesses, the PIOs decided to hedge their bets by not converting *en masse* to the Kenyan citizenship to which they were entitled. Instead, they formed long queues outside the offices of the British consular representatives to reaffirm their existing British nationality, a fact which confirmed to radical Africans that the loyalty of these permanent immigrants to their adopted land was suspect. As many as 82,000 PIOs obtained British passports while less than 50,000 became Kenyan citizens.

8.17. Some of them seem to have wondered whether much of the later resentment against them could have been avoided if they had swung solidly to the African side. In any case, the Blacks found it difficult to countenance the sight of the principal bazaars of Nairobi displaying the names of so many Indian-owned shops even after the country's political independence. The impatient new African government immediately launched a programme of Kenyanisation. When it realised that there were enough Indians with Kenyan citizenship to frustrate African aspirations, the government switched to a policy of Africanisation – which meant the cancellation or non-renewal of trading licences to non-Blacks, whatever their nationality. Affirmative action in favour of the Blacks was apparent in every aspect of socio-economic life: in trade, the award of contracts, appointments to government jobs, and many other such spheres. President Kenyatta's repeated exhortations to PIOs at public meetings to 'pack up and go' were taken literally and many with British passports departed hastily to start a new life in the UK or North America.

8.18. The Government of India's reaction to the unfortunate chain of events in Kenya was the subject of a stormy debate in the Lok Sabha on 16 March 1970. Explaining the official position, Shri Surendra Pal Singh, Deputy Minister for External Affairs, told Parliament that India's responsibility was restricted only to such of the PIOs as were Indian citizens. In other words, it was restricted only to the NRIs. As for those who were either Kenyans or British by nationality, Nairobi and London were required, under international law, to look after their interests. India should not be expected to allow them free entry into the country. He added that PIOs who had been rendered stateless for one reason or other were also clearly the concern of their country of domicile.

8.19. Shri Singh then added that what he had said so far was only the legal position. But there was also a moral or emotional aspect to this question. India had to tread softly in determining its response so as not to be accused of being either a 'nosy Parker or indifferent'. Delhi could have no quarrel with the policy of Africanisation as it was in Kenya's national interest; it was also technically non-discriminatory between different races. This stand was similar to what India had taken in the case of Burma. But the Government of India had made representations to Kenya to implement its nationalisation policies in a humane manner as the PIOs had been in Kenya for several generations and had made valuable contributions to its development.

8.20. On the other hand, the question of British PIOs was very complex, as London had passed the Commonwealth Immigration Act in 1968, which had restricted entry into the U.K. to only those British passport holders who could conclusively prove a 'continuing relationship' with Britain. This stipulation meant that either of the parents or one of the grand parents of a person aspiring for free entry into Britain must have been born in Britain. Obviously, such a condition could not be satisfied by most of the PIOs in Kenya. Shri Surendra Pal Singh informed the Lok Sabha that the British Government had been told categorically that it was solely responsible for safeguarding the interests of British PIOs, including their free entry into Britain. And when London pleaded that this would cause social problems and, therefore, only a phased entry programme could be entertained by it, India asked Whitehall to increase its annual quota for such entries, as well as to liberalise other provisions such as the definition of 'family'. Meanwhile, the Indian High Commission in Nairobi had been authorised to issue visas quite freely to British PIOs, so that they could await in India their turn in the quota queue.

8.21. An even more serious crisis erupted in Uganda in the early 1970s when Idi Amin ousted President Milton Obote after a military coup. On 9 August 1972, he announced the issue of a decree expelling, within 90 days, all persons of Asian origin who were citizens of the U.K., India, Pakistan or Bangladesh. Ten days later, he decreed that even Ugandan citizens of Asian origin were also to be expelled. The ensuing Indian *démarches* with Kampala were on the same lines as in the earlier case of Kenya. External Affairs Minister Sardar Swaran Singh apprised the Lok Sabha on 4 September 1972 of the discussions that had taken place with the Ugandan Government. India expected it to enable our NRIs (who then numbered about 4,000) to leave the country 'under conditions conforming to humane and equitable standards under international law and usage.

Their honour and safety and the security of their property was the responsibility of the Ugandan Government'. He also informed the Lok Sabha that, simultaneously, the strength of our High Commission in Kampala had been increased, so that it could render effective assistance to our nationals.

8.22. As regards the PIOs of British nationality, with the precedent of Kenya before it, the U.K. Government accepted full responsibility for all the 'Asians' in Uganda holding British passports. By then, because of India's partition in 1947, the appellation of 'Asians' had become mandatory to describe people originating in what was formerly the British Empire in India.

8.23. It is worth noting here that by the early 1960s, when the British colonies of Tanganyika, Kenya and Uganda finally gained their independence, there were over 360,000 'Asians' in East Africa. Today, the Indian Diaspora in East Africa does not even touch a figure of 200,000. Of them, a hundred thousand persons are to be found in Kenya, not more than 80 to 85 thousand in Tanzania, and barely 12 to 14 thousand in Uganda.

8.24. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that the PIOs of Kenya have been able to overcome the challenges of Africanisation by diversifying from their former, almost-total involvement in petty business and trade, into other occupations, industry, and various professional sectors, thus constituting an important part of the country's economy. The situation in Tanganyika is not as comfortable as in Kenya. Its Asian population continues to lead a peaceful though not a very prosperous existence. After the nightmare of Idi Amin's regime, the Asians of Uganda have been reluctant to respond to the present, Museveni government's overtures to them to return to the country and regain their lost possessions. Having settled down and prospered in countries of their second migration, they are reluctant to go back. Those few who have done so, seem to have gone there only to regain and quickly dispose of their former properties, and to return once more to their current permanent homes after that. Only the Madhvani and the Mehta families, who had played a major role in Uganda's economy in pre-Idi Amin days, have apparently revived some of their activities in the country.

Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora

8.25. The High Level Committee was not able to visit all the three countries of East Africa in the course of its tours to familiarise itself with the problems and difficulties faced by members of the Indian Diaspora in various parts of the world. However, during its visit to Kenya, representative members of the local Indian community placed before the Committee the following demands and expectations. We are persuaded that a similar list would be forthcoming from the Diasporas in Tanzania and Uganda as the basic conditions of their existence in the three countries of East Africa currently share many common characteristics:

(1) There is no interest among the PIOs of east Africa to acquire dual citizenship. In fact, they feel such a status would only cast doubts on their loyalty to the countries of their permanent domicile.

(2) A number of senior citizens among these PIOs are keen to return to India, to pass their sunset years in the land of their ancestors. They would be grateful if the regulations for the re-acquisition of Indian citizenship could be amended so that this process can be completed within a short period.

(3) The fee for the acquisition of a PIO Card should be reduced significantly. An attractive brochure setting out the special facilities that such a card would make available should be prepared and widely circulated for the information of prospective applicants.

(4) A widespread complaint brought to the Committee's notice was about the harsh treatment accorded to PIOs visiting India by our customs and immigration authorities.

(5) Similar protests were heard from them relating to bureaucratic hassles relating to their investments in India. It was suggested that the position could be improved if a single-window investment clearance facility is set up in each state.

(6) Many PIOs would like to send their children to India for education in Indian institutions. In this context, our High Commissioner in Nairobi has suggested that the HRD Ministry could, with the help of EdCIL, craft and execute a strategic plan to meet this demand. It would be very helpful if an attractive booklet is prepared with comprehensive information regarding the courses of study available at various educational institutes in India, their fee structure, the minimum eligibility qualifications and other admission requirements, the timetable for submitting applications for admission and other such details.

(7) In view of the exorbitant local cost of suitable health care, many PIOs would like to avail themselves of the medical facilities existing in various prestigious hospitals in India. To facilitate this, a detailed publication or CD-Rom containing relevant details should be produced and become accessible to PIOs through all the Indian diplomatic and consular missions abroad.

(8) Considering the immense interest of the PIOs in Indian classical music and dance, one or more Indian Cultural Centres should be established in east Africa. Suitably qualified and experienced artists should be deputed to these centres to train PIO children in various disciplines of Indian dance and music, both vocal and instrumental.

8.26. The Committee's responses to these demands and expectations would be found in Chapter 38 entitled 'Conclusions and Recommendations'.

8.27. As indicated by us in the introductory part of this chapter, brief notes have been added below to describe the limited presence of the Diaspora in many of the other countries of Africa.

8.28. Very few of our nationals migrated to most of those countries for a variety of reasons. Many of them were not part of the former British colonial empire. The abolition of slavery by Britain in 1834 and the introduction by it of a new system of indentured labour did not therefore affect

them immediately, except to a comparatively limited extent. Induction of Indian labour into the non-British colonies started only after their former metropolitan countries had successfully negotiated an agreement with the British government enabling them to acquire Indian labour from British India. Some of those countries were so far away from India that hardly any Indians ventured out to them voluntarily. And then there were African countries where the opportunities for settlement did not seem attractive enough for our people to go there for permanent settlement.

8.29. As stated earlier, we have excluded the Maghreb region from the purview of this chapter. We have, however, covered statistics of the local Indian communities in two of them – Algeria and Tunisia - in the comparative table presented earlier. We have done so to illustrate the fact that in former non-British colonies, where the official language and the administrative regime were unfamiliar to our people, not many Indians thought of going there. Needless to say, these additional factors also influenced the limited voluntary Indian migration to the colonies of the Dutch and the Portuguese.

Angola

8.30. Bordering on the western coast of the African continent, this vast and mineral-rich former Belgian colony has had few permanent Indian settlers in it. Angola's enormous distance from India, as well as its unfamiliar local environment must have discouraged potential migrants. Even after the country's independence in 1975, the continuing civil war conditions in it have served as a disincentive for migration.

Botswana

8.31. A few Indian families, mainly Gujarati Muslims, migrated from South Africa to Botswana in the beginning of the 20th century. Initially engaged in general trading, they gradually built up big businesses by purchasing dealerships for international products, and also successfully investing in property. Most of them acquired local citizenship. This was possible as Botswana permits expatriates with over ten years' residence in the country to apply for permanent residence status and citizenship. A number of Indians who went to the country more recently have also become Botswanans. Some of them have taken an active part in politics. While no PIO has so far won any election to the Botswana Parliament, one of them has become a Nominated Member of its Parliament.

8.32. The discovery of diamonds and their mining from the late 1960s saw the beginning of a sustained economic boom in Botswana. This attracted many more PIOs to this country. Both professionals and businessmen arrived there from several African countries, especially South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe and even from Kenya and Uganda. The Botswana Government does not encourage immigration of foreign labour. But with its shortage of skilled manpower, it started recruiting Indian experts directly from India from the late 1980s – teachers, doctors, engineers and civil servants. The Indian community is well respected in Botswana for its business acumen and its

reputation for hard work. The political leadership and the higher bureaucracy are appreciative of its contribution towards the development of the country.

8.33. With the growth of the community, a number of region-based community associations have sprung up. There is already a Hindu temple in Gaborone, and another in Selebi Phikwe. A gurudwara and a mosque have also been built in the capital city. Plans have been made for the construction of a *Swaminarayan* temple, a *Sai Baba* Centre, a *Venkateswara* Temple and an ISKCON Centre at various sites in Botswana.

Cape Verde

8.34. There are four Catholic priests of Indian origin in Cape Verde. They were originally from Portuguese Goa. They had gone to Cape Verde in the 1950s when both Goa and Cape Verde were Portuguese colonies.

Côte d'Ivoire

8.35. There are only a very small number of Indians in this country. They started arriving in Côte d' Ivoire, which was then a French colony, about 30 years ago. They appear to have gone there because of the political instability prevailing at that time in some other African countries in which they had been based earlier. Many of them were traders in textiles and household goods. Others owned shops for electric and electronic goods, or household effects.

8.36. Some qualified persons have also gone there more recently from India to man technical and management positions in locally based companies owned by NRIs living in a third country. A few are employed in multilateral organisations like the African Development Bank, which also has on its staff, PIOs who are citizens of other African countries like Kenya and Zimbabwe.

Djibouti

8.37. There are around a hundred French nationals of Indian origin in Djibouti. This territory guarded for France, during colonial days, the entrance to the Red Sea from the Gulf of Aden. As for the remaining 180 or so PIOs in this country, they are mainly from Gujarat. Most of them are small traders or are employees of various commercial establishments. There are few expatriate Indians here in senior official positions.

8.38. India has had an Honorary Consul in Djibouti since 1969. Mr. S. J. Kothari, a long-term resident who owned a shipping enterprise, and had authoured a number of books about this country, was the first person to hold this post. His son is the current Honorary Consul for India.

Eritrea

8.39. Eritrea was formerly part of the Ethiopian Empire. After a punishing civil war that went on for thirty years, it declared its independence in May 1993. A short period of friendly relations was followed by further conflict with Ethiopia. With this kind of troubled history, it was not surprising

that the Indian community in Eritrea had dwindled from its original pre-war strength of 2,000 - consisting mostly of schoolteachers and Gujarati businessmen - to a mere thirty, all of whom have acquired Eritrean citizenship.

8.40. Recently, however, more Indians have gone to Eritrea as the government and some commercial establishments have been recruiting teachers, professors, technical personnel and other experts. Many of them are working in various ministries of the Eritrean government, or in the country's Central Bank, besides the 40 Professors at the University of Asmara. Some other NRIs are on the staff of the FAO. The number of NRIs in this country has now reached almost 400. Added to them are 1,323 Indian troops who are part of the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea. But their exact number in each of the two countries at any given time would of course depend on operational requirements determined by the United Nations.

Ethiopia

8.41. The Indian community in Ethiopia had at one time reached a figure of 2,500. General Rawley had been loaned by India to set up a Military Academy for Ethiopia. A large number of Indians had been employed between the late sixties and the nineties on a contractual basis to teach in the country's primary and secondary schools. But with the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie by Colonel Mengistu, the new communist regime introduced a policy of "Ethiopianisation" which meant that foreigners were not allowed to teach in Ethiopian schools. Consequently, all the teachers and a large number of Indian businessmen moved to other destinations. Only a few Indians remained behind, among whom were those who had settled down in the country for more than three generations.

8.42. Presently, there are only around 700 Indians residing in Ethiopia. Around a hundred of them are businessmen. Mainly from Gujarat, they work as commission agents of various import-export companies. Another 150 are professors who teach in the Defence Ministry's Engineering College and in various faculties of leading Ethiopian universities and other institutions of higher learning. Six of them teach in the Civil Services College, a prestigious institution under the Prime Minister's Office that is similar to our Administrative Staff College. As many as 15 Indian professionals are on the staff of various UN agencies in Addis Ababa. With the renewed Indian presence in Ethiopia, an Indian Association and a Hindu Mahajan have been established. They jointly celebrate various Indian festivals. Indian businessmen run two of the three Indian restaurants in Addis Ababa. Several Indian PSUs - TCIL, WAPCOS, RITES, ICT, etc. have won a number of contracts. Their officials in Ethiopia enjoy a good rapport with their local counterparts. All in all, Ethiopians hold the Indian community in high esteem.

Gambia

8.43. Gambia has in it a small presence of PIOs and NRIs who are engaged in diverse professions such as doctors, pharmacists, businessmen and skilled workers. In the total Indian community of 135 persons, there are as many as fifteen children under the age of fourteen.

Ghana

8.44. In a country of 19.4 billion inhabitants, Ghana has a relatively small Indian community of barely 4,000 persons. Some of them have acquired Ghanaian citizenship, which is generally granted without any discrimination. Most members of the local Indian Diaspora are well off. They are either independent businessmen with branches also in neighbouring countries, or employees of various local companies. However, many of them have been badly affected by Ghana's recent economic problems. With the fall in the international prices of its main export items of gold and cocoa beans, and with the accompanying rise in the prices of its imports of crude oil and other petroleum products, the exchange rate of the local *cida* has crashed *vis à vis* hard currencies. This has adversely affected the independent Indian businessmen, along with everyone else who had been involved in foreign trade.

8.45. The Indian Diaspora in this country has been quite active socially. In Accra, it has set up an Indian Association and an Indian Social Centre, both of which function from the premises of an Indian temple that has been constructed by the community in Accra. Various social and cultural programmes are organised there, as well as festivals to mark important religious days. Every Thursday and Sunday, community members gather there for *kirtans* and *poojas*. The temple also hosts a Yoga Centre and Radhasoami (Beas) *satsangs*. There is no Indian school in Ghana. Well-to-do Indian families send their children to the Ghana International School, while others prefer less expensive schools. Some members of the Indian community even send their children to India or to some other country for their education.

8.46. Social interaction between the Diaspora and the local people is fairly widespread. There are partnerships between them in some business deals and also some mixed marriages. Ghanaians freely attend Indian social and cultural functions. The Indian community makes occasional donations to various worthy causes. The mainstream Ghanaians are quite appreciative of the role being played by them in the overall development of the country, and also for their culture and understanding towards others.

Guinea Bissau

8.47. In Guinea Bissau, there are only five PIO families. Two of them are in retail trade and one owns a pharmacy, while the remaining two have been working with local NGOs on short-term contracts.

Madagascar

8.48. Madagascar was known as Malagache when it was a French colony. As far back as 1900, predominantly Gujarati Indians from the Saurashtra region had arrived in small sailing boats at the port of Hahajanga, located in the northwestern part of this island. Some of them had also gone there from Zanzibar. The initial influx into this island was predominantly Muslim, consisting of Khojas, Ismailis and Daoudi Bohras. A small number of Hindus also followed them, but they

went to other parts of Madagascar. By 1950, the community had spread to practically every nook and corner of the country. Apart from five families who had carried their prosperity with them, most of the others were initially just about able to make both ends meet as traders and general merchants. After the country's independence in June 1960, the French bureaucracy stayed back and so did their commercial enterprises. With the wholesale nationalisation of private industries after the revolutions of 1972-75, they were compelled to leave. A gaping void ensued in the country's bureaucracy, its trade and its commerce. But the local Indian Diaspora was in no position to step in immediately, as most of the Indians were then illiterate. Nevertheless, they were gradually able to seize the opportunity that had come their way and, in time, they became a force to reckon with in the trade and commerce of Madagascar. It is generally believed that approximately 50-60% of the country's economy is in their hands. The unfortunate consequence of this prosperity is that, whenever there is political or social unrest in the country, PIOs become an easy target for unruly demonstrators.

8.49. With little interest in the bureaucracy or local politics, the Indian community maintains a low profile socially, while zealously guarding its culture and languages. It has no other problems in this country. But those members of the community who are stateless persons constantly pressurise the government of Madagascar to grant them local citizenship. Foreign nationals can easily acquire Malagasy nationality if they are married to a local citizen, whereupon their children automatically acquire local citizenship. But this regulation provides little solace to stateless persons.

Mozambique

8.50. The Indian connection with Mozambique dates back to at least the late 15th century. Muslim traders from the Malabar region of India had been part of the local commercial establishment long before the arrival there of the Portuguese colonists. Vasco da Gama found some Hindu traders in this country when he visited it in 1499. With the establishment of Portuguese power on the Malabar Coast of India, the Portuguese began to favour the idea of Indian migration to east Africa. Many Goans, especially Catholics, were taken to Mozambique to serve there as petty officials, soldiers or ecclesiastics. Some Hindus from the other Portuguese possessions in India went there voluntarily as traders.

8.51. In 1961, when the Government of India liberated Goa, Daman and Diu from Portuguese rule, Salazar ordered that Indian nationals in Mozambique should be consigned to concentration camps for six months. All their bank accounts and properties in Mozambique were sealed under his orders. The persecution of the Indians in this country came to an end only after the fall of the Salazar dictatorship. On 25 June 1975, Mozambique finally attained its independence.

8.52. The Indian Diaspora in Mozambique is currently estimated to number around 20,000 persons, of whom fewer than 900 are NRIs. Despite their presence in this country for several centuries and the adverse circumstances that they had to face under Portuguese rule, they have retained their

distinct culture, traditions, attire and also their Indian lifestyle. Both Hindus and Muslims celebrate their various festivals with the same pomp and gaiety as is done in India.

Namibia

8.53. Namibia has a very small Indian community. Before its independence in 1990, apartheid South Africa had defied the UN Trusteeship Council's repeated resolutions to grant independence to this territory. Instead, it had insisted on regarding Namibia as part of its administrative jurisdiction, designating it as its 'Southwest Africa' province. It had not permitted PIOs and NRIs even to visit Namibia, leave aside settling down in it. Under exceptional circumstances, however, a South African of Indian origin, Mr. Navin Morar, had managed to go there with his family. They had been allowed to remain in the country.

8.54. After Namibia's independence in March 1990, President Sam Nujoma's government revoked the earlier restrictive immigration policy. Thereupon, South Africans of Indian origin and also Indian citizens began visiting the country in search of trading and employment opportunities. Finding the living conditions amenable and the business climate lucrative, some of them settled down there on a permanent basis. As of now, there is in Namibia an Indian community consisting of about 40 families, out of which 22 are Indian citizens and the rest are South Africans or nationals of some other country. Of them, about 12 families are engaged in business and trading activities, while the others are employed as teachers, doctors, engineers, etc. Most of them reside in the capital city of Windhoek.

Nigeria

8.55. Sindhis were the first to arrive in Nigeria in the early part of the last century. They had gone there to explore for business opportunities. With their hard work and shrewd business acumen, they succeeded in gradually gaining a firm foothold in the country. Initially, they were primarily engaged in trading. But gradually, while still retaining their interest in trading, they also ventured into other fields like manufacturing and professional services. In succeeding decades, they made substantial investments in Nigeria, aggregating more then US$ 4 billion. In this way, they engaged themselves actively in the textiles sector, as well as in pharmaceuticals, fishing and various engineering industries.

8.56. The Government of Nigeria follows a liberal and non-discriminatory policy in the grant of citizenship to resident foreign nationals. It is not surprising, therefore, that there are as many as 8.000 Nigerians of Indian origin in this country.

8.57. Starting from the 1970s, the Nigerian government and also several private sector agencies began to hire a large number of Indian doctors, teachers, engineers and other professionals to assist them. Towards the end of the 1980s, many of the Indian experts decided to return to India when, with the substantial reduction in the country's oil revenues, the country began to face severe economic problems. In spite of this, there are still as many as 17,000 NRIs in Nigeria.

Senegal

8.58. Formerly part of the French possessions in Africa, Senegal became independent in June 1960. There is a very small Indian community in this country – thirteen PIOs and eight NRIs. Two Sindhi families have been living here since 1947. Single-shop owners, they import handicrafts and other such articles for sale in their own souvenir shops or those of others. They are financially well off, but can by no means be regarded as prosperous. The only other members of the Indian community in Senegal are executives connected with a textile mill and a paint factory belonging to the UB group of companies.

Seychelles

8.59. Seychelles is a tiny island nation of 81,000 people in the middle of the Indian Ocean. The Indian Diaspora in it constitutes a little over 6% of the country's population. Almost equally divided between NRIs and PIOs, it is clearly identifiable among the indigenous people of African origin and the European whites who had decided to settle down in Seychelles after its independence in 1976. The PIOs in this country consist mainly of first and second generation Seychellois, plus a smaller number of third generation persons. Among PIOs of the older generations are many that have totally adopted the indigenous culture. Some of them even have local spouses. Among them are several that have set up construction companies in the island. They employ hundreds of NRIs, as well as Indo-Seychellois, to work as contract labour on their construction jobs.

8.60. The Bank of Baroda has had a branch in Seychelles since 1978. Airtel, a local subsidiary of Bharati Telecom of India, was established there in 1997. Another Indian firm has a contract to maintain the Seychelles Public Transport system, which mainly plies Tata buses. A large number of NRI professionals consisting of engineers, chartered accountants, teachers and computer experts are employed in the hotels, banks, parastatals and various ministries of the Seychelles government. Indian doctors keep the health services running. The Heinz Indian Ocean Tuna factory employs a large number of NRI labourers.

8.61. Overall, it is believed that more than 10% of the population of Seychelles has some Indian roots. Many local shops cater to the needs of the Diaspora by stocking Indian consumer items. The community has established a Hindu temple that is run by the *Hindu Kovil Sangam*. There is also here an Indo-Seychelles Friendship Association and a Hindu Council of Seychelles. But the relative prosperity of the community is possibly responsible for the nascent anti-foreigner sentiment in the country. This was evident during the recent presidential elections. A natural consequence has been the growing PIO concerns relating to their life, their property and their earnings – concerns heightened by the fact that repatriation of local earnings to India is difficult due to the country's shortage of foreign exchange.

Sudan

8.62. The history of the Indian community in Sudan goes back to about a hundred years when the first

Indian family arrived in Port Sudan. Almost the entire Diaspora in this country is from Saurashtra. Most of them are inter-related by marriage. In Sudan, there are also a little over a thousand NRIs. They work in the local sugar companies and in other establishments as engineers or skilled workers. Otherwise, the community mostly consists of small traders and businessmen. A vast majority of the Indian Diaspora is able to afford only a modest livelihood, while some can even be regarded as poor.

Zambia

8.63. Unlike South Africa or East Africa, there was no requirement for indentured labour in Zambia, which was known as Northern Rhodesia in British colonial times. This territory was then regarded as poor and backward, with few or no attractions for any prospective British or Indian settlers. Its extensive copper deposits had yet to be discovered. But adventurous Indians from Gujarat who had ventured out in search of trading opportunities arrived there in 1905 through coastal Bechuanaland (now Malawi) to settle down in the northwestern part of Rhodesia. The initial wave of pioneering settlers was mostly of Muslims, but Hindu traders soon joined them. Gradually, both communities made their way to Lusaka, to settle down in the region's administrative capital.

8.64. Even educated Indians were not then eligible for employment in the civil service of the colonial administration. Before the settlers could get involved in trading, they often had to begin life in their new country as gardeners, tailors or in some other such occupation. Only gradually were they able to revert to their traditional occupation of trading, whereupon with patient diligence, they were able to make their presence felt in the local market. But economic prosperity was still a distant dream. It came to them many years later - in fact, after Zambia attained its independence in 1964 and started looking towards India for material and moral support.

8.65. Thereafter, the Indian community began to play a meaningful role in the Zambian economy. Trading was still their primary occupation. Some of them became wholesalers. A large number of shops all over Zambia began to be run by them. Others took up occupations like banking, farming and mining. The influence of Indian expatriate professionals also became visible in Zambia, especially in the fields of medicine and education.

8.66. Meanwhile, about 10,000 Indians had adopted Zambian citizenship. There are currently four Indo-Zambian Members of Parliament. Three of them have held ministerial positions until recently. The fourth is currently Minister of Commerce, Trade and Industry. On the whole, however, the role of the Diaspora in the country's politics is not very substantial due to its small number. But its members have been a useful source of election funding for the party in power.

Zimbabwe

8.67. Indians started arriving in Southern Rhodesia about the end of the 19th century. Their further immigration was restricted after 1923 when the colony became a self-governing territory under

the British Empire. But after the formation of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1953, the flow of Indians into what was later to be renamed as Zimbabwe was resumed. They migrated to this country from the other two members of the Federation and also from South Africa. There was no damming this tide even after Ian Smith's declaration of Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965. Currently, the Indian Diaspora in this country has reached a total of over 16,000 persons, of whom Zimbabwe citizens form the overwhelming majority. This has been facilitated by the fact that, since its belated independence in 1980, Zimbabwe has followed a liberal policy towards foreign residents in the country. Those who are born in Zimbabwe can acquire its citizenship without any discrimination. Others can qualify for this status only after living in the country continuously for over five years, provided they have had a clear police record and have engaged themselves in productive activities. Interested members of the Diaspora were duly qualified for local citizenship.

8.68. Both the Hindu and Muslim components of the Indian community have established cultural centres that also host religious activities. They become very active during weddings and festivals. There are four or five Hindu *bhajan* and prayer *mandals* and a temple each in Harare, Gweru and Bulawayo. The Muslims have built mosques in Harare, as well as in several smaller *mofussil* centres.

8.69. The Indian Diaspora in Zimbabwe consists mainly of Gujaratis. As elsewhere in the world, here too they are generally business-oriented, though some of them also belong to the artisan class. A small number have ventured into industry. There are also some professionals among them - doctors, lawyers, accountants, engineers and teachers. Very few of them are employed in any agencies of the government. The only notable exceptions are two who are judges and another two who occupy high positions in the Government's Legal Department. On the whole, the community may be said to have attained a fairly comfortable social and economic status in Zimbabwe.

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Chapter 9

Israel

Basic Facts

Population of the country: 6.3 million (as of October 2000)

Approximate number of the Indian community:

(a)	Persons of Indian Origin:	45,000
(b)	Indian Citizens (NRIs):	300
(c)	Stateless persons, if any:	Figures not available, but we have not come across any such cases

Profile

According to available data, between 25,000 and 30,000 Indian Jews have migrated to Israel starting from the late 40s, with the major waves going there in the 50s and 60s The migrants from India belong essentially to three groups: the Bene-Israel of Maharashtra (20,000 plus); the Cochin Jews (3,500); and the so called Baghdadi Jews. Of these, the first two groups had lived in India for thousands of years and were thoroughly Indian in their language (Marathi and Malayalam, respectively), food habits and other cultural traits. The Baghdadis had a shorter sojourn in India starting from the 19th century onwards; they retained many elements of Iraqi Jewish culture but technically many of them could also claim Indian origin in terms of the definition in Article 5 of the Citizenship Act. In the last few years a fourth group has emerged – the Bnei Menashe of Mizoram who were accepted as a 'lost tribe' of Israel. A small number have settled in Israel. The available information about this group is scanty.

9.2. The Jews have never faced discrimination in India. Some of them went to Israel because of their religious affiliation and hopes for a better economic life. Initially, they found a country established by Ashkenazi (European) Jews. It was run by the latter on their terms, and many of the migrants from India had a difficult time adjusting and assimilating. Lacking adequate economic and social support systems, the Israelis from India had to struggle in the small "development towns" and agricultural settlements to establish themselves in Israel. The community today has a good

reputation for being law abiding and modest. They belong, by and large, to the middle class. A large proportion of the Bene-Israel lives in small towns and works as employees in firms and government agencies. A few have become business executives, while some own small businesses. Many of the Cochinis took to agriculture (in contrast to their professions while in India) and have succeeded. One migrant from Cochin ranks amongst the largest exporters of roses from Israel.

9.3. Since the younger generation born in Israel are mainly conversant with Hebrew (all immigrants have to study the language) and are being absorbed in the Israeli Jewish melting pot, the community is losing the "Indianness" which the first generation had taken with it. Knowledge of Marathi and Malayalam, for example, is diminishing among the Jews born and raised in Israel. There is, however, considerable interest among them in maintaining cultural links with India. Israelis of Indian origin have participated in gatherings of Marathi speakers from all over the world, and a session of the World Marathi Conference was held in Israel some years ago. The most evident cultural link today, however, comes through the pop culture, particularly Hindi films and the dance forms associated with the film world. This is popular with many young people in the Indian Jewish communities, irrespective of whether or not they understand the language fully.

9.4. As they are of modest means with little political "activism," Israelis of Indian origin have had limited economic involvement with India, or any political status in the country of their adoption. There are a number of "Indian Jewish" and "Bene-Israel" associations in small towns, along with a loosely structured umbrella organisation, the Central Council for Indian Jews in Israel. But the community does not have a high degree of political mobilization at the national level and consequently little bargaining power in the intensively competitive Israeli political system. There is only one person of Indian origin in the Knesset –Eli Ben Menachem – a Labour (One Israel) MK who was born in Mumbai in a Baghdadi family. A few PIOs have been successful in local politics, in town councils in cities like Lod and Ramle where there are concentrations of PIOs. A Cochini is presently the Council President of a small town (Yesod Hamala) in northern Israel. In recent years, a group of young Indian Jews started a movement (Hodaya) to mobilize the community for political action. They had marginal impact in the 1999 elections, but are seeking to continue their organisational activity.

9.5. The basic problem of the Israelis of Indian origin is socio-economic advancement. Given the fact that the Israeli economy has developed very rapidly in the last two decades, the community does have reasonable prospects for development, particularly if it emphasizes higher education more than in the past. The Indians in Israel are broadly classed as "Sephardic" Jews and have a few Rabbis among them. In religious terms, they are quite well integrated among the "Sephardim" of Israel.

Non Resident Indians

9.6. The small community of Indian citizens in Israel is mostly of Gujaratis engaged in the diamond business. There are about 20 families (most of whom can trace their origin to Palanpur) and some of their employees are resident in Israel with employment permits. They play an important part in the diamond trade, which constitutes about half of overall Indo-Israeli trade. The Gujarati community is socially active and, by and large, well respected in Israel. It has set up an informal association called the Gujarati Indian Association that celebrates major cultural festivals.

9.7. There is also a small and fluctuating population of students and scholars, numbering about 50 to 60 and a few Indian workers engaged in construction, the hospitality industry and domestic work. Their numbers are hard to verify but they have been estimated to be a few hundred only.

Cultural and Other Associations:

9.8. The following associations have been formed by the PIOs in Israel:

(i) The Indo-Israel Cultural Association: This association organizes a variety of cultural events in Israel including lectures on India and artistic performances.

(ii) The Central Organisation of Indian Jews is the main association of Jews of Indian origin in Israel. It conducts meetings of all Indian Jews once in a year and organizes cultural events, especially popular Hindi and Marathi song and dance programmes. The Central Organisation of Indian Jews also publishes a quarterly journal.

(iii) The Centre of Jewish Heritage is broadly the main organisation of the Cochin Jews in Israel. It administers the Museum on Jewish Heritage in India. This is located at Moshav Nevatim in Israel.

(iv) The Gujarati Indian Association has been referred to in para 9.6 above.

Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora

9.9. The older generation of the Israeli community of Indian origin has notions about India that are based on nostalgia for the past. Members of the second generation have high expectations from India, derived from what it has heard from the older generation. They expect things in India to conform to standards in Europe and Israel, and get a culture shock when they visit India and find that this is not so.

Chapter 10

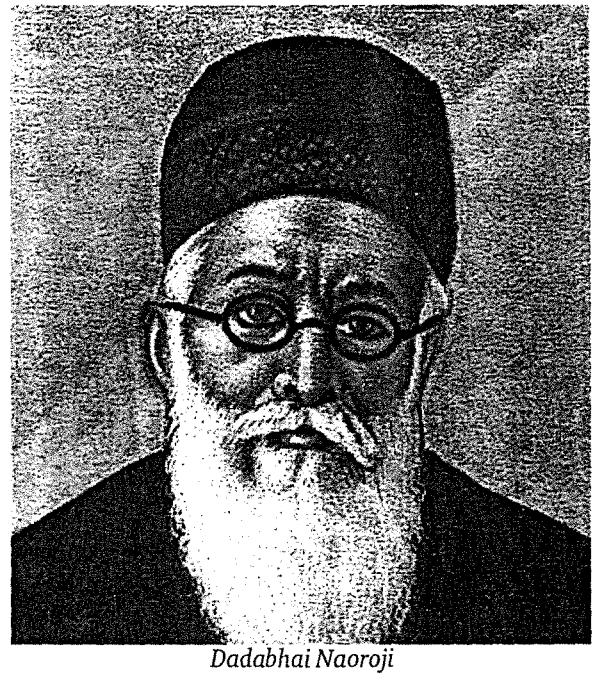
The United Kingdom



The Swaminarayan Hindu Mission, London – the biggest temple in Europe



Lord Tarsem Singh King, Mayor of Sandwell, first Sikh to be made member of the House of Lords
(Photo Courtesy: Focus Studio,Birmingham)



Dadabhai Naoroji
First Indian elected to UK Parliament



Shri Guru Nanak Dev Gurudwara Sahib,Birmingham
(Photo Courtesy: Focus Studio,Birmingham)

Introduction

The Indian community in the U.K. has a unique place in our Diaspora. The U.K. is the first country which has an Indian community truly representative of its diversity. The colonial connection between India and the U.K. had ensured intimate interaction between the two countries at all levels for over two centuries. This has obviously contributed to the evolution of an Indian community in Britain comprising of all sections of the people. The presence of a moderate intellectual elite comprising of very eminent patriots like Dadabhai Naoroji and Gopal Krishan Gokhale ensured Indian participation in the British political process from the early stages of India's Independence Movement. Dadabhai Naoroji elected to the House of Commons as a Liberal Member as early as 1892. He was a successful Parsi businessman, who became the 'Grand Old Man of the Congress' represented Indian opinion in the UK and applied his liberal education and experience in the UK to India's problems. He was followed by Sir Mancherjee Bhawangree (Conservative, 1895 to 1906) and Shapurji Saklatvala (Labour, 1922, and as Communist MP, 1924). A number of Indian organisations were founded in Britain to work for India's independence. Almost all of them believed in mobilizing British public opinion for their cause. This further contributed to Indians becoming a part of the British political process. The Indian student bodies in Oxford and Cambridge were among the most active student organisations in these universities. Krishna Menon enjoyed personal friendship with the leadership of the Labour Party.

10.2. A large number of Indian leaders of the Independence Movement, including Mahatma Gandhi, were deeply influenced by the liberal education they had received in the U.K. The non-violent nature of the Indian Independence Movement resulted not only in the peaceful departure of the British from India but also helped in continuation of ties with the UK.

10.3. Participation of a large number of Indian soldiers in both the First and Second World Wars had also created special bonds between the Armed Forces of the two countries. The largest number of Victoria Cross recipients were Indians. Because of these bonds, a number of people in India felt that they had claims on the Empire as equal citizens. This was an important factor in the migration of Sikhs to various parts of the Empire. The foundations of Indology were laid in the UK during

the colonial times. Every major university in the UK had departments for deep and serious India studies. The civilisational impact of India was felt in the UK very strongly in the 19th century owing to the works of India's social reformers and philosopher Raja Ram Mohan Roy and British personalities who studied the civilization of India. Warren Hastings expressed deep praise for the Bhagawat Gita as the most wonderful text of its kind in the world. The colonial policy had moreover resulted in the emergence of Indian communities in virtually every part of the Empire. Through their hard work, perseverance and expertise they played a vital role in the transformation of these colonies into organised economies and modern states. A number of these PIOs subsequently migrated to Britain, thus creating unique segments within the large Indian Diaspora of the U.K. The presence of such extraordinary diversity in a country with which India had over two centuries of colonial relationship had resulted in this truly unique Diaspora. A substantial presence of PIOs in the British Parliament, several hundred Councillors and a substantial number of Mayors reflect the significant participation of PIOs in the public life and political processes in the UK. Among other prominent PIO citizens are the industrial giants, hoteliers, traders, media men, scientists, artists, cultural and literary figures, academicians and sportsmen of eminence.

Brief History of Migration

10.4. The origins of the present day Indian Diaspora lay in the variety of interactions between the long British Raj and India. The Parsi community of Gujarat and the Bengali community arrived in Britain in the 18th and 19th centuries as qualified lawyers, doctors, professionals to settle down in the UK. The Parsis dominated the Indian community in the UK as the earliest settlers. During the First and Second World Wars, many British Indian Army soldiers who were part of the war effort, settled down in Britain.

10.5. The largest settlements however, occurred after 1947. The first influx of Indians into the UK from post independence India took place in the 50s and 60s. Large numbers of workers, mainly of Punjabi origin, went to the UK in the aftermath of the post-World War-II reconstruction efforts in the industrial sectors. The second major wave was in the 60s and 70s when PIOs, mainly of Gujarati origin, were forced to leave erstwhile British colonies in East Africa. The Asians who were uprooted from Uganda in large numbers by Idi-Amin constituted an important segment of the PIOs who went to Britain in a large influx in the early and mid 70s. Many of them left the UK for the USA thereafter reflecting secondary and tertiary waves of PIO migration. The second wave had considerable expertise in trade and business. The economic successes and prosperity of the Indian community in the UK commenced in a major way with this second wave of migration, establishing the Indians as 'shopkeepers in the nation of shopkeepers.' It made a major impact on the socio-economic landscape of the UK and its multi-cultural fabric.

10.6. The Sikh migrant communities initially comprised only of men, resulting in large demographic gender imbalances. The arrival of families in the UK had the effect of strengthening the pattern of family life along the lines that existed in India. Traditional customs, religions and cultural values

were also maintained. Second and third generation Asians, however, had difficulties in conforming to them. The pressures of discrimination from the dominant society led to further strains and consolidation of the traditional lifestyle of the minorities. However, the growth of an Asian sub-culture is seen in the combined Bhangra and Western dance music, which reflects the synthesis of the British and Asian cultures. The Asian and Afro-Caribbean communities in the 50s and 60s experienced difficulties in assimilation in the UK owing to their very distinct lifestyles and cultures which were vastly different from those of the mainstream host society. This brought a new concept of 'multi-culturalism' on the public agenda of the UK, which emphasized the need of co-existence of different cultures to enrich the multi-cultural fabric of the nation.

10.7. In the last decade, the population of the UK has remained stable, but it has been ageing like the population of many other developed countries. This has led to a dependence on young workers from non-Western countries, especially high-tech skilled workers such as IT experts, doctors, teachers, and engineers.

10.8. The number of British work permits issued to immigrants from India has risen steadily from 1,997 in 1995 to 5,663 in 1999. Of the total number of work permits granted in 1999 by the UK, 51.4 per cent were for work in the computer industry. At least two-thirds of all software professionals now entering Britain are from India. This is due to amendments in the work permit rules last year which facilitate the entry of more information technology-trained foreigners. Those amendments have opened the floodgates for Indian IT professionals, as Britain faces a massive skills shortage in IT. Government figures show 18,257 foreign IT professionals coming to Britain in 2000. Of them 11,474 were from India. In 2001, according to official estimates, these numbers are rising faster. Last year, the second highest number of IT professionals (2,034) came from the US, of whom, many are of Indian origin. Many of the 748 professionals who came from South Africa, and the 708 who came from Australia are also reportedly of Indian origin. Within Asia, Indian professionals have clearly taken a substantial lead over others in taking up IT jobs in Britain. 132 came from Pakistan, 69 from Sri Lanka and 15 from Bangladesh. India is thus becoming a generic supplier of skills to Britain, as indeed to the rest of the developed world.

10.9. India and the UK are making efforts to intensify their economic cooperation, so as to make it future-oriented in emerging and growth areas such as information technology. Non-traditional knowledge-based sectors like IT and bio-technology have therefore acquired great prominence and promise in bilateral relations. Nearly 100 Indian companies are resident in the UK and 65 of them are in the IT sector. The Government of the UK has also expressed considerable interest in facilitating Indian IT professionals to work in the UK by taking several initiatives such as adding IT skills in the list of skill shortages in March 2000 and introducing an innovators visa scheme in September 2000. This would facilitate the conversion of student visas into work permits in the skill shortage categories while the individual concerned stays in the UK. It is therefore obvious that the Diaspora in the UK will continue to grow and also acquire even greater diversity in the coming years.

Demographics

10.10. According to the official statistics for the year 1999-2000, the total population of the UK was 56.9 million. Of them the number of PIOs and NRIs was 942,000 – i.e. 1.6% of the total. On a more informal basis, however, it is estimated that the size of the Indian community today is closer to around 1.2 million – i.e. 2.11% of the total population.

10.11. Over 40% of the Indian origin population lives in inner and outer London. It is concentrated in the boroughs of Ealing (Southall), Brent (Wembly), Hounslow, Barnet, Croydon and Newham. Outside London, the main areas of concentration are West and East Midlands, Leicester and Greater Manchester. As the following table indicates, Indians constitute a sizeable proportion of the total population in several areas :

Brent	(17.5%)	Newham	(13%)
Ealing	(16.1%)	Leicester	(22.3%)
Slough	(12.5%)	Harrow	(16.1%)
Hounslow	(14.3%)	Redbridge	(10.2%)
Wolverhampton	(11.4%)	Barnet	(7.3%)
Blackburn	(7.7%)		

10.12. A majority of the original immigrants of the 1960s and 1970s were industrial workers. The later immigrants from East Africa are mostly in small and medium-scale business and also the health sector. A majority of the second generation Indians and current immigrants are professionals working as doctors, engineers, solicitors, chartered accountants, academicians, IT experts, etc.

10.13. An important trend in non-EU immigration in recent years to the UK is accounted for by family reunification and marriage migration, in which the Indian subcontinent has a major share.

10.14. Persons of Indian origin constitute the single largest ethnic minority in Britain. Amongst the Indian immigrants, the largest number, approx. 45%, hail from the Punjab, of whom the 300,000 Sikhs form a large majority. Gujaratis comprising of Hindus and Muslims, Ismailis and Bohras constitute an equally large ethnic group. The Diaspora from Bengal, Bihar and UP, though numerically small, form influential groups in some selected pockets.

Socio-cultural Profile

10.15. The Indian community today maintains a vibrant and dynamic socio-cultural life within the framework of its numerous organisations and associations which are based mainly on their Indian religious or regional origin. In addition, there are a number of social, cultural and political

organisations. Though nearly 1000 organisations exist on paper, only about 200 among them are active. The community organisations are by and large constituted around the following alignments:

(a) Religion based organisations: Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Christians and Parsis have their religion based organisations. Important amongst these are Hindu Cultural Society, Indian Muslim Federation, Ahmadiya Muslim Association, Dawoodi Bohra Community, Arya Samaj, Jain Samaj Europe, Sikh Forum, Namdhari Sangat, Zoroastrian Organisation, Indian Christian Organisations, Ambedkar & Buddhist Organisation, etc.

(b) Organisations based on regional or ethnic alignments: Most of the regional and linguistic groups have their own organisations. Prominent among them are Confederation of Gujarati Organisations, Andhra Association, Bengali Association, Goan Association, British Malayali Association, Maharashtra Mandal, Punjab Unity Forum, etc.

(c) Organisations with a political orientation: These include rival groups of Indian Overseas Congress, Indian Workers' Association, Friends of BJP, VHP, etc.

10.16. The Indian community's divisions into sub groups on religious and regional lines tend to limit capability in terms of influence-building even though the community remains united on major issues concerning India. However, some of the emotive issues related to caste or religious affiliations in India do sometimes find their echo in the utterances of some community leaders in the UK.

10.17. Religious and cultural identity have been a significant factor in helping the community to cope with the stresses of adjustment in a foreign land. This is evident in the vast mushrooming of gurudwaras, temples and mosques as well as committees which administer them. There are about 800 such committees in the UK of which nearly half are temple committees. Many religious functions are organised in the temples, gurudwaras and mosques. Swami Narayana Temple, the largest temple complex, has found its way to the Guinness Book of World Records. The landscape of the Indian community settlements is dotted with temples, both Hindu and Jain. There are also prominent Buddhist Viharas of the Ambedkarites groups.

10.18. The Indian community is culturally very active. It organizes numerous cultural and religious festivals to maintain cultural ties with India. There is no formal cultural exchange programme between India and the UK. Cultural exchanges, however, take place through mutual interest and negotiations are held between organisations/institutions on a regular basis. Several Indian artists are presented in the UK each year.

10.19. The Nehru Centre was established in 1992 in London. It functions as part of the High Commission of India, with the objective of show-casing the cultural and intellectual achievements of India. Both the Centre as well as the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavàn have performed a very useful role in fulfilling the cultural needs of the Indian community and assisting it in establishing links with its Indian cultural roots.

10.20. The popularity of Hindi films and ethnic television is a major element in keeping the Indian Diaspora and, in particular, its second and subsequent generations in touch with India. The reach of the Hindi cinema cuts across barriers of language, religion and caste which are otherwise seen in most community organisations. In addition to all sections of the Indian community, Hindi films enjoy considerable popularity amongst the other South Asian communities, and have started to attract mainstream audiences.

10.21. Indians have done exceedingly well in the sphere of education, to which they attache considerable importance. It is no mean achievement that today the Indian community's educational performance is assessed as being higher than that of the majority community of Britain. Approximately 30 Indians occupy permanent positions as professors in major universities and research institutions in various disciplines including engineering, computer science, biochemistry, chemistry, aerospace and others.

10.22. The national honours and awards of the UK invariably include several PIOs for their distinguished contribution and services to their adopted country. Compared to other South Asian communities in the UK, the Indian community is considered the best-educated, qualified and law-abiding community. This differentiation is now being noticed by social scientists and the media, persuading them to look at the Indian community as a distinct category and not just in terms of the larger 'Asian' community. The Indian community has no major conflicts with the host community.

10.23. First generation migrants remain nostalgic about the parent country and are extremely keen to maintain an active cultural and spiritual link with India. At the same time, the community now has a number of retired persons with the time, inclination and resources to devote themselves to the protection and propagation of the cultural and religious heritage of the community. This urge, and consequently the linkage, is declining somewhat with the succeeding generations. For the second and third generations a great deal of cultural hybridization has inevitably been taking place. The priorities of the second generation are quite different from the first since they tend to be better-integrated in the mainstream British community and often retain only a peripheral interest in India. Usage of Indian languages is also declining amongst the second and third generations. First generation visits to India are almost annual, subject to their financial status, while the succeeding generations tend to limit their visits to important family occasions or tourism. Community leaders are well informed about developments in India. Some of them are in close and frequent contact with political, religious and cultural personalities in India.

10.24. It is unfortunate that despite their significant contribution to their country of adoption, the PIOs continue to be apprehensive of their rights and security. This is evident also in other West European countries. There are strong democratic institutions and legal frameworks in Western countries, which guard against racial discrimination and harassment. Unfortunately, particularly in times of economic crisis, ethnic minorities continue to be attacked by extremely right wing groups. Following the recent terrorist attacks in the US, members of the Indian community in Britain were also

threatened or abused in several cases. Professor Bhiku Parekh, a reputed PIO political theorist, has lamented the insecurity felt among the PIOs and appealed to the general population not to treat them as "step-citizens, bearing the burdens of equal citizenship without enjoying equal rights and opportunities".

Charities and Philanthropy of the Indian Community

10.25. Most of the Indian community associations are registered as charities. Many of them take grants from their local boroughs. Almost all wealthy PIOs have individual trusts or charities for projects pertaining to health, education or other infrastructure in their home states and villages in India. Many senior doctors run eye camps in India in their villages. Local charity activities mainly cater to the Asian community, for example in the form of senior citizen centres. In times of national crises, natural calamities in India, the community organisations and associations raise generous contributions for relief and rehabilitation of the victims.

Economic Profile

10.26. The Indian community with a per capita income of 15,860 Pounds per year is among the highest earning groups in the UK. Its per capita income is higher than the national average, according to a 1998 study by the Institute for Social and Economic Research of Essex University.

10.27. The community has attained considerable economic prosperity and plays a crucial role in key sectors. It has diverse interests in almost all spheres of commercial and industrial activities. These include steel, engineering, manufacturing, finance, hotels, pharmaceuticals, IT, media, travel, trading (including cash and carry), catering, fashion, consultancy, etc.

10.28. The Indian community accounts for 40% of the retail sector. It is also estimated that a significant percentage of hospital doctors, general practitioners and consultants are from the community. The National Health Service is greatly dependent on the services of doctors from India. The rate of unemployment amongst Indian emigrants is considerably lower than that of other emigrant communities. This is attributed in part to the higher skill levels of Indian emigrants, especially those who have gone to the UK in recent years. Equally important, the Indians who came from East Africa in the 1970s were known for their entrepreneurial abilities and high savings rate. Their presence in several sectors of the economy helped in creating a useful base for absorbing new immigrants, thereby creating productive opportunities and keeping unemployment rates low.

10.29. The PIOs dominate the 'cash and carry' stores and retail trade. They are mostly in small and medium business. Owing to this success, till the 80s the Indian community was mostly perceived as a sub-nation of corner shop-wallas, specializing in vending sweets, newspapers, cigarettes and bread. But several of them have risen to public prominence, after figuring in the Queen's honours list. Prominent examples of this kind are, Baron Bagri of Regent's Park and Baron Desai of St.

Clement Danes. They are becoming a part of Britain's new aristocracy in the making. Lord Tarsem King, one of the five Indian peers in the House of Lords, felt that acquiring this position was a pointer to the future of the marginalised Indian community. Similarly a 21 year old multi-millionaire Reuben Singh, perceives himself as a role model of British Indian teenagers and feels that if his portrait can hang in the National Gallery, it is proof that Indians can make it to the top. The North London based and the world's best known metal magnate, Lakshmi Mittal, is among the richest half a dozen persons in the UK. He heads a continuously growing list of what is jokingly called the 'coolie millionaires'. It includes Shrichand and Gopichand Hinduja (oil, banking and telecom interests), Lord Paul (Caparo Group), hotelier Jasminder Singh, brewer and sugar king Manubhai Madhavani and electronics giant Gulu Lalvani to name just a few. Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen was the first Indian to become Master of an Oxbridge college

10.30. From being stereotyped as a land of snake charmers, saints and fakirs, India now appears to the Western world as a computer-savvy, intelligent and dynamic nation. A century ago, India was the land from where Western countries would get factory workers and farm labourers. Today, the fourth generation Indians have invaded virtually all fields of repute and expertise. There are approximately 300 important NRI businessmen today and approximately 150 prominent and rich Indians (NRIs and PIOs) in the UK. They have a significant business presence across diverse sectors of manufacturing and services, both as owner-entrepreneurs and as professionals. They are already playing a significant role in bilateral trade with India and indeed in UK's global trade with the rest of the world. The close of the 20th century took Indians from one end of the stereotype to the other. However, some of the achievers feel that the glass ceiling has only cracked and has yet to be fully removed to enable the full flowering of the talent of the Indian community and its optimal contribution to its host country.

10.31. Unlike the Diaspora in the US, the PIOs in the UK do not have the same economic and political strength although there is considerable leverage that could contribute to closer economic and political bilateral links with the UK. The presence of the Indian community in the UK's civil services has not kept pace with the community's overall economic profile. Although the numbers have risen somewhat over the last few years, in part due to the Government's special efforts to recruit from ethnic minorities, there are still very few representatives of the Indian community at the higher echelons of the civil services.

10.32. India has now emerged as a leading investor in the UK, with most of the 125 Indian companies having set themselves up in and around London. Indian companies have invested over 250 million Pounds in the UK, and have created several hundred jobs in this country. Indian FDI into the UK for the last five years is roughly equal to the UK FDI into India. These investments are not restricted to the IT sector, but include major acquisitions in the area of steel and tea.

10.33. Almost all of the 50 Chambers of Commerce and Industry in the UK incorporate 'Asian' units or chapters within them, which cover India and are generally manned by Indian-origin professionals.

Besides them, some of the prominent community organisations also play a role in disseminating business information and are involved in business promotion.

10.34. There are at least 15 prominent PIO commercial organisations in Britain, such as Indian Development Group (UK) Ltd, Indian Development Fund, Confederation of Indian Organizations, Indian Forum for Business, India Group at the London Business Schools etc.

10.35. The PIOs have strong affinity and links with India. Though decisions to trade with a country or company are not taken on emotional considerations but on realistic, economic ones, the PIOs knowledge of the home country and its culture as well as their family links are generally considered as an advantage and attraction. Given the significant proportion of the Indian community in the population of the UK and their contribution to the UK, there is important potential for the Indian Diaspora to contribute to India's trade and bilateral relations with the UK.

Political Profile

10.36. Owing to the century-old tradition of participation in the political processes in the UK, the Indian community in Britain has made its presence felt in the political arena in the country. The increase in its numbers, accretion in economic strength, attainment of higher educational levels and enhancement in social status are being gradually reflected in the increasing political visibility of the community in the UK. It has four elected Members of Parliament. There are 11 members in the House of Lords. In a significant development, Lord Dholakia has taken over as the Chairman of the Liberal Democrat Party. This is the first time that a person of Indian origin has taken over the top post in a national party in the UK. There are also three Members of the European Parliament from the UK.

10.37. At the next level of political participation, there are over 250-300 Councillors of Indian Origin scattered all over the UK. Their group has now grown large enough for them to form a group called "British-Indian Councillors Association" (BICA). About a dozen Indian Mayors of different Councils have also been elected in recent years. Traditionally, Indians have been supporters of the Labour Party and, till recently, over 65 % of the Indian population was estimated to be voting in favour of Labour. However, the Conservatives have also been making concerted efforts to woo the Indian voters, and the appointment of Lord Dholakia as Chairman of the Liberal Democrats may boost their ability to target the Indian vote.

10.38. Out of the three major political parties in Britain, two i.e. the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrat Party have formed Friends of India parliamentary groups. The Conservatives have also announced that they would soon launch such a group. Apart from these Friendship Groups in the political parties, there is also a British-Indian Parliamentary Association which cuts across party lines and consists of members of the British Parliamentary Association, which is known as the "Curry Club" and meets regularly to discuss matters of topical interest and to promote India's concerns.

10.39. Indian community leaders have displayed considerable interest in promoting bilateral relations. They have lent significant support to efforts to form pro-India lobby groups in the three major political parties. Lord Swaraj Paul heads the British delegation for the Indo-British Round Table, a non-official initiative launched during the visit of Honourable Robin Cook to India earlier this year. Prominent members of the Indian community have been assisting officials of the Indian High Commission whenever necessary in their efforts to lobby political opinion makers.

Media

10.40. A number of persons from the Indian community occupy important positions in the mainstream British media, including organisations like the BBC, The Daily Telegraph, The Financial Times, etc. Their presence in these organisations contributes to a better understanding of India and a more balanced projection of issues of concern to India.

10.41. The ethnic Indian media has a strong and powerful presence throughout the country. The Indian community runs a number of ethnic TV channels, radio stations, newspapers and magazines. There are 9 prominent ethnic publication, namely, India Weekly, Gujarat Samachar, Garavi Gujarat, Asian Trader, Amar Deep, India Home & Abroad, Southall Gazette, New World, Asian Affairs. There are also 11 ethnic Indian radio/TV channels, namely-Sunrise Radio, Sunrise Radio Yorkshire, Zee TV, Asia 1 TV, Sony TV, Sabras Radio, Radio XL, APNA TV, NAMASTE TV, Supa AM, MP Media Services. All of them tend to focus primarily on news and events related to the Indian subcontinent and help the community to remain in touch with India. In addition, the community now receives news and entertainment programmes directly from India through TV channels such as Zee, Star TV, Sony and B4U. The growing availability of newspapers on the Internet is another important new development for keeping the Diaspora connected with India. Several PIOs have attained prominence in literature, the most recent example of this kind being that of Sir V. S. Naipaul who recently won the Nobel Prize. The contribution of these individuals in media, literature and cinema is increasingly recognised in mainstream British society.

Demands and Expectations from India

10.42. The Indian community in the UK has expressed the following needs, grievances and demands from India to the High Level Committee:-

(a) Grant of dual nationality. Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have allowed dual nationality to their people in the UK. It is the perception of PIOs that dual nationality would have a positive influence especially on the second and third generation of Indians settled abroad. There is among them, a keen interest in acquiring agricultural land in India.

(b) Fees of the PIO Card be substantially reduced to make it accessible to families; purchase of agricultural land be allowed to PIO Card holders.

(c) A single window clearance system for PIO investments in India. Removal of red tapism and corruption, both of which discourage investment.

(d) Safety and security during their visit and stay in India and elimination of harassment at airports. They have suggested the establishment of a centre which could act as a watch dog agency for problems faced by NRIs and PIOs in India, to which NRI/PIOs could go for redressal of their problems.

(e) Promotional linkages of the youth with India. These include increasing two-way exchanges of cultural troupes and regular interaction between the High Commission and representatives of the youth, to understand their aspirations and needs and acquaint them with the positive aspects of India. Linkages between educational institutions for exchange of students as part of a degree course; twinning of cities of India and the UK, as in the case of Sandwell and Derby with Amritsar and Kapurthala through the initiatives of local PIO political leaders.

(f) Cells in Central and select State Governments to deal with PIO/NRI problems and systems of fast track disposal of cases .

(g) PIOs who return to India after retirement should be made aware of their rights under the provisions of the law. A permanent body should be established to address the various problems faced by such returnee Indians.

(h) Greater coverage by All India Radio, reflecting the needs of the PIOs.

(i) Floating of a special lottery for overseas Indians for raising money for various charity projects in India. A committee could be set up by government to identify projects to be funded through the lottery.

(j) PIOs and NRIs who make films on India should not be required to submit their scripts before hand as this is a time consuming procedure.

(k) Renewal and grant of new passports should not involve cumbersome and time consuming references to departments in India. A time limit should be set by government for such responses to avoid harassment.

(l) Redressal of problems faced by the NRIs in regard to investment, trade and industry : (a) slow and cumbersome bureaucracy; (b) infrastructural bottlenecks, viz. land, power, water, logistical connections and transport; (c) lack of reliable Indian partners; (d) quality and consistent supply of goods; and (e) multiplicity of agencies.

(m) As regards problems faced by NRIs and PIOs in the UK the following are of significance :-

1. Expectation among the first generation particularly, that the Indian government should in some manner continue to exert its influence to protect the interests of the Indian community in view of threats of racial violence and discrimination.

2. Measures to check illegal immigration into the UK. The High Commission has assisted the UK authorities in deporting four to six hundred Indian nationals per year in the last few years.

3. Measure to address the problem of educational degrees. Students going from India to the UK on completion of their high school education (10+2) find it difficult to equate their eligibility for entrance into British universities with the appropriate level of their education (e.g. in English, Maths and Chemistry). Similarly, those who go back from the UK on completing their GCSE examinations find it difficult to equate their qualification with exams in India and enter into their right classes.

Chapter 11

Other Countries of Europe



Late Prime Minister Shri Morarji Desai, with members of the Indian Community in Paris on 15 June 1977.



The Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee being greeted by representatives of the Indian Community at Kremlin in Moscow on 7 November 2001

Introduction

The term West Europe includes the European Union which, with its 15 member-States, two of which are permanent members of the UN Security Council, is now the largest economic entity in the world. The role of information technology in the American economic miracle of the 90s, has spurred a desire in the EU to make it the most competitive and knowledge based economy in the world. The last EU summit adopted a Charter on the Global Information Society and drew up an E-Europe-2002 action plan to create an information technology based society.

11.2. These developments have opened up new opportunities for India's skilled human resources and especially its IT experts. The EU has traditionally been India's largest trading partner and source of foreign direct investment, a major contributor of development assistance and technology, and also a home to a significant section of the Indian Diaspora. India and the EU share many common values and are both committed to upholding democracy. India's contacts with the community have acquired a political dimension with the commencement of India-EU annual Summits from June, 2000. There has been an abiding interest in Indian civilization in Europe. The Indian communities can bring about greater understanding and amity between India and West Europe. The Indian Diaspora can contribute to the strengthening of India's bilateral relations with their adopted countries. With its growing and varied skills, expertise and experience in developed countries the Indian Diaspora can in its turn make a catalytic contribution to India's development and modernization.

11.3. Two-thirds of the Indian community in the EU is found in the UK, which has been covered extensively in the previous chapter. Consequently, this chapter deals with the West European countries that have small but significant concentrations of Indian communities, barring the UK. Russia and Central/East Europe have been dealt with separately. Table11.1 on the following page indicates the population distribution of the PIO community in Europe:

Table 11.1: PIO Community in Europe

No.	Country	Population (million)	PIOs	NRIs	Stateless	% of population
1	Armenia	3.7		200		0.005
2	Austria	8.1	3005	8940		0.154
3	Belgium	10.2		7000		0.069
4	Bulgaria	8.2		20		0.003
5	Cyprus	0.7		300		0.460
6	Denmark	5.3	900	1252		0.040
7	Finland	5.2	410	750	10	0.220
8	France	58.8	55000	10000		0.110
9	Germany	82.0	10000	25000		0.042
10	Greece	10.3		7000		0.050
11	Ireland	3.7	600	1000		0.027
12	Italy	57.4	36000	35500		0.063
13	Netherlands	15.9	200000	15000		1.350
14	Norway	4.4		5630		0.127
15	Poland	38.6	75	750		0.002
16	Portugal	10.0	65000	5000		0.700
17	Russia	145.6	44	16000		0.010
18	Slovakia	5.4		100		0.001
19	Spain	40.0	16000	13000		0.040
20	Sweden	8.9	9000	2000		0.012
21	Switzerland	7.2	8400	4800	300	0.117
22	Ukraine	49.0		3400		0.069
23	U. K.	56.9	(Total PIOs + NRIs = 1,200,000 approximately)*			2.109

* Exact figures of NRIs and PIOs not available. Total no. of Indians is currently estimated to be 1.2m.

History of the Indian Community in West Europe

11.4. The movement of Indian immigrants to West Europe is largely a phenomenon of the 20th Century, although such migrations may go back to several centuries BC. The Old Testament mentions the import of spices, ivory, and peacocks from India. Several Indian rulers sent emissaries to Rome and trade flourished between the two kingdoms more than two thousand years ago. Indian literature and science had an impact on Western societies. The Greeks learnt from Indian science, **especially the medical sciences and arithmetic. Europeans learnt of the concept of Zero invented by Indian mathematicians**. The *Panchatantra* was translated in the 6th Century from Sanskrit to Latin, Spanish, Italian and other European languages. The Europeans were familiar with *Buddha* and the concepts of *Karma* and *Nirvana*. Translations of *Puranic* tales in Europe were undertaken. Indian philosophy was greatly admired by German philosophers and writers including Kant, Hegel, Goethe, and more recently the humanist Herman Hesse, who recognised that India was a major civilization. There were Indologists of great repute such as Max Mueller. Historically India has enriched European civilization.

11.5. From the 19th century onwards - British, French, Dutch and Portuguese colonialism led to a significant migration of Indians, mostly as indentured labour, but also as traders, teachers, clerks, etc. to the European colonies. Following the emergence of aggressive nationalistic regimes in several countries in Africa, the Asia-Pacific and Latin America after they achieved independence, a significant proportion of these Indian communities migrated to the colonial centres. Thus Surinamese Indians went to the Netherlands; Indians from Madagascar, Mauritius and Indo-China went to France; from Mozambique and Angola they went to Portugal and from East Africa - to the UK. Some business and family ties, forged in the colonial era, as well as the fact that several members of the Diaspora had received their education in metropolitan centres, facilitated immigration.

11.6. After 1947, Indian migration took place in response to a demand for labour and professionals for the post Second World War economic reconstruction in West Europe. Many West European countries relaxed their immigration laws for both skilled and unskilled categories of Asians in the 60s and 70s. Following a surge in immigration from India and other Asian countries, restrictions were reimposed. Computer experts and other professionals such as engineers, business managers, nurses, teachers, scientists etc., were however, permitted to immigrate in restricted numbers. In recent years there has been a growing interest in EU member States in attracting foreign high-tech experts, particularly Indian IT experts who have already made a mark in the USA.

11.7. West Europe has also attracted illegal Indian immigration in the construction, agriculture and manufacturing sectors. Many of these have subsequently regularised their stay by taking advantage of periodic amnesty offers, prompted by the shortfalls of cheap unskilled labour. Some applied for political asylum in the 80s following the disturbances in Punjab. This trend has seen a significant decline as West European Governments have shown decreasing propensity to entertain such pleas. Besides the need to control illegal immigration, crime networks are associated with such

migrants. Illegal migrants bring a bad name to the Indian communities and have also resulted in some terrible incidents like the Malta Boat tragedy. Illegal labour moreover renders itself vulnerable to exploitation. The Government of India is trying to check illegal emigration.

11.8. The Netherlands has a Surinamese Hindustani (Indian) community of around 180, 000, descendants of the indentured labourers sent by Dutch colonisers to Suriname under an agreement with the British Government. There is a small community of NRI/PIOs which came directly from India and today occupies top positions in business, academia, medical and other professions. Some unskilled labour has also come in illegally.

11.9. Portugal and France have a relatively large Indian community owing to their colonial connections with India. Portugal has around 70,000 people of Indian origin mostly from Mozambique, where their ancestors had gone as part of the colonial administration from Goa, followed by Gujarati traders from Daman and Diu. These migrants became junior administrators, teachers and doctors. Large numbers migrated to Portugal due to the unsettled conditions following Mozambique's independence and that of other African countries. A few Goan emigrants left around the time of the liberation of Goa. Their Catholic religion and knowledge of Portuguese and culture led to relatively easy assimilation in Portuguese society.

11.10. France and its overseas departments has an Indian community of around 330,000 – 350,000 who arrived from the former French colonies of Pondicherry, Karaikal, Yanam, Mahe and Chandranagore. Later arrivals were mostly Gujarati businessmen and traders from other Francophone areas including Madagascar, Seychelles and Mauritius. In recent years professionals and software specialists, especially IT experts have migrated to France from India.

11.11. The Indian Diaspora in West Europe is in the process of establishing itself in the professions and trade. In politics they have yet to make a mark. Portugal and Netherlands have one PIO Member of Parliament each. Germany has a PIO mayor and a municipal councillor. Wealthy PIO diamond traders in Antwerp dominate India's diamond trade with Belgium.

11.12. Members of the Diaspora are attached to India. This is reflected mainly in contributions made during national crises, such as the Kargil War, Orissa Cyclone and the Gujarat earthquake. The Goan Diaspora provides computers to all the schools in Goa through non-governmental channels. PIOs in the EU however often complain of procedural bottlenecks and inadequate machinery in the Government of India that impede philanthropic contributions.

Prospects

11.13. West Europe today is a dynamic centre of inter and intra regional migration. The economic demands of a globalising marketplace, which seeks the best human skills and expertise available worldwide, have become an important factor encouraging immigration. Demographic factors, i.e., the aging population of West Europe has increased their dependence on young workers from developing countries. According to OECD reports and the World Migration Report-2000 this

dependence will deepen. It will in most respects enrich "social, political and economic life in the region" as economic necessity forces a change in anti-immigration attitudes. Opportunities in high-tech areas, bio-technology, Information Technology, finance, management and other services abound for qualified Indians. The profile of the Indian Diaspora in West Europe/the EU is thus likely to change in coming years owing to upward mobility among the existing Indian communities and continued immigration of highly qualified Indian professionals.

At the end of this chapter are short notes on Russia and some of the countries of Central/East Europe.

THE BENELUX COUNTRIES

THE NETHERLANDS

11.14. There are two distinct groups among the Indian community in the Netherlands - people of Indian origin who originally migrated from India to Suriname as indentured labour, and later migrated to the Netherlands, and a more recent wave of Indian professionals from India. The Indian community is estimated at 215,000 or 1.35% out of a total population of 15.9 million. There are also approximately 2000 illegal Indians, mostly Sikhs, in the Netherlands.

11.15. The colonial connection played a role in Indian migration to the Netherlands. After the abolition of slavery in 1834, the colonial government and estate owners in Suriname, then a Dutch colony, began looking for alternative sources of cheap and bonded labour. Under a Treaty signed in 1870 between the Netherlands and Great Britain, the Dutch colonial Government was permitted to recruit Indian labourers. Accordingly from 1873 onwards, a large number of Indian indentured labourers travelled to Suriname.

11.16. The approach of Suriname's independence sharpened apprehensions among the people of Indian origin regarding their future status and economic and political rights. More than 1/3 of the PIO population availed of a provision in the Independence Act permitting Surinamese to migrate to the Netherlands before the transfer of power in 1975. Today, the Surinamese Indian community in the Netherlands, which calls itself the Surinamese *Hindustanis*, numbers approximately 200,000, while the more recent arrivals from India number around 15,000.

Economic Profile

11.17. Like other countries in Western Europe, the Netherlands enjoyed an uninterrupted two decades of economic growth in the 1950s and 60s, giving rise to an acute demand for high-skilled labour. The number of Indian families increased from 10 in 1960 to 250 by the end of 1970. Moreover, as the scope for imports of textiles, leather products and other consumer goods from developing countries increased, a number of NRIs set up trading companies in the Netherlands. Finally, expanding Dutch universities attracted some highly qualified and experienced Indian scientists, educationists and researchers. Thus there was a sizable influx of Indians to the Netherlands and the community's size increased to the present level of 15,000.

11.18. Though the people of Indian origin from Suriname significantly outnumber and precede those who went to the Netherlands from India more recently, the latter have also made their presence felt. The NRI community in the Netherlands mostly consists of highly qualified engineers, doctors, scientists, businessmen and other professionals. Most of them occupy senior positions in their organisations. In terms of income, the majority of them can be grouped among the top 10% of the Dutch population. Their contributions are appreciated by the Dutch community and some of them have also been bestowed with special recognition and honours.

11.19. Besides the above, the Dutch (and Belgians) have been adopting Indian children on a regular basis, for which exact figures are not available. No instances of maltreatment have been reported. The numbers of these children will grow and they will form a distinct group that may like to renew its links with India in the future.

Socio-cultural Profile

11.20. The Surinamese Indians in the Netherlands share similar characteristics with the people of Indian origin *in* Suriname and other Caribbean countries. They are deeply religious, tradition-bound and are proud of their cultural heritage. Many members of the community can even today recite *Hanuman Chaleesa* by rote and retain a deep reverence for Indian epics like the *Ramayana*. One distinctive feature of the Surinamese-Indian community in the Netherlands is that even though they left Suriname over 25 years ago, they still speak Sarnami Hindi, the language they spoke in Suriname. Sarnami Hindi is a mixture of Bhojpuri, which they called Hindustani, and Awadhi, with a smattering of Dutch and English.

11.21. The Surinamese Indian community has established a large number of temples in various parts of the country. Religious/cultural centres run by Mata Amritanandamayi, Anand Marg, Arya Samaj, Babaji, Brahma Kumaris, Brahmarishi Mission, Divine Life Society, ISKCON, Sanatan Dharma Sabha, Sai Baba, etc. have branches throughout the Netherlands. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi had set up a Vedic University in Vlodrop. There are a number of Sikh Gurudwaras, Mosques/Islamic centres and some Buddhist temples in the Netherlands. Various Surinamese Indian associations like "Insaniyat" hold Diwali Milan melas, dance and music festivals. There are also Surinamese Indian weeklies, newsletters, music bands, etc. Hindi movies are very popular in the community.

11.22. Despite their continuing attachment to their roots, the Surinamese Indians have integrated well in Holland, and are making a useful contribution to the country's economic and social life. The majority live in Amsterdam, The Hague and Rotterdam and are found in business, education, medicine, law and other service industries. Similarly, Surinamese Indian musicians, artists, sculptors, sports persons, journalists, actors and singers have made a considerable contribution in the social cultural spheres. The Indology Department in the Leiden University conducts seminars and lectures on Indian culture. The Nederland Hindi Parishad, a Surinamese Indian organisation, is actively propagating teaching of Hindi language in various schools run by the community. Due to their efforts, Hindi will now be taught as an optional subject in selected primary schools in the

Netherlands. There are over 200 yoga schools in the Netherlands. There are three companies in the Netherlands producing TV programmes on India. Their documentaries are telecast on local TV stations. There are a large number of Indian/Surinamese Indian restaurants in the country.

11.23. Although there is no separate political party representing the Surinamese Indians, some of them are active members of Dutch political parties. One prominent member of the community, Ms. Tara Udayrajisingh Varma is a Member of the Dutch Parliament, and has recently visited India at the invitation of ICCR. Active participation by the Surinamese community in the Dutch political scene has helped in sensitising the Dutch Government to the concerns of the Indian community.

11.24. A distinctive characteristic of the NRI community in the Netherlands is their unity. Despite the fact that members of the NRI community hail from different parts of India and speak different Indian languages, there is only one socio-cultural organisation, viz., Netherlands-India Association, representing them. This Association organises cultural programmes showcasing cultures of different parts of India, celebrates Diwali and other Indian festivals, and also invites scholars and artists from various regions of India. There are other NRI organisations devoted to India and Indian culture, such as music schools, organisations for researchers in India, and also an Indian Ladies Club and Foundation for Critical Choices for India. The latter is a 'think-tank' that prepares special studies on critical problems facing India and organises international seminars and other activities to focus the attention of local policy makers.

11.25. Despite their common origin and cultural heritage, the two groups of Indians in the Netherlands, have different characteristics and cultural nuances and also differ in the degree of their integration with wider Dutch society. The Surinamese Indians are more integrated with the local society, partly due to their knowledge of the Dutch language and their familiarity with the Dutch system from colonial times. Indians who migrated to the Netherlands initially faced considerable problems due to the language barrier. However, since a majority of them were well-educated professionals, they were soon able to carve their niche in Dutch society and earn the acceptance and respect of the local people. During the interactions between the two groups and the High-Level Committee, it was observed that the only common language with the Surinamese Indian community was Hindi, while with the NRI community, it was English.

11.26. While there is scope for greater interaction between the two groups, members of the NRI community and the Surinamese Indian community come together at festivals and other occasions. The two groups have cooperated in setting up of a statue of Mahatma Gandhi at Amsterdam, for which the Surinamese Indians provided the land, while the Indians did the planning and the actual execution. Both Indo-Surinamese and NRIs contributed generously for relief assistance following the Orissa cyclone, Kargil war and Gujarat earthquake, channelling funds mostly through the PM's National Relief Fund. Last minute changes in policy decisions however made them feel that their efforts did not achieve the desired impact, nor were they given due recognition by the Indian authorities. A number of Indian/ Surinamese Indian artists are running private institutes

for teaching and propagating Indian classical music and dance. While there is a hall gifted by the Dutch government as a permanent facility to the Indo-Surinamese, both communities have jointly sought some Indian support for building a common Indian cultural centre, which will act as a hub for activities promoting a better and more authentic understanding of India.

Demands and Expectations

a) Establishing an Indian Diaspora Consultative Committee for regular interaction on pressing demands of the NRIs/PIOs;

b) Grant of dual citizenship;

c) Grant of voting rights in Indian elections;

d) Nomination of Rajya Sabha Members to represent NRIs;

e) Involving NRIs in consultative bodies in sectors like tourism, international trade, etc.;

f) Creation of a single nodal point to facilitate implementation of various proposals from PIOs/NRIs in the field of trade, investment, IT, etc.;

g) Dissemination of information regarding investment rules, trade and business promotional events;

h) Institution of favourable investment incentives and guarantees to encourage NRIs/PIOs to participate in the economic development of India;

i) Setting up of a high level committee, with possible inclusion of an NRI, to explore possibilities for NRIs to play a role in the private banking sector;

j) Exploring the possibility of increased cooperation between the two countries in the field of medicine and the role that the NRIs can play in this field;

k) Clear mechanisms for facilitation of donations for relief operations in India;

l) Reducing the cost of PIO Cards;

m) Creating reserved seats/priority quotas for the children of PIOs/NRIs in Indian educational institutions;

n) Establishing an Indian Cultural Centre in the Netherlands; and

o) Developing archives on Indian cultural heritage.

BELGIUM AND LUXEMBOURG

11.27. The Indian community in the Low Countries is tiny, and estimated at 7000 or 0.069% of Belgium's population of 10.19 million. In Luxembourg, the percentage of the total population of 435,700 is the same with only 300 Indians present there.

Socio-economic Profile

11.28. The average per capita income of Belgium is US$ 23,861. While the per capita income of the Indian community is not available, they are mainly to be found in the professional and more prosperous sections of society. Indians are employed in software, the diamond business and a few local industries in cities like Antwerp, Ghent, Brussels and Liege. A section of immigrants from Palanpur district in Gujarat had entered the port city of Antwerp to work with the Jewish community in the diamond business, and eventually started their own. The Antwerp Indians still form a very tightly knit group and actively celebrate Indian festivals. Indian software companies like HCL, TCS and Infosys have a presence in Belgium while Indian software professionals are in great demand by multinationals like Swift, Compaq and Alcatel. The professional Indians in Belgium represent the modern, youthful face of India. Some farm labourers and shop-hands, mainly immigrants from North India have also managed to enter Belgium illegally. Despite the small size of the community there are several Indian cultural associations. The leading ones are Bhartiya Samaj, Antwerp India Association and Shanti Darshan. An India Study Centre was set up in Antwerp in 1996. A few temples and gurudwaras built by the community are found in Brussels, St. Truden and Antwerp. The Indian community enjoys good relations with the local population. Due to their small size they are not politically active. The Indian community is law abiding. A handful of Indians work in the financial institutions based in Luxembourg, which boasts an Indian Association. As in the Netherlands, Belgians regularly adopt children from India.

Demands and Expectations

1. Grant of dual nationality
2. Reduction in PIO card fees
3. Reduction of restrictions in the foreign trade sector in India
4. Extension of better credit facilities by Indian banks

FRANCE

11.29. The Indian community in France is estimated at 65,000 or 0.11% of the total population of 59 million. Indian citizens constitute 10,000 while PIOs number around 55,000. In addition, the Indian community in the Departments/Overseas Territories of France including Reunion Islands, Guadeloupe, St. Martinique etc. numbers approximately 300,000.

Profile

11.30. The Indian community in France is estimated at 65, 000. A majority of the members hail from former French colonies in India; Pondicherry, Karaikal, Yanam, Mahe and Chandranagore. Later arrivals in the country are mostly Gujaratis from other Francophone areas including Madagascar, Seychelles and Mauritius. With the end of the French Rule in the former Indo-China, some Indians of French nationality went to France. Head of the Ismaili community, The Agha Khan has set up

his headquarters near Paris. It is difficult to have exact figures of the Indian community since even Tamils from Sri Lanka are often referred to by the French as Indians. If we also take into account all those Indians who are settled in the various Departments/Overseas Territories of France, the Indian community may be 3,65,000 strong. Reunion itself has an Indian population of 2,20,000. A separate chapter on the Indian Diaspora in that Island has, therefore, been added in the Report.

Socio-economic Profile

11.31. A large majority of members of the Indian community are mainly engaged in private small businesses. Some are employed in educational institutions. While about 6,000 members are estimated to have taken up jobs in army/police forces, about 12,000 members are in the French Government service. Approximately 9,000 Indians may be working in a managerial capacity in French private companies. There are approximately 200 Indian professionals employed in well-known scientific, industrial and commercial companies/organisations. Some are running restaurants, shops, travel agencies and, IT companies. There is a small number of students. No definite figures are, however, available since it is against the policy of the French Government to disclose such information. Most of the people of Indian origin residing in France belong to the middle class. The businessmen also market handicrafts, home furnishings, fabric and garments, gems and jewellery, rice, spices, ethnic groceries, fruits and vegetables etc. from India. Indian food is getting increasingly popular in France. With France opening its IT sector for Indian professionals, Indian software industry may see a growth in exports to France in the IT sector.

Cultural Profile

11.32. The Indian community has formed a number of associations. However, an apex body of these associations was formed on 23rd January, 1996 and designated as Federation of Indian Associations in France (FAFI). The Federation which has been registered in accordance with the local laws consists of 24 member associations with the Indian Ambassador as "President of Honour". Since its creation, the Federation in coordination with the Indian Embassy extends help to the member associations in organizing social and cultural activities.

11.33. The local Indian associations organize programmes of Indian classical dance and music, which are very popular with the European audiences. Most of these associations also organize classes or workshops of Indian classical dance and music, where the teachers are usually NRIs or persons of French origin having learnt these disciplines in France. A few of them also organize cookery classes, ayurvedic massage, yoga and conferences on Indian art, culture and spirituality.

11.34. Traditionally, the French have had a great love and admiration for Indian traditions and culture. The then President Francois Mitterrand had designated 1985 as 'The year of India in France' to acknowledge the Indian contribution in France as well as its various Overseas Departments and an year-long Festival of India was organised. A large programme of cultural activities including museum exhibits, musical and dance productions, films and public meetings was mapped out

during the Festival. President Mitterrand also awarded the prestigious 'Legion d'honneur' to Satyajit Ray in Calcutta during his visit in 1989 for the inauguration of the 'Festival of France in India'. India was also the country of honour at the 'Festival d'Avignon' in 1995 for which ICCR had sponsored more than 66 Indian artists. A Festival of Indian cinema, the only one of this magnitude (120 feature films and 40 documentaries) called 'Indomania' was organised by the Cinematheque Francaise, Paris from November'96-February'97. All these activities are an ample testimony of the French admiration for the Indian culture.

11.35. Apart from the associations promoting Indian performing arts, cuisine, yoga, etc. there are large number of associations of Pondicherians and Tamils which focus mainly on the conservation of their own culture (language classes, regular meetings of their members etc.). Their activities however, remain limited to their own members and their families. Indian cultural activities taking place in France are given free publicity by the Indian Mission through its monthly bulletin "Agenda Cultural" and a bi-monthly magazine "Nouvelles de L' Inde".

11.36. There is no specific cultural centre in France for ensuring or promoting cultural exchange programmes with India, with either governmental or private support. However, two major institutions for promotion of performing arts, viz. 1) Theatre de la Ville, Paris and 2) Maison des Cultures du Monde, have an annual programme of performing arts which include performances by Indian artists. Both these institutions are subsidised by the municipal authorities of Paris, as well as the French Ministry of Culture, and both contact the Indian artists through their own network.

11.37. Besides, a number of small local 'indophile' associations exist in France. They generate funds through membership and the Indian programmes are organised by them. Most of them call upon the Indian artists residing in France to perform, as this saves them the cost of international air-fares, food and lodging. In general, they do not have sufficient funds to ensure the standards required for hosting eminent artists from India. Among the active ones may be mentioned Mandapa, Triveni, Les Cultures du Monde. Most of the cultural centres do not have their own hall or cultural centre, but some of the active organisations provide facilities such as halls, book and music shops, small exhibition space, reading rooms and space for practising yoga and Indian dance, etc.

Demands and Expectations

11.38. The main demands and expectations of the Indian community in France include:-

(a) grant of dual nationality;

(b) reduction in the fees presently charged for the PIO Card which is felt to be exorbitant;

(c) removal of difficulties faced by them at Immigration and Customs counters of the Indian airports and with the banks for encashment of travellers' cheques, etc.;

(d) abolition of the current dual tariff structure, under which PIOs are asked to pay more for hotel accommodation, air fare, visits to monuments and registration fees for conferences, etc. and are required to make payments in US dollars only;

(e) removal of difficulties in remitting funds to charities in India;

(f) an organisational structure with a single window for addressing the problems and grievances of the NRIs and PIOs;

(g) more transparent investment opportunities;

(h) the PIOs (approximately 250 families) residing in Lyon have requested the Government of India to open a Consulate there which could provide them consular services;

(i) the Federation of Indian Associations in France (FAFI) have requested the Government of India for establishment of an Indian Cultural Centre in Paris with facilities for imparting classes in the field of Indian classical dances, vocal singing, Hindi language, yoga etc.;

(j) the local Hindu religious organisation in France have requested the Indian Embassy's intervention with the local authorities for obtaining permission to construct Hindu temples in France;

PORTUGAL

11.39. Out of a population of 10 million, the Indian community is estimated at around 70,000 including 5000 Indian citizens, or 0.7% of the population.

Profile

11.40. Indian community in Portugal is one of the important non-English speaking components of the Indian Diaspora in Europe. It enjoys a special position in Portugal because of long colonial relationship with India. Migration of the community to Portugal has taken place in two streams; firstly that of direct movement from India – in smaller numbers from Goa, Daman, Diu before the liberation of Goa and thereafter in a pronounced flow after its liberation in 1961. The second stream consists of arrival in Portugal of Indians, mostly Gujaratis from Portugal's African colonies, particularly, Mozambique and Angola at the start of the decolonisation there in 1975.

Economic profile

11.41. The Indian community in Portugal has distinguished itself as a well-to-do community. Most Indians are either in retail or wholesale business. Some serve as skilled or unskilled workers. There are several Indians in medical and legal profession, in banks and in managerial and secretarial jobs. The affluent members wield considerable economic and political power. Commercial organisations, numbering about twenty, run by Indians include Indian restaurants, supermarkets, hotels etc. Like the British and the French, the Portuguese had also found the Indians useful in running the

colonial administration. For that reason, the Portuguese Government took large number of Indians for professions like teaching, medical, etc. The Goans in Portugal - around 15,000 – have thus been active in government and public services. Some of them have attained high positions in public services & universities. Of late, there have been increasing cases of illegal immigration from India mostly through other European destinations. These immigrants work as un-skilled and semi-skilled labour.

Socio-cultural Profile

11.42. Indians are concentrated in Lisbon and its suburbs and in Porto in the North. Emigrants from Gujarat and Maharashtra, who have gone from Mozambique, etc. include among them Hindus (about 33,000), Muslim (Sunnis) (about 12,000) and Ismailis (about 5,000). These groups while adopting Portuguese language and nationality have maintained their distinct socio-religious identities. Members of these groups are generally active in business, trade, construction, tourism and services. Besides the Gujaratis and Maharashtrians, there are a few thousands from Punjab who entered Portugal in the last one year or so, taking advantage of Portugal's liberal law enabling such migrant workers to get temporary (one year) residence and work permits.

11.43. There are over 20 Indian associations, which have been formed either on regional or communal lines. The Gujarati Hindus are a prosperous business community, active in trade and business, wholesale as well as retail. The Ismaili group is the most well knit and affluent. Its members run several hotels and other businesses in tourism industry. Goan are predominantly Catholics and are socio-culturally well assimilated in the national mainstream. The Indian community as a whole maintains its distinct socio-cultural identity. Many of its members have family ties with India.

11.44. There is a large temple-cum-community centre built in 1998 by Gujarati Hindus. It is one of the largest in Europe. The Ismaili group has an impressive Jamat Khana-cum-Community Centre built in the same year. Both those structures were inaugurated by the President of Portugal. The Islamic community also has an impressive mosque and related facilities. The Goan component of the Indian community enjoys a special relationship with the Portuguese authorities because of the Portuguese colonial connection with Goa. It is setting up a large premises of its own called Casa de Goa (Goa House) and for which it has received substantial assistance from the Government of Portugal. There are also some gurudwaras as well as an ISKCON temple. Gulbenkian Foundation and Orient Foundation actively organize cultural activities.

11.45. The Diaspora has people professing all religious faiths including Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. The community responded spontaneously whenever there has been a national calamity in India like the recent earthquake in Gujarat. It responded with generous contributions when there were devastating floods in Mozambique. The Hindu community has also been organizing blood donation camps every year on the anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's birth.

11.46. Almost 90% of the NRIs in Portugal speak Portuguese. By and large, they pursue their education in Portugal. In respect of professional and technical courses, they have expressed an interest in availing of the educational facilities in India.

11.47. There is a significant number of Indian restaurants offering North Indian cuisine. Indian food is liked by the Portuguese. There are several socio-cultural associations formed either on regional or communal lines. Those associations conduct socio-cultural functions for their members and families and attend to welfare and other activities of the community. They also organize cultural events to celebrate major religious festivals.

11.48. The community, has adapted itself quite well. It has no problems of its interaction with the local populace and has earned respect as a peace-loving community.

11.49. Prominent academicians who are working on Indo-Portuguese related areas include Professor Luis Filipe Reis Thomaz, a historian and Professor of Universidade Nova; Professor Narana Coissoro, Member of Parliament, a prominent lawyer and President of Oriental Institute; Professor Teotonio de Souza, Dra. Rossa Maria Perez, ISSTEC - Instituto Superior de Ciencias do Trabalho e das Empresas; Professor Doutor Alfredo Bruto da Coasta, former Minister of Social Welfare and currently Professor of the Catholic University and Dr.Orlando Costa, writer and author of two award winning books. Among other prominent Persons of Indian Origin, we may mention the names of Professor Andre Goncalves Pereira, another prominent lawyer and former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Mr.Kantilal Jamnadas, prominent businessman, owner of DANCAKE Portugal and President of the Hindu Community of Portugal

Political profile

11.50. Although the Indian community is generally not very active in national politics, there are many individuals who have attained notable political eminence. We may mention, besides Professor Andre Goncalves Pereira and Professor Doutor Alfredo Bruto da Coasta, former Minister of Social Welfare, the names of Professor Narana Coissoro, Member of Parliament since 1976, one of the four Vice Presidents and Dr.Abilio Fernandes, Mayor of Evora since 1977. Various groups of the Indian community have good equation with political parties and the Government, who in turn seek electoral support by participating in and encouraging the socio-cultural activities of those groups.

Media

11.51. Zee TV programmes received through transmissions from London are quite popular.

11.52. The community keeps itself well informed about India through TV, Print Media, internet and their visits to India.

Demands and Expectations

11.53. During the Committee's visit to Portugal in February 2001, the representatives of the Indian community made the following demands:

(a) Grant of dual nationality. In this connection, it was pointed out that the Government of Portugal allowed dual nationality to its nationals.

(b) Reduction in the fee of PIO Card.

(c) Establishment of an Indian cultural centre in Portugal in view of the community's keen interest in Indian culture.

(d) Facilitating the issue of passports to the Indian workers in the construction sector, which include illegal immigrants so that they may avail of Portuguese Government's amnesty schemes to legalize their stay in Portugal.

(e) Opening of an Indian bank or its representative/liaison office in Portugal to facilitate remittances to India.

(f) Direct flights to Portugal from India since travel through Paris or London, as at present, results in wastage of time in transit in order to catch the connecting flights.

AUSTRIA, DENMARK, GERMANY, GREECE, IRELAND, ITALY, NORWAY, SPAIN AND SWEDEN

11.54. As mentioned above, there are very few Indians in these countries lacking any colonial connection with India. Their communities comprise of professionals (nurses and doctors, engineers, scientists, academicians), small and middle level entrepreneurs and traders, and in some cases illegal immigrants.

AUSTRIA

11.55. The Indian community as a percentage of a population of 8 million at around 12,000 is just 0.15%. Early Indian immigrants to Austria were mainly nurses from Kerala, who maintained their links with their homeland. Some Indian professionals in the UN settled down in Austria. There is a small community from rural Punjab, whose members graduated from odd jobs to later become successful businessmen. Some Indians acquired Austrian citizenship by claiming refugee status. There are two Gurudwaras and one temple in Austria.

DENMARK

11.56. Out of a population of 5.3 million, the Indian community at 2150 comprises 0.04%. Indian nationals in Denmark are mainly computer professionals, journalists and doctors. The Indian

community, by and large, is law abiding and does not face any specific problems in Denmark. There are around 12 Indian Associations that organise cultural programmes and celebrate national days and Indian festivals. Places of worship of different Indian faiths have been built in Copenhagen. There are several yoga and meditation societies run by Danes and Indians. There are three local radios (FM), viz 'Pride of India Radio', 'Sabrang Radio' and 'Sunrise Radio' run by people of Indian origin. A local TV channel called 'Indiavision' run by a Danish national of Indian origin, telecasts miscellaneous programmes for the community on Saturdays and Sundays.

GERMANY

11.57. The Indian community at 35,000 is barely 0.04% as a percentage of a population of 82 million. Of these, only 10,000 Indians are estimated to have acquired German citizenship, mainly due to restrictive citizenship laws. The majority of Indians emigrated in the 1960s and 70s. There are places of worship for the Indian community in almost all major German cities. The NRI community is comprised primarily of technocrats, businessmen and nurses. In addition to the estimated 6000 registered asylum seekers, around 2- 3000 illegal Indian immigrants may have entered Germany through Central Asia/East Europe.

11.58. Recently, noting the contribution of Indian IT experts to the American economic miracle, Germany has begun to actively woo high-tech Indian professionals with offers of attractive employment opportunities. A few Indians have also acquired political eminence. Dr. R. Gujjula, a doctor in Altlandsberg, holds the post of Mayor. Mr. Sebastin Edathy is a Member of the German Parliament from the ruling Social Democratic Party (SPD). Mr. Debashish Bhaduri, SPD, is a Municipal Councillor from Tiergarten Mitte Berlin.

11.59. There is a rich independent legacy of studies on India in Germany. Indology Departments were set up in Bonn University in 1818 and later on in Humboldt University in 1821. 22 universities in Germany offer courses in Indology. There is an Indian Cultural Centre (ICC) at Berlin. The Gandhiserve e.K., also in Berlin, is devoted to the dissemination of information on Mahatma Gandhi (its President is Mr. Peter Ruhe).

GREECE

11.60. Indians comprise 0.05% of the Greek population of 10 million. Till the 1970s, one route of entry was for Indian seamen jumping ship to slip into the country illegally. Following the deteriorating conditions in Lebanon, more than 2,000 Indians living there left for Greece and stayed on quietly after the expiry of their visas. On January 1, 1998, the Greek government granted a general amnesty to all illegal immigrants, thus legalizing the status of Indian immigrants also. Most Indians hold low to middle-level positions in shipping companies, banks and other companies. Some of them have their own businesses. Illegal Indian immigrants are working in agriculture, industry and shops or as domestic help. The Greek Orthodox Church does not allow cremation of dead bodies in Greece. Indians have to take their dead to India for cremation. As permission of

the Greek government is required for setting up any place of worship by foreigners, there are only make-shift gurudwaras in a few areas. Indians in Greece have no role in the country's politics.

IRELAND

11.61. The Indian community at barely 1600 comprises a tiny 0.027% of the Irish population of 3.7 million. It is believed that links between India and Ireland can be traced to the migration of Dravidian tribes to Ireland around the sixteenth century. One of the earliest documented arrivals was that of Dean Mohomet from Patna in the 18th century. The cricketer Ranjit Singh bought Ballynahinch Castle in Connemara in 1924 and was succeeded by his nephew Duleep Singh. The Maharaja of Baroda maintained a stud farm in the west of Ireland. In the early 1920s, Mohammed Ali, a bonded Indian labourer working on sugarcane plantations in Cuba, escaped to Ireland and was followed by his relatives. The majority of Indians are however self-employed businessmen in the textiles sector who arrived before 1960. Recently, apart from semi-skilled and skilled workers, professionals like doctors and software engineers have migrated to Ireland. NRIs in Ireland keep themselves abreast with happenings in India and are culturally active. There is a small Sikh Gurudwara in Dublin.

ITALY

11.62. The Indian community as a percentage of a population of 57.4 million is about 0.063% at 71,500. Italy and India have had relations since ancient times. The *Romas* or the Gypsies who migrated to Italy claim to be persons of Indian origin. However the number of Indians trying to enter Italy has never been significant. From 1990 onwards however, the Italian Government declared a series of amnesties for illegal aliens in view of acute labour shortages. Consequently more Indians started arriving in the country. Italy's membership in the Schengen Agreement also facilitated the flow of illegal immigration.

11.63. Most of the Indian immigrants are farm labourers from Punjab. Some businessmen run restaurants and jewellery and other shops. Some Indians are working in international organisations, hospitals and churches, the latter mainly hailing from Kerala. Places of worship of different faiths have been constructed. Keralites have formed an association of the *Indian Priests and Sisters Union*. Certain universities in Venice, Milan, Rome, Naples, Genoa, Turin have departments on Indian studies. The Indian community has generally adapted well to the local conditions and is regarded as sincere, law abiding, hard working and has earned the goodwill of the local community.

NORWAY

11.64. The approximate number of the Indian Community is 5600 out of a population of 4.5 million and comprises 0.12% of the population. Immigration from Punjab began in the early 1970s. The Indian community is culturally active and endeavours to preserve its traditions and ethos. The Board of the Indo-Norwegian Society has equal representation of Indian and Norwegians and

plays an important part in promoting harmonious cultural relations. There are two Gurudwaras located at Oslo and Lier and a Hindu Temple near Oslo.

SPAIN

11.65. The Indian community as a percentage of a population of 40 million is again only 0.04% at perhaps 30,000. Most Indians originally travelled to Spain from Africa, while others came from India and even Japan and Southeast Asia. Sindhi traders and shopkeepers thrived in the free ports of the Spanish Canary Islands of Las Palmas and Tenerife following the imposition of import and foreign exchange restrictions in Spain after World War-II. They conducted a brisk trade with the North African continent from Las Palmas. When Ceuta and Melilla, parts of Spanish Morocco, were also declared as free ports, Indian businessmen set up trading houses and retail shops catering to the tourist trade. By the mid-seventies, there were over 200 Indian trading houses in Ceuta and Melilla. With the liberalisation in import policies introduced in the eighties, business activity shifted to the port cities of Malaga and Barcelona. Madrid also attracted many Indian businessmen.

11.66. The Indian community in Spain enjoys a good reputation. Indians are considered hard working, non-political and peaceful. The Indian community has integrated well with Spanish society. Sindhis and Sikhs form the majority of the Indian community. The community celebrates various Indian festivals. Rath Yatras are also taken out by members of the *Hare Rama Hare Krishna* movement with the enthusiastic support of the Indian community.

SWEDEN

11.67. Out of a population of 8.9 million, PIOs number 11,000 or 0.012%. Most are Punjabis, Bengalis, Gujaratis and South Indians. Some Indian students who went to Sweden in the 1950s settled down there. Another stream of Indians came from Uganda in the 1970s. Some Indians sought and obtained political asylum after 1984. They are a law-abiding, respected community. The influx of IT experts has raised their prestige in Sweden. The Indian community is culturally very active. Different associations hold cultural functions and observe national days.

RUSSIA

11.68. Out of a population of 145.6 million, the Indian community numbers 16000 and as a percentage of the population is 0.01%. It includes students, businessmen and others. In addition there are about 1000-1500 Afghan nationals of Indian origin staying in Russia. The estimated strength of the student community is approximately 7000. Those working in Indian business establishments comprise the second largest section of the community. About 100 companies and 15 Indo-Russian joint ventures are functioning in Russia. The Indian Association (erstwhile Hindustani Samaj) during the 42 years of its existence has been in the forefront of the community's social and cultural life in Moscow. Other cultural organisations include the Bharatiya Sanskritik Samaj and

the Gurudwara Prabhandak Committee. There is also a Ramakrishna Society – Vedanta Centre at Moscow with another branch at St. Petersberg. The Jawaharlal Nehru Cultural Centre, The Embassy of India Club and the Indian Women's Association encourage participation of the Indian community in national, social and cultural events. The 'Russia Journal' is a prominent English weekly publication brought out by Mr. Ajay Goyal, an Indian citizen. Voice of Russia has some Indians who broadcast Asian programmes. There are 13 Indian journalists based in Moscow representing various prominent newspapers, news agencies from India.

CENTRAL/EAST EUROPE

11.69. The size of the Indian community in the countries of East/Central Europe is very limited. Before 1990 there were a number of Indian students in the higher educational institutions of these countries. In Ukraine this trend persisted even after 1990 with the number of Indian students in Ukrainian institutes of higher learning increasing to nearly 7000 by 1997. However due to the recent de-recognition by India of degrees of some Ukrainian institutes, the number of students from India has dropped to 3000.

11.70. Some enterprising members of the Indian business and trading community, many of whom are networked with overseas Indian companies in Dubai, Hong Kong and London, are today exploring new business opportunities in this region. In Poland, some companies employ a number of Indians on work visas. Professionals working with multinationals or Indian companies and software experts comprise another category of Indians in this region. The Indian community in Poland is generally well educated and dynamic. Those in business and working with multinationals or Indian companies are reasonably well off. Of late, some NRIs have made significant investments in Romania in the metallurgical, mobile telephones and trading fields. It may be mentioned that Dr. Rabindranath Tagore had visited Romania in 1926 and had delivered a series of talks. He is still remembered with fondness by many Romanians.

Demands and Expectations

11.71. Predictably, the Demands and Expectations of the Indian communities in these countries are similar, and revolve around the following:

a. Steps to obtain recognition of Indian educational degrees (in some countries of east/central Europe – a converse demand is for India to recognise their degrees, particularly medical degrees by India's IMC);

b. Opening of local branches of Indian banks particularly in Rome;

c. Direct airlinks to India;

d. Frequent visits by Indian cultural troupes;

e. Screening of Indian films;

Chapter 12

North America

Indians in North America have emerged as the single largest as well as fastest growing component of the Indian Diaspora. Their achievements and status have earned them the respect of the other communities in North America. After all, the term "brain drain" was coined because of the migration of highly qualified professionals from India to the United States. Dr. Hargovind Khurana's Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1968 and Dr. S. Chandrashekhar's Noble Prize for Astrophysics in 1983 are outstanding examples of their kind for a first generation of the Asian Diaspora.

12.2. The PIOs in North America can be broadly divided into 3 categories, which very roughly coincide with the chronology of their arrival in North America: (a) those from an agricultural background – the first wave which radiated southwards from British Columbia in Canada (b) entrepreneurs, store-owners, motel owners, self-employed small businessmen arriving mainly in the 1960s and onwards and (c) professionals, e.g., doctors, engineers (60s and onwards), software engineers, management consultants, financial experts, media people, (80s and onwards) etc. No first generation immigrants have excelled at the top of their professional ladder as this last category. The large and high-profile presence of Indo-Americans in the Information Technology and the Health sectors, the number of CEOs of Indian origin of the multinationals United Airlines (Rono Dutta), Sun Microsystems (Vinod Khosla), and Mc Kinsey (Rajat Gupta), and their increasing presence in the high-flying world of international finance and management consultancy has created a new image of the Indo-American community who are viewed with a new found respect in the United States.

12.3. People of Indian origin arriving from various former British colonies in Africa and the Caribbean and Fiji constituted the major portion of the second category, although the number of Indo-Fijians who fled Fiji accelerated in the aftermath of the 1987 military coup. There may be around 300,000 Indo-Caribbeans and Fijians of Indian origin in the US. Canada also has a substantial population of Indo-Caribbeans and Indo-Fijians.

12.4. The last decade has thus witnessed 3 critical trends with important implications for the leverage the community can exercise in the US context - a sharp increase in their numbers, the emergence of a large number of financially powerful and politically well-connected Indo-Americans, and an increase in their activities to promote some issues of concern to India in the US political arena. Kargil demonstrated their willingness to mobilise politically and contribute financially to Indian

causes. Similar sentiments of concern for their land of origin were displayed during the recent Orissa cyclone and the Gujarat earthquake.

12.5. The achievements of PIOs and NRIs in North America are not confined to the United States. Indo-Canadians have also come to be highly respected for their professional skills in medicine, academia and engineering. They have made noteworthy achievements in public life. Ujjal Dosanjh's election as Premier of British Columbia was a landmark not only for Indo-Canadians but also for the North American Asian Diaspora. There is probably no other example of a first generation Asian immigrant reaching such an elevated political position in a developed country. Herb Dhaliwal's inclusion as a Cabinet Minister in the Liberal Government represented another milestone. A number of Indians have been elected to the Canadian House of Commons and an Indian woman has been appointed to the Senate. Interestingly Indo-Americans in the US took much longer to achieve similar distinction in spite of the fact that Dilip Singh Saund from California was the first Indian and also the first Asian to be elected to the US Congress in 1956. The Indian representation in the UK has still not reached Cabinet level.

12.6. Recent developments following the tragic September 11 terrorist attacks on the WTC, have highlighted the vulnerability of the community and underlined the need both for political mobilisation to protect the community's interests, as well as for closer links with India.

12.7. The Indian community in North America, particularly the United States clearly constitutes a formidable new asset in strengthening India's relationship with the world's only superpower and also with Canada, a G-8 country with considerable influence in international affairs. This depends greatly on the quality of their interaction with the country of their origin and the sensitivity to their concerns displayed in India. In order to better understand this influential component of the Indian Diaspora, it would be useful to view the Indian migration and evolution of the Indian community in North America in a historical perspective.

History

12.8. The impressive achievements of the highly visible, professional segment of the Indian community in the United States have blurred memories of the difficulties and prejudices faced by earlier generations of Indian immigrants. The latter were coloured (metaphorically) by colonial-era perceptions of Indian immigrants as 'coolies' – unskilled, indentured labour imported into British Caribbean and African plantations - after the formal abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1834 created a huge appetite for other, barely disguised forms of bonded labour. Attacks in 1987 on Indian women in New Jersey (the "dot-busters") and the more recent though isolated attacks on South Asians, primarily of the Sikh community in the aftermath of the World Trade Centre bombing - may have rekindled these memories, even though the contexts in these cases is entirely different from earlier instances of violence directed at them.

12.9. American perceptions of India before the First World War were inevitably filtered through a British prism, which accounted for the initial lack of empathy with India and Indian issues.

Indology was in its infancy, leaving the field open for patronising interpretations which derided India's heritage. An exception was the revulsion generated by the horrendous famines caused by the East India Company's plunder in Bengal province, which coincided with the American struggle for Independence. There was minimal contact between India and North America, with only some direct trade and limited American consular representation in Bombay and Calcutta.

12.10. Indian soldiers, who transited Canada on their return from Edward VII's coronation in 1902, first alerted their compatriots about the opportunities for settlement in the New World. Migration of Indians to North America began in mid-1903 when Sikh male immigrants settled in Vancouver, British Columbia to work in lumbering, agriculture and the railroads. An alternative source of cheap labour was in demand following imposition of a $500 head tax on Chinese immigrants. However because of their colour, they were unwelcome and led hard lives, the Government making it difficult for them to bring their families. However, as living conditions worsened between 1849 and 1911 in the Punjab, their numbers continued to swell, peaking at 2623 in 1908.

12.11. To limit the influx the Canadian government in 1908 prohibited immigrants who had not travelled to Canada by continuous journey from their country of citizenship, and the Canadian Pacific Company, the only company providing such services, was ordered not to sell through tickets to Indians. Other conditions included fluency in a European language, which the Indian community however successfully contested, and the requirement that each immigrant bring at least $200 with him. Indian immigration thus slowed to a trickle to only 878 between 1909 and 1943. Increasing numbers returned to India or went to the United States, which had not yet passed discriminatory legislation.

12.12. Despite the harsh conditions, Canadian Sikhs established a cohesive community bound by religious and cultural ties. Gurudwaras were constructed and became the focal point for boosting morale and community activities. The Sikh community contributed to charitable causes in India and more important, united to fight discriminatory laws against Indians. Their success in contesting discriminatory anti-immigration legislation alarmed the Canadian Government (thus the 1952 incarnation of the Immigration Act retained provisions prohibiting immigrants of "unsuitable" races and occupations and was the principal instrument for implementing a white Canada policy till the late 60s). A Canadian Court ruling in 1913 reversing the deportation of 39 Indian immigrants proved to be the last straw. In January 1914 new Orders-in-Council completely debarring Indians from entering Canada were effected by the Canadian Government.

12.13. The *Komagata Maru* incident of 1914 brought into sharp focus the fortitude of Indian immigrants, the blatantly discriminatory attitude of the Canadian authorities and the extent to which they were prepared to contravene their own laws to prevent Indian immigration. In 1914, one courageous Indian, Gurdit Singh, angered by the inhuman treatment of Indian "coolies" he encountered in Malaysia, decided to challenge the ever tightening restrictions on immigration including the 'continuous journey' law. He chartered a Japanese ship the *Komagata Maru* to carry 376 prospective immigrants from Calcutta to Vancouver. The ship was however surrounded by

the Canadian navy on arrival and denied permission to dock. It was forced to wait for 2 months in Vancouver harbour. The passengers were not allowed to disembark nor provided with food and water. The Sikh community organised food and legal assistance, and even offered to stand security for the passengers, to no avail. The Canadian navy eventually escorted the ship outside Canadian waters. Upon reaching Budge Budge near Calcutta, the exhausted passengers were fired upon by the British and several of them died.

12.14. Since Canada was one of the major routes chosen by Indian immigrants, this affected immigration into the US also. Nevertheless some Indians, largely from the Sikh community, managed to reach the West Coast of the United States from Canada. Immigration of only 6359 "East Indians" between 1905-1915 was enough to ignite existing anti-Asian hatreds, already inflamed by the presence of Chinese and Japanese labourers. In 1907 anti-"Hindu" riots broke out in Bellingham, a small town in Washington State south of the Canadian border, followed by similar occurrences in other towns. These instances of violence against Asian immigrants were almost never punished and were tacitly supported by the press. Immigrants thereafter drifted to California, where through its industry and thrift the small Indian community was able to repatriate considerable savings to its homeland. Like its compatriots in Canada, its members led hard lives and suffered racial discrimination. Several married women of Mexican origin, though these unions ended frequently in divorce.

12.15. In 1917, the US Congress also created the notorious "barred zone" through an immigration act that also mandated a literacy test, which effectively shut out unskilled Asian immigration. The small Indian community inevitably got politicised under such conditions. Lala Lajpat Rai established the Indian Home Rule League of America between 1914-1919, and mobilised opinion in favour of the Indian nationalist movement. The most well known attempt at radical political mobilisation was the short-lived *Gadar* party under Lala Har Dayal, who had immigrated to the United States in 1911. The *Gadar* Party, based in San Francisco, enjoyed support from the mainly Sikh communities in the United States and Canada, and planned an uprising in the Punjab aimed at overthrowing the Raj in February 1915. Members of this heroic but ill-fated enterprise forged links with Irish activists and even German diplomats. Relentless British infiltration and surveillance and collaboration with the US led to its activities being pre-empted and activists apprehended, jailed and convicted for violating American Neutrality Laws.

12.16. The next hurdle the Indian community had to cross was the decision of the US Government to revoke naturalisation papers of Indians on the basis of the US Supreme Court's rulings in the early 20s to restrict naturalisation to *white* Caucasians only, after an Indian Sikh Bhagat Singh Thind, lost his case to be classified as a Caucasian, or a white. Indians were thus denied citizenship and by extension, the right to own land (the California Alien Land Laws prohibited aliens ineligible for citizenship from owning or leasing agricultural land.). This decision was successfully challenged in 1926 by another Indian - Sakhram Ganesh Pandit - who established that his 1914 naturalisation, endorsed by a regular court, could not be reopened beyond the 3 year-period provided for appeal.

12.17. Meanwhile economic interest, shared anti-colonial sentiment, slowly increasing inter-action and a gathering realisation of the wisdom embodied in Indian culture helped to create a more favourable atmosphere for the consideration of Indian issues. US consular officials, missionaries and artists who had visited India since the 19th century published several accounts of their impressions, the most prominent being Mark Twain who published a sympathetic and lively account of his visit in *Following the Equator, A Journey Around the World* in 1897. There was an animated exchange of views and cooperation between American Unitarians and Rammohun Roy and his Brahmo Samaj.

12.18. The great American intellectuals Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau were influenced by Hindu philosophical literature. Mme Blavatsky expounded an amalgam of Hindu and Buddhist beliefs in New York following her visit to Tibet in 1873. Swami Vivekananda's visit to the US on the occasion of the World Parliament of Religions in 1893 in Chicago, culminated in the rise of Vedanta societies all over the US. Another Indian saint, Yogananda devoted his life to promoting mutual East-West understanding, whose *Autobiography of a Yogi* became an American bestseller. Visits by eminent personalities like Swami Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore in 1916, were landmarks in stimulating popular American interest in Indian philosophy. The American Oriental Society, initially founded in Boston in 1842, established by John Pickering and William Jenks, catalysed interest in Indian philosophy and languages, which spread to academia. Ananda K. Coomoraswamy's dedication to Indian art, though himself half-Sinhalese and half-British, helped to create the first Indian art collections in the US.

12.19. Mahatma Gandhi, who freely acknowledged his intellectual and spiritual debt to the American philosopher Henry David Thoreau, in his turn exercised a powerful hold on the American imagination and influenced Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. His American supporters - distinguished and highly influential personalities like William Randolph Hearst, John Gunther and his wife, and Louis Fischer - espoused the India's Independence cause. *Time* magazine chose Gandhi as Man of the Year in 1930/1. It is common knowledge that US President F.D. Roosevelt strongly differed with Winston Churchill on the issue of Indian Independence.

12.20. By the end of the Second World War, American perspectives on India had therefore undergone a perceptible change. Also, the US needed more professionals, particularly doctors, engineers and entrepreneurs, and this was the prime motivation for moves to ease immigration restrictions. Efforts of the Indian lobby in America and particularly of the New York-based Indian merchant, J.J. Singh, and US Congress members Emmanuel Celler and Clare Booth Luce culminated in the bipartisan Indian Citizenship Bill of 1946, permitting naturalisation for Indian immigrants and giving India a token annual quota of 100 immigrants. Between 1948 and 1965 however only 7000 "East Indians" had been recorded as entering the US. By this time the first wave of Indians who had arrived in California in the late 19th- early 20th century had acquired relative prosperity.

12.21. In addition, several people of Indian origin in the Caribbean and Africa and Indo-Fijians headed for North America in a steady stream. The Indian community in general had been haunted by feelings of insecurity as independence for the British colonies approached and questions of their

citizenship and relationship with indigenous communities came into sharper focus. The pace accelerated after Idi Amin's forcible eviction of Asians in the 70s and the 1987 coup by Rabuka ousting the elected government of Fiji that had the overwhelming support of the Indian community. Indo-Fijians for example belonging mostly to the semi-skilled labour category, though some held professional qualifications, headed for Vancouver, which now has the largest population of Indo-Fijians outside Fiji.

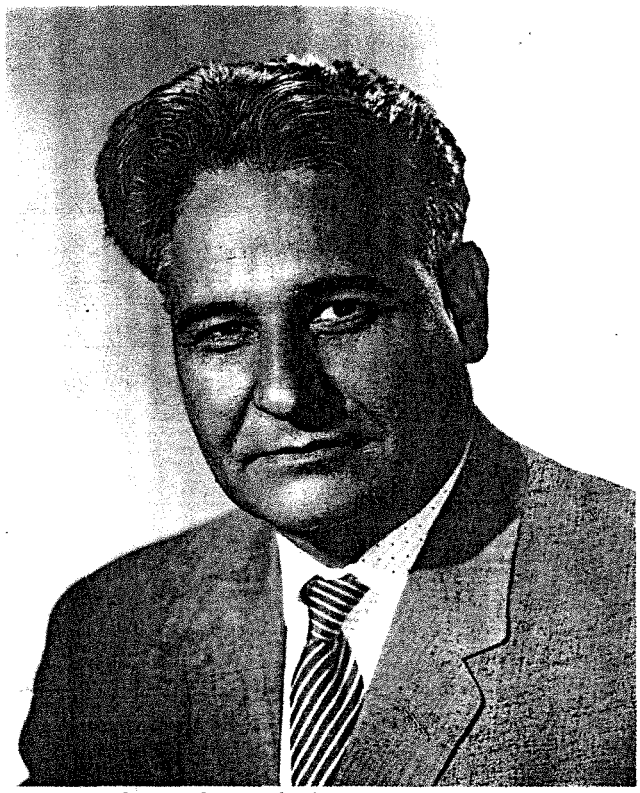
12.22. Indians from East Africa added a new element in the Indian community profile in the United States – that of the small, self-employed entrepreneur. They moved into the newspaper kiosk, grocery store, laundry and motel business. They now constitute the single largest ethnic group owning the motel industry in the United States, especially on the Western Coast. Possessing characteristic Indian virtues of thrift, family values and hard work, they started with family-owned motels at the lower end of the market, and moved up to own the more up-scale *Days' Inn* and *Holiday Inn* franchises. Many *Dunkin Donuts* franchises are owned by Gujaratis from East Africa, as no clash with dietary restrictions is entailed, unlike at *Mc Donald's*.

12.23. The Immigration Act of 1965 abolished immigration quotas and led to an ever-increasing flow of Asians and Indians to the United States, irrevocably changing the racial composition of immigrants in favour of the Asian communities. This led to an increase in immigration by Indian professionals - doctors and engineers, whose progeny are now a major presence in America's top Universities. Some Indians were able to pursue higher studies in the United States itself in engineering and medicine following the easing of visa regulations in the 60s and 70s.

12.24. In Canada, the continuous journey legislation was dropped after the Second World War. In 1947 Indians won the right to vote. Between 1962 and 1967, around the same time as the US, Canada abolished discrimination in immigration policy based on race and nationality, and in 1971 somewhat self-consciously proclaimed 'multiculturalism' as a national policy. This led to a ten-fold increase in Indian immigration from 6774 in 1961 to 68,000 in 1971. Whereas the majority of earlier immigrants had been from the Sikh community, from 1962 onwards people from other Indian communities, religions and regions as well as from other parts of the world started to stream in. Thus by 1991, only 173,670 out of over 500,000 immigrants of Indian origin were born in India. PIOs from the Caribbean, Fiji and Africa also settled in Canada. The cultural diversity of the Indian community reflected the cultural diversity of India. A significant change in Canadian policy has been the signing of the Extradition Treaty with India in 1987 and addition of *terrorism* as grounds for exclusion under the Immigration Act, 1993.

Chapter 13

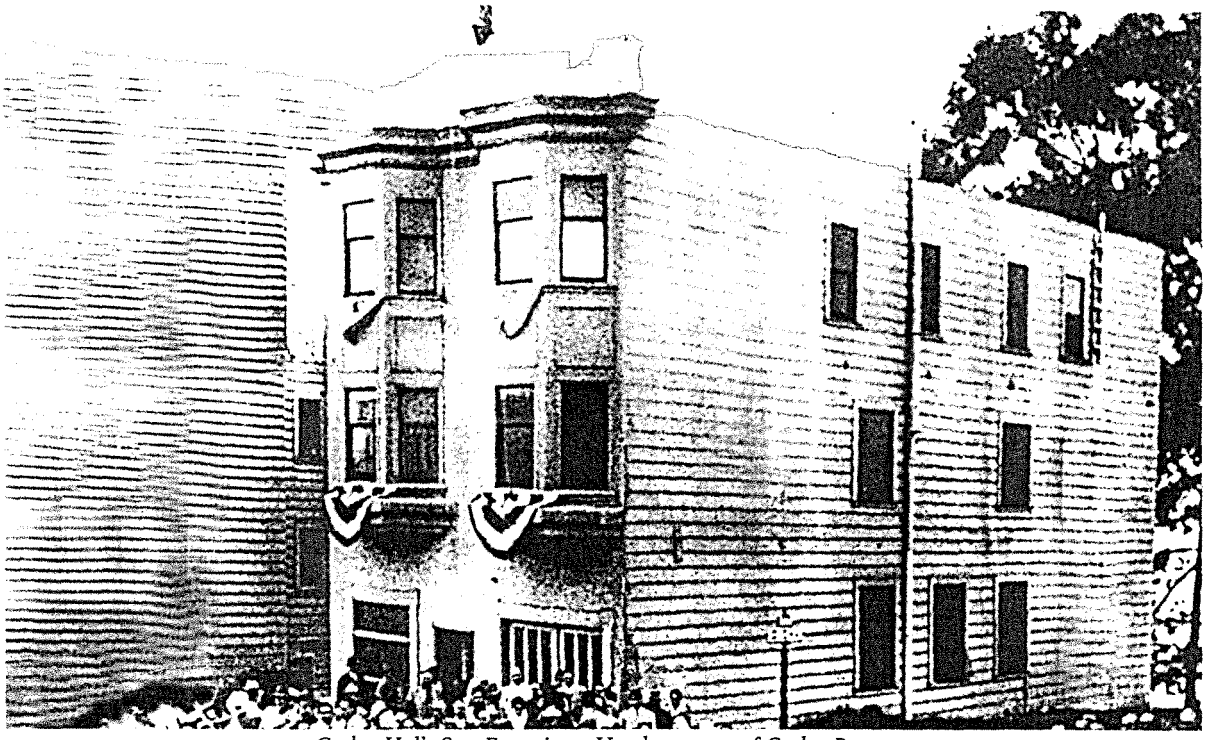
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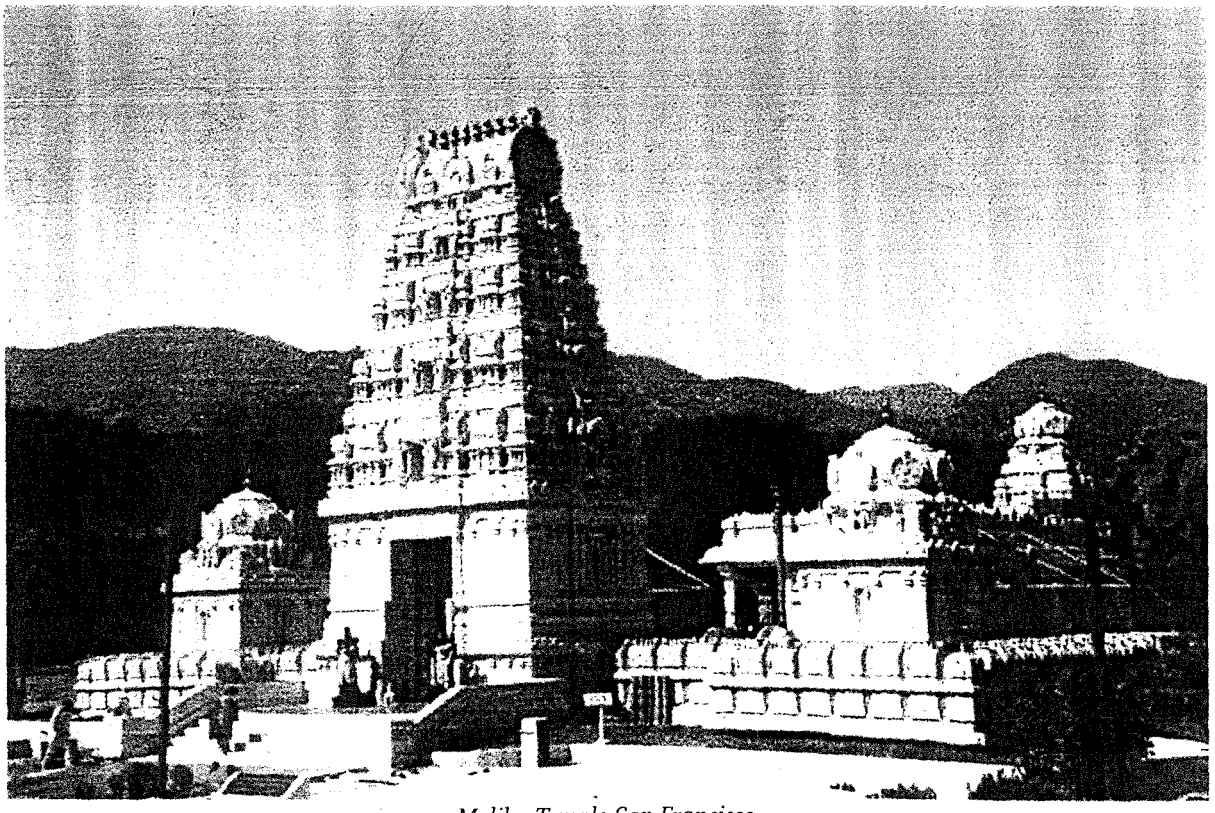
Late Mr. Dilip Singh Saund – first Asian American in the US Congress



Ms.Indra Nooyi, first lady President of PEPSICO (Photo Courtesy: Business Standard)



Gadar Hall, San Francisco. Headquarters of Gadar Party



Malibu Temple,San Francisco

Basic Facts

1.	Total Population of the United States	281,421,906*
2.	Indian American community	1,678,765*
3.	Percentage of Indian Americans in Asian American population	16.4%
4.	Percentage of Asian Americans in US population	3.6%
5.	Percentage of Indian Americans of the total population of the US	0.6%

*2000 Census.

From 815,447 Indian Americans recorded in the 1990 US Census, the number reached 1,678,765 in the US 2000 Census, representing a phenomenal growth of **105.87%** - *the highest among all Asian origin groups*. Annual immigration from India between 1990-2000 at around 30,000 - 45,000, recorded by the Immigration and Naturalisation Services (INS), consisted of highly skilled knowledge workers and dependants of Indian American relatives. The Indian American population now ranks third in the Asian American Group in the US after the Chinese and Filipinos, having overtaken the Japanese since the last census. California has the largest concentration of Indo-Americans, followed by New York, New Jersey, Texas and Illinois. Other States with a sizable Indian community are Florida, Pennsylvania and Washington, DC. In addition to the above, a large number of illegal immigrants of Indian origin enter the US through the southern States through Mexico, unofficially estimated at a few hundred thousand.

Economic Profile

13.2. The per capita income of the community is currently estimated at US $ 60, 093 compared to the average per capita income of US $ 38, 885. High levels of education have enabled Indo-Americans to become a very productive segment of the US population and to contribute to the unprecedented economic boom of the 90s. More than 87% of Indo-Americans have completed high school while 62% have some college education compared to just over 20% for the US population. The majority acquired their higher educational qualifications in India, particularly in the engineering and IT sectors, although some have studied in US institutions. 72.3% are employed, of which 43.6%

occupy managerial and professional positions, 33.2% are in the technical, sales and service sectors, and the remaining 23.3% are skilled labours. Indian Americans are found in the following broad occupations:

(a) Medicine, engineering and law: These professionals arrived in the US in the 1960s and 70s following the easing of immigration rules, and established themselves well before the IT influx took place. One of the many areas in which Indian Americans have done the country of their origin proud has been in science and technology - engineering, biotechnology and medicine. In biotechnology, Indian Americans have done extremely well. A large number of Indian scientists and engineers work in sensitive US government owned laboratories, including nuclear laboratories. Boeing and NASA employ a significant number of Indian Americans in their technical work force. It is estimated that 35% of Boeing's technical work force is Indian. Amar Bose established the finest acoustics systems company in the world, while Sam Pitroda, CEO of World Tel contributed to the expansion of telecommunications in India.

(b) Information Technology: About 300,000 Indian Americans work in technology firms in California's Silicon Valley. They account for more than 15% of high-tech start-ups and their average annual income is estimated at $200,000. There are around 650 to 700 Indian owned companies in the Silicon Valley, with more appearing every day. The impact by prominent Indians in this field is nothing short of extraordinary. Vinod Dham, Father of the Pentium chip, Sabeer Bhatia, founder of Net based email *(Hotmail)* Vinod Khosla, Kanwal Rekhi and K.B. Chandrashekhar, are just some of the illustrious names in this field.

(c) International finance and management.

(d) Higher education: Several American Universities, including those of the Ivy League, have prominent Indian Faculty members. The Indian community has also started to fund Chairs on Indian studies, like the Chairs on Indian History at Brown University and University of California and a Jagdish Bhagwati Professorship on Indian Political Economy at Columbia.

(e) Mainstream media, journalism, writing, films and music: Prominent journalists, writers, musicians and film-makers have made a noteworthy contribution. Indian writing in English is now recognised, with Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies* winning the Pulitzer Prize in 2000, while Bharati Mukherjee and Anita Desai won acclaim earlier. Dr.Fareed Zakaria, after a distinguished stint as Editor of the prestigious *Foreign Affairs*, has taken over as Editor of *Newsweek*. Pankaj Mishra and Shashi Tharoor write regularly in the *NYT*. An association of South Asian journalists has been launched in Washington. The recognition given to Pandit Ravi Shankar, Ali Akbar Khan and Zakir Hussein who settled in the US, brought Indian music into mainstream consciousness, while Zubin Mehta's success was also a tribute to the talent in the Indian community. Mira Nair's off-beat films on Indian

themes have won much acclaim. Her film *Monsoon Wedding* won the Venice Film Festival *Golden Lion Award.* Famous Anglo-Indian Hollywood actors are Vivien Leigh and Ben Kingsley.

(f) Traditional businesses: real estate, retailing etc., and

(g) Taxi drivers, factory workers, newsstand workers and farmers.

Socio-cultural Profile

13.3. The Indo-American community is recognised as one of the influential ethnic communities in the United States and is often referred to as a model minority. It is known as law abiding, and is appreciated for its hard work and adaptability to local conditions. Their high educational profile, economic success, knowledge of English and experience with democracy in their home country has won them acceptance. Americans have traditionally been appreciative of hard working and successful workers/entrepreneurs and the Indian Americans are perceived to have fulfilled this criteria. Indians are also renowned for their mathematical abilities and technical expertise and have earned the distinction of being the largest ethnic group on the mathematical faculties of all American universities. They are rated among the best doctors, engineers, economists and scientists.

13.4. The Indo-American community in the US reflects the diversity of India. The first generation Indian Americans remain deeply attached to their culture and traditions. The community has preserved its close family bonds and linguistic, religious and cultural traditions. Virtually every regional group and religious denomination flourishing in India has its representative body in the US and its own cultural organisation, which celebrate national functions and Indian festivals such as Republic Day and Independence Day. Ethnic, linguistic and regional cultural organisations such as the Federation of Kerala Associations in North America (FOKANA), Federation of Gujarati Associations in North America (FOGANA), Telugu Association of North America (TANA), and the Bengali Association of North America (BANA) hold national conventions. Members in thousands along with their families gather at these conventions to participate in cultural, culinary and handicraft extravaganzas. A large number of temples, Gurudwaras and even Churches are flourishing as centres of religious, cultural, educational, charitable and social activities and more are being built. The Hindu Swayam Sewak Sangha, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Ramakrishna Mission, Chinmaya Mission and the Swaminarayan Sanstha have national and regional units. All major religious festivals of India like Holi, Deepavali, Dussehra and Gurupurab are celebrated with traditional enthusiasm.

13.5. It is interesting that Indian religious preachers have a large and enthusiastic following amongst the Indian American community, and incidentally, also amongst the mainstream American communities.

13.6. Indian Christians formed an umbrella organisation – the Indian American Christian Association - in Los Angeles in 2000. The major organisation representing Indian Muslims is the "Federation of

Indian Muslim Associations", which mainly coordinates relief work for Muslims in India. It has maintained links with Muslim organisations from other countries based in the US.

13.7. There are larger political organisations such as the American Indian Foundation and various professional organisations, such as The IndUS Entrepreneurs (TIE), Indo-American Chamber of Commerce, Network of Indian Professionals (Netsap) etc., which function as umbrella organisations. There is considerable scope for better networking with other minority groups in the US like Afro-Americans, Hispanics, Chinese and Jews.

13.8. A worrying trend of spousal abuse and wife battering, especially among a certain strata of society, is on the rise. A number of women's social organisations with help lines have been set up to deal with the problem.

Links with India

13.9. The Indian community has access to all the information on India through Internet, e-mail, access to Indian TV channels etc. There are a number of Indian television and radio programmes. The most popular Indian TV Channels are *TV Asia, Zee TV, Sony Entertainment, B4U, Zee Gold*, etc. In addition, there are local TV channels like *Darshan TV* and *Namaste* and several publications on India issued by the community. There is a profusion of printed material on India such as *India Abroad*, which has a balanced coverage of Indian events. The *India West* and *India Post* also enjoy a wide readership amongst other publications. Indian film stars Aishwarya Rai and the current crop of young actors remain very popular, even among second generation Indians. Young girls of Indian origin aspire to become Bollywood stars. Bollywood shows are big hits. Films like *Lagaan* and *Taal* were big hits with second generation Indian Americans also in the US. Eminent Indian artists perform to sold out audiences in the US.

13.10. Having witnessed India's success in the IT field, Indian Americans feel that the future holds tremendous potential for India. However, negative experiences while dealing with immigration and customs officials at the airport or sorting out family affairs has reinforced their perceptions that *corruption is rampant and unchecked in India*. This has a major impact on their perceptions and attitudes as they contrast life in the US and in India, and conclude that not enough has been done to enforce the right values, particularly in the lower echelons of the bureaucracy with which they are forced to deal with.

13.11. While some of these are legitimate concerns, some of the criticism takes on an abrasive tone. Underlying the above ambivalence are undercurrents that need understanding. The eminent Indian writer in English Shashi Tharoor traces the paradox of conservative religious tendencies and even support for extremist causes back home (witness the support for *Khalistan* in Canada) manifesting themselves particularly in the first generation of Indian Americans, to the 'very nature of expatriation'. While Indian-Americans are generally far better off in the United States than they would have been in India, many suffer from homesickness. There is even a mixture of

nostalgia and bitterness about having had to leave a land they secretly miss. The emotional insecurity and stresses caused by an alien environment play an important role in the psychological make-up of Indian Americans. This is one of the major reasons why high priority is given to the construction of places of worship. This is one way of affirming their proud cultural heritage and roots. As the community has not yet fully integrated into the mainstream, there is also an unconscious desire to secure recognition of their concerns and role from their Indian counterparts. Hence some Indian citizens may be taken aback at the vehemence with which they criticise some aspects of Indian life, which even foreigners hesitate to condemn quite so openly.

13.12. While they feel genuinely concerned about Indian issues, and have donated generously during national calamities (Latur, Orissa Cyclone, Gujarat earthquake), barring a small minority this support cannot be assumed to extend to investment and business decisions, where they are far more cautious than their mainstream counterparts. Their desire to help is manifested more in philanthropic gestures for their hometown or university, although this is thwarted to some extent by the lack of a smooth mechanism for implementation of such projects.

13.13. While first generation Indians continue to be attached to their culture, and keep links with India alive through frequent visits, second generation Indo-Americans have a distinctly different and even more complex attitude towards India. Their interest in Indian tradition springs from the realisation that Indian culture provides a viable approach for peace of mind and stable family values. The heightened awareness in the mainstream communities of the uniqueness of Indian culture has reinforced their pride in it. In America's top universities, second generation Indians continue to form lively Indian-American student associations devoted to interpreting and popularising Indian philosophy and culture. Significantly, first generation Indian student university associations, while also projecting traditional themes, try to highlight current issues also and invite eminent speakers from India to address mainstream audiences. Second generation Indo-Americans justifiably seek to cultivate pride in their cultural and ethnic inheritance, but contrast India's economic performance with East Asian success stories. Since they are able to better explore the diverse opportunities provided by the American university education system, they try very hard to blend into the mainstream. The traditional drive for educational excellence has endured. The focus is shifting to marketing, law, finance and management.

Political Contribution

13.14. The 1.68 million Indian-American community comprises a sizable voting force. The need for political empowerment dawned following the attacks on Indian women in the late 80s. Lately, although a substantial portion continues to remain aloof from political activities, a small but influential section of the community has begun to test its new-found political leverage. Indo-Americans have even resorted to the quintessential American practice of fund-raising for political candidates at the federal, state and local levels – including at the level of former President Clinton and Vice-President Al Gore – to draw the attention of mainstream politicians to their concerns.

President Clinton, the only American president who has paid two visits to India (one after his term was over), made it a point to include a sizable number of eminent Indo-Americans in his entourage. They were also involved in the visit of the Indian prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee to the US. Organisations like the IAFPE (Indian American forum for Political Education), IACPA (India Abroad Centre for Political Awareness), US-India Business Council and the congressional India Caucus and many others have effectively put across issues of concern to the Indian community including on issues affecting their country of origin.

13.15. Second generation Indian Americans are also increasingly drawn to national politics. They are also active in generating a favourable climate of opinion on current issues. Indo-American political organisations have started to cultivate prominent Congressmen and Senators. 118 out of 435 legislators in the US Congress have become members of the India Caucus, which has played a crucial role in influencing opinion in Congress and defeating anti-India legislation, as well as advocating India's stand on issues ranging from the nuclear tests in 1998 to Kargil. Similarly, in answer to India's long-standing demand, the number of visas approved by Congress shot up from 65,000 a few years ago to a projected 200,000 from next year, thanks to pressure from InfoTech companies, many headed by Indian Americans. Earlier they had succeeded in getting Indians recognised as a separate category in the US census.

13.16. Amongst prominent Indo-Americans are Satveer Choudhary, who was recently elected State Senator from Minnesota; Nimi McConigley, an Indian born American citizen, currently a State Legislator from Wyoming, who is contesting a United States Senate election and Kumar Barve, a second generation Indian American, who is a legislator in the Maryland Assembly. At least 3 Indian Americans have held the position of Mayor: Bala K. Srinivas in Hollywood Park, Texas; John Abraham in Teaneck, New Jersey, and Arun Jhaveri in Burien, Washington. Indian Americans were also appointed to various levels of government by the former Clinton Administration. An Indian American Vishwas More, was named a Bob Dole delegate on the 165-member slate to the 1996 Republican National Convention. In 1992 ten Indian Americans were chosen as delegates to the Democratic National Convention. The Democratic Party has recently launched an Indian American Democratic Campaign Committee with Sunil Aghi, President of the Indian American Political Foundation based in Los Angeles - as its Chairman.

13.17. As a result of this activity the State Department now regularly consults representatives of the Indian American community on matters of concern to it and even on Indo-US issues. President Clinton recognized the importance of the Asian American community and constituted the *White House Initiative on Asians and Pacific Islanders*, which was headed by an Indian American.

13.18. A weakness of the Indian community has however been its failure to unite. The formation of the *Indian American National Foundation*, a conglomerate umbrella body of four major associations viz. Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA), Association of American Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI), National Federation of Indian Americans (NFIA) and Indian American Forum for Political Education (IAFPE) in 2001 was welcomed as a move by the community to

forge unity among Indian groups at the national level. However, although the Foundation has established a liaison office in Washington DC, real unity in terms of action oriented policy and programmes is yet to be established. This has inevitably adversely impacted the community's ability to leverage its substantial strengths and capabilities in the political sphere.

13.19. For the first time, India has a constituency in the US with real influence and status. India is known as a quality source of knowledge and service sector workers, which are the leading sectors of the US economy. The demand for these workers will continue to grow despite a recent slowdown. With the recent liberalisation of H1-B visas – 100,000 Indians are expected henceforth to enter the US annually. Many will stay on. The Indian American community will therefore continue to grow, in numbers, power and influence.

13.20. As mentioned earlier, the September 11 terrorist attacks, have underscored the need both for political mobilisation to protect the community's interests, as well as for closer links with India, whose leaders have unhesitatingly taken up the issue of safety for the Indian community with their US counterparts. A sympathetic and sensitive handling of the issue is required on all sides.

Economic Contribution

13.21. So far, the working class/ professional status of Indo-Americans had precluded economic links with India along the lines of the Chinese Diaspora and China, or even the Gulf Indians, who as temporary workers in their host countries had an incentive to send their remittances home. Fortuitously, the economic reforms launched in 1991 in India and the stellar rise of the Indian Information Technology sector opened up new business opportunities for the Indian community in the United States. As India's only world-class sector, the Indian Information Technology (IT) sector has recorded a compounded annual growth rate of 55% between 1992 and the present. Many IT professionals relied heavily on strengths back home - the huge pool of skilled computer experts and software professionals – to sub-contract work to their country of origin, ***thus creating several virtuous cycles for the Indian IT sector and economy***. Today Information Technology collaborations connect, admittedly a small but influential section of Indian industry with the best and most innovative companies in the United States, many of which are led by Indian Americans (Government policy is helping this by easing provisos for acquisition of software firms overseas). It is no accident that some of India's best-managed companies are also the ones most globally integrated – the IT companies.

13.22. Several IT graduates had left India and emerged as important entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley, where 15% of the start-ups today are supposed to be by people of Indian origin. Overnight Indians have risen to the top in one of the fastest paced sectors in the US, whose contribution to increased American productivity fuelled the 90s US economic miracle. This fact did not go unnoticed in the US, and other developed countries, where the doors to hi-tech Indian immigration have since opened.

13.23. The list of Indians who have made it to the top is impressive (in the next section the contribution of successful Indians who have engaged in substantial philanthropic work in India is discussed). Some of the luminaries are - Sanjiv Sidhu and Ken Sharma of *i2 technologies*; Ajay Shah and Mukesh Patel of *Smart Modular,* Romesh Wadhwani of *Aspect,* Naveen Jain of *InfoSpace,* Sanjay Kumar of *Computer Associates,* Mukesh Chatter of *Nexabit Networks.* Steve Sanghi of *Microchip,* Vinod Gupta of *InfoUSA* and Steve Sanghi, chairman and CEO of *Microchip Technologies.* Indians hold the top posts at *Citibank* and *Lucent Technologies' Bell Labs* – IIT alumni Arun Netravalli is the President of *Bell Labs* and Arun Kripalani - Senior Vice President of *Qualcomm.* 2 hi-tech magazines have been launched just for the high-tech Indian community – *SiliconIndia* and *TechMantra* – while websites proliferate.

13.24. The success and achievements of Indian Americans have also attracted the attention of major multinationals to India's potential in the IT sector. Thus India is today one of the few, if not the only, developing country which has attracted investment not in one, but *scores* of R & D centres wholly funded and established by reputed MNCs like GE, CISCO, Sun Microsystems, Microsoft, IBM, Hughes Software, etc. **Intel**'s R&D centres in Delhi, Bangalore and Mumbai service its global operations. **Oracle** has two development centres, in Bangalore and Hyderabad; **Sun Microsystems** is doubling its Indian investments. **Texas Instruments** reportedly applied for several patents in the US based on the work on integrated circuits and software at its Bangalore centre. **Phoenix, ABB, IBM, America Online** (AOL) and **Chase** are in the process of setting up new R&D centres. **Lucent Technologies and Microsoft** are in India. Bill Gates has reportedly referred to India as an "IT superpower". India's fame in IT has spread to Asian countries traditionally wary of investing in India.

NRI/PIO Philanthropy

13.25. Some Indian Americans realise the debt they owe to the country of their origin, in terms of the value systems which have helped them rise meteorically in American society, and also for the high quality education they have received in India at virtually no cost. Such Indians have been contributing towards charitable causes in India, motivated by a desire to give back something to India. In their own words, the reasons for these charitable acts are – "One is the obvious emotional attachment to India. Two is when you do something like this, there is much more satisfaction than the consumption of the same wealth. The third factor is that each one of us believes our image over here is strongly influenced by where India stands in the world. " A number of eminent Indian Americans told the Committee that they would like to do something for India and it was now "pay-back time."

13.26. Donations have been made by Silicon Valley Indians towards educational projects such as the IITs, to which most credit their personal professional success. IIT alumni associations have been most active in this regard. According to them, the tradition of philanthropy in the West (American educational institutions routinely canvass funding support from former students) fits in with the traditional Indian concept of *guru dakshina.* A number of organisations have been formed to

support social welfare projects in India such as child welfare, literacy and rural community programmes. Academicians of Indian origin have held seminars/conventions on India thus giving prominence to current issues of importance to India, which have attracted substantial interest. Some Indians are keen to fund development projects in their home towns or help to channel foreign investment to India.

13.27. Concerned members of the Indian community have however repeatedly raised the issue of creating a hassle-free environment to encourage such philanthropic activities. They have suggested a nodal point which could process charitable donations, facilitate investment and trade, voluntary work, transfer of technology and know-how etc. According to them there is a vast suppressed desire to help India in whatever way possible provided the right mechanisms are put in place.

13.28. Several successful Indians in the US have demonstrated a strong desire to make a solid contribution to India's economic development. Examples abound. US-based IT magnate and venture capitalist Kanwal Rekhi helped to found *The Indus Entrepreneurs*, or *TiE*, a non-profit professionals' network established to foster entrepreneurship through venture capital funding, to help Indo-Americans join the mainstream and aspire to the highest levels of the American business community. *TiE* is active in India and has a similar mandate. Each chapter in India is headed by a famous Indian IT CEO (Satyam, Infotech, Infosys, Wipro). Of Rekhi's several protégés, K.B. Chandrashekar, a former Wipro software engineer, and now co-founder of Exodus Communications, is in his turn, helping Indian angel investors. Another protégé, Naren Bakshi, is mentoring other Indian IT entrepreneurs.

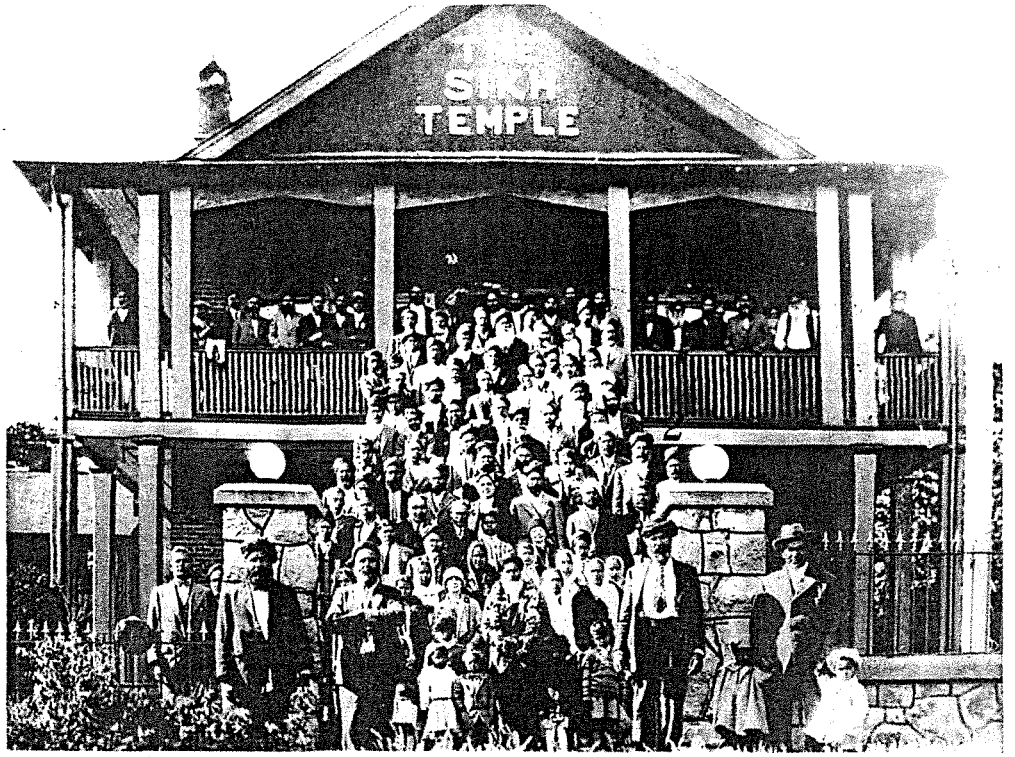
13.29. *TiE's* collection target for the five IITs is $500 million. Rekhi himself donated $2 million to IIT-Bombay. K.B. Chandrasekhar contributed to a centre at the Madras Institute of Technology. Fellow co-founder B.V. Jagdeesh donated $1 million towards schools in Bangalore. Vinod Gupta of *infoUSA* founded the *Vinod Gupta School of Management* in India and set up a polytechnic for women in his native Rampur. A San Jose pathologist, Dr. Nilima Sabharwal, founded *Home of Hope* which raised $20,000 in 1999 for a Chennai orphanage. A New York taxi driver, Om Dutt Sharma, set up a girls' school in his native village and now hopes to build a hospital. A retired cancer-stricken plastic surgeon from New York, Sharad Dixit, has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for performing and supervising some 44,000 free surgeries to fight deformities in India. Pavan Nigam, co-founder of *Healtheon WebMD*, is launching a free IT training institute in Kanpur and investing in an Indian dotcom. Prabhu Goel, founder of *Gateway Design Automation* has contributed $10 million to set up the *Foundation for Excellence* to fund the education of deserving underprivileged students in India.

Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora

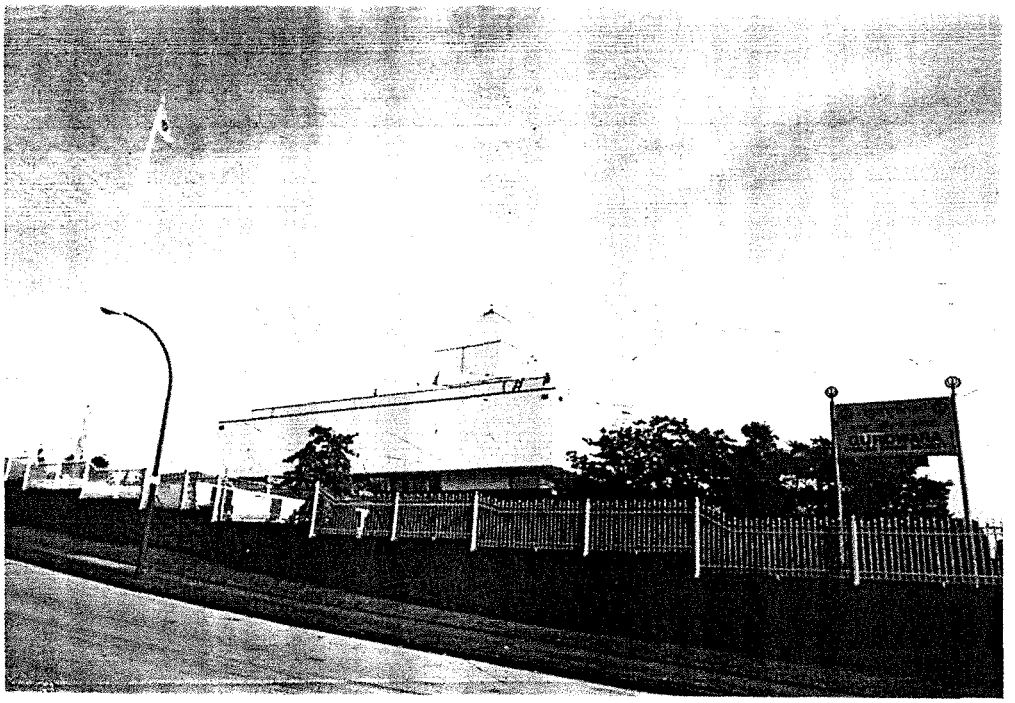
13.30. As the demands and expectations of the Diaspora in the United States are almost identical with those of the Indo-Canadians, they have been catalogued in one place at the end of Chapter 14: Canada.

Chapter 14

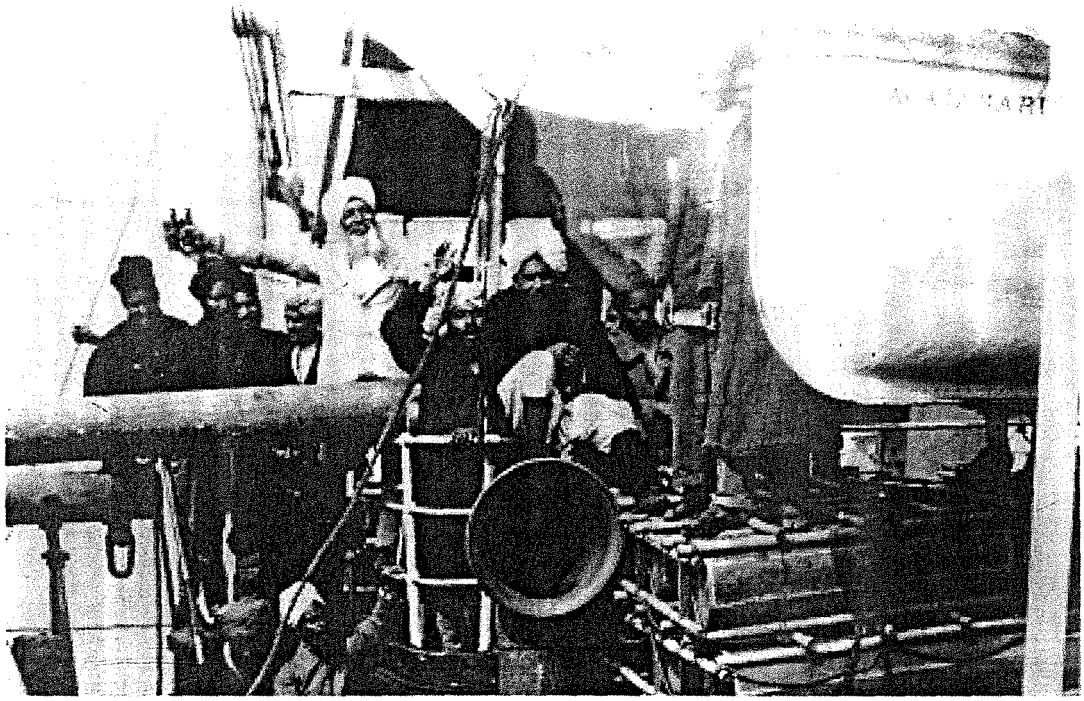
Canada



Khalsa Diwan Society, Early Sikh-Canadian Sangh, 1930, Gurudwara, Vancouver.



Khalsa Diwan Gurudwara at Ross Street, Vancouver (Recent)



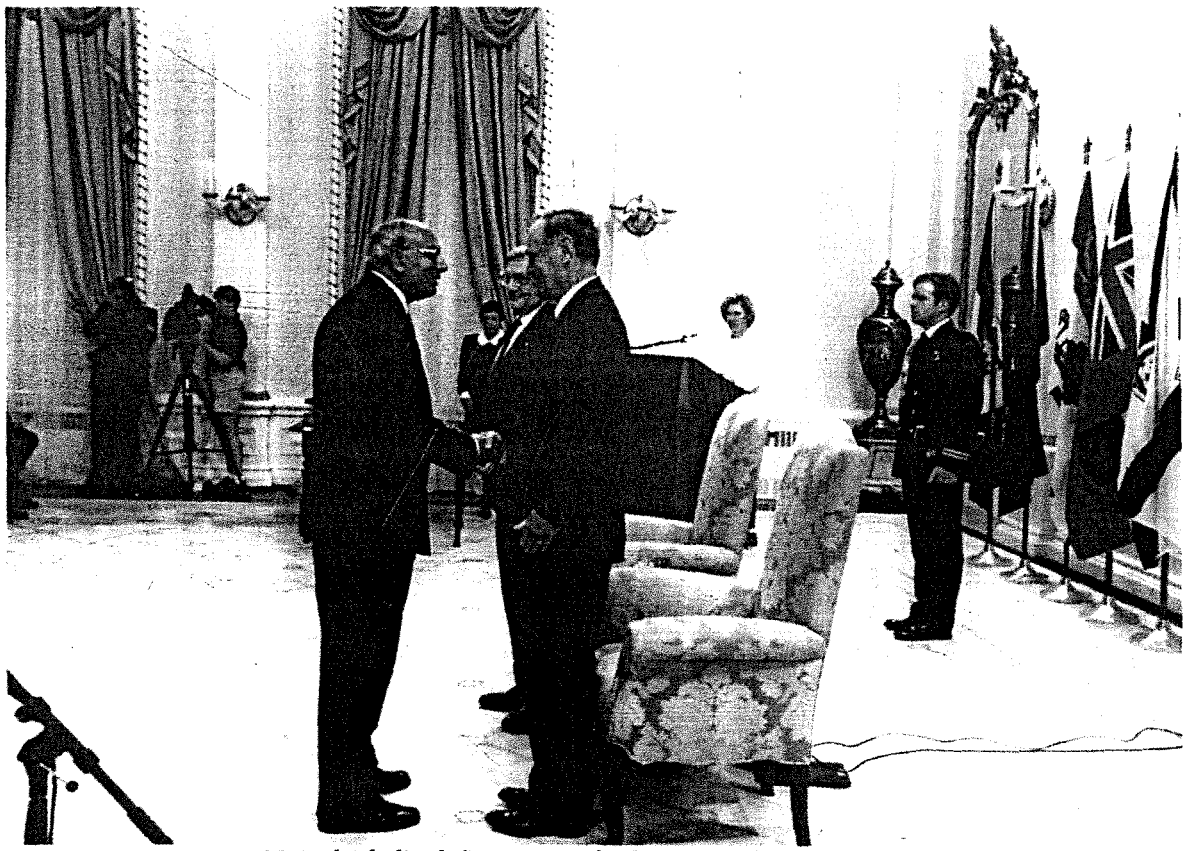
Komagatu Maru, a freighter which reached Vancouver on 23 May 1914 with 376 Indian passengers. The Canadian Immigration Deptt. refused to allow the passengers to land except 20 passengers who had resident status



Indo-Canadians celebrating India's independence on 15 August 1947



Sir Ujjal Dosanjh – First Indo-Canadian Premier of B.C. (February 2000-July 2001)



Mr.Herb Dhaliwal, first person of Indian origin, being sworn in as Minister of Fisheries and Oceans of Canada on 3 August 1999

Basic Facts

Total Population of the Country		About 30 million
Estimated size of the Indian community		
(a)	Indian citizens	About 150,000
(b)	Persons of Indian Origin	About 700,000
(c)	Stateless	About 1,000
(d)	Indian Community as a percentage of the population	2.8%

The majority of the community is from Punjab, though most of the principal linguistic and ethnic groups of India are represented in the Indo-Canadian population. A survey conducted in 1991 showed that 49% of the Indo-Canadians surveyed were Sikh, 24% were Hindu and 10% were affiliated with other religions. The Indo-Canadian community is highly urbanised and almost 90% of them live in metropolitan areas, especially in Toronto (capital of Ontario), Vancouver (capital of British Columbia), Montreal (the largest city in Quebec), Calgary and Edmonton.

Economic Profile and Contribution

14.2. No detailed information on the employment characteristics of the Indo-Canadian community is available. It is estimated that over 30% of them have jobs in professional and managerial positions, both within the government and the private sector, whereas 23% work in manufacturing. The average annual income of immigrants from India is nearly 20% higher than the national average. Immigrants from India are more likely than other groups to possess a university degree. However, the community also has more non-matriculates than other immigrant groups. In part, the latter is explained by the family sponsorship scheme of Canadian immigration policy.

14.3. Indian immigrants have a larger component of persons with mathematics, engineering and applied sciences background than other groups. In general, Indian students and those of Indian origin do well in Canadian universities, particularly in technical faculties like computer science and engineering, medicine, basic sciences, etc. Only the Chinese-Canadian community competes with Indo-Canadians in the educational field.

14.4. With the expansion of the knowledge-based industry, the Indo-Canadian community is likely to gain in importance and strength. This would also expand bilateral ties between India and Canada in the hi-tech and information technology fields. While PIOs/NRIs can be expected to donate to charitable causes in India, the Indo-Canadian community will invest in India when the investment climate there is made more attractive. Extra effort will need to be made, both by the community and India, to maintain their special ties and links.

Socio-cultural Profile

14.5. Nothing demonstrated how the destinies of the Diaspora and India were bound together, as the fact that Indo-Canadians won the right to vote soon after the same time India won its Independence from colonial rule. Thus Indian Independence awakened the pride of the Indo-Canadian community, which gave an unprecedented welcome to the first Indian High Commissioner Shri H.S. Malik. Nehru strongly advocated its cause during his visit to Canada.

14.6. Today, Indo-Canadians are organised on the basis of linguistic, regional, religious and other characteristics. Indo-Canadian organisations with an overarching character are not as cohesive. Government agencies like Heritage Canada and Canadian International Development Agency also fund religious, quasi-religious and cultural activities as part of their official mandate of supporting multiculturalism. Many institutions/NGOs have been set up by NRIs for the promotion of Indian arts and culture, some of which have affiliations with their counterparts in India. The Lal Bahadur Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute has made excellent contribution in facilitating interaction between the academic communities of the two countries. Various seminars, fellowships and research programmes under the aegis of the institute have helped in promoting Indian studies in Canada and vice versa.

14.7. Every area with an Indo-Canadian concentration has produced excellent Indian dance schools. Every year several concerts by Indian musicians, singers, film artists etc. are held at prominent venues in cities like Toronto, Vancouver, Ottawa and Montreal. The Indo-Canadian community has also produced some distinguished writers, artists, dancers, film-makers & TV personalities. Some of them like Rohinton Mistry have won a long list of prestigious awards like the *Hart House* literary prize, the *Canada Governor General's Award*, the *W. H. Smith/ Books in Canada First Novel Award*, the *Commonwealth Writer's Prize for Best Book*, the *Giller Prize*, the Royal Society of Literature's *Winfried Holtby Prize*, and the 1996 *Los Angeles Times Award* for fiction. *A Fine Balance* made the short-list of nominees for the *Booker Prize*, on which a film was also made. Toronto-based Robin Sharma's *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari has also won acclaim.* Other luminaries like Ms. Ruby Bhatia, Mr. Mansa Ram and Ms. Deepa Mehta have also made a name in India.

14.8. A number of Indo-Canadians have received the Order of Canada, which is awarded to distinguished Canadians who have made an important contribution to the community. One of them, Asa Singh

Johal, who arrived as a semi-literate worker and went on to become a leading figure in the forestry industry in British Columbia, established a Chair on Forestry at the University of British Columbia, for which he received an Honorary Doctorate and later was awarded the Order of Canada.

14.9. Indo-Canadians celebrate their religious festivals with much fanfare. Canadian government ministers and even the Prime Minister appear at functions organised by the Indo-Canadian community. During the celebrations of the 300th anniversary of the Khalsa Panth, the majority of the Canadian Cabinet made an appearance. In the annual Baisakhi functions organised in the Canadian Parliament complex, it is not uncommon for the Prime Minister to be present.

14.10. There are more than a hundred Gurudwaras and temples throughout Canada, which provide a psychological haven for Indo-Canadians. Many Indo-Canadians feel they are unable to fulfil their potential owing to hidden racism in a white-dominated society. Thus the covert racism found expression in the aftermath of the 11th September terrorist attacks in the US, when a Hindu temple in Hamilton was burnt down. Another problem cited by Indo-Canadians is that their Canadian-born children are losing touch with their country of origin.

14.11. These sentiments have the same psychological roots – a mixture of insecurity, desire to assert a distinct identity, and alienation – as observed and described in the previous section on the Indian American community in the United States. However, they are accentuated in Canada because of the distinctive character of the community, a sizable section of which has traditionally been composed of first generation rural migrants. The culture shock faced by such immigrants has been far greater than that faced by their counterparts in the US, as they have had to make a double adjustment – from rural to urban and from developing home country to a highly developed host society. At times it gets manifested in an inflexible adherence to community traditions and religion, marriage and dating taboos, and even psychological/behavioural problems brought upon by alienation and discrimination. These can then be manifested in an increasing emphasis on one's own separateness and religious affiliations.

14.12. When misperceptions of home country policies designed to fight the *cross-border* terrorism in Punjab in the 1980s were added to this volatile mixture, the results were heartbreaking for all the parties concerned. Some places of worship in Canada began to be frequently misused for political purposes. The extremist movement found an echo among certain misguided sections of the community, resulting in the tragic event of *Kanishka* in 1985. However, following the defeat of the *cross-border* sponsored terrorism in Punjab, these militant trends have abated significantly.

14.13. However, despite the above problems, with each passing generation, the community is becoming more integrated with the mainstream as Canada pursues more liberal and enlightened policies on immigration. Inter-marriage between second generation Indo-Canadians and white Canadians is not uncommon. Therefore, it would be reasonable to expect a progressive dilution in the attachment that the Indo-Canadian community feels for India.

Political Profile

14.14. The political prominence of Indo-Canadians is growing. As a result Canadian politicians avidly cultivate Indo-Canadian ethnic groups. The Liberal Party of Canada, which has ruled Canada for most of the past century (70 out of 100 years) is known to attach great importance to the ethnic vote.

14.15. Indo-Canadian have made their presence felt in mainstream Canadian politics in a relatively short time, partly owing to the nature of the Canadian political system and the importance of the ethnic vote in a country of immigrants. Barring Moe Sihota, Minister in the NDP government in British Columbia, *all other prominent Canadian politicians of Indian origin in public life are first generation immigrants.*

14.16. Thus the province of British Columbia on the West Coast had the first Indo-Canadian Premier (roughly equivalent of a Chief Minister in India), Ujjal Dossanjh of the New Democratic Party. Dossanjh is India-born and migrated to Canada in 1968. Indo-Canadians are represented in the British Columbia, Ontario and Alberta legislatures and in the British Columbian Cabinet.

14.17. There are 6 Indo-Canadian MPs out of 301 Members of the Canadian Parliament. These are Herb Dhaliwal (Liberal Party; India born but Canadian educated; also, the first Indo-Canadian Cabinet Minister), Gurbax Singh Malhi (Liberal Party; India born and educated), Rahim Jaffar (Canadian Alliance Party; East African origin), Gurmeet Grewal (Canadian Alliance; India born and educated), Keith Martin (Canadian Alliance; originally from Goa but born in the UK), Deepak Oberoi (Canadian Alliance Party; East African origin but educated in India).

14.18. The community wants India to be strong and play a role in the world commensurate with its importance. Its leaders keep abreast of Indian developments and maintain close personal ties with politicians in India, particularly in Punjab. The Canadian Sikh community also maintains close ties with the Sikh community in the US and UK, a trend spurred by the erstwhile separatist movement.

Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora

14.19. The level of expectation from India on issues concerning the Indian American community remains very high in North America. There are several overlapping issues that have been raised by the Indo-American community both in the US and in Canada. Hence the following demands and expectations refer to the Diaspora in both the countries:

1. Grant of dual nationality. This has been a long-standing Indian-American community demand, which they feel would strengthen ties between the Diaspora and India, and facilitate transactions such as investment, dealing with property matters including agricultural property etc. The Sikh community in Canada in particular has strongly pressed for this demand as they have a stake in agricultural property.
2. Reduction in the fees charged for a PIO Card, as the current fee – US $ 1000 – is prohibitive, and accounts for the poor response.

3. Liberalisation of venture capital rules to enable Indian Americans to finance start-ups in India.

4. Deepening and accelerating economic reforms in order to encourage investment and other economic links.

5. Urgent and pressing need for greater transparency, reduction of bureaucracy and corruption.

6. Increase in the frequency of flights to India to overcome the difficulty in getting reservations, particularly during holiday seasons.

7. Establishing an organisation to provide single point contact to NRIs/PIOs for facilitating investment, technology transfer, philanthropic activities, voluntary work and lodging of grievances. Such an organisation should also have Field Officers in the States with large numbers of overseas Indians.

8. Related need to simplify the procedures for transfer of funds for philanthropic activities in India. FCRA clearance needs to be speedier and less troublesome. Authority could be delegated to the Mission for giving FCRA (Foreign Contributions Regulation Act) clearance. In case this is not feasible the Mission should at least have a major role in facilitating transfer of funds and philanthropic activities.

9. Flexibility in execution of philanthropic projects to which PIOs make full or partial contribution. Many PIOs wish to fund small infrastructure projects like roads, bridges, etc. in their villages. However, because of fear of corruption they would prefer such works to be assigned to reputed NGOs or corporations, in which both the PIOs and State/Municipality authorities could participate, rather than have the projects executed by PWDs or government departments.

10. Flexibility in funding small infrastructure projects. Several PIOs wish to fund infrastructure such as bridges and roads in their home towns, but given their experience of widespread corruption and extortion do not wish to entrust it to a Government agency like the PWDs. They have approached Indian authorities with a request to route such funding through trusted organisations, firms and NGOs nominated by them.

11. Simplification of formalities regarding income-tax clearances. Most PIOs are not aware of the necessity of obtaining an income-tax clearance in case of stay beyond the mandated 120 days. On departure they are harassed at the airport where arrangements for redressal are highly unsatisfactory.

12. Setting up of budget hotels near airports/ports of entry. Many visiting Indo-Americans spend extended periods in hotel accommodation and cannot afford the exorbitant five-star rates.

13. Establishing convenient air connections between Delhi and Punjab, or at least making convenient transport arrangements between airport, bus and railway hubs.

14. Provision of reliable and safe transportation from airport to residence from where they are frequently taken literally for a ride has been requested.

15. Tackling corruption at the customs and immigration counters in the airports. The Sikh community has pleaded for pruning of the blacklists as Sikh militancy has long become a thing of the past. Sikhs are also harassed at immigration counters because they carry like sounding names with people on the black list.

16. Abolition of the dual rate of charging Indians and foreigners, at least for PIOs.

17. Assistance in checking bank fraud. A new class of impersonators forging and encashing FDRs (fixed deposit receipts) sent home by PIOs through fake power of attorney has sprung up.

18. Assistance in legal and property matters to deal with illegal occupation and takeover of property in their absence.

19. Assistance and mediation in family disputes in which one partner is an Indian citizen. Apparently, some Indian partners harass PIOs on fraudulent grounds (however there are cases in which the Indian partner has been tricked and abandoned; care will need to be exercised in this regard).

20. Assistance on divorce related custody issues when one partner is an Indian citizen.

21. Setting up Cultural Centres in order to encourage second generation Indians to familiarise themselves with their ancient traditions.

22. Posting Indian teachers in various community centres or schools and provide audio visual material to support Indian language and cultural studies. Launch courses in Indian languages and studies in open universities or other institutions.

23. Instituting specialized one semester and short-term courses in prestigious Indian universities designed to familiarise second generation Indians with India. Courses should be recognized by US Universities.

24. Nominating an NRI to the Rajya Sabha who could represent overseas community interests and act as a liaison at the highest legislative level.

25. Greater freedom in establishing and managing institutions of higher learning in India. Flexibility in hiring and working conditions of Faculty members and fee structure for various categories of students. Freedom from excessive bureaucratic control and regulations of academic institutions.

26. Facilitate greater interaction between cultural organisations of the community and Indian cultural organisations. Facilitate exposure of NRI artists to Indian audiences.

Chapter 15

The Caribbean

Introduction

This chapter is a general introduction to the Diaspora in the Caribbean region. It attempts to sketch briefly the setting in which the drama was played out of Indians who had been inducted there in the mid-19th century in a condition that has been described as virtual slavery. But the descendants of these same persons gradually became honourable members of the societies in which they found themselves. The three following chapters contain a detailed survey of the Indian settlers in two of the former British colonies in that region, namely, Trinidad & Tobago as well as Guyana; and the colony that the Dutch had established in Suriname. The Indian emigration to those countries has been selected for in-depth treatment because it is in them that there are, even today, relatively large numbers of Indian settlers – over 40, 51 and 35% respectively, of their total populations. Most of these migrants had been taken to those colonies as indentured labourers. It is there that they had spent their initial years in hardship and unrequited toil. And it is there that they and their descendants had overcome their servitude and suffering to become respected members of their respective societies and, in time, even to attain political eminence. Basdeo Panday in Trinidad & Tobago, Cheddi Jagan and Bharrat Jagdeo in Guyana, and Jaggernath Lachmon in Suriname have been the most prominent among them.

15.2. It must be noted at the outset that in the Caribbean all persons of Indian origin are known as 'East Indians', an expression that will recur frequently in this chapter. This nomenclature is logical as the whole region is commonly referred to as the West Indies and its residents as 'Westindians'. Commenting in a humorous note on this innovation, the late Samuel Selvon had written as follows: 'If you look in the dictionary – I use Chambers myself – the definition for an East Indian means an inhabitant of the *East* Indies. This starts to be bewildering, and gets even more so, for when we have East Indians born in Trinidad, we should have to call them East Indian Trinidadians. And the people living in these islands are called Westindians. So, by definition, what we have here is really an *East Indian Trinidadian Westindian.*'

15.3. It was not only in politics but also in other spheres as well that the descendants of Indian migrants have been able to shoot to fame. Sir V. S.Naipaul and Samuel Selvon (who was actually of mixed

ancestry) have been, among them, the best known names in literature. There have also been a number of women writers who have won laurels for their work, having overcome the inbuilt prejudices against women in indenture days – Mahadai Das, Ramabai Espinet and Niala Maharaj are some of them. In diplomacy and international relations, Sridath Ramphal distinguished himself as a two-term Commonwealth Secretary General.

15.4. Another Indo-Caribbean feature that deserves notice is in the context of 'the three Cs' for which this region has gained universal repute – cricket, calypso and carnival. Over more than a century of their residence in these islands, the East Indians have developed into genuine natives as they have adopted and enriched all the three 'Cs', even though they may have had to make some adaptations along the way. Poems like *'Kuli Man Has Come To Stay'* called on the larger Caribbean society to recognise the legitimacy and permanence of the Indian presence. Their *chutney-soca* was an amalgam of song and dance which they had drawn from their own folk songs and dances, as well as on the soul-calypso (or *so-ca)* of the Creoles. As for cricket, it took them awhile to shake themselves loose from their indentured moorings to indulge in what was then a gentleman's game. But by 1950, Sonny Ramadhin of Trinidad had emerged as a right-hand spin bowler in test cricket. Seven years later, C.L.R.James extolled the virtues of Rohan Babulal Kanhai. He wrote about his batting that he had attained the freedom 'to create not only *a house for Mr. Biswas*, a house like other houses, but to sail the seas that open out to the East Indian who no longer has to prove himself to anybody but himself.' Others were to follow after that in the person of Joe Solomon and Alvin Kallicharan, proving conclusively that the East Indian had successfully scaled also the sacred Caribbean citadel of cricket.

15.5. In an article published in the British journal *New Community* in the early 1990s, Professor (now Lord) Bhiku Parekh had noted that 'Overseas Indians' take an affectionate interest in India and regard it as 'their cultural and spiritual home'. He then added that 'over time the ties had weakened but they were never severed'. These observations are relevant also to the Indian Diaspora in the Caribbean, and particularly so in the case of Guyana.

15.6. Some of the PIOs in that country continue to bear a grudge against India for not having given any material support to the Indian community during the difficult decades of political dominance by the Afro-Guyanese. Among educated members of the community, one often finds a certain indifference towards India and things Indian. With few familial ties to bind them, and with the vast distance between Guyana and India, hardly any of them visit the land of their ancestors. Many members of the Muslim community of Indian origin prefer not to be regarded as Indians. The same sentiment is found among the richer segments of the PIOs who also display a marked reluctance to be identified with India. They are closer to the USA and Canada where many of them have been educated and where innumerable Indo-Guyanese have relocated themselves. The businessmen among them show no particular desire to import goods from India.

15.7. Nevertheless, it must be said about the 'silent majority' throughout the Caribbean that the members

of the Indian Diaspora, living their simple lives in the rural areas and belonging to the lower and middle rungs of society, are generally proud of their Indian ancestry. They are keen to know more about the land of their origin, its past and present, its culture and its role in the contemporary world. They harbour warm and friendly feelings towards what is for them the land of their religious and spiritual inheritance. It is primarily from this segment of the local Diaspora that there is the desire to learn Indian languages and for their children to acquire skills in Indian music and dance.

15.8. A brief reference will also be made in the subsequent Chapter 19 to the induced emigration of Indians to the French West Indies, that comprised mainly of Guadeloupe, Martinique and French Guiana. This was not too difficult an enterprise for France as it already had its own Indian colonies in Pondicherry, Chandernagar, Mahé and Karaikal. The number of prospective recruits from those territories was grossly inadequate to meet its needs. France negotiated for many years with a reluctant Britain to allow it to recruit labour from British India. As those negotiations dragged on endlessly, the French were not averse in the meanwhile to smuggle Indian labour to the Caribbean from British India.

15.9. The *conquistadores* of Spain did not have a base in India from which to import labour. In any case, after their conquest of almost the whole of Central and South America, they did not need any indentured labour as they had enough indigenous people to exploit and put to work - until Spanish rule was finally ended in that vast region. Just for completeness, Chapter 19 takes note of the Indian presence in the countries of Central and Latin America (including the French West Indies), even though the Diaspora is thinly represented in that vast region.

A Perspective of the Indian Diaspora in the Caribbean

15.10. After the abolition of slavery throughout the British Empire by an Act of Parliament in 1834, the British planters in the Caribbean tried initially to forestall the danger of desertion by their slave labour. They devised a system of 'state supervision', according to which former slaves were compelled to work on their estates as contract labourers for a period of ten years. But as this did not achieve the expected results, the British colonial governments, as also the settlers, began to look for cheap labour from wherever they could. India was their obvious and first choice. They were able to persuade the British government in Delhi to agree to their persistent exhortations to save them from their plight.

15.11. A large number of poor and indigent Indians allowed themselves to be tempted by the attractive picture that recruiting agents held out to them of life in a foreign land. They decided to leave their homes for the same reasons that had motivated their compatriots who were going abroad at about the same time to other parts of the British Empire. We need not repeat those reasons here as they have been stated elsewhere in this report.

15.12. These settlers had usually carried with them on their way to their respective port of embarkation in India, only their pots and pans, a few pieces of clothing, and perhaps also a blanket. Yet they managed to bequeath to their children and their grandchildren the cultural heritage of their land of origin. This was possible because they had also taken with them memories of a highly developed society with its ancient religions and its rich traditions and culture. They soon discovered on arrival at their destinations that these intangible parts of their baggage were totally alien to what they found in the Caribbean countries. Their new environment was predominantly Euro-centric, with traces of an Afro-centric nature. The indentured Indians made strenuous efforts to recall and retain what they could of their religious rites and practices, their home languages, their costumes and eating habits, their culture and their traditions. A few of the migrants may have even been proud owners of landed property before a cruel fate had deprived them of their possessions. All of them knew the value of money. It was not surprising that after their contractual period they opted to lead simple lives, so that they could provide a decent livelihood for their children. They segregated themselves voluntarily as soon as they could from the other racial groups and, as V.S.Naipaul has noted in his *Area of Darkness,* the indentured Indians managed to 'recreate an Eastern Uttar Pradesh village in Central Trinidad as if in the vastness of India'. This comment applied with equal validity to the other British colonies in the Caribbean. For several decades, they had little time or interest in getting involved in the general life around them.

15.13. It was natural that their peculiar position had ingrained in them a gut feeling that the Whites who exploited and ill-treated them were superior to them and that they, in turn, were better than the Blacks. It was not unnatural that the latter, in turn, reciprocated the Indians' sentiment towards them in ample measure. They even regarded them as uncivilised - if only because the former slaves had, in the meanwhile, converted to the white man's church and had also adopted many of his food, attire and some other details of daily life. Thus, both the Whites and the Afro-Caribbeans began to regard the East Indians for a long time as a hostile and exotic group, insufficiently integrated and therefore alien to everyone else.

15.14. The Indian emigrants also fondly remembered the old Indian institution of the joint or extended family. There was no way in which they could replicate it in their new environment. The barrack life of their initial indenture days militated against any family life at all for most of them. There were few married couples among them. There were also hardly any single women among the indentured labourers, so that it was almost impossible for most of the men to start a new family even if they had wanted to. It was only in later years of the indenture period that entire families, as well as more women were recruited from India. Housed in long, barrack-like structures, the emigrants were thrown together without any consideration for privacy. An unintended result of their cramped existence was that inhibitions of caste and creed had to be abandoned willy nilly. On the debit side, it is sad to note that the shortage of space and of women resulted in numerous conflicts and sex-related crimes in the barracks.

15.15. The social system and the mental attitudes of their host societies stifled the free expression of these people. In many cases, tolerance rather than encouragement was displayed towards their religions, their languages and their dress, as well as other aspects of their existence. The very insistence that they be like the rest of the society fuelled their spirit of resistance. For instance, they ignored the contempt accorded to their "bamboo marriages". According to the *Dharmashastras*, their nuptials were valid and blessed. In their closely-knit communities, traditions inherited from their ancestors were unquestioningly sustained and passed on through succeeding generations. For many, it may have seemed an act of desperation as rituals, rather than an understanding of their significance; symbols, rather than what they stood for, were all they could gift to their children. They no longer knew why a *diya* was lit at six in the evening, what the rituals of morning *puja* meant, why women were not supposed to cut pumpkins. Yet they adhered to such traditions with religious zeal. They had to face several dilemmas. Their illiteracy proved to be a major stumbling block in their quest for a certain level of autonomy. To the East Indian emigrants, merging completely into the local milieu would have meant losing all sense of self. Their recollection of the *Ramayana,* the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagwad Gita* refurbished their spirituality. Tulsidas and his immortal stanzas, read out and explained to them by whoever among them could read, became a veritable tonic for them as they gathered in the late evenings after a hard day's work. Nor did they forget to chant the *Hanuman Chalisa* as a beacon of their faith and hope.

15.16. Christian missionaries were then vigorously engaged in proselytisation. The East Indians were under great pressure to convert to Christianity. Many vocations were then closed for non-Christians. Jobs in the civil services, the armed forces, the teaching profession and many others were denied to those who were not Christians. The reluctance of both Hindu and Muslim migrants to accept Christianity, because of what they regarded as its capacity to alienate them from their roots, adversely affected their potential for social mobility and economic advancement. Being the uneducated, unskilled and economically deprived persons that they were, the East Indians were treated as 'pagans'. This was one of the factors that contributed to their being consigned to the lowest rung of the socio-economic and cultural ladder. And this is where they stayed for much of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

15.17. The government also deliberately kept them out of the education main stream. They were blocked and discouraged from any opportunities for advancement unless they learned English. The Hindi language was regarded as a backward language since it was associated with people of foreign beliefs and traditions. The younger generation gradually preferred to neglect Hindi and study English instead, as the language of the future, while Hindi was confined to the home and was not generally spoken in public.

15.18. It is indeed a wonder that in such a milieu, where it was far from easy to practise Hinduism or Islam, a vast percentage of ethnic Indians did not opt to change their religion, in order to enjoy tangible material benefits. However, many of them adopted anglicized names. Even today, one

comes across East Indians who have purely Christian names though they have adhered to their ancestral religions.

15.19. At the end of their contracts, most of the East Indians had settled down wherever they were. They had become independent cultivators after acquiring small plots of land. In Trinidad, apart from growing cane and cocoa, they had succeeded in taming vast areas for rice cultivation. Since the beginning of the 20th century, they gradually became more and more involved in other economic sectors, such as trade and transport. Many of them realised the importance of acquiring additional skills through Western education as an invaluable tool for upward social and economic mobility.

15.20. The arrival of Indian indentured labour to the Caribbean had led to several social benefits for the general population of these former British colonies. The health services had been improved through the construction of hospitals in the sugar estates. The Indian immigrants had introduced skills like tanning and the goldsmith trade. They had participated in public works for the construction of roads and had thus helped in initiating a modern transport system.

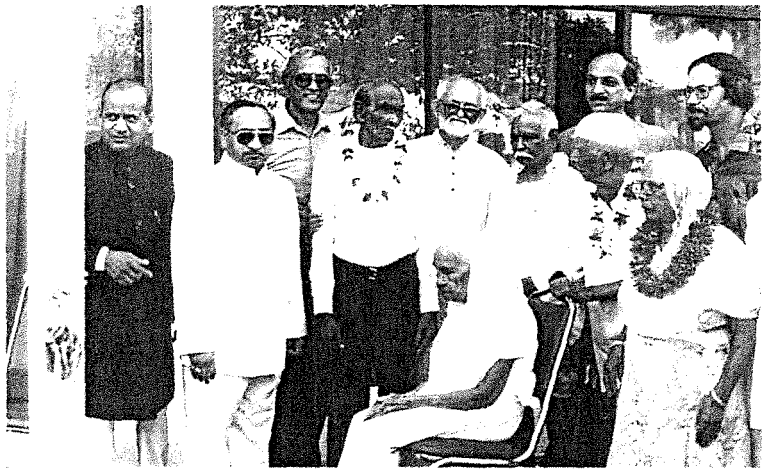
15.21. Today, the East Indians are well integrated into the respective societies and economies of the countries of their settlement. They can be considered as part of the upper middle class of these countries. Although many of them have an agricultural background, most of them are now active in other sectors and professions as doctors, lawyers, traders and also increasingly in the civil services.

15.22. The pride and strength of resolve of the Indian migrants to the Caribbean had brought its own rewards. After enduring innumerable hardships, they had finally 'arrived'.

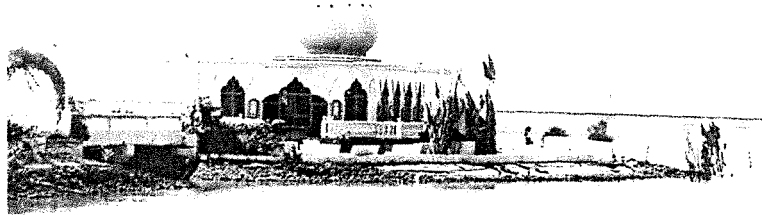
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Chapter 16

Trinidad and Tobago



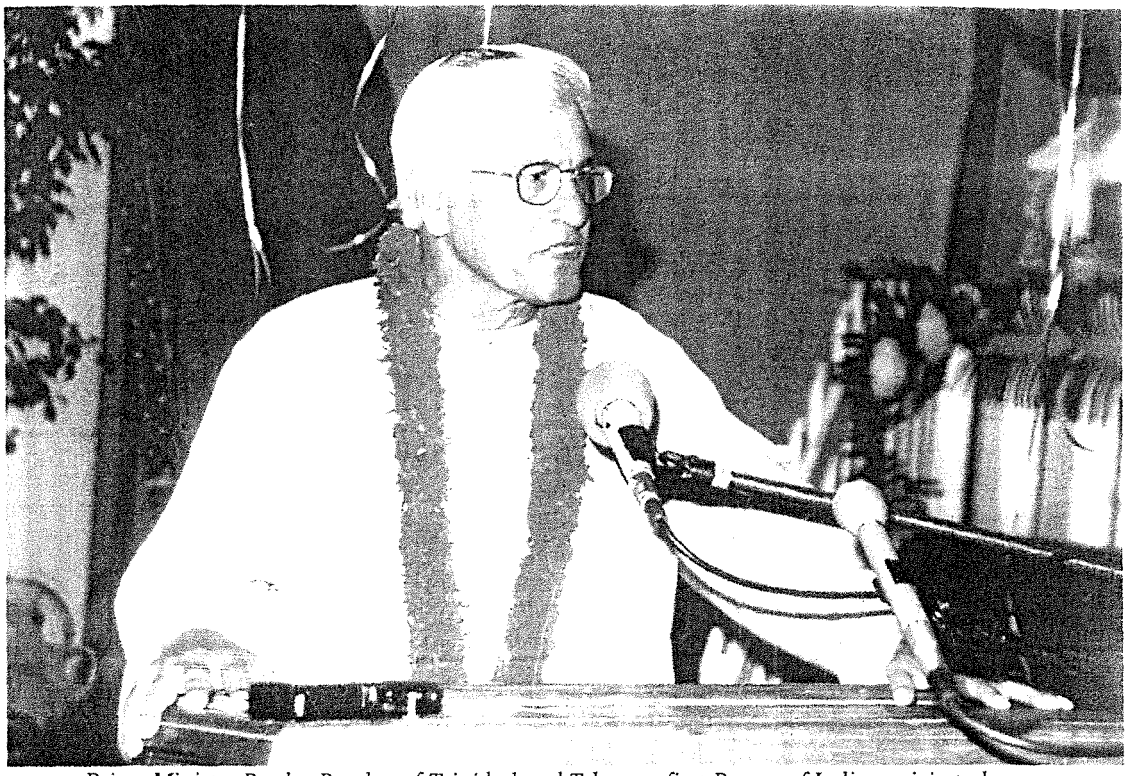
Some of the survivors of the first generation of migrants in Trinidad and Tobago (with garlands) – (August 1995)



Shiewdass Sadhu Mandir, Temple on the sea, Waterloo, Central Trinidad



T.M.L. Mosque, St. Joseph, Port-of-Spain.



Prime Minister Basdeo Panday of Trinidad and Tobago – first Person of Indian origin to become Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago



Late President Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma being given a ceremonial reception on arrival in Trinidad and Tobago on 29 May 1995, on the occassion of celebration of 150 years of Indians' arrival there

The Indian Community During the Indenture Period

In 1834, after a sustained and successful campaign by anti-slavery groups for the abolition of the inhuman system of slavery throughout the British Empire, a new system of indentured labour was introduced in the British colonies. Accordingly, starting from 1845, Indian workers were taken, *inter alia*, to Trinidad & Tobago (abbreviated here as 'T & T') on labour contracts ranging from three to five years. Their situation differed from slavery in one essential respect, namely, that the duration of their contracts was temporary and it did not connote life-long bondage. The Colonial Office in London had forbidden the imposition of restrictive work contracts. It had stipulated that the Indian migrants should be entitled to a basic minimum wage, accommodation and health care, all of which were to be provided by their employer. Regulations also existed for strict official monitoring of their treatment. But this was not always enforced. Due to lack of supervision and control, many of the migrants faced enormous problems. Over the years, at the insistence of the Colonial Office in London and of the Government of India, the Trinidad Legislative Council enacted several Immigration Ordinances. Responding to widespread criticism, Lord Grey, the then Secretary of State for the Colonies, agreed in principle to curtail the indenture period to one year. Under continued pressure from the planters, however, three-year contracts were introduced in 1850 and even that was changed in 1862 to five years!

16.2. India contributed approximately 134,183 indentured labourers to T&T between 1845 and 1917. A vast majority of these migrants were from UP, Bihar and Bengal. Those who had embarked on ships sailing from the port of Calcutta were known as *'Kalkatiyas'* - to distinguish them from about five thousand South Indians who had gone through the port of Madras and were called *'Madrāsis'*. Those who had gone from the tribal areas of Bihar and Bengal were given the name of *'Jangalis'* or 'hill coolies'.

16.3. In spite of all its built-in safeguards, the indenture system had retained a number of restrictive conditions. In fact, for all practical purposes, the Indian migrants virtually entered into a system of bonded labour with its provision of jail sentences for 'breaches of labour contracts'. Many of the Indians fell foul of the local laws and regulations. This was duly reflected in the fact that, year after year, the natives of India topped the list of prison inmates in Trinidad.

16.4. On the other hand, so effectively did the indentured labourers prove their worth that, after their initial five years of contracted labour, they were encouraged to enter into a second period of work. The white colonists had, in the meanwhile, come to the conclusion that the free passage back to India (that had earlier been agreed upon) was an unnecessary expense. They decided to offer their labourers a plot from the Crown Lands in lieu of the return passage. From around 1860, about a thousand Indians annually accepted the extension of their contract periods. Many of those who had earlier opted for return passages gave them up for lands of equivalent value.

16.5. After their extended contracts were over, the Indian migrants transformed themselves into a dynamic peasant class. Their families also participated in the plantation work that they had taken up. Gradually, with the money that they were able to set aside, they were able to acquire more and more land, as well as other possessions. Having realised the value of money during their days of poverty, they were prepared to make personal sacrifices and lead a simple life, so that their children could later live in comfort. After 1870, they purchased Crown Lands wherever they could and, between 1885 and 1912, they formed their own villages and tried to settle down into their former way of living – cultivating rice, sugar, cocoa and various types of vegetables and, even more important, restoring their Indian customs and traditions.

Post-indenture Transformation of the Indian Migrants

16.6. By 1917, when the system of indentured labour was officially terminated, the Indian migrants in T&T already owned more than one-fifth of all the cultivated land in Trinidad. The 1921 census showed that more than 60% of persons engaged in agriculture were East Indians, while their number among professionals was negligible. Soon after that, they started moving out of the countryside into other occupations such as unskilled labour in the Public Works Department; work on the famous Pitch Lake; milk vending; private family businesses; or initiating the country's first transport system, using carts and carriages, and so on. In this way, the Indian Diaspora in Trinidad began to scale the daunting economic heights of their new country and, in time, it became a viable economic force. Its initiative and example opened up new opportunities for the Afro-Caribbeans who also began to develop various artisan skills.

16.7. Free at last from the fetters of indenture, they gradually established a number of religious institutions. The *Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha* and the *Anjuman Sunat-ul-Jamaat Association* responded to the religious and emotional needs of the Hindus and the Muslim. More than 150 Hindu temples were built and consecrated. A hundred mosques called the faithful to prayer at the appointed times. The small group of Sikhs residing in the country constructed a *gurudwara*.

16.8. Simultaneously, the community established many primary schools for the education of their children. The *Sangre Grande Hindu College* and the *Lakshmi Girls Hindu College* promoted the further education of the younger generations, thus enabling them better to cope with the challenges of modern existence.

16.9. They soon became aware that religious revival and education alone would not by themselves enable them to face the social and economic realities of their life in Trinidad. If they were to emerge completely from the shadow of the indentured past which continued to haunt them, they had to grow into both an economic and also a political force in the country. Meanwhile, their arduous participation in the country's development had brought several benefits to the entire community. Health services had improved through the construction of hospitals in the various sugar and tea estates. Security had improved throughout the country.

16.10. But there had been, during the indenture period, a 'love-hate' relationship between the Afro-Trinidadians, whose ancestors had been slaves, and the Indo-Trinidadians with their *coolie* ancestry. Both of them had been at the receiving end of discrimination at the hands of the Whites and neither had really been any better off than the other. They had both led the worst imaginable lives. But despite their common grief, the two communities had not mingled together, socially or culturally. They had lived like people from two different planets as their deeply ingrained racial differences had kept them apart. They had despised each other's habits, dress, language, and even food. Unfortunately, the same kind of antagonistic feelings continued to haunt them after the indenture period was abandoned.

The Political Baptism of the Diaspora in Trinidad and Tobago

16.11. This dislike and distaste for each other continued even after T&T became independent in 1962. Afro-Trinidadian political leaders like Dr.Eric Williams adopted a policy of marginalisation of the Indian community. They systematically shielded the East Indians from attaining political power. The higher echelons of the bureaucracy were out of bounds for them. In the field of education and employment also, they were discriminated against. This was evident in the meagre allotment of government funds to Indian schools and cultural organisations. Dr.Williams invariably had a few East Indians in his Cabinet during his long tenure as the country's Prime Minister. But they were never allowed to reach the top. It was only in the post-Williams era that the East Indians started making a dent in politics.

16.12. The early Indian immigrants and the first generation of their children had been chiefly interested in their economic advancement. They had gradually overtaken the Afro-Caribbeans in the economic sector. They had had little or no urge for political power. In fact, they had not even contemplated residing permanently in Trinidad. In later years, however, they gradually began to move into the forefront of the country's politics which had, till then, been dominated by the People's National Movement (PNM), an Afro-centric party. It had ruled T & T continuously for three decades since the country's independence. But with the advent of the charismatic Basdeo Panday, the PIOs have catapulted themselves into political power.

16.13. It is interesting to recall what happened at an international conference that was held at the University of the West Indies at St. Augustine in August 1995 to examine 'the historical context of the Indian Diaspora'. A participant in that meeting expressed the view that an East Indian could

never be elected as Prime Minister of T&T as that would surely result in rivers of blood flowing through the streets of Port of Spain. He must have later regretted his hasty conclusion. For one of the other participants in the conference was Basdeo Panday. In 1986, he had been instrumental in helping Mr. A.N.R. Robinson, an Afro-Caribbean, to become Prime Minister in a coalition Cabinet, thus ending the long period of domination of independent T&T by the Afro-Caribbean-dominated People's National Movement. Robinson is the leader of the National Alliance for Reconstruction, which has its base in T & T's sister island of Tobago. The coalition government of 1986 did not last long. But it led to the creation of the United National Congress. Basdeo Panday, its undisputed leader, is currently the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago for a second term.

The Cultural Life of the Diaspora in Trinidad and Tobago

16.14. Persons of Indian Origin in contemporary Trinidad and Tobago, especially the older generation among them, continue to be culturally and emotionally attached to 'Mother India'. Some of them are so emotional about it that they consider themselves Indians first and Trinidadians next. This has rightly attracted the criticism of the Afro-Trinidadian community. But the ties of the PIOs with India are so deep-rooted that, despite the prohibitive airfare and the great distance, they visit India regularly for pilgrimage or tourism. Some enterprising travel agents have started organising conducted tours that cover important religious places in India. Many of the East Indians, especially the Hindus among them, adhere strictly to age-old Indian customs, traditions and religious practices. In the PIO villages scattered all over the country, it is not unusual to come across little shrines dedicated to one or other deity of the Indian pantheon.

16.15. Indian music and dance are extremely popular in Trinidad. Bollywood films attract large audiences. Indian film stars are regularly invited to the country to entertain their fans. Port of Spain even boasts of the existence of two magazines dedicated to the Indian film world! Indian fashions are keenly followed and copied by the younger generation. At least five local radio stations are dedicated to Indian programmes that broadcast religious sermons, besides talk shows, Hindi songs and other items of entertainment.

16.16. Many members of the Indian Diaspora evince keen interest in what is taking place in India. They make it a point to keep themselves abreast of the latest developments. There is also some eagerness among older persons to trace their roots in India. Some of them have succeeded in doing so. A local History teacher, Shamshu Deen, has done considerable pioneering work in this field. He has already succeeded in tracing not only his own kith and kin, but also those of other interested persons, including Prime Minister Basdeo Panday.

16.17. The National Council of Indian Culture (NCIC) is an NGO dedicated to the promotion of Indian culture in Trinidad and Tobago. Its activities are centred in *Diwali Nagar,* a community centre established by it in the heartland of T&T's main island, not far from Port of Spain. *Diwali* is celebrated here every year with great enthusiasm. It is interesting to note that, with the awakened political consciousness of the Indian Diaspora in this country, *Diwali* has been included in the

calendar of national holidays. In the same manner, *'Arrival Day'* also figures in this list, marking the day when the sailing ship, the *Fatel Rozak,* docked in the harbour at Port of Spain in May 1845, carrying the first of the Indian indentured labourers who were destined to come to the country. The NCIC also organises other Hindu festivals, cultural shows and religious functions regularly. Its premises are also used for social functions. Its other activities include occasional invitations to Indian scholars, pundits, singers, and dancers to visit the country as its guests.

16.18. The ICCR has established a Cultural Centre in T&T called the Mahatma Gandhi Institute for Cultural Co-operation. This centre has been in existence for the last three years. It has on its staff three performing artists who teach Indian music, dance and the *tabla.* With the opening of this centre, Indian cultural programmes have gained even greater popularity.

16.19. The *Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha (SDMS)* is one of the most influential socio-religious Hindu organisations in T&T. Led by its dynamic Secretary General, Sat Narayan Maharaj, the SDMS runs about 50 schools in the country. It also controls an equal number of temples spread all over the island. These temples and schools are engaged in spreading Hindu philosophy and religion. The SDMS regularly organises social and religious seminars and conferences, both national and international. Occasionally, the SDMS sends its pundits to India to get the requisite training to perform *poojas* and other religious ceremonies. Hindi is taught in SDMS schools at the primary level.

16.20. The *Hindi Nidhi,* a private institution, is also engaged in teaching Hindi. It conducts classes at both the elementary and primary levels. Some of its teachers have received their training in India.

16.21. The *Swaha,* a Hindu *Prachar Kendra,* is another organisation serving the Indian community. It also promotes Hinduism.

Non Resident Indians

16.22. The number of NRIs in Trinidad and Tobago is not more than 600 to 700, which translates into about 150 family units. Most of them are professionals like engineers, doctors and academics. A small number are traders and businessmen. While most of them had arrived in Trinidad with their families in the recent past, around 25 or 30 of them have been there for more than 15 years. They are from the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, U.P., Bihar, Delhi, etc. As in other countries of their settlement, the NRIs in T&T are a close-knit group - law abiding and far-removed from any involvement in political activities. Their main ambition seems to be to work hard, earn money, send their children for higher studies to the United States and, perhaps ultimately, to migrate to that country. Some of them seem to consider T&T as a springboard to their final country of destination. Their strength is their academic excellence and professionalism, while their weakness is their inclusivity and indifference to any thing that happens outside their home and office. Their contact with outsiders, barring a few, is limited to occasional meetings during National Day celebrations, or cultural and religious functions.

Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora

16.23. The following are the demands and expectations of the Diaspora in Trinidad and Tobago from India:

a. More trade opportunities for Indo-Trinidadians to do business with India, albeit on concessional terms.

b. Award of scholarships to study in India. This should cover music, dance and also professional courses.

c. Training of local pundits in the performance of Vedic rites, religious ceremonies, marriage functions, etc.

d. Establishment of a permanent Cultural Centre in Trinidad and Tobago.

e. Financial grants to local Indian cultural and religious organisations.

f. Assistance in tracing the Indian roots of interested PIOs.

g. Telecasting of Indian TV programmes like those of Doordarshan.

h. Provision of facilities to pursue higher professional studies in India.

i. Establishment of an Indian Diasporic Committee.

j. Special grants to local cultural associations.

k. Reduction in the cost of PIO cards.

l. Assistance to the University of the West Indies (UWI) to start a course in communications.

m. Launching of a separate TV channel on the Indian Diaspora to highlight its activities worldwide.

n. Increase in the frequency of bilateral visits by Indian and T&T scholars.

o. Easy availability of films, books and CDs relevant to the Diaspora through the Indian High Commission in Port of Spain.

p. Convening of regular conferences relating to the Diaspora.

q. A separate Ministry in the Government of India to deal with the Diaspora.

r. Creation of pressure groups within the Diaspora.

s. Exchange of students between Indian universities and the UWI.

t. Liberalisation of visa rules.

u. Dual citizenship.

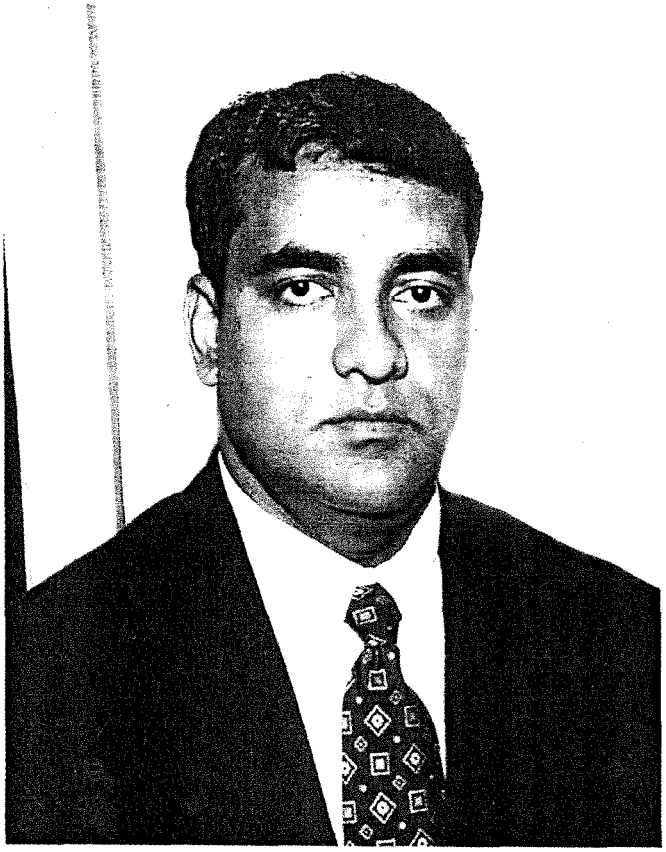
v. Easy accessibility of radio and video materials in the HCI in Port of Spain.

Chapter 17

Guyana



Dr. Cheddi B. Jagan, Late President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana



H.E. Bharrat Jagdeo, President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana



Rohan Babulal Kanhai, famous Guyanese cricketer

Introduction

Guyana is another of the three Caribbean countries, Trinidad & Tobago and Suriname being the other two, where PIOs constitute a sizeable part of the population. These ethnic Indians, popularly known as Indo-Guyanese, now account for 51% of its total population of 775,000.

17.2. Guyana had been integrated into the British Empire in 1836 as British Guinea. Here too, with the abolition of slavery, the indenture system of contract labour had been introduced and Indian workers had started arriving in Guyana under this new form of virtual slavery from 1838. Their flow into the country picked up after 1850 and continued until 1920, by which time no less than 239,000 Indian workers had arrived. About 90% of them had gone there from U.P. and Bihar, while the rest had originated in Tamil Nadu and other southern states. Throughout the rest of the 19th century, they remained confined to the sugar plantations to which they had been initially indentured. It was only after 1900 that their socio-economic conditions began to improve as a result of their hard work, their perseverance and their economic lifestyle. They then began to take up other vocations, even as their children and grandchildren started entering institutes of higher learning. A small number of Indo-Guyanese acquired various professional qualifications, especially in the fields of medicine and law. In this way, the community gradually acquired the ability to play a meaningful role in the political life of Guyana, even though it proved to be an uphill task.

The Years of Afro-Guyanese Dominance

17.3. Guyana became independent in 1966. In the early 1950s, Britain had started the process of preparing it for self-rule by enacting a constitution that was supposed to familiarise it with the Westminster form of democracy. Elections were held under the provisions of that constitution for the first time in 1953. They were won handsomely by Dr Cheddi Jagan's People's Progressive Party (PPP). But after a little over four months, the colonial administration suspended the constitution and dismissed the Jagan government, as it feared that he was moving the country into the socialist block. Since then, the political situation in the country has been dominated by sharp antagonisms between two main political parties. Dr Jagan's PPP and Lynden Forbes Sampson

Burnham's PNC (People's National Congress). A former colleague of Dr Jagan's, Forbes Burnham had engineered a split in the PPP in 1957 to form his new party. While the PNC almost exclusively consisted of Afro-Guyanese, the PPP enjoyed the support mainly of Indo-Guyanese. The founding fathers of these two parties have both disappeared from the scene of their activity. But the unfortunate racial divide between their ethnic groups has continued to bedevil the country's politics.

17.4. The PNC formed each successive government in Guyana from 1964 to 1992. It won every election during that period as Burnham had managed to form an electoral alliance in 1964 with a small group calling itself the United Front Party. With its support, he triumphed in the pre-independence elections of that year, despite the fact that his own Afro-Guyanese supporters did not constitute a majority of the population. The period from 1966 (when Guyana became independent) to 1992 was a highly distressing one for the Indo-Guyanese. The successive PNC Governments made a systematic attempt to obliterate the distinctive identity of the PIOs by discriminating against them in various ways. Even the import of foodstuffs normally consumed by them was banned, while a similar restriction embargoed the import of Indian saris! Indian cultural activities were discouraged. Even bearing Indian names was frowned upon! The community lived in an atmosphere of fear and insecurity. As in the earlier British colonial times, professions such as the civil services continued to be denied to non-Christians, which meant that Indo-Guyanese could not aspire to these services, as many of them had resolutely resisted the evangelising attempts of Christian missionaries. Often physically abused and intimidated by criminal elements among the Afro-Guyanese, they had few means of seeking redress as the local police, consisting mainly of PNC supporters, did not usually come to their rescue.

17.5. In this kind of stifling atmosphere, the Indian Diaspora became disenchanted with the government and developed a deep antipathy towards the Afro-Guyanese. Many of the PIOs even expressed resentment against their own country of origin as they felt India was doing little to help them in their dire state. It was not surprising, therefore, that a large number of them began to migrate to Canada and the United States. By now, the number of Indo-Guyanese in North America has reached a figure of 400,000, i.e., roughly equivalent to their number in Guyana.

The Advent of the PIOs in Guyana's Politics

17.6. Meanwhile, those who remained behind were not sitting idly by. Despite the many hurdles that they had to surmount, several of them won great distinction for themselves and their community in diverse fields such as business and industry, and in the legal and medical professions. Sir Lionel Luckhoo's name finds mention in the Guinness Book of Records for having won the largest number of murder cases, while Dr. Mohamed Shahabudeen became a judge of the International Court of Justice. Dr. Harry Annamunthodo gained his laurels as a distinguished surgeon. Sir Sridath Ramphal served as Secretary General of the Commonwealth for two terms. Rohan Kanhai joined the hallowed list of eminent West Indian cricketers.

17.7. The time had finally come for the Indian community to assert its presence and its numerical majority by participating actively in Guyana's political life. In the general elections of 1992, Dr Cheddi Jagan finally came to power as the country's first Indo-Guyanese President. His admirers described him as the heart and soul of the nation, while they themselves felt they 'were walking ten feet tall'. During his years in office, he planned to introduce many constructive policies. He dreamed of improving the social and economic condition of all the people of Guyana and, in the process, of also bridging the racial divide between his compatriots of Indian and African origin through 'participatory democracy' by all of them in his development plans. Unfortunately, he died in 1997 while he was still President, leaving many unrealised dreams behind him. In the elections that were held in March of this year, the Indo-Guyanese overwhelmingly voted again for the PPP, while the Afro-Guyanese voted for the PNC. The 37 year-old Bharrat Jagdeo won handsomely, with 53% of the votes cast. He had defeated his 72 year-old rival and a former Afro-Guyanese President, Desmond Hoyte, by a huge margin, thus reconfirming the fact that the country continues to be divided on racial lines.

Socio-economic and Cultural Life of the Indo-Guyanese

17.8. In spite of the impediments thrown in their path during the years of colonial rule, and also later when Afro-Guyanese were in power, many members of the Indian Diaspora have been able to retain their Indian heritage and culture to a significant extent. They have built a large number of temples and mosques, which are well attended. Indian festivals like Diwali and Holi are celebrated with great gusto and enthusiasm, while Muslim holy days are observed by the faithful.

17.9. There is considerable interest among some members of the Indian community to learn Hindi or Urdu, depending on whether they are Hindus or Muslims. Bollywood films enjoy immense popularity among all of them. While there are no private radio stations in Guyana, there are a number of private TV channels belonging to Indo-Guyanese persons. Hindi films and Indian cultural programmes are very popular features on them. Songs and dances, usually copied from Hindi films, constitute an integral part of social functions organised by members of the Indian community. Many of them evince great interest in teaching their children the basics of Indian dance and music. This is especially so among Hindu parents. In many ways, even the cuisine of individual members of the Indo-Guyanese community resembles that of their places of origin in India.

17.10. Most Indo-Guyanese follow one or other of three main religions, namely, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. Inter-marriages do take place across these religions, even if this is not a normal occurrence. The fact that many Hindus converted to Christianity during recent years has been a cause of tension. Some Muslim and Christian members of the community sometimes prefer to identify themselves as Muslims or Christians, rather than as Indo-Guyanese. Because of religious differences, and sometimes also on the basis of the region of origin in India, there is no single body in Guyana that can claim to represent the Indian community as a whole.

17.11. The Indo-Guyanese control most of Guyana's trade, whether at the retail level or the wholesale,. Very few of the big commercial establishments have Afro-Guyanese proprietors. As regards the industrial sector, this is not very well developed in Guyana. But one or other member of the Indian community would have established the few industries that do exist in this country. Rice is one of Guyana's major crops and most of the rice farmers are Indo-Guyanese. Some of them possess large farms and are very wealthy. The number of Indo-Guyanese holding senior positions in the bureaucracy continues to be minuscule as compared to their share of the population. On the other hand, there are numerous lawyers and doctors among the Indo-Guyanese who have a flourishing legal practice.

Non-resident Indians

17.12. In contrast to countries like Mauritius, Trinidad and Tobago and Fiji, there was no migration of Indian academics and professionals to Guyana during the 1960s and 70s. As a result, there are very few NRIs in this country. Their total number is no more than a hundred, including wives and children.

Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora

17.13. The following are the Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora in Guyana from India:

(a) Promote the teaching of a course on Hindu philosophy at Guyana University and forge closer links between it and the Indira Gandhi Open University.

(b) Post a Hindi and Urdu teacher in Georgetown, where we have our only Cultural Centre (CC) in Guyana.

(c) Provide to the CC an additional performing arts teacher to supplement the only one that it now has. This would enable it to conduct classes in Indian music and dance in other parts of Guyana, and especially in Essequibo and Berbice, in both of which there is a demand for such classes.

(d) Depute to the CC a person who can teach subjects like yoga, Indian philosophy and culture.

(e) Expand the present library in the CC and also stock it with audio and video cassettes of Indian music, dance and other cultural matters.

(f) Gift books regularly to various organisations in this country on different aspects of India, especially its culture and history.

(g) Extend financial assistance, as appropriate, through the Indian High Commission in Georgetown, to temples and other Indo-Guyanese organisations that seek its help.

(h) Offer free specialised medical treatment in India (but not travelling expenses) to a few deserving Guyanese as such facilities are locally inadequate.

(i) Encourage the holding of Indian commercial exhibitions and fairs in Guyana and encourage our private sector to invest in this country.

(j) Arrange regular visits to Guyana of Indian artists, academicians, writers, intellectuals and spiritual leaders on lecture tours.

(k) Invite prominent Indo-Guyanese to visit India on familiarisation tours.

(l) Encourage Indian hoteliers to set up an Indian restaurant in Guyana.

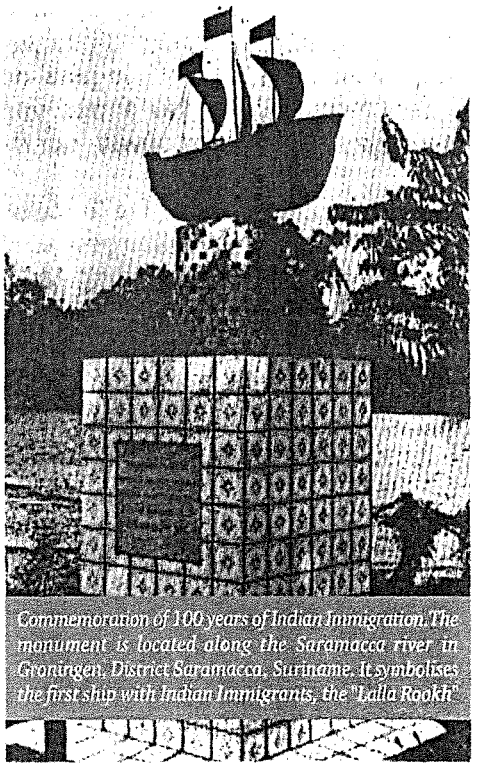
(m) Augment our assistance to Guyana through the ITEC and other programmes.

(n) Lower the cost of travel between India and Guyana so that people can visit India and take back with them various Indian things.

(o) Reduce the fee being charged for PIO cards.

Chapter 18

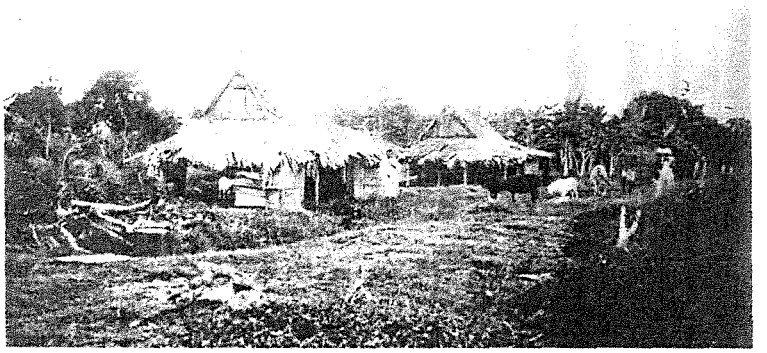
Suriname



Commemoration of 100 years of Indian Immigration. The monument is located along the Saramacca river in Groningen, District Saramacca, Suriname. It symbolises the first ship with Indian Immigrants, the "Lalla Rookh"



Hindustani Surinamese working in sugar plantations



Huts of Indian plantation workers in earlier times



H.E. Late Mr. J. Lachmon, former Speaker of the National Assembly, Republic of Suriname



H.E. Mr. Jules Rattankoemar Ajodhia, Vice President of Suriname

Genesis of Suriname as a Dutch Colony

Suriname had been 'discovered' in 1499 by a Spaniard, Alonso de Ojeda. Spain integrated it into its empire only in 1533. It then became a bone of contention between several rival European powers – France, the Netherlands and Britain until 1866, in which year the British magnanimously traded it with the Dutch in lieu of New Amsterdam, which was later to become New York.

18.2. Unlike its two neighbours, the former British and French Guineas, Suriname is rich in flora and fauna. Sugarcane, bananas and citrus fruits grow luxuriously in it, while its coastal areas provide plentiful stocks of fish. Its thrillingly beautiful landscapes had impressed V.S.Naipaul so much that he is reported to have once described it as 'a tulip-less Holland'. Nature has also been bountiful to it in its gifts of bauxite and alumina, as well as Latin America's largest gold reserves and also some amount of crude oil. This far-off country, separated from India by two oceans and the endless landmass of Africa, is today the home of over a hundred and fifty thousand PIOs out of a total multiracial population of only around 438,000 persons, thus constituting the single largest ethnic group in the country.

18.3. The induction of Indians into Suriname as indentured labour, their gradual transformation, initially into independent farmers and kitchen gardeners, progressively into traders, academics and professionals of every kind, and finally also into active politicians, forms another fascinating chapter in the history of the Indian diaspora.

The Indenture Period

18.4. Unlike Britain and France, the Netherlands abolished slavery only as late as 1863. The Dutch planters in Suriname were soon confronted with large-scale desertion of their former slaves and as many as 90 plantations faced closure. After protracted negotiations, an unwilling Britain finally agreed in 1870 to the recruitment of Indians to work in Dutch Guinea as indentured labour. Even before the conclusion of that agreement, the Dutch colonists had managed to attract some of the Indian workers who had completed their contractual period to cross over from British Guinea into Dutch Guinea. On 5 June 1873, the sailing ship *Lala Rookh* finally arrived in Paramaribo after a voyage of over three months from Calcutta with a cargo of 452 labourers, most of whom

Caribbean, as in other parts of the world. In 1946, the PIOs and their counterparts from Indonesia, who were locally called Javanese, organised a group called the *'Hindostans-Javanese Centrale Raad'* which demanded a more sympathetic attitude towards Islam and Hinduism in the local schools. The forming of this group marked the political baptism of Jaggernath Lachmon. Other PIOs had formed various Hindu or Muslim political parties. But the reform-minded Lachmon had the sagacity to invest his political future in the *'Hindostans-Javanese Politieke Partij'* (HJPP) as he was convinced that religion was too narrow a base for a political movement in a country whose population adhered a wide spectrum of faiths. The HJPP soon became the *Verenigde Hindostaanse Partij'* (the United Hindustani Party) by allying itself with the Muslim and Hindu parties, in time to face the first elections which were held in the colony in 1949 on the basis of universal suffrage. The new coalition party's successes included, *inter alia,* the legitimisation of Hindu and Muslim marriage and burial rights, the declaration of Id and Holi as national holidays, and keeping the community in a state of active mobilisation.

18.9. It was unfortunate that the political developments leading to the partition of India in 1947 had their unavoidable reflection in Suriname. The newly apparent mutual antagonism between the two major components of the PIO community was accompanied by the alienation of both of them from the Afro-Surinamese who resented their prosperity and political activism. According to contemporary observers, they and the Creoles had begun to view the Indians 'very much in the same way as the old European conception of Jews: a miserly, acquisitive lot, less than loyal and unwilling to assimilate'.

18.10. The last half-century has witnessed many developments in the politics of Suriname, which need not be described here in detail. Note may be taken, however, of the Dutch government's decision to grant internal self-rule to the colony in 1954, followed by the grant of independence to it on 25 November 1975. Désiré ('Desi') Bouterse staged a military coup five years later. Civilian rule was restored in 1987. It did not last long for there was further political turbulence in the form of Bouterse's 'telephone coup' of 1990. Angry international reaction to the coup, including the cancellation of a generous Dutch grant for the economic development of its former colony, lead to the restoration of democratic rule. After the elections of August last year, Runaldo Ronald Venetiaan has again been elected as President after a gap of four years. Another Hindustani, Jules Rattankoemar Ajodhia has become the country's Vice President. Late Jagernath Lachmon, the former Speaker of the National Assembly was generally regarded as the octogenarian leader of the Indian community in the country.

Cultural Life of the Indo-Surinamese

18.11. By 1975, the year in which the Netherlands government granted Suriname its independence, the younger generations of Hindustanis numbered almost as many as 300,000 persons. Availing of the liberal Dutch citizenship laws and the continuing inter-racial tensions in the former colony, as many as 50% of the Hindustanis opted to migrate to the Netherlands.

18.12. Those that chose to remain in Suriname have retained the essential traits of their Indian culture and traditions, in the same manner as those that migrated to the Netherlands have done. As many as 80% of the community in Suriname are Hindus of various sects, while the Muslims number no more than 17.5%. They have both succeeded in keeping their respective religions alive; and also, to some extent, the home languages of their ancestors. Both the Muslims and the Hindus have established foundations to run schools for their children. Since the 1930s, they have also formed various socio-religious organisations like the *Sanatan Dharam Maha Sabha, the Arya Dewakar* and the *Islamitische Vereniging* (Islamic Club). In earlier years, the two communities normally used Hindi and Urdu at their social and religious meetings. These languages were also the normal mode in which PIO radio and TV. programmes were produced. Recently, however, '*Sarnami*' has replaced both of them as many intellectuals and the younger PIOs are not very familiar with either Hindi or Urdu, while *Sarnami* is understood by almost all the Hindustanis. Soon after the commencement of Indian immigration, the Bhojpuri language had been spoken by most of the indentured labour. It had begun to be called 'Hindustani' and had become the most popular language among all the immigrants. Modern day *Sarnami* (or *'Surinami Hindi')* is a mixture of Bhojpuri and Awadi, with the addition of a few Dutch, English and Creole words.

18.13. On the whole, it would be right to say that the Hindustanis have carved their own distinctive niche in this country and even in its government. They have integrated themselves well into Surinamese society. Their influence in the ethnic lifestyle of the general population is very visible. They have also made significant contributions to the country's economy, its trade and commerce, as well as to its transport and other sectors. Its share in the country's GDP is quite significant.

Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora

18.14. The following are the Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora in Suriname from India:

(a) Start an Indo-Suriname Brothership Society;

(b) Establish a Hindi Chair at the University of Suriname;

(c) Institute a mechanism to trace the Indian roots of the PIOs;

(d) Introduce the Indian Neem tree in Suriname;

(e) Encourage Indians to cultivate land in this country;

(f) Promote the establishment of Indo-Surinamese joint ventures; and

(g) Establish in Suriname Institutes for Infotech and for Small Enterprises Development through bilateral co-operation between private sectors, Chambers of Commerce and the Governments of the two countries.

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Chapter 19

Other Countries of Central and South America

Introduction

Most of the countries covered in this chapter fall outside the Caribbean region. The French West Indies and Jamaica may be notable exceptions, as well as one or two of the smaller members of CARICOM. We have added brief sketches here about many of the countries of Central and South (or Latin) America, where there is even a small Indian presence. In doing so, our purpose has been to pay our tribute to the relentless spirit of the *'Overseas Indian'* who has ventured forth to remote corners of the world in search of adventure or profit, whatever the impediments or challenges he or she has had to encounter. There are relatively few PIOs or NRIs in most of these countries. But their achievements in what may sometimes have been a hostile or unwelcome milieu must command our respect and admiration. A comparative table has been included on the next page to show, at a glance, the comparative presence of the Indian community in the many countries of Central and South America.

ARGENTINA

19.2. Argentina was never a part of the British Empire and there was thus no post-slavery indenture system to take Indian labour to that country. But it seems some intrepid Indians went there around the beginning of the 20th century as employees of British-owned railways, or as plantation workers for British or Anglo-Argentine firms. Most of those who had gone to Salta or Jujuy in the northern part of the country married local women and settled down as farmers. They even adopted local names and became Argentine citizens. In time, some of these people and their descendants took up other professions such as law, medicine, finance, banking and trade. They are generally well off and are held in high regard.

19.3. Many of the PIOs in Argentina have remained attached to their Indian culture and traditions. The have constructed a *gurudwara* at Rosarion de la Frontera in Salta province. Some of them are actively involved in propagating *ayurveda*, yoga, Indian classical music and the Hindi language. They have established an Indian Association in the northern provinces and organise social and cultural events to celebrate Indian festivals. Unfortunately, there is little interaction between them and those who have settled down in other parts of this extensive country.

19.4. A large number of the Indian Diaspora living in Buenos Aires are businessmen, doctors, financial or business executives, and employees of multinational corporations. Most of them have retained their Indian citizenship.

19.5. Considering the small size of the Indian community in Argentina, its impact on the general population of its country of settlement is insignificant. Nor does it have any special demands or expectations from India. However, some of the prominent businessmen in the Diaspora have expressed the hope that the bureaucratic hassles often encountered by them in the course of their business dealings with India should be reduced, if not totally eliminated.

Table 19.1: PIOs, NRIs and Stateless Persons in some of the countries of Central and South America

No.	Country	Population	PIOs	NRIs	Stateless	% of the Population
01	Argentina	36,600,000	1,200	400	Nil	Insignificant
02	Barbados	260,000	2,100	100	Nil	0.81
03	Belize	250,000	500	NA	Nil	Insignificant
04	Brazil	169,000.000	1,500	400	Nil	- do -
04	Chile	15,650,000	Few	650*	Nil	- do -
05	Colombia	42,000,000	1	19	Nil	- do -
06	Costa Rica	3,600,000	1	15	Nil	- do -
07	Ecuador	12,000,000	Nil	5	Nil	- do -
08	Guatemala	11,500,000	22	NA	Nil	- do -
09	Guyana	775,000	395,250	100	Nil	51.01
10	Jamaica	2,600,000	60,000	1,500	Nil	2.36
11	Mexico	99,580,000	400*	NA	Nil	Insignificant
12	Panama	2,800,000	211	1,953	Nil	- do -
13	Peru	25,200,000	5 – 10	135*	Nil	- do –
14	St. Lucia	156,260	250*	NA	Nil	- do -
15	Suriname	438,026	153,306	150	Nil	35.00
16	Trin.&Tob.	1,282,000	500,000	600	Nil	39.04
19	Venezuela	24,000,000	400	280	Nil	Insignificant

Notes: NA = Not Available; * = Approximate

BARBADOS

19.6. The first Indians to arrive in Barbados were a small group of silk merchants from Bengal in the year 1913. Almost all of them left around 1925. The present-day Indians in this island began arriving there in small numbers from 1929. They now constitute less than 1 per cent of the total population of 260,000. There are four distinct segments in the local Indian community – Suratis, Sindhis, professionals and the descendants of indentured labour who had originally been taken to Guyana (or some other Caribbean country) and who migrated to Barbados after completing their contractual period of labour.

19.7. The Suratis form the largest segment of the local PIOs, numbering about 900 persons. They are mostly Muslims. They have established four mosques and a nursery school. Many of them continued to ply their traditional occupation of itinerant salesmen. But their children have taken advantage of locally available educational facilities to become professionals. All of them maintain their links with their extended families in India. The Sindhis, on the other hand, are Hindus. They are followers of Satya Sai Baba or Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, while the remainder belong to the Radha Soami sect. There is one Hindu temple in Barbados, but it is the professionals and the descendants of former indentured labour from the Caribbean who usually go there. The professionals in the Indian community number just over a hundred persons. Most of them went to Barbados after its independence in 1966 – either directly from India, or under the aegis of the UN or the CFTC. Recently, many computer programmers have also gone there, in response to local demands. There are approximately 800 descendants of former indentured labour. They have prospered well in their new country, especially in the tourism sector and in the construction industry.

19.8. Most of the ethnic Indians in Barbados are successful in whatever economic activity they have been engaged in.

BELIZE

19.9. The Indian Diaspora in Belize consists only of PIOs as there are no restrictions here to the acquisition of local citizenship. Most of them had gone there in the 1950s, when Belize was still a British colony. They subsequently invited some of their relatives, as well as some of their employees, to join them from India. The community is comprised almost entirely of Sindhis and so there are few differences among them. They are mostly retail traders and are well accepted. They have little interest in local politics, but their economic strength assures them an influential position in Belize.

19.10. The PIOs maintain close and regular contact with India through frequent trips to visit friends and relatives back home. Some of these visits are connected with their quest for Indian brides for their children. As in all other countries of Indian settlement, Indian music and Hindi films are popular here and have been useful in nurturing friendly relations with the local people.

19.11. In addition to the community described above, there is a fairly large group here persons who trace their origin to India. These persons live in villages scattered all over Belize. Like the indentured Indian who founded the Indian community in the Caribbean, the ancestors of those persons had reached Belize in the 19th century as cane cutters. As they were a small group, they intermarried with the local people and lost their language and original religion. However, they are still identifiable through their physiognomy and are known as 'Hindus'. They live in reasonably compact rural communities. Re-establishing their linkages with India is a useful and necessary endeavour as they number between 10 to 15 thousand, which is more than 5% of the population of Belize. It is also necessary because this effort will create another strong bond between India and this region.

BRAZIL

19.12. Brazil is not only the largest and most populous country in South America, but it is also the only one that is not Spanish speaking. That is because it was part of the former Portuguese Empire. It would be apparent from the statistical Table 19.1 that the size of the Indian community in this country is also the biggest in this entire region, marginally more numerous than its counterpart in Argentina.

19.13. There are 1,500 PIOs and about 400 NRIs in Brazil. A small number of Sindhis had arrived here from Suriname and Central America in 1960 to set up shop as traders at a place called Manaus. A second wave consisted of university professors who arrived in the 1960s and also in the 1970s. Other PIOs migrated to this country from various African countries, mainly from former Portuguese colonies, soon after their independence in the 1970s. The number of PIOs in Brazil has been augmented in recent years by the arrival of nuclear scientists and computer professionals. A few Christian nuns and priests were also attracted to this predominantly Catholic country. It is not surprising that there are as many as 1,500 PIOs among the Indian community in Brazil, as against only 400 NRIs, since foreign nationals can easily acquire local citizenship without any discrimination after 15 years of domicile in this country. Brazil has also no bar against dual citizenship. But in recent years, it has been granting immigration visas only in high tech. areas. The fact that it is a monolingual country has also deterred aspiring Indian emigrants from attempting to go there.

19.14. In a country with a total population of 169 million people, the Indian Diaspora must be regarded as miniscule. It is spread thinly over the vast expanses that constitute this gigantic land, so much bigger in area than India. The only exceptions are the Sindhis in Manaus (who have formed an Indian Association with about a hundred members) and the Goans in Sao Paulo. There is also an Indo-Brazilian Association in the national capital at Brasilia. This is natural, considering that our Embassy is located in that city. Otherwise, it is not surprising that the Indian community has not been able, nor found the need, to organise itself into any single recognisable group. Besides its dispersal over this continental sized country, many of those that arrived in the earlier years have

acquired Brazilian brides and are totally assimilated in the local society. The children born to such couples are Brazilians by birth.

19.15. On the whole, it would be right to conclude that the Indian Diaspora in this country has good interactions with the local community and is held by it in high regard.

CHILE

19.16. A few Indians had gone to Chile in the 1920s. The others migrated there about 30 years ago - not only from India, but also from Hong Kong, Indonesia, Nigeria, Panama, the Philippines and Singapore. The total number of PIOs today does not exceed 650 persons in a country of almost 16 million people. Belonging mostly to the Sindhi community, they are usually engaged in trade and are reasonably prosperous. Many of them have married Chilean women and acquired Chilean nationality, and yet they have largely remained out of the Chilean mainstream. Some members of the younger generation, being Chilean citizens by birth, have however ventured into professions.

19.17. It is unfortunate that most members of the Indian community in Chile have little interest in India and few cultural bonds with their country of origin. But they do occasionally visit India, if only to meet their relatives or to pursue some business interest or other. Visits of a tourist orientation are rare. Not surprisingly, they do not have any demands or expectations from India.

COLOMBIA

19.18. Colombia has historically maintained tight controls on immigration. Foreign nationals can acquire local citizenship only after ten years of residence in the country. There is only one Indian citizen and 19 PIOs in this country of 43 million people. This small Indian community is mostly engaged in business, with a sprinkling of professionals and others. But RITES has recently won a contract to provide its services to both of Colombia's privatised railway concessions. Accordingly, fifteen of this PSU's personnel would be deployed in this country at different times over the next five years, and perhaps also during the rest of the thirty years duration of the RITES contract.

19.19. The presence here of a small number of Indians associated with spiritual or charitable organisations is an interesting feature of our diasporic history in this country. They are in Colombia in response to considerable local interest in Indian spiritualism, civilisation and culture. In fact, an estimated 300 Colombians visit India every year in connection with spiritual pursuits. The *Brahma Kumaris* and the Missionaries of Charity maintain offices in this country. In addition, there are here a number of yoga centres. The *Satyananda* Yoga Academy, located in Bogota, is affiliated to the *Satyananda* School of *Monghyr* in Bihar.

19.20. The Indian community in Colombia faces no major problems, apart from that of physical insecurity resulting from the general climate of violence prevailing in this country and affecting all its inhabitants. The size of the community is unlikely to grow substantially in the foreseeable future.

COSTA RICA

19.21. This predominantly Spanish speaking country in Central America has a population of just 3.6 million people. Costa Rica is a picturesque and mountainous country with extensive forests and several volcanoes. It has the unique distinction of being the only country in the world that has no defence forces. It exports enormous quantities of bananas, to the United States and Western Europe, whose cultivation and packaging seems to be its main industry.

19.22. India's relations with Costa Rica are minimal. Ten training slots have been allotted to it under the ITEC programme and solar energy equipment costing Rs.18.5 lakhs was donated to it in 1997 to assist it in establishing a research laboratory. Nevertheless, 15 NRI professionals and businessmen are to be found in this country. In addition, there is one PIO, a fact that pays tribute to Costa Rica's non-discriminatory immigration laws. Naturally, considering the small size of the Indian community, it has not made any particular impact on this friendly country.

DOMINICA, COMMONWEALTH OF

19.23. The most northerly and largest of the Windward Islands, Dominica is situated between Guadeloupe to its north and Martinique to its south. It has an area of 290 square miles and a total population estimated as 74,700 in 1996. The Dominicans are primarily of African origin, with a small number among them of Carib Indians and some descendants of former European settlers.

19.24. There is no Indian community as such in this country. The Committee's purpose in including a reference to it in this chapter on Other Countries of Central and South America is to illustrate the ingenuity and initiative of Indian youth – qualities that have taken them to distant lands in search of opportunities that they did not have in India. There is, in the Commonwealth of Dominica, a medical school whose graduates are entitled to practise in the United States of America. This has attracted about a hundred students of Indian origin to this country who aspire to head northwards to 'their country of final destination' as soon as they have acquired their medical degrees!

ECUADOR

19.25. As in the case of Costa Rica, there is hardly any Indian presence in this remote Andean country that is situated to the south of Colombia and faces the Pacific Ocean. Nevertheless, five NRIs are currently located here. All of them are engaged in trading. Although this country has a fairly relaxed and non-discriminatory immigration policy, none the NRIs has attempted to acquire local citizenship, which would probably imply the transitory nature of their sojourn in Ecuador. With their small size, they maintain a low profile and concern themselves only with their business.

FRENCH WEST INDIES

19.26. The abolition of slavery by France in 1848 created a crisis in its three colonies in the Caribbean – French Guinea, Guadeloupe and Martinique. It was feared that the impending desertion of African

slaves from the plantations would result in enormous losses to the French planters, losses that would be compounded by recurrent floods and epidemics that were endemic in that region. Accordingly, France decided to follow the example of Britain and recruit indentured labour from India to replace the former slave labour. Initially, it had no difficulty in doing so because of its own Indian connection in the form of its territories in Pondicherry, Mahé and Karaikal. But it soon found that the supply from those areas was insufficient. Accordingly, it commenced negotiations with Britain in 1851 for permission to recruit Indians from British India. As these talks went on endlessly without agreement, it apparently managed in 1852 to spirit out some persons from British India to its own enclaves and then shipped them off to the Caribbean. Initially, the British Government had been willing to allow France to recruit Indian labour for work only in Réunion. It finally conceded the French request by the Treaty of Paris of 11 July 1860.

19.27. As many as 42,326 Indian labourers are reported to have arrived in the three West Indian French colonies between the years 1853 and 1889 when this system of recruitment was finally terminated by Britain. Only 4,613 of them had remained there by 1898 due to the death or repatriation of many labourers. Contemporary British records were full of horror stories about the condition of the Indian workers. Their migration to an unknown land without any satisfactory system of supervision and control had been unfortunate. Even at the end of the 1990s, Professor Lotus Vingadassamy, a native of French Guinea, made the following remarks about the PIOs in the French West Indies at a meeting in Delhi's India International Centre. The transplantation of her community from India to the West Indies, she said, 'carried psychological connotations of deep sorrow and suffering, inconsolable mourning, along with the everlasting feeling of being torn inside.

GUADELOUPE

19.28. Guadeloupe, an island in the Atlantic Ocean and a French Department had traditionally been a bone of contention between the French and the British. The British occupied it from 1759 to 1763. In 1763, it was restored to France in exchange for all French rights to Canada. It was finally designated as territory of France through The Treaty of Paris in 1815. It was represented in the French parliament for the first time in 1871. It became a French Department on 19 March 1946.

19.29. After the abolition of slavery in 1848, to meet a shortfall in labour, over 40,000 workers were brought from India to Guadeloupe to there for work on plantations through an agreement reached between France and Great Britain in 1861. Most of the workers came from the Tamil Nadu region. The importation of Indian labour was gradually discontinued after 1883 as a result of adoption of a policy by the British Government against recruitment of labour in its territories and also because of high mobility of Indian labour. Over 10,000 of them perished as a result of difficult living and working conditions and the rest of them continued to be treated harshly till

the efforts of Henri Sidambarom in 1904 gave them some political rights. It was in 1923 that Guadeloupeans of Indian descent were granted citizenship and the right to vote.

19.30. Since the cessation of migration, the history of the Indian community has been one of steady integration with the rest of the population, to the extent that there are very few Tamil speakers left on the island. However, the third or fourth generation persons of Indian origin still maintain links with India in many different ways such as adopting Indian names.

19.31. The Indian community in Guadeloupe is estimated to be approximately 40,000 in a population of over 450,000. Some of them have acceded to important posts in the public and private sectors. Dr. Henri Bangou held the post of Senator from Guadeloupe in the French Senate. Ernest Moutoussamy has been the Depute of Guadeloupe in the National Assembly of France since 1981.

19.32. There are several associations to promote Indian culture in Guadeloupe. These associations, run by mostly people of Indian origin, are fairly active in organising cultural activities in all the principal towns, namely, Pointe-a-Pitre, Moule, Port Louis, Cape Terre and Saint-Claude. One such prominent group is 'Association Culturelle Guadeloupeenne des Armis de L'Inde', which has over 300 members and 2000 associates.

19.33. Cultural troupes sponsored by ICCR have also been visiting Guadeloupe to enable the locals to have a glimpse of Indian cultural heritage. A 10-member *Mohiniattam* dance troupe led by Dr. Kanak Rele and sponsored by ICCR visited Guadeloupe in 1999.

19.34. A Festival of Women and Cinema with India as the theme was organised in Guadeloupe in 1997. This also coincided with workshops on Indian cuisine and exhibition and sale of Indian art objects. At the initiative of the Depute of Guadeloupe, Mr. Ernest Moutoussamy, a photographic exhibition on the theme 'The World of Tomorrow & Gandhi's Vision' was organised in January 1997. A Festival of Indian films to be organised in Guadeloupe under the Cultural Exchange Programme has been pending consideration in the Directorate of Films Festivals, New Delhi.

19.35. The city of Basse-terre in Guadeloupe and Pondicherry have been designated as twin cities to promote cultural links and exchanges.

19.36. Recently, we have received information that in 2004, celebrations to mark the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the first Indians in 1854 transported to Guadeloupe by the French to work in the plantations would be held. The Indian Associations in the territory are in the process of forming a committee, which will start working to realise the event.

GUATEMALA

19.37. Guatemala is a tiny mountainous country in Central America, immediately south of Mexico. Like in the rest of this region, Spanish is the only language spoken in it. It is a picturesque country with an over-abundance of rivers and volcanoes. But in addition to those formidable gifts, Nature

has also been bountiful to it by giving it the kind of ecological environment that has enabled it to grow a plentiful crop of cardamom, its principal export commodity.

19.38. It was this last feature that must have attracted a few enterprising Indians to seek their fortune and settle down here in Guatemala City. In a country of about 11.5 million natives, there are currently just 22 PIOs, of who five are businessmen; three each are professionals or housewives; one is a priest; and ten are students. They arrived in Guatemala not so long ago but have already dominated the cardamom export trade of the country. The community is visibly prosperous and respected by the Guatemalans for their cultural and family values, besides their generous response to local charities. Notwithstanding their small number, they have formed an informal group called the *Bharat Bandhu*. The community has taken on itself the responsibility of hosting and organising Indian cultural events from time to time.

HONDURAS

19.39. Mostly facing the Caribbean Sea in Central America, Honduras has a small Indian population of 52 Indian citizens, which includes members of their families. Most of them reside in the capital city of Teguchigalpa. There are approximately 25 businessmen among them, a few professionals, two or three experts affiliated to one or other international organisation, and even 15 or 16 Christian missionaries. This last group is indeed surprising, considering that Honduras, like the rest of Central and Latin America is a predominantly Catholic region. Being a sophisticated and educated group, many of the NRIs are already familiar with the Spanish language. Comparatively recent arrivals in this country, they are relatively well off, are quite active on the cultural front, and are respected by the mainstream population.

JAMAICA

19.40. As in the other former British colonies in the Caribbean like Trinidad & Tobago and Guyana, Indian indentured labourers were recruited for work in the sugar plantations of Jamaica after the abolition of slavery in 1834. It is estimated that no fewer than 38,959 Indians were taken to this country between 1845 and 1917. Most of them had gone from Eastern UP and Bihar. Of the total number of persons who migrated to Jamaica, only 11,959 returned to India after serving their indenture contracts.

19.41. On their arrival in Jamaica, the 'East Indian' indentured labour lived in their barracks on the sugar estates. They tended to huddle together, not out of choice but merely because the coercive system of indenture kept them largely confined to very specific geographic and ecological areas. Preservation, much more than promotion of the culture and the values that they had brought along from India, was an uphill task in such an environment. Most of them were illiterate, unable even to read and write their native language. Only a few had a few years of education. Not a single person was able to speak English. The cultural practices of this ethnic group were centred on the few *pandits* and *maulvis* that happened to be in their midst.

19.42. At the termination of their indenture contracts, they left the plantations to which they had been assigned, for other areas. This meant that they were dispersed among the general population and thus were much less visible as a distinct racial and ethnic group. In addition, they began absorbing the values of the larger Jamaican society. This led to an increase in their intermarriage with the Blacks. In fact, since the end of indenture in 1917, such intermarriages have been on the rise and Jamaican culture was beginning to make serious inroads into the lifestyle of the East Indian community.

19.43. The descendants of the indentured workers are said to number about 60,000 today. All of them have assimilated themselves within the mainstream society in this country and do not have any direct links with India. Nevertheless, they are reported to have keen interest in Indian culture and many of them are also proud of their Indian heritage. Since the latter half of the 20th century, Indo-Jamaicans have progressed academically and economically. Many of them have become professionals. A large number have migrated to the USA, Canada and Britain to pursue vocations such as medicine and engineering.

19.44. From 1973 onwards, some NRI professionals also went to Jamaica. They consisted of doctors, accountants, schoolteachers, university professors, information technology consultants, and similar other professions. The number of such expatriate personnel is about 1,500. Members of this community visit India regularly for tourism and to meet their relatives. Some of their prominent members of the community visit India for specific purposes such as participation in conferences.

19.45. On the other hand, the main community of Indo-Jamaicans does not have much direct contact with India. Nevertheless, they are afraid of losing their distinct identity completely and are therefore making a concerted attempt to resist total assimilation into the larger Jamaican culture. With this objective in view, they have established their own social and cultural organisations. There is an Indo-Jamaican Cultural Society in Kingston. A Club-India, set up by them in the same city, is mainly patronised by the business community, although its membership also includes some other Indo-Jamaicans and the expatriate Indian community. The NRIs in Jamaica also have their own Indian Cultural Society. In addition, an Indian Benevolent Association exists at Montago Bay. There is National Council for Indian Culture that is an umbrella organisation for all these cultural associations. Then there are three religious groups: the *Sanatan Dharma Mandir,* the *Prema Sangha* and the *Sai Baba Centre.* Religious and cultural functions are organised in the temple premises from time to time, while arrangements have been made for the teaching of Hindi at the Club India.

19.46. Over the years, as the Indo-Jamaicans had progressed academically and economically, some of them were able to make a mark in Jamaican society and are now even represented in politics and the various local bodies. A few hold high positions such as Ministers, MPs, judges and administrators. Jamaican regulations permit NRIs to acquire the citizenship of Jamaica. Most of the Indian businessmen and their families who came here before India's partition have become

Jamaican nationals. The Indo-Jamaicans and the NRIs are regarded as vital for the progress of the country.

MEXICO

19.47. There are in Mexico, about 80 Indian families, constituting a total number of about 400 NRIs. Most of them are recent arrivals in the country. Almost all of them have settled down in the capital city. Mexico has a non-discriminatory policy with regard to the grant of its citizenship. The spouse of a Mexican national would generally not face any problem in acquiring local citizenship. But although a few of the NRIs have married Mexican girls, they have retained their Indian citizenship.

19.48. The Indians in this country are mainly businessmen or professionals. Many of them work with one or other international organisation or a multinational corporation. There are also some academicians and scientists among them. They have helped to bring about greater mutual understanding between India and their host country. At present, Dr Raja Ram (a distinguished Indian scientist and Padma Shri recipient) is also in Mexico, working at CIMMYT. Some of the Indians work for *ISPAT Mexicana*. This company is part of the *Laxmi Mittal* group, well known in this region for having turned around a sinking steel company in Trinidad. The Indian presence in Mexico has been greatly appreciated as fifty other business ventures have invested around US$ 1.58 billion in this country during the period 1994-2000. There are also about 20 to 25 Indian Christian missionaries in Mexico.

19.49. The Indian community in Mexico has no divisive factions in it, although its constituents come from different parts of India. It has jointly established an organisation called *Sangam*, under whose auspices it celebrates important festivals and cultural programmes. A *Sai Baba* temple, a *Vaishnav* temple and a *Gurudwara* have also been constructed by it in Mexico City. Most members of the Diaspora speak Spanish and have adapted themselves admirably to their foreign environment.

PANAMA

19.50. Unofficial figures compiled by our Embassy in Panama would indicate that ethnic Indians number approximately 8,000 persons in this small country of 2.8 million inhabitants. If confirmed, this would mean that Panama has one of the largest concentrations of overseas Indians in this entire region, apart from the main Caribbean countries. On the other hand, official statistics provide a totally different picture, indicating the presence here of only 211 PIOs and 1,953 NRIs! This statistical confusion is probably due to the fact that the official figures take into account only the relatively new arrivals. They may not have included the Indians who had first come to Panama during the construction of the Colon-Panama railroad in the 1840s. There are also several Indian families here that trace their origin to the first decades of the 20th century.

19.51. The Indian Diaspora in Panama consists mostly of Muslims from Gujarat State. They have been there for a long time. They often bring their male relatives over from India to marry locally available Indian girls. They have built two mosques and a school for their children. The Hindus in Panama are also mostly from the same state in India. They too have constructed a place of worship for themselves. Besides their temple, they have set up a cultural society that is called the *Hindostana* Society of Panama. There is also a small Sikh community with its *gurudwara*.

19.52. The Indian Diaspora in Panama has, over the years, established itself well and has been able to acquire some influence in the government. A few PIOs have occupied high positions in the government, including that of Vice-Minister and Director General of the National Police. Many members of the community are running wholesale business and retail shops. At one time, the Panamanian road transport was in the hands of Indians settled here. Some PIO companies are currently engaged in construction work. There are many Indian companies in the Colon Free Zone of Panama. They import Indian goods into the country, either directly or otherwise.

19.53. The community has adapted itself well to the living conditions in Panama by mixing with the local people and speaking their language. It does not have any specific demands or expectations from the Government of India.

PERU

19.54. Like Ecuador, its northern neighbour, Peru is another remote Andean country facing the Pacific Ocean. Its main claim to international fame is the presence here of the ancient 'Indian' civilisational remains at Machupicchu. The first 'Indian Indians' to have arrived in this country were businessmen who had gone there in the early 1960s. Later on, the community grew in number marginally until the early 80s, after which many of its members left due to the severe local economic crises and the prevailing terrorism. Those with relatives in other Latin countries joined them. In the recent past, the size of the community has remained stable. The majority of Peruvians are Catholics and Spanish-speaking. There is a small remnant of the original 'native Indians' in this country who still maintain their traditional culture and religious beliefs. This probably explains the presence in this country of a small number of Catholic missionaries from India.

19.55. Most members of the local Indian community are Sindhis. They are reasonably well-off, but very few can be regarded as prosperous. Their general level of education is low. Most of them speak only their mother tongue and Spanish, with a smattering of English. There is also here a small number of professionals from other parts of India. Residence permits are not difficult to obtain in Peru. But citizenship is more complicated and only a small number of Indians have obtained it – not more than 10 out of a total number of almost forty persons. While a few cultural activities are organised by the more enterprising PIOs, in general they maintain a low profile. Considering the vast distance that separates the community from India , its interest in its country of origin is

limited to major events, mainly derived from occasional browsing on the internet. But being invariably first generation migrants, many of them do occasionally visit India.

ST. LUCIA AND ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

19.56. These two tiny island states are among the Windward Islands in the Caribbean Sea. Both of them have a largely Afro-Caribbean population with some remnants of the former European colonisers. There are also here a small number of PIOs. But most members of the Indian community are so integrated with the local people, socially and through inter-marriage, that they cannot be easily differentiated from them. A few NRI families, mainly professionals and traders, are also found here. They are mainly traders, but some of them are doctors and professionals.

VENEZUELA

19.57. During the oil-related high-income years of the 1970s, there were around 400 NRIs in this country. The Indian community consisted of personnel from the petroleum and petrochemical sectors, as well as a large number of traders. Many of them had taken their families with them to Venezuela, whether from India or elsewhere. Most of the traders belonged to the Sindhi community but there were also some persons from Gujarat, Punjab and the southern Indian States. When the oil boom ended in 1982, followed by devaluation of the local currency, many of the NRIs decided to seek their fortunes elsewhere. Currently, the Diaspora has been whittled down to half its former size. There are now only about 45 Indian families in Venezuela who are mainly engaged in retail trade. There are also a small number of experts in high tech. industries such as telecommunications. All of them have adapted themselves very well to their country of residence and are generally held in high regard by the local people on account of their hard work, expertise and non-political nature.

19.58. The Venezuelan Constitution guarantees equal rights without discrimination to all expatriate personnel. This has facilitated the Indian community's life. Another interesting feature is that many local persons are interested in Indian religions and spirituality. There are several Sai Baba, Radha Soami and Hare Krishna (ISKCON) Centres, as well as Rama Krishna Missions in this country. Some members of the Indian community also attend their functions. Most of the NRIs are well educated. However, given their small numbers, they have not formed themselves into an active representative body. But they remain in touch with one another and with the Indian Embassy in Caracas. Even though they have little time to engage in numerous cultural activities, they do get together to celebrate Indian festivals like Diwali.

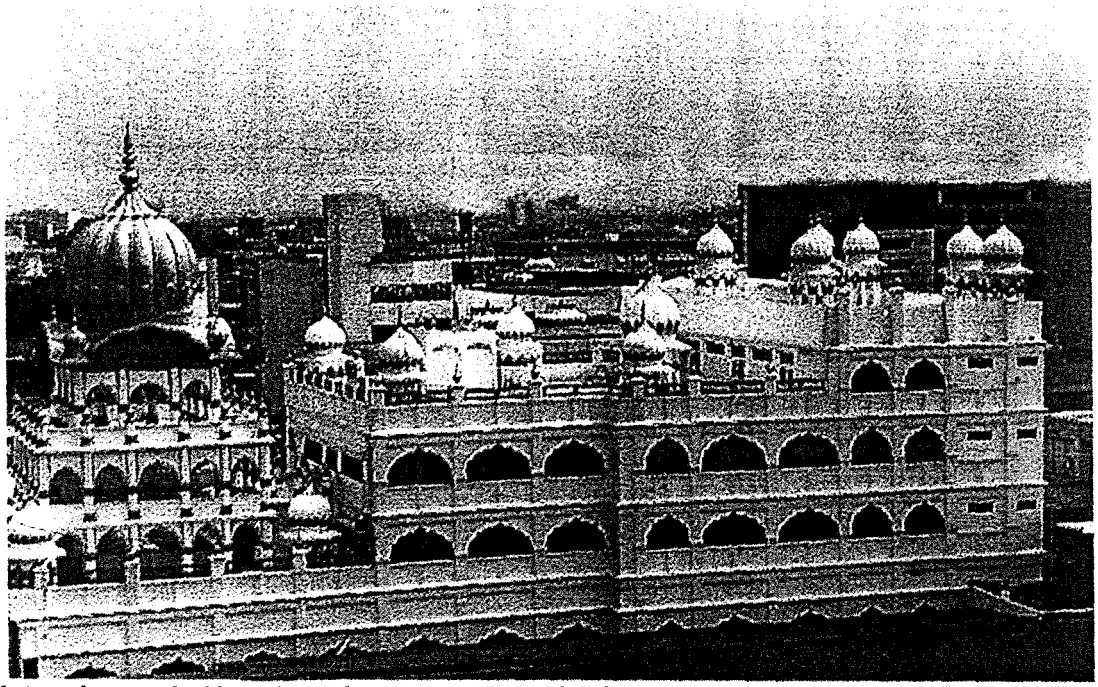
19.59. On the whole, the Indian community in Venezuela is quite prosperous and has a *per capita* income that is above the national average that is itself as high as US$ 8,300 in terms of PPP. They take an active part in mobilising donations to help in alleviating distress at times of national calamities in India.

Chapter 20

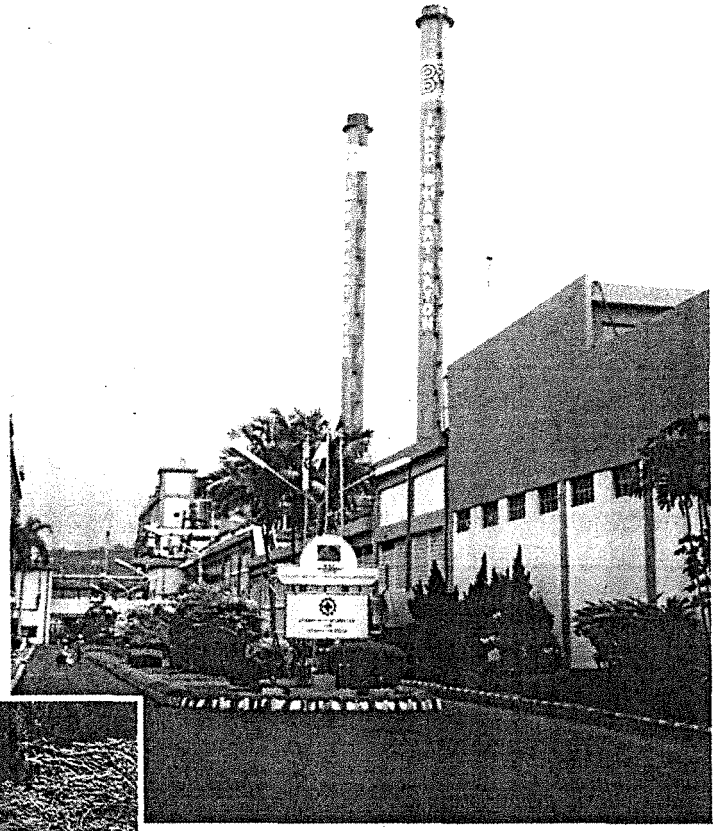
South East Asia



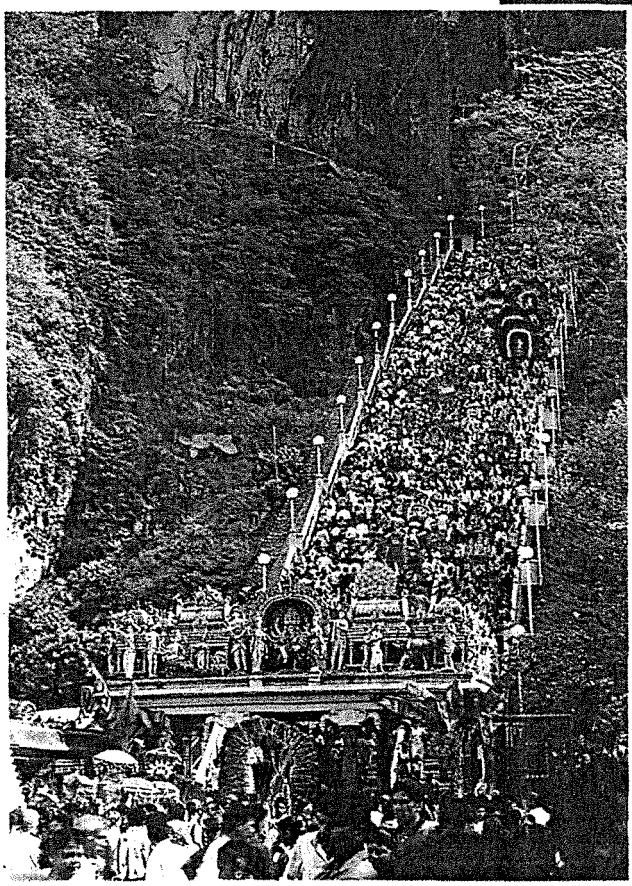
The Chairman of the Indian National Army, Sardar Ishar Singh Narula, a resident of Thailand witnessing Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose signing visitors book at Emerald Buddha Temple (Wat Pra Kaey), Bangkok in the year 1943



Bird view of present building of Gurudwara Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Bangkok, which consists of Diwan Hall, Langar Hall,Kindergarten School and Guru Nanak Mission Clinic. All the activities of the community are being held here.



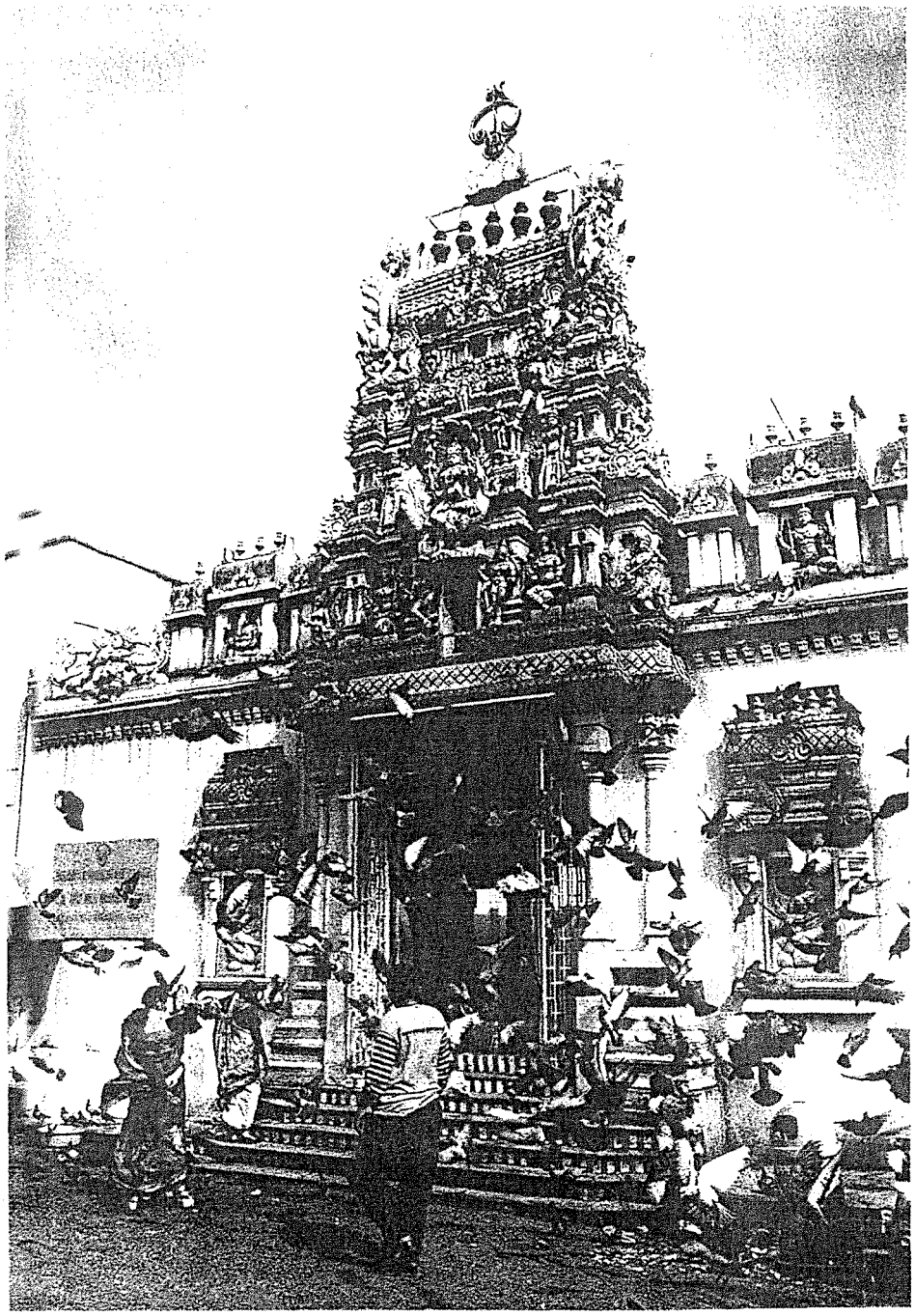
Indo-Bharat Rayon, Aditya Birla Group's flagship venture – first Viscose Staple Fibre Plant in Indonesia which started production in 1982



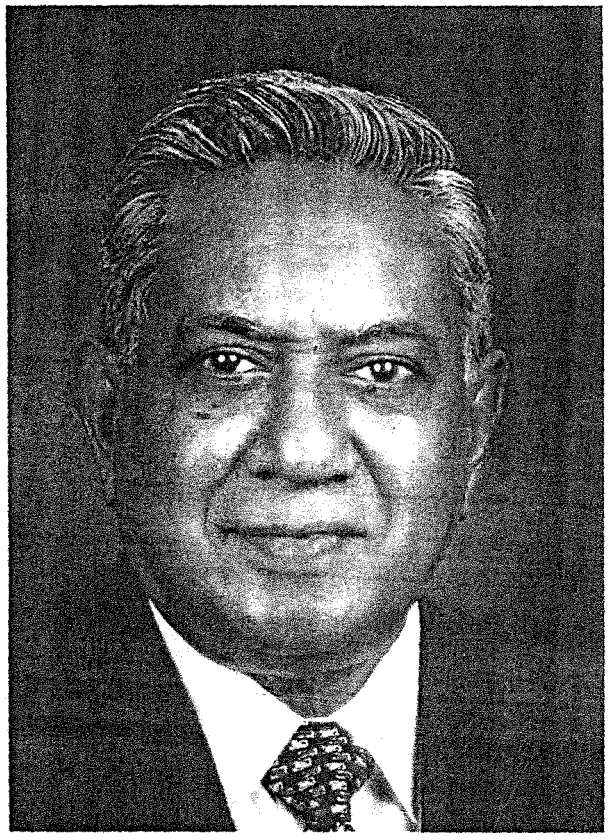
Hill Temple,Batu Caves,Malaysia where annual ThaiPusam festival is held. To reach the temple, one has.to climb a steep flight of 272 steps



Lt.K. R. Das, a former INA Member, representing the Netaji Welfare Foundation,handing over a Memorandum to the Indian Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, during his visit to Malaysia in May 2001. Also seen in the photograph is Mr. S. P. Narayanaswamy, Hon.Secretary, Netaji Centre,Kuala Lumpur



One of the Hindu Temples in Malaysia. The country abounds with many such beautiful and intricately sculptured temples



President Nathan of Singapore



Serangoon Road with road signs giving Indian names, Singapore



Thenday Yutthapani Temple, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam



Islamic Mosque, Ho Chin Minh City, Vietnam

Introduction

India's cultural relations with Southeast Asia are one of the most fascinating fields of history. This interaction, which precedes the beginning of the Christian era, has left an indelible impression on almost every aspect of life in a number of countries of the region. It would not be an exaggeration to say that this intercourse has been a vital factor in shaping the history of this area. The most unique feature of this interaction is that it has been entirely peaceful. There is probably no other example in the history of mankind of such cross fertilization between different cultures and people for over two millennia without any involvement of military force.

20.2. Early Indian migration is a subject of debate among scholars. There is, however, a general agreement that it took place both by land and sea routes. Different views have been expressed about the causes of Indian migration to Southeast Asia. There is considerable merit in the view that the primary motive for migration was economic. Initially, the mineral wealth of Southeast Asia appears to have been a major attraction for Indians. The deep imprint of intense interaction is visible even today in the language and literature, religion and philosophy, art and architecture, customs and manners of the whole of Indo-China, Indonesia, Burma (now Myanmar), Thailand and the Malaysian peninsula. The famous Angkorwat and other Hindu temples in Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, etc. are well-known. However, it is not so well-known that the first royal *shiva linga* in Southeast Asia was established at Mi-Son near Da Nang in Vietnam and the oldest Sanskrit inscription was found in a village named Vo Canh near Nha Trang in the southern part of Vietnam.

20.3. India also benefited considerably from its interactions with Southeast Asia. The trade with Southeast Asia played an important role in India's prosperity. The commonly used word *'lungi'* has its origin in the Burmese word 'longi'. There is evidence of relations between several kingdoms of Southeast Asia and the royal households of coastal India. It must, however, be emphasized that the number of Indian migrants to Southeast Asia was very small. Large scale migrations have only taken place as a result of colonial connections mainly in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Indian Emigration During the Colonial Period

20.4. Indian emigration during the 19th and early 20th centuries to the British, French and Dutch colonies was unprecedented. There are two types of emigration that took place during this period, namely (a) emigration of contract labourers under the 'indenture system' or 'Kangani' system; and (b) 'free' or 'passage' emigration of traders, clerks, bureaucrats and professionals.

20.5. With the abolition of slavery, particularly in the British Empire and the French and Dutch colonies in 1834, 1846 and 1873 respectively, there was a severe shortage of labourers working in sugar, tea, coffee, cocoa, rice and rubber plantations in their colonies. India and China became the obvious alternative sources of labour. During the period 1852 to 1937, approximately 2 million Indians went to Malaya and approximately 2.5 million to Myanmar. Since these colonies were situated not far from India, a majority of the migrants returned home after serving as plantation labourers. After 1920, the 'Kangani' emigration gradually gave way to individual or unrecruited migration due to a fall in the demand for Indian labour.

20.6. The second type of migration, namely, 'free' or 'passage' migration of traders and artisans took place to Myanmar and Malaysia during the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries. They included Baniyas from the United Provinces (modern UP), Marwaris from Rajputana, Chettiyars from Madras, Gujaratis, Maharashtrians and Punjabis.

20.7. A number of Punjabis from the Gujranwala region of West Punjab (now Pakistan) had also migrated to Thailand before India's independence. Prior to World War II, specially in Malaysia and Singapore, Indians had little political interest in their countries of residence, their activities being largely oriented towards the mother country with which they retained strong economic, sentimental and political links. This orientation of the Indians in Malaya was strengthened by periodic visits by Indian leaders like Pt. Nehru, Rabindranath Tagore and Srinivas Sastri. It was finally brought into the open with the establishment of the Indian National Army (INA) in Malaya. Between 1942 and 1945, thousands of Indians volunteered to join the INA for the purpose of fighting for the independence of India. In addition, Indian Independence League (IIL) organisations were established in all leading centres in Southeast Asia to recruit men, collect funds and generally to coordinate the Independence Movement. Men and money poured into the independence movement on an unprecedented scale from all over Southeast Asia. After Independence small numbers of Indians have continued to migrate to Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. These have been mainly professionals working for Indian joint ventures and other institutions. In recent times many local companies have also engaged Indian professionals. In Thailand there are also blue collar workers from the Gorakhpur region in U.P.

20.8. The following table presents a comparative picture of the Indian community in the South East Asian countries and the countries of the former Indo-China:

Table 20.1: The Indian Diaspora in the countries covered in this chapter

Country	Population	NRIs	PIOs	Stateless	% of the Population
Brunei	331,000	7,000	500	100	2.3%
Cambodia	11,340,000	150	150	Nil	Negligible
Indonesia	200,000,000	5,00	50,000	Nil	Negligible
Laos	5,100,000	107	18	NA	Negligible
Malaysia	22,890,000	15,000	1,600,000	50,000	7.3%
Myanmar	46,500,000	2,000	2,500,000	400,000	5%
Philippines	76,000,000	2,000	24,000	12,000	Negligible
Singapore	3,160,000	90,000	2,17,000	Negligible	9.71%
Thailand	62,000,000	15,000	70,000	Nil	.07%
Vietnam	78,000,000	320	nil	10	Negligible

BRUNEI

20.9. Most of the Indian community in Brunei migrated in the 20th century, particularly after the discovery of oil in 1929 and more prominently from 1950s onward when Brunei's economy started expanding. When Brunei introduced modern education in the 1950s and there was a sudden need for teachers, many of them went from India and today Bruneians still cherish fond and respectful memories of their former Indian teachers. Indian construction workers, who constitute a majority, went to Brunei in the last decade. An estimated 2500-3000 Indians are expatriates including doctors, engineers, teachers, businessmen and people in other vocations. The rest about 4000 are construction and other manual workers who are in Brunei on a relatively short-term basis. There are a good number of Indians in business like running mini-marts and small restaurants. Brunei is a manpower scarce country with late introduction of modern education. Indians working in Brunei, therefore, fill up human resources vacuum and have thus made an important economic contribution to Brunei. Social interaction between Indians and others including Bruneians and third country expatriates is limited. The community maintains a low profile despite its relatively significant size. It is well regarded for hard work and professionalism. Its main areas of settlement are Kuala Belait District, and the capital Bandar Seri Begawan.

20.10. The community makes conscious efforts to preserve its cultural identity and carry on with its cultural traditions. There are also a few churches and some small Hindu temples. Majority of the members are Muslim and for them, Brunei provides a more natural environment. However, the Hindus have no cultural or religious restrictions. Some expatriates are teaching Indian dances. Culturally, the largest segment of the Indian community comprises OF Tamils, both Muslims and

Hindus. Other sizeable groups are Malayalees, and people from Azamgarh/Jaunpur districts of UP. Prominent Indians in the academic field include Dr.P.Ramalingam, Member, Board of Education and Dr. P. N. Tandon, Member "Post Graduate Academic Research Regulations" Committee in the University of Brunei Darussalam.

20.11. There are two associations of Indians in Brunei, namely, Indian Association of Bandar Seri Begawan and the Indian Association of Kuala Belait.. Their activities are mainly of a cultural and social nature. These associations also organize functions on National Days, Diwali, Onam etc. Organization of a voluntary blood donation camp by the Indian Association at Bandar Seri Begawan for the last few years has emerged as a noteworthy activity. Both these associations bring out their small news bulletins, though not very regularly, for distribution among their members. The local national radio has a daily programme of film music in Hindi (and Nepali). There is also an Indian Chamber of Commerce. The major Indian commercial unit is a medium size construction company, Galfar, an India-Oman-Brunei joint venture, mainly controlled and run by Indians.

Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora

20.12. The demands and expectations of the Indian community in Brunei are as follows:-

a) Assistance from the Government of India in consular matters like:

i) faster issuance of passports through quicker verification of passport particulars;

ii) issue of a larger passport booklet than the present 60-page one;

iii) issue of a new passport one and a half years before the expiry of its validity since regulations of many countries require that a passport should be valid for more than one year before they can issue residence permit/visa.

b) Grant of dual citizenship.

c) Voting rights in the respective home town constituencies even for the Indians permanent residing abroad.

d) Introduction of Air India flights between Brunei and Chennai as majority of the Indian community (about 60%) belongs to Tamil Nadu.

e) Establishment of an NRI Welfare Fund to cater to the welfare of the Indian citizens when they run into problems while staying in foreign countries. A 50-50 contribution, i.e., 50% of the funds to come from the Government of India and the 50% to be provided by the NRIs has been suggested.

CAMBODIA

20.13. There is a small Indian community in Cambodia, numbering around 150. A majority of them are expatriates working on assignments. There is an Indian Association in Cambodia (IAC).

20.14. The conditions in Cambodia present an opportune time for the Indian Groups in Thailand to explore the possibilities of entering into the Cambodian market. The companies from India could also look at Cambodia more seriously. The tourism sector and hospitality industry would be of particular interest. There is a large potential in the tourism sector considering the fact that the tourist arrivals in Cambodia in the year 2000 increased five-fold to 200,000 from 40,000 in 1999 and are expected to increase further to one million in the next few years. This is, therefore, a good time to enter the hospitality sector, especially in the Siam Reap area.

20.15. Some of the public and private sector corporations, which have their offices or representatives in Bangkok could also consider expanding their areas of interest to Cambodia in view of a lot of activity going on in the infrastructure sector, particularly in the construction of roads and bridges all over the country.

INDONESIA

20.16. Indian involvement in Indonesia long preceded the arrival of the Dutch. However, the Indians presently in the country are descendents of those who arrived largely in response to Western mercantilism from the end of the 19th century through the late 30s. At the end of the 19th century, many unskilled or semi-skilled labourers of Tamil origin went to work on the Dutch and English plantations in East Sumatra. According to 1930 census, 67% of the Indian population was domiciled in Sumatra, while Java and Madura had about 18% of the population. Kalimantan and Sulavasi were settled by about 12% of Indians. The rest of the islands accounted for less than 3% of the Indians.

20.17. The members of the Indian Community, who came in the 60s and 70s invested mainly in textile industries. They played a prominent role in the export of Indonesian textile products. They expanded their activities during the economic boom seen by Indonesia. The economic recession, which took place, affected them slightly. However, the recovery has started which has opened up other avenues for Indian investment in textile, IT and other industries. The early identification of Sindhis with the textile business and Sikhs with the sports goods business continues to provide the overall framework of the economic position of Indians in Jakarta. A rather new development is the presence of Indians in the professions, such as medical, accounting and law.

20.18. The NRIs can acquire citizenship after fulfilling certain conditions prescribed under the immigration laws. There are no discriminatory policies. Indonesians of Indian origin have got the right to franchise in Indonesia.

20.19. Most of the Indians are still maintaining their link with India, having properties and bank accounts in India. The Indian community is culturally very active. They actively organise and participate in Indian cultural functions. However, they keep a low profile in the domestic politics. The Economic Association of Indonesia and India (ECAII) established by the Indian business community to promote trade relations is very active. There is an Indian bazaar called 'Pasar Bharu'. The Sindhi

community has their own association called 'Gandhi Seva Loka'. There is an Indian school called 'Gandhi Memorial International School'. There is also an India Club in which all the Indian community members actively participate.

20.20. The Jawaharlal Nehru Indian Cultural Centre at Jakarta organises various cultural programmes in Indonesia apart from imparting yoga, dance and tabla training. The Indian community is treated well and has integrated itself with the local population due to many centuries of cultural and historical relations. Places of religious worship like Churches, Gurudwaras and temple exist at Medan, Jakarta and Surabaya. In Medan alone, there are 5 Gurudwaras and over 10 temples. The Indian films are quite popular in Indonesia. Most of the Indian community mingles with the local Indonesians and participate in their social gatherings. The Indian Mission involves the local Indian community in programmes during the visits of VVIPs from India and cultural troupes performances. This gives the Indian community a sense of importance and link to India. They do not seem to have any major grievances as such.

LAO PDR

20.21. The Indian community in Lao PDR is very small, numbering about 125 persons though the Indians numbered around 1000 prior to the Communist revolution in the country. Most of them are from Tamil Nadu. There are a few Sindhis as well. There are about 18 PIOs having acquired Lao citizenship. 70-80% of the community are Muslims. Main areas of settlement are Vientiane and Sekong.

20.22. The community has integrated itself very well with the local populace. Some of the Indian settlers in Lao have married local ladies. There seems to be a very good understanding between the Indian community and the people of Lao. Most the members of the Indian community keep a low profile and mainly focus on their day-to-day activity of their business. There is a local Masjid in Vientiane, which was built on land donated by a Hindu in the 1980s and is a regular meeting place for the Muslim members of the community in Lao.

20.23. The Indian expatriates in Lao are mostly professionals and well-educated whereas a large number of settlers are not so well-educated. Most of the settlers try to send their children to India for higher education. Indian experts in consultancy, particularly in the infrastructure related projects such as roads have been active during the last about 20 years in the country. Some of them are doing good business in jewellery, textiles and restaurants and others are engaged in petty trading. There are two Indian garment manufacturing companies and four Indian restaurants.

Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora

20.24. Some of the expectations of the Indian community are easy repatriation of their earnings to India, tax benefits for the income earned here, and less cumbersome customs procedures. According to the Indian Mission, they have not been approached for PIO Cards or with queries regarding dual nationality (which, in any case, is not permitted under local law).

MALAYSIA

20.25. India's contacts with Malaya go back to the pre-Christian era. However, despite the great antiquity of the Indian overseas migration to Malaya and the debt of Malay culture to ancient India, there were seldom large number of Indians in Malaya in the pre-British period. The bulk of Indians came during British time as plantation workers. Nearly all the 1.6 million Indians at present in Malaysia are either themselves immigrants or descendents of recent immigrants.

20.26. Qualitatively speaking, there was a major difference between Indians who came to the Malay peninsula up to the late 18th century and those who came in far larger numbers in the subsequent 130 years. The early arrivals were mainly merchants and traders; they were also Muslims. The early Malay states thrived because of entrepot trade. In the early 19th century, a different class of Indians began to arrive. As British and European capitals became more and more involved in plantation agriculture – coffee first and rubber later – Indian labourers were brought into the peninsula with increasing rapidity and in greater numbers. The largest average annual flow of Indians into Malaya occurred during the period 1911-30, when more than 90,000 persons arrived in the country every year.

20.27. Indian ethnic community consists of mostly Tamils (80%), followed by Keralites, Andhrites, Bengalis, Punjabis, Sindhis and Gujaratis. Most Indians are settled in Penang state in north Malaysia, Perak in central Malaysia and the rest in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor state. Indian community's contribution to Malaysia's GDP is about 2% and its share in Malaysia's international trade is about 3%.

20.28. While a major portion of the Indian community is engaged in rubber and palm plantations, a small section is involved in services like police, railways and food business as well as in the legal and medical professions. Being engaged in plantation labour, the major chunk of Indian community belonging to the older generation was either illiterate or educated up to the primary school level. The present generation is, however, more literacy conscious.

20.29. Though education is free up-to secondary level, Indians are still not utilizing the opportunity. The number of Tamil schools in Malaysia has come down from 720 in 1963 to 526 in the year 2000 due to poor response towards Tamil studies. All this is due to the compulsions of employment requirements both within the country and overseas. A substantial majority of the Indian community has remained tied to the plantations and lagged behind in economic progress and education. As a result the per capita income of an Indian in Malaysia is below that of an average Malaysian.

20.30. There are some associations/groups formed due to their educational linkages with India such as: Malaysian Association of Indian University Graduates (MAIUG), Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) and Society of Medical Graduates of India and Malaysia (SOMGRIM). University of Malaysia has a department of Indian studies, which focuses almost exclusively on Indian languages and among them Tamil. There is a school run by the Laxmi Narain Temple, which teaches Hindi. Indian classical music and dances are promoted regularly by the Institutes,

such as, The Temple of Fine Arts, Sutra Dance Threatre, Shektra Dance Group and Tanji Kamla Dance Group. There are two Indian expatriates associations, namely, Bharat Club and Indian Expatriate Tooling Family of Malaysia. There are several associations of PIOs. There are two prominent Tamil dailies, namely, Tamil Nasiol and Malaysia Nanban. While there is no ethnic Indian radio/TV channel, Astro and Mega channels transmit lot of Indian programmes.

20.31. The Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) which was formed in 1946 is a main component of the ruling coalition National Front (Barisan National) since 22 years and has got fourteen seats at present in the Malaysian Parliament (seven each in the two Houses), which include one Cabinet post, two Deputy Minister's posts and two Parliamentary Secretary's posts.

20.32. The Indian community maintains its linkages with India by means of pilgrimage, tourism and business trips apart from social commitments. They have close ties and interaction with their relatives in India. Community is taking part in infrastructure sector – construction of highways, ports, etc. They look towards India as a big market for Malaysia.

20.33. It is difficult to acquire Malaysian citizenship and PIOs/NRIs with continuous residence for 10-15 years and having a Malaysian spouse are considered selectively for Malaysian citizenship.

20.34. The religious worship and religious activities are permitted by the local authorities within certain guidelines. ICCR sponsored troupes visit Malaysia on a regular basis.

Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora

20.35. Malaysia continues to attract illegal work force and job racketeers based in India in collusion with their counterparts in Malaysia allure job aspirants to come to Malaysia on tourist/social visas after payment of hefty sums. Once in Malaysia, they are employed illegally mostly as labourers in plantation and construction sites on meagre wages and often apprehended by the Immigration authorities. Consular assistance is provided to them by the Indian Mission. Deportation of those arrested for overstay/illegal entry is often delayed due to the lack of sponsors to arrange their return tickets or their inability to pay fine. There are many cases of arbitrary termination of contracts and non-payment of salaries. Delays occur owing to the complex legal system and immigration laws.

20.36. Ethnic Community in Malaysia feels that there should not be any visa requirement for them. One of the main grievances of the Indian community is the hurdle of bureaucracy in business ventures and also the difficulties in transportation and hotel accommodation. They also feel that India has not exploited Malaysia's tourist potential.

20.37. There should be direct flights between Kuala Lumpur and Thiruvananthapuram or Cochin.

20.38. **Culture** – Local institutes/centres expect financial and other support in the form of books/ instruments, etc. from the Government of India for promoting Indian culture. There has been a demand from the community for setting up a cultural centre in Malaysia. During the visit of the

High Level Committee to Malaysia in July 2001, President of the Malaysian Indian Congress Dato' Seri S. Samy Vellu had stated that the Malaysian Indian Congress proposed to establish a cultural centre for the community.

20.39. **Education** – The community have requested for establishment of a PIO University in India as a long-term solution for the educational needs of the children of the Indian Diaspora. As a temporary measure, they have represented for allocation of a definite number of seats in the professional institutions or colleges in India. For example, the medical colleges in India, which have a total of about 150,000 seats could offer 300 medical seats to the PIOs. There should be a 10-year programme to induct a large number of Malaysian PIOs for professional courses in institutions in India. Some of the Indian-Malaysian youth could be considered admission on self-financing basis. There should be more scholarships for the deserving ones.

20.40. Consideration should be given to the concept of twinning programmes or the setting up of branches of Indian educational institutes in Malaysia.

20.41. Malaysian authorities extend only limited recognition to Indian degrees. Global Organization of Persons of Indian Origin (GOPIO) have requested that the Government of India should seek the support of the Malaysian Government for an increase by the latter in the number of recognized degrees offered by the institutions in India for engineering, dentistry, pharmacy, animal husbandry, etc. in keeping with the spirit of South South cooperation.

20.42. **Entrepreneurial development** – The Government of India should frame a 10-year special "economic assistance policy" for the development of Malaysian PIO entrepreneurs. This should include preference for Malaysian PIOs in project offers, entrepreneurial support programmes and training and exposure to Malaysian PIO entrepreneurs in small and medium scale businesses and industries in India.

MYANMAR

20.43. The origins of the present day Indian community in Myanmar can be traced back to the second half of the nineteenth century with the establishment of British rule. Britain ruled the country with the help of Indian soldiers, policemen and civil servants. Indian labour was extensively used for developing the infrastructure and for construction work. Indian farmers were taken there to cultivate virgin lands. Indian moneylenders and traders followed them to take advantage of the growing economy and the consequent prosperity. As a result, there was a large Indian community in Burma as Myanmar was then called, at the time of its independence. In the cities of Yangon (former Rangoon) and Mandalay, Indians were a dominant community. All important spheres of life, which included the civil services, education, professional services, trade and commerce were largely in the hands of the Indian community. While the community was generally perceived to be prosperous, a large segment of it belonged to the working class, which included the lower echelons of bureaucracy, domestic servants and labour, both in the agricultural and non-agricultural

sectors. Soon after Myanmar attained independence in January 1948, land was nationalised resulting in the expropriation of land holdings belonging to the Chettiyars, a community of prosperous money lenders who financed the traditional rice trade. This community was the first substantial group to leave Myanmar in the early fifties.

20.44. The 1962 military takeover was followed by a wholesale nationalization of business and a programme of Burmanisation, which meant replacing English by Burmese in all teaching establishments and in Government administration. This caused a large scale exodus of the prosperous, professional and educated segments of the Indian community – almost 320,000, between 1962 and 1964. What were left behind were the poor working class, which had nowhere to go, as well as some remnants of the trading community. The present Indian community in Myanmar is, by and large, composed of these people.

20.45. Due to lack of available data, the exact size of the Indian community in Myanmar is largely a matter of conjecture. According to estimates provided by the Embassy in Yangon, there are around 25 lakh persons of Indian origin in the country out of which only around 2000 hold Indian passports. The Embassy has estimated that around 13 lakhs among them are Muslims (which might include persons from Bangladesh), 8 lakh Hindu and 4 lakh Christian and Sikhs. It has to be emphasized that these are only guesstimates of people of Asian origin and it is difficult to say as to how many of them are of Indian origin today. Between 2 to 4 lakh persons of Indian origin are stateless, despite being third or fourth generation residents of Myanmar since they do not have any documents to prove their citizenship under the Burmese Citizenship Law of 1982. Our Embassy has been raising this issue with the local Government. As a result of its efforts, around 50,000 PIOs have been granted naturalization certificates which entitles them to certain rights. Their children would, however, be entitled to full citizenship. Over the last two years, the Myanmar Government has been granting full citizenship to PIOs in small batches.

20.46. While small communities of persons of Indian origin can be seen all over the country, including in the remote areas, major concentrations are in and around Yangon, Mandalay, Zeyawaddy, Kyauktaga, Mawlamyine and Pathein.

20.47. A majority of the present day Indian community in Myanmar is not well off. In the Yangon area, which has its largest concentration, most of the PIOs are engaged in jobs like domestic help, mechanics and construction workers, while others are engaged in petty trades. Only a handful of them are doing well in trade and business. In other cities, the PIOs are mainly engaged in petty trading. In the rural areas, the Indian community is engaged in farming. There is a large concentration of the Indian community, nearly one hundred thousand of them, in the Zeyawaddy and Kyautaga areas, who are engaged in farming. They are third or fourth generation descendents of Indians from Bihar who had been brought in by the British at the turn of the century. While few of these farmers are landowners, the rest of them are either sharecroppers or farm labourers. There are around 200 NRI families which came to Myanmar after economic liberalization began

in 1990. Most of them are located in Yangon and are engaged in export-import business or are employees of Indian or Singapore based companies.

20.48. On the educational front also, the Indian community has not been faring well, despite the fact that at one time, the faculty and alumni of Rangoon University was comprised mainly of Indians. The main reason for their poor performance in the educational sector is that, between 1964 and 1988, Indians were denied admission to universities and professional courses. As a result, there are hardly any Indian students in the universities, leading to a virtual extinction of a professional class in the Indian community.

20.49. Since social status in any society is linked to economic well-being, the Indian community in Myanmar does not, at present, enjoy much social or political clout. The present military government in Yangon does not permit any political activity. In the parliamentary elections of 1990, the Indian community did not play any role at all.

20.50. Since, as already mentioned above, most of the PIOs in Myanmar are near the bottom of the social pyramid, they have few or no prospects at present for any significant improvement. The various linguistic and religious groups among them still maintain their cultural identities. Most of the younger generation are more comfortable speaking Burmese. The *Arya Samaj* and the *Sanatan Dharma Sabha* are active in areas with large Hindu communities. However, there are no Indian political organisations because of the restrictions imposed by the military regime.

20.51. There are a large number of Hindu temples, mosques and gurudwaras in Myanmar. Practically in every town, the Indian community has established places of worship. The Indian community celebrates religious and cultural festivals and events with great fervour and enthusiasm. The older generations, in particular, are making a special endeavour to keep Indian religious traditions and languages alive by holding religious and language classes in temples, mosques and *gurudwaras*. The special festivals celebrated by the Hindu community include *Durga Puja* and *Navaratri, Holi, Janma Ashtami* , etc. The Muslim community gathers to mark the annual Urs of the Panch Peer held near Yangon. The *Urs* festivities spread over a five-day period. The death anniversary of Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar is also observed every year with special programmes.

20.52. In some areas like Zeyawaddy and Kyautaga, there are whole villages inhabited entirely by PIOs from Bihar. In these places, the community is maintaining its distinctive linguistic and cultural identity. Their language and some of their customs date back to the beginning of the twentieth century. In other places, while the older generation is maintaining a separate identity, younger persons are more comfortable with the local language and customs. There are increasing instances of inter-marriages between Indians and Myanmarese persons.

20.53. The Indian community's relations with the Myanmar Government and people are, by and large, cordial. Occasionally, senior government functionaries attend functions organised by the Indian community.

Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora

20.54. A vast majority of the PIOs in Burma are now poor and have no continuing family ties with India. Most of them were born in Burma and no longer have any contact with their relatives in India, though their emotional ties with India still exist. Since many of them are stateless, the Indian embassy has been authorized to issue restricted validity passports to them to facilitate their journey to India to meet their relatives. On an average, 500 persons avail of this facility every year.

20.55. The first and foremost expectation of those who have stayed back in Myanmar is that the Government of India would intercede on their behalf with the Myanmar Government to sort out some of the problems being faced by them, like the grant of citizenship, compensation for nationalized businesses, etc. There is a sense of anxiety among those sections of the community who have not been granted local citizenship, particularly because it affects their ability to own property, have higher education, get government jobs, etc. There has been practically no compensation for the land holdings nationalized in 1948, most of which belonged to Chettiyars from South India, as well as the private businesses nationalised in 1962. The Embassy and the Government of India have been taking up these issues with the Government of Myanmar.

20.56. The Indian community also looks up to India for its educational and cultural needs. They would like to send their children to India for higher education but are unable to do so for economic reasons. Our Embassy has been helping in a limited way by providing text books and books in Hindi and other Indian languages. It has also been supplying religious books, musical instruments, etc. to different socio-religious bodies. Ministry of Human Resource Development also gives annual grants to some cultural organisations in Myanmar. On the cultural front also, the Indian community expects India to help them in maintaining their cultural identity by providing them necessary support. Cultural troupes from India are always a special attraction for the Indian community.

THE PHILIPPINES

20.57. Recent studies suggest remarkable Indic influence in languages, literature as well as social customs in the Philippines. Some of the pre-Islamic influences are more pronounced in the cultures of the Tausugs, the Maguindanaos and the Maranaos. In literature for instance, "Maharadia Lawana" – a Maranao epic based on the Ramayana story – is regarded as a historic legacy among the Maranao Muslims and is popularly recited and depicted through drama and dance forms. Another Maranao epic, "Raja Indrapatra", is also of Indic origin. Interestingly, many traditional names of the Maranao Muslims are of Sanskrit origin and have not been Islamised, such as: Nagasura Madale, Gadia, Mitra, Laxamana, Radja, Salipada, and Sangkula.

20.58. It was the Seven-Year War in Europe that gave the British an excuse to mount a naval expedition against Manila. The expedition was fitted in India and it included, besides the British, a contingent of about 600 Indian sepoys and labourers, recruited from among the subjects of the Nawab of

Arcot in Madras. The British expeditionary force occupied Manila from 1762-64. The British occupation of Manila brought India and the Philippines in contact with each other in modern times. Similarly, it was the British annexation of Sindh and Punjab in 1843 and 1849 respectively that gave impetus to the Indian immigration in the Philippines. The prospects of gainful employment and business opportunities impelled the peasants from Punjab and Sindh to migrate to the USA and Canada. However, by the turn of the century after the American occupation of the Philippines in 1898, the Punjabis and Sindhis began to trickle into the country.

20.59. It may be noted that as against the exodus of the Indian indentured labour to the British colonies in South East Asia (and Africa), the Indians who went to the Philippines were free to select their destination and were not vulnerable to the unmitigated exploitation of the indentured system. Despite there being no discrimination or restrictions on Indian immigration into the Philippines, the Indians came to the Philippines only in trickles. They preferred to migrate to the USA and Canada. The Philippines was the last choice for them after Singapore and Hong Kong. Sindhi merchants were the first to come to the Philippines. The immigrants from Punjab came close behind the Sindhis to Manila to around 1902.. Quite often, the Indians would come to Hong Kong and from there to the Philippines without even knowing its name and existence, for economic reasons.

20.60. A Majority of the Indians in the Philippines are settled in Manila whereas some are present in other towns of the country as well. The Sindhi community in the Philippines is mainly engaged in trade and manufacturing whereas Punjabis are dealing in money lending. There are two Indian joint ventures in artificial yarn production. Indians have a dominant position in manufacturing and export of garments. There are many Gurudwaras and Hindu temples.

20.61. The traditional structure of the two main linguistic groups – the Sindhis and the Punjabis constituting the Indian community in the Philippines has gradually changed with a large number of highly educated civil servants from India coming to join the international organisations, such as International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Asian Development Bank (ADB), Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), World Health Organizations (WHO) and a number of other UN agencies with regional offices in the Philippines. In addition, business and industry representatives from India engaged in joint ventures in the Philippines, or multinational Indian Corporations (Birlas, Kirloskars, Dalmia) have made Manila their business base in Asia.

20.62. There is a monthly magazine "Samachar" in English, which is run by the Sindhi community. We may mention among the prominent Indians the name of Prof. Ajit Singh Rye, who retired as Head of the Asian Centre, University of the Philippines. He has been in the Philippines for about 50 years and has an intellectual passion – both written and spoken – about India. Considering the comparatively small number of Indians in the Philippines, they have had some presence in the local politics. Mr. Ramon Bhagatsing, with Indian father and Filipino mother was Mayor of Manila during the Presidency of Mr. Marcos. Mrs. Laticia Shahani, sister of President Ramos is married to an Indian. She was a Senator. Her son, Ranjit Shahani is a Member of the House of Representatives.

Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora

20.63. The PIOs in the Philippines expect to have dual citizenship so that they can participate in the Indian elections. They also look forward to India for educational opportunities for their children. Some members of the Indian community have brought to the notice of the Indian Embassy problems faced by them in obtaining long-term/multi-entry visas and permanent residence status for their Indian spouses.

SINGAPORE

20.64. The nucleus of the present Indian origin community in Singapore was formed by those, who were with Sir Stamford Raffles, the East India Company Officer, who arrived in Singapore in 1819 to establish a base there to arrange protection and provision for East India Co. ships carrying cargo between India and the region, especially China. They included 120 soldiers, several assistants and domestic servants. From 1825 to 1873 Singapore as a major penal colony in the region saw influx of convicts from India, who were utilised as virtual slave labour to clear swamps and jungles and for the construction of roads and buildings. From 1830 onwards, large immigrant groups, mainly Tamilians were brought in by the British as indentured labourers to work on the plantations, civic projects, government facilities such as harbour, transportation systems, naval military bases, etc. Also around this time began the immigration of Indian traders, from Sindhis to South Indian Muslims to the Chettiars attracted by the Singapore's rapidly increasing status as a trading centre. By the middle of the 19th century, Indians had become Singapore's second largest community – about 13,000 – with bulk of them being labourers from Tamil Nadu. Towards the end of the 19th century, as Singapore continued to develop, more and more Indians arrived in search of employment opportunities in the white-collar sector.

20.65. Indian migration to Singapore also took place specially after the end of World Ward II and after India's partition. In the 50s fresh influxes from India virtually ceased as Singapore authorities passed increasingly restrictive ordinances to control immigration but about 50,000 Indians crossed over from Malaya seeking to escape the uncertain conditions generated by the emergency there. From the 60s immigration from India has reduced to an almost negligible level, primarily because of Singaporean authorities, decision to recruit most semi-skilled and unskilled labour from "traditional" sources of recruitment, wherein India did not figure.

20.66. In cultural terms, the Indian community is the most diverse of Singapore's ethnic communities. About 64% are of Tamil origin and Tamil is one of the four official languages together with Chinese, Malay and English. There is also a sizeable Punjabi, mainly Sikh community (about 7%), most of whom initially arrived in Singapore as members of the British army and police. The other distinct Indian communities are the Malayalis (about 8%), Sindhis (about 6%) and the Gujaratis (about 2%). Indians are also the most religiously diverse of Singapore's ethnic categories; an estimated 50-60% are Hindus, 20-30% Muslims, 12% Christians, 7% Sikhs and 1% Budhists.

20.67. Indians had a head start in the civil service and the professions because of their general proficiency in English. In the 60s and 70s, top posts in the Government, among civil services, judiciary, armed forces and educational institutions were largely held by Indians. Some people of Indian origin prominent in Singaporean politics and Government today include the new President, Mr. S.R. Nathan, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Law, Prof. S. Jaykumar and Opposition leader Mr. J. B. Jeyaretnam. PIOs are also represented in all sectors of Singaporean economy and society to a greater extent than the Malays specially in the traditional professions such as medicine, law and academics. PIOs and NRIs are currently contributing significantly to the efforts of Singapore to become the new economy hub for the region. Even today, Singapore recruits majority of its construction workers from India. They have also kept Indian culture alive in Singapore. Part of Singapore's IT industry today is being fuelled by Indian expertise. There is also a significant Indian contribution to scientific research including in bio-technology and medicine.

20.68. The Indian community in Singapore, whether PIO or NRI, is largely content with its life and lifestyle. The Singaporean authorities accord equal treatment with regard to their basic demands, such as housing, schooling, recognition of cultural traditions, etc. The community is now overwhelmingly local born and linked to India primarily through the maintenance of cultural traditions, rather than by any nationalistic feelings. Those who were born and brought up in Singapore look upon themselves as Singaporeans rather than Indians and look to the West rather than to their ancestral birthplace for advancement of opportunities outside Singapore. There is an area called Little India, around Serangoon Road, which is almost completely populated by PIOs.

20.69. All Indian religions are represented in Singapore. There are quite a few gurudwaras, temples, churches and mosques as also religion based associations, such as, the Ramakrishna Mission. The media being government controlled, there are no privately owned radio or TV channels in Singapore. However, the government has allocated one radio and one TV channel exclusively for the Indian community. The programmes on these channels are primarily in Tamil, though other Indian languages are also represented, mainly through feature films. In addition, cable stations, such as Sun TV, Zee and Star World are broadcast locally. Cultural troupes sponsored by the ICCR stage various performances in Singapore on many occasions. Cultural organisations also frequently organize Indian cultural programmes with local talent. Most of the cultural institutions have their own auditoriums.

Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora

The demands and expectations of the Indian community in Singapore are as follows:-

a) Educational facilities – The NRI community in Singapore would like an Indian school, with the CBSC syllabus, to be established there, as this would facilitate the adjustment of their children to the Indian school system, when they return to India.

b) Culture – More sponsorship from Indian Missions abroad specially for cultural programme/ events not implemented through ICCR.

c) Investment/Trade/Industry/S & T – Simplification of rules, development of infrastructure, less interference from trade and labour unions, a streamlined exit policy, genuine single window clearance, etc.

d) Dual citizenship, removal of residence qualification and simplified procedure for acquisition or re-acquisition of Indian citizenship.

e) Immigration and Consular matters – Simplification and streamlining of property acquisition regulations, avoidance of harassment by immigration officials, customs officials, FRRO, etc. Also some PIOs, who are permanent residents of Singapore, but hold third country citizenship raise the issue of dual citizenship.

f) Illegal immigration – Immigration laws in Singapore being very strict, there is a persistent problem of illegal migrants mainly coming from Tamil Nadu into Singapore on fake passports, fake visas or illegal entry from Malaysia through boats. There is another category of persons, who deliberately choose, not to leave Singapore when their visas expire and go underground. Such persons are imprisoned for a period of a few months, caned and sent back to India. During the period of imprisonment, the Singapore Government gives the workers, temporary work permits and makes them earn the upkeep and for the cost of the air ticket provided by the Singapore authorities. Singapore authorities at times complain that their jails are clogged with Indian workers thereby causing a drain on their resources, as at any given time there are up to 300 Indians in Singapore jails. The Committee has been informed that the bottleneck is on the Singapore side, which insists that the workers earn their air passage before going back to India.

g) Labour problems – These include delayed payment of wages, not paying the wages stipulated in the employment contract, ill-treatment, selling of passports by the employers, etc. One of the complaints often heard is that Indian software professions are underpaid. Besides their passports and original certificates are retained by the company making them virtually bonded workers. Disputes such as these are settled with the intervention of the Indian Mission with the companies concerned. A related problem is that the Indian professionals are paid less than their counterparts from other countries. This is more so for engineers. Indian degrees are not recognized by Singapore authorities nor is there any system by which an Indian can qualify an equivalent examination.

h) Yet another problem is that of exploitation of Indian workers by Singaporean Indians and their Indian counterparts. The agents on both sides charge hefty sums and arrange Indian workers from India on the promise of getting them white-collar job in Singapore. These agents then keep these labourers in make-shift shanties and do not give them their wages for prolonged periods. The Indian Mission is learnt to have taken up the issue with the local authorities for finding out a solution.

i) There are some members of the older generation, who would like to return to India to go back to their roots to escape post-retirement blues or simply because of the lower cost of living. Most of their savings are tied-up in their CPF. However, even after retirement, only partial CPF withdrawals are permitted and that too for specified purposes. Full withdrawal can be made only after surrendering Singaporean citizenship. In practice, this means that for the five years of continuous residence in India required to regain Indian citizenship and the additional time required by the authorities to formalize their status, they cannot have access to their CPF savings. Re-acquisition of Indian citizenship could be expedited in such cases to take advantage of the potential for substantial foreign exchange remittances to India in addition to alleviating their hardships.

j) Most Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) in Singapore, desirous of employing Indian maid servants are put to a lot of inconvenience due to the existing procedures. Besides getting all the paperwork and the agreement between the employer and the employee attested at the Indian High Commission, Singapore Ministry of Manpower etc, they also have to go to the local Protector of Emigrants (POE) (Ministry of Labour) office in India, to deposit an amount equivalent to cost of one way air ticket to India. This is to enable the worker/maid servant to get the Emigration Clearance Not Required (ECNR) stamp on his/her passport. Depositing this amount involves, running around in the POE office, filling up challans, depositing the money in the bank, dealing with labour agents etc. Since the PIOs are not based in India, they have to make their relatives do the running around or employ agents, adding to their anxiety. Getting refund of this amount, on the conclusion of the contract of the maid servant, is also a very big hassle.

k) While the PIOs in Singapore are agreeable to the payment of the cost of one way air ticket for their maid servants, they would like a simplified procedure. It has been suggested that they be allowed to deposit the required amount at the High Commission of India (HCI), Singapore which can issue a certificate to this effect. A copy of the certificate issued by the HCI can be forwarded to the concerned POE for their record. The maid servant can then be given the ECNR stamp at the airport itself on the strength of the HCI's letter. Similarly, on conclusion of the contract with the maid servant, the refund of the amount deposited can also be obtained at the HCI after the repatriation of the maid servant.

l) The Indian labourers and maid servants in Singapore also often face problems in getting their compensation/insurance claims settled by their employers for injuries sustained by them during the course of their work. Despite assistance by the HCI, there are delays in settlement of such claims in case workers have travelled on forged passports or if the particulars of their next of kin are not mentioned in their passports and there is a legal problem in identifying them, etc.

m) Suggestions for building linkages - There is a lot of potential for building economic cooperation between India and Singapore if the Indian community in Singapore which is

active in the field of joint ventures is encouraged further in their endeavours. It is to be noted that the First Global Indian Entrepreneurs' Conference of GOPIO was hosted by Singapore-Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Singapore in 1996. There is an IT park in Bangalore, phase I of which has achieved 100% occupancy and break-even status. With the initiation of phase II, the outlook for enhanced investment by Singapore is brighter now.

20.70. There is also a lot of potential for promoting tourism between Singapore and India by making use of the enterprise of the Indian community in Singapore.

THAILAND

20.71. The links between the Indian sub-continent and Thailand have been documented by historians. Evidence of the presence of a sizeable number of Indians during the Sukhothai and Ayutthaya periods has been described by a number of Western travellers to the Thai court. Indian influence was noticeable in the religion and manners of the royalty. Indians were also seen to play an important part in trading activities.

20.72. The presence of Indians, who have settled in Thailand can be traced back to more than 100 years ago. Some Indians have been settled there for 3-4 generations. The earliest groups to have gone in sizeable numbers to Thailand appear to have been the Tamils. Phuket in Southern Thailand seems to have been the first area that experienced a spill over of Tamils from Penang and peninsular Malaysia. Most of them went there to participate in the cattle trade and the mining of precious stones, with service groups like the Chettiyars following them. As Bangkok grew in commercial importance during the 19th century, Tamils also moved to Bangkok from Phuket, Penang and Singapore. Until 1940, the Bohras and Tamil Muslim Merchants from Pondicherry and Karaikal, all of whom were French subjects, were the only important businessmen in Thailand. After the first wave of Tamils and Bohra Muslims, came the Punjabis and the UP'ites.

20.73. Almost all the Indians in Thailand are found in urban centres. About 75% of them lives in Bangkok. The other urban centers, where Indians are found in sizeable numbers, include Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and Lampang – all in Northern Thailand. The largest component of the Indian community is that of Sikhs numbering around 30 to 35,000 followed by Hindus numbering between 15 to 18,000 originally from West Punjab, i.e., presently Pakistan. They are followed by persons from UP, Gujaratis, Marwaris, Maharashtrians, Sindhis and South Indians. A majority of the members of Indian community are well-established, mainly in the textile, real estate or gems and jewellery business. They have been playing a very active role in the economic development of Thailand.

20.74. A large number of religious and cultural organisations have been formed by the PIOs. Culturally the community is very active and organises various Indian cultural events and festivals from time to time. It has adapted and integrated itself very well with the local population and conditions. It does not take much interest in political activities, whether at the local or at the national level.

20.75. Presence of a large number of Indians in various International and UN organisations, multinational companies, banks, financial institutions as well as the progress that India has made specially in the field of information and communication technology has helped in giving India and the Indians in Thailand a progressive modern and forward looking image. The community is held in high esteem among the official and political circles as well as among the common people of Thailand. The setting up of the Aditya Birla Group of Industries around 32 years ago, Indo-Rama Group about 12 years ago and Thai Baroda Industries Ltd. about 7 years ago have contributed considerably to improving the image and prestige of the Indian community in local circles. Involvement of the Indian social and cultural organisations in charitable and philanthropic activities has also played a significant role in enhancing the standing of the Indian community. Some of the members of the community have also been decorated with honours and awards by the Thai Government.

20.76. Most of the PIOs in Thailand have obtained Thai citizenship. They are issued long-term visas by the Indian Mission in the country to enable them to visit India.

20.77. The PIOs in Thailand visit India frequently and remain in touch with their Motherland. There is also an increasing awareness among them about the educational facilities in India and a considerable number of them have been sending their children to India for studies, since most Indians parents prefer their children to retain their Indian cultural identity. By studying in India, the children can also acquire a good knowledge of English, which is useful later in the business and commercial sectors.

20.78. Consequent upon the down turn of the Thai economy since 1997, the Indian community has shown greater interest in investment in various projects in India. A large section of the community is extremely rich, doing very well in the textiles business and in real estate. A large number of them are interested in investing in India and can be useful in expanding our relations with Thailand in the economic and commercial fields, including the tourism sector. They can play a possible role in the BIMST-EC (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand – Economic Cooperation) and Mekong-Ganga River Valley Project.

Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora

20.79. No immigration problems are faced by the PIOs and NRIs, who hold valid travel documents. However, the number of Indians who either enter Thailand illegally or overstay are detained and thereafter deported to India after undergoing the prescribed punishment.

20.80. Our Embassy in Bangkok provides assistance in the resolution of problems of legal dues and death compensation through intervention with the local authorities. Most members of the Indian community are reportedly working with reputed Thai-Indian companies, or working on their own. No disputes pertaining to arbitrary termination of contract, non-payment or delay in payment, etc. have been reported to the Embassy in the recent past. Grievances and disputes arising out of employment of Indian nationals are settled through the courts and other concerned organisations of the Thai Government.

20.81. The following are some of the demands and expectations of the Diaspora in Thailand:

a) The educational institutes in India should offer cost-effective facilities to the students from the region. These should have a realistic fee-structure for NRI students.

b) Indian educational institutes do not recognize many internationally recognized certificates, which creates difficulties for students.

c) Indian cultural centre should be set up in Thailand.

d) There should be increased interaction between the Thai Board of Investment (BOI) and Indian Chambers of Commerce like the FICCI to promote understanding of markets. Turn-key projects, heavy equipment and IT have been identified as promising sectors for Indian exports.

VIETNAM

20.82. It is reported that prior to the reunification of Vietnam in 1975, there existed a wealthy Indian Community of over 25,000 in South Vietnam with a large concentration in Ho Chi Minh City, most of the members hailing from Tamil Nadu or Bombay. They were engaged in petty trade – textiles, jewellery, general merchandize retailing and service professions. A number of Chettiars concentrated in Ho Chi Minh City were prosperous moneylenders, who had also invested in real estate. The Indian families, which are second/third generation migrants have integrated into Vietnamese society and are mainly engaged in petty trade or manual work. They have adapted well to local conditions. Many of them are able to speak the Vietnamese language. Some of them have married Vietnamese ladies. None of the Indians are known to have obtained the Vietnamese citizenship. Most of the Indians, who have arrived in Vietnam in the recent past, are working as professionals. They are well educated. Many of them are engineers and accountants. Most of them are representatives of Indian companies in Vietnam. There are virtually no unskilled workers in the Indian community. The main areas of settlement are Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi.

20.83. The Indian pharmaceutical companies have good presence in this country. The largest Indian investment is by the Nagarjuna Group in a sugar factory near Ho Chi Minh City. The KCP group has also set up a sugar plant in Southern Vietnam. Some other companies where they work are Godrej, Arihant Oil Mills, etc. Some work in multinational companies like Coca Cola, Pepsi, Lever Brother, Proctor and Gamble, etc. There are several Indian cuisine restaurants. The Indian businesses have set up an Indian Business Chamber (INCHAM). India has made investments in engineering, agricultural processing and plastic industries. There is also Vietnamese-India Friendship Association (VIFA), which also participates in India's Republic Day celebrations.

20.84. Due to the close political ties between India and Vietnam nurtured since the era of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and President Ho Chi Minh, there is a great warmth among the Vietnamese for

India. The Indians are, therefore, easily acceptable and are identified as traditional partners by the Vietnamese. Moreover, progress made by India in the recent few years in the fields of computer software and information technology and achievements like Green Revolution and White Revolution have also helped boost India's image in this country. The Indian education system and movies too are quite appreciated in this country.

20.85. The Indian community in Vietnam enjoys reasonably good economic status. The Indian Business Chamber (INCHAM) publishes a monthly newsletter on the activities of the Indian community in Vietnam and the major events in India including economic initiatives during the month. INCHAM has also been contributing towards building 10 low cost houses every year for the under-privileged people. A school situated in a province adjoining Hanoi has been adopted by the Indian community and the Indian Embassy. The school is called Indo-Vietnam Friendship School. An orphanage has been set up on the outskirts of Hanoi by Cimmco, a Birla company. M/s Ishan International Private Ltd. has been providing scholarships to 20 primary school students every year in a southern province of Vietnam. Its chairman, Mr. Shantanu Srivastava, who has been doing business in Vietnam for the last about eighteen years, has been accorded honorary Vietnamese citizenship in recognition of his contributions to Vietnam.

20.86. The Indian community is quite active culturally. Major Indian festivals like Diwali and Holi are celebrated in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. There are four Hindu Temples and a mosque, all located in Ho Chi Minh City. There also used to be a Gurudwara in Hanoi.

20.87. Under Cultural Exchange Programme, the ICCR sends cultural troupes to Vietnam every year.

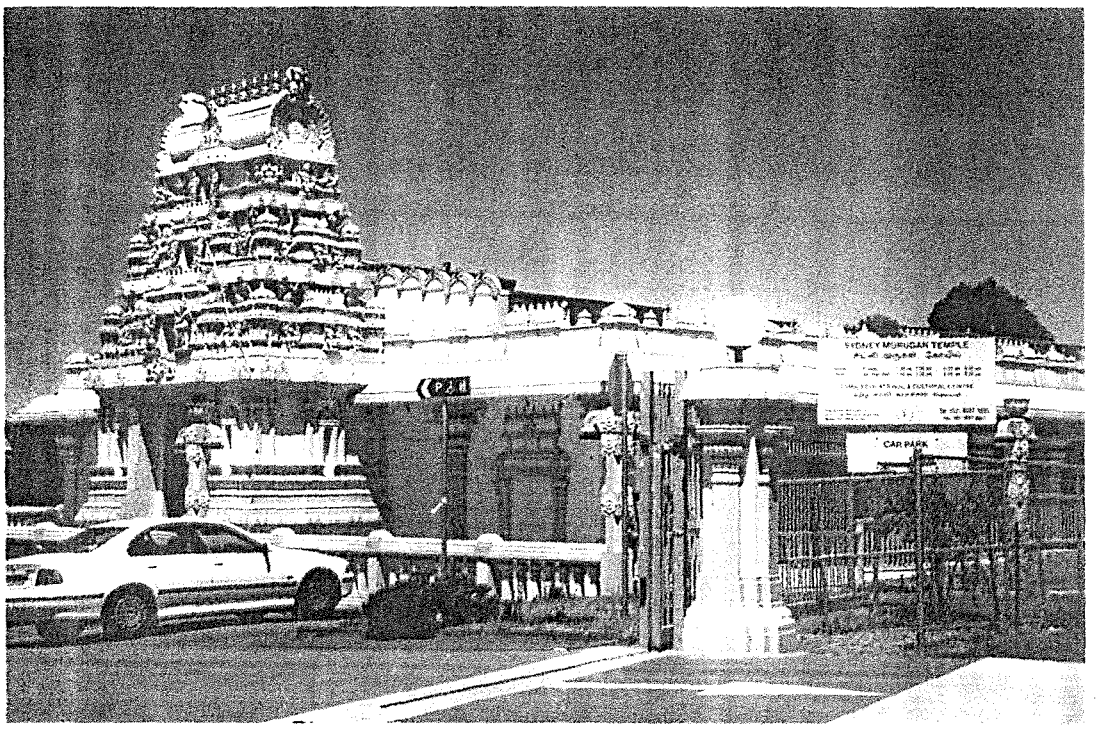
Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora

20.88. The Indian community generally expect the Indian authorities assistance in increasing their bilateral trade. They have requested for directing shipping services and air flights between India and Vietnam.

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Chapter 21

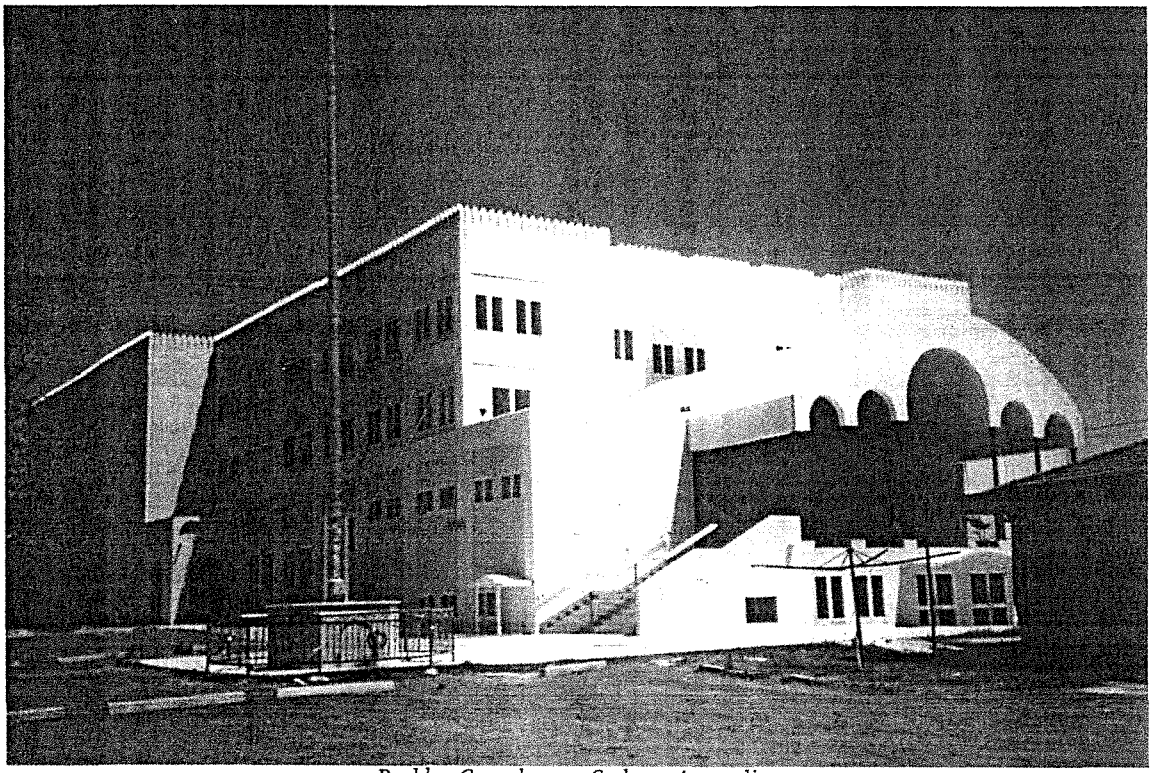
The Asia Pacific Region



Murugan Temple, Sydney, Australia



Auburn Gallipoli Mosque, Sydney, Australia



Parklea Gurudwara, Sydney, Australia

Introduction

In this chapter the Committee will discuss issues relating to the widely dispersed Indian Diaspora in a vast expanse which will be referred to under the rubric of the 'Asia Pacific Region'.

21.2. The ASEAN countries, many of which are on the shores of the Pacific Ocean, have already been covered in the chapter on Southeast Asia. They will not, therefore, figure here.

21.3. This chapter will deal only with the Diaspora in Australia, Hong Kong, Japan, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand and Taiwan – in all of which there are sizeable numbers of NRIs and PIOs. The following table presents a comparative picture of the Indian community in these countries.

Table 21.1: The Indian Diaspora in the countries covered in this Chapter

Country	Population	NRIs	PIOs	Stateless	% of Population
Australia	18,700,000	30,000	160,000***	NIL	1.02
Hong Kong**	6,800.000	22,000	28,500	NIL	0.74
Japan	126,600,000	9,000	1,000	NIL	Negligible
R.O.Korea	44,000,000	2,500	200	NIL	Negligible
New Zealand	3,800,000	5,000	50,000*	NIL	1.45
Taiwan	22,000,000 (approximate)	NA	1,800	NIL	Negligible

***These include about 50,000 PIOs who had arrived in Australia on secondary and tertiary migration from other countries like Fiji (about 40,000); and from Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, the UK, Malaysia, etc. (about 10,000).

** Hong Kong is a Special Administrative Region under Chinese rule. Sovereignty passed from Britain to China on 1 July 1999.

* This figure includes approximately 12,000 persons of Indo-Fijian origin.

21.4. Among the countries of this region, the situation of Australia is unique in the sense that while the waters of the Indian Ocean wash its eastern and southern shores, the northern and western coasts of this vast landmass border on the Pacific Ocean.

21.5. There are, of course, countless other islands in the Pacific. But it is only the Fiji archipelago that hosts, however reluctantly, a significantly large Indian Diaspora which has unfortunately been mired in controversy for several decades. The next chapter describes this community's origin and subsequent evolution in Fiji. It also analyses the complex and difficult situation confronted by the Diaspora in that country today.

AUSTRALIA

21.6. The history of migration from India to Australia dates back to the 19th century. It was in the 1850s when Australia was a British colony that it was decided to import camels and their handlers or "drivers" from North-West India (which then included Baluchistan and parts of North-Western Pakistan). The first instance of Indian camels and their handlers arriving in Australia was in June 1860 when three 'Ghans' (as in 'Afghans') arrived in Melbourne with 124 camels. The British rulers employed another 3000 camel handlers between 1860 and 1930s. These immigrants were usually employed on three-year contract and mostly returned to India after completion of the contract. Those who stayed back worked as labourers. The contribution of these Afghans in establishing the rail-road network has been recognised with the naming of a major Australian train route as 'Ghan Express'.

21.7. In the last four decades of the 19th century, Indians particularly Punjabi Sikhs and Punjabi Muslims went to Australia mainly as agricultural labourers, hawkers and traders. The greatest Indian immigrant concentration was on the North coast of New South Wales. Following the enactment of the Immigration Restriction Act in 1901, the number of Indians declined and remained at around 6,500 to 7,000 until after the end of World War II.

21.8. The single largest inflow of Indian immigrants to Australia was in the 1930s from Jalandhar district of the Punjab. They went to work as labourers in the sugar plantations in Woolgoolga (New South Wales). Around 400 families, mostly Sikhs are presently settled there and engaged in banana cultivation. The next wave of immigrants from India to Australia began when many Anglo-Indians decided to migrate to Australia some years after India's independence in 1947 and their migration was accepted even before the "White Australia Policy" came to an end. As late as the mid-60s, their migration to Australia continued. One of the most prominent members of that community was Lt. Gen. Anderson Brooks. The relaxation of the restrictive immigration policy by the Australian authorities in 1966 led to a marked rise in migration to Australia. According to some estimates, the Indian population there rose from 7500 in 1947 to 14167 in 1961 and to 29212 in 1971. This period saw a change in the nature of the Indian immigrants. Earlier a majority of them were railway and dock workers from the Anglo-Indian community, while from the 1970s onward, they were largely professionals.

21.9. A noteworthy feature of the composition of the Indian community in Australia is that a significant component is made up of Indians who migrated from Fiji to Australia owing to the climate of political uncertainty arising in the wake of the first coup in Fiji in 1987 and thereafter in 2000. It is estimated that between 35000-40000 people migrated to Australia as a result of the exodus from Fiji. There was also a migration of about 10,000 Persons of Indian Origin to Australia from countries, such as Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, the UK and Malaysia.

21.10. The 1990s again saw a sharp rise in immigration when a number of professionals, like computer and software experts, engineers, doctors, accountants, etc. opting to settle in Australia doubled in comparison to the earlier decade. The growing recognition of India as a power in the IT field is likely to attract more IT professionals from India to Australia in future.

21.11. Of 30,000 Indian citizens, about 10,000 are students from India studying in Australian Universities mainly in the IT and Management Courses. The number of students has increased six-fold during the last five years. Many of them, who took degrees from Australia, have gone back to Australia and hold positions in the Universities. The community in general has a high profile in so far as its level of education is concerned.

21.12. Western Australia has the highest proportion of the Indian population followed by Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Northern Territory, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania.

21.13. Since only professionals and qualified persons are allowed as immigrants under the rules, the majority of Indians happen to be professionals. There is a sizeable number of doctors among them especially in the Indo-Fijian component of the community. A number of Indian immigrants are engaged in the restaurant business and Indian restaurants can be seen in all the major cities of Australia. Indian food is widely appreciated by the Australians and the Indian restaurants are doing good business. A small number of Indians is engaged in small and medium scale business, mostly of import of commodities, textile garments, etc. There is a taxi stand called "The Punjab Agricultural University Taxi Stand" in Sydney named after the graduates from the Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana a large number among whom, on migration to Australia did not get employment commensurate with their qualifications and took to taxi-driving.

21.14. There are associations/organisations of Indians in almost all the major cities of Australia. Most of the PIOs celebrate national days of India and Australia as well as actively participate in social and religious functions organised by some of the Indian Associations present there. The Indo-Fijians are steeped in culture and traditions and celebrate Indian festivals with great enthusiasm and gusto. Local party leaders/officials and often Australian MPs, Senators and Ministers attend important functions organised by major Indian associations. The members of the Indian community are doing very good work to project India by associating themselves with a number of main stream Australians in their cultural activities. The community has adapted to the local environment very well and has considerable interaction with the other communities. There are many Indo-Australian marriages.

21.15. There are several ethnic newspapers, prominent among them being, The Indian Down Under, The Indian Post, India Voice, The Indian Link, Bharat Times, Bharatiya Samachar, The Indian Observer etc. Similarly there are several Radio and TV channels, which broadcast popular programmes including Bollywood music for the Indian community. For example, SBS Radio has Hindi and Punjabi programmes, while Radio 2000 runs Punjabi programmes. Radio Preetlari, Radio Satrang and Radio Darpan also have popular programmes for the community. Some channels have Hindi programmes particularly for the Indo-Fijian community. There is SBS TV channel in New South Wales catering to the Indian community.

Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora

21.16. The main demands and expectations of the Indian community as expressed by its representatives during the Committee's visit to Australia (July, 2001), are as follows:-

(a) removal of difficulties faced by them at Immigration and Customs counters of the Indian airports and with the banks for encashment of travellers' cheques, etc.;

(b) abolition of the current dual tariff structure, under which PIOs are asked to pay more for hotel accommodation, air fare, visits to monuments and registration fees for conferences, etc. and are required to make payments in US dollars only;

(c) removal of difficulties in remitting funds to charities in India;

(d) assistance in the obtaining of visa for the spouse of the PIOs or a tourist visa for the immediate family members.

21.17. Since Australia has a large number of Indo-Fijians, the Committee was able to meet a number of them during its tour to Australia. Demands made by their representatives include:

(a) Provision of scholarships to more Indo-Fijians in the technical training institutions so that they are able to assist their brothers and sisters in Fiji and also possibly by migrating to other countries.

(b) Assistance in establishing a university in Fiji, which would go a long way to provide good quality education to Indo-Fijians.

(c) Establishment of a Cultural Centre for Asia-Pacific region to meet the cultural needs of the Indian Diaspora.

(d) Supply of religious books, like Ramayana and some musical instruments to some societies in Fiji, which would go a long way to create further good will towards India.

(e) Provision of resources by the Government of India to the local Indian associations/societies to spread an image of modern India by means of seminars, supply of kits to school teachers, etc.

(f) Facilities for the teaching of Hindi.

HONG KONG

21.18. India's links with Hong Kong are over 150 years old. Four Indian traders and 2700 defence personnel were with the British when they raised the Union Jack over Hong Kong in 1841. Members of the Indian community have participated actively in creating some of Hong Kong's most well-known institutions and commercial entities. Among these are: Hong Kong University, Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, Ruttonjee Hospital, the Star Ferry etc.

21.19. There was some confusion about the status of Indians in the pre-1997 days. This has, however, been sorted out as most Indians have stayed on in Hong Kong. The controversy about acquisition of British Nationals (Overseas) (BNO) passports and fears about statelessness have also been put to rest.

21.20. The Indian community in Hong Kong is basically a trading community with cultural and social links with India. They have professionally been trade-intermediaries between China and the Middle East/ African countries. The main areas of trading include textiles, chemicals and dyes, pharmaceuticals and diamonds. Some Indians from Hong Kong have also set up manufacturing units in Shenzhen in China and they deal with watches, textiles etc. Sindhis and Gujaratis, with smaller numbers of Rajasthanis, Punjabis and Tamils dominate the community. Tall, burly and handsome Sikhs working as doorkeepers in several commercial establishments are a common sight in Hong Kong. Increasingly, a large number of professionals are going to Hong Kong, giving rise to a new generation of Hong Kong Indians. The majority of Indians are based on the Kowloon Peninsula and have their business also in the same area. Among the professionals, a large number are located on the Hong Kong Island.

21.21. The strength of the Indian community in Hong Kong has been its control over substantial trading volumes. A large number of Indians have been in Hong Kong for a very long time and at one time their share in Hong Kong's exports was quite disproportionate to their number – being to the tune of almost 10%. Recently, though, the role of Indians in Hong Kong's economy has gone down with an influx of Chinese capital from the mainland and Taiwan. After the handover of Hong Kong to China, highly-educated Indians in the banking/finance sectors as well as in Information Technology have been going to Hong Kong in ever increasing numbers often in replacement of British expatriates. They constitute an important component of the Indian community. There is an MOU on IT cooperation between Hong Kong's Special Administrative Region and the Government of India signed in February, 2000.

21.22. The links of the Indian community in Hong Kong with India are basically cultural and not adequately commercial. As a result, the investment capabilities of Hong Kong Indians have not been fully exploited by India, as they have not been able (or willing, because of past experiences) to cash in on the business and investment opportunities available after the liberalization of the Indian economy. Another problem is that the Indian community in Hong Kong is mainly focused on trading, with very little inclination to go in for manufacturing.

21.23. The social profile of Indians covers the entire spectrum ranging from the highly active leaders of the Indian community who interact with the top levels of Hong Kong government and society, to the lowest where the Indians are involved in menial jobs. Between these two extremes, the Indians are an active part of the Hong Kong society.

21.24. Of the Indian community in Hong Kong, the richest are the businessmen and traders who have been in Hong Kong for a long time. At the top level, Indians own hotels, restaurants and other businesses, deal in jewellery and precious stones like diamonds and carry on trading activities within Asia as also with Europe, Africa, the Middle-East, South America and the United States. Below them are the professionals and middle level businessmen. These people are quite well-to-do. The next level comprises people involved in various occupations (semi-skilled and unskilled).

21.25. The Indians have contributed greatly to the social, financial and cultural development of Hong Kong. In recognition of this, Dr. Hari N. Harilela was bestowed the Golden Bauhinia at the handover day anniversary on July 1, 2000. Down to the present day, the Indians continue to make notable contributions to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in the Government and consultative bodies. For example, Mr. Haider Barma, former Transport Secretary, is currently Chairman of the Civil Services Commission. Mr. Hari Harilela is one of the few non-ethnic Chinese to be appointed Hong Kong Adviser to China. He is also Member of the Court of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. Mr. Gary Ahuja is an elected Member of one of Hong Kong's district boards. The Indian Chamber of Commerce, which has been functioning since 1952 is one of the four organisations in Hong Kong authorized to issue Certificates of Origin for exports of locally manufactured goods. The contributions of Indians are widely recognized at all levels by the Hong Kong Government, which calls them the model citizens. Some Indians have been nominated as Justices of Peace, mainly a social honour. The Indian community in Hong Kong has adapted itself quite well. Of the long time residents, a large number are fluent in culture, customs and language of the locals and this has helped provide them get better business opportunities as well as high degree of acceptability.

21.26. The wide variety of Indian culture is quite evident in Hong Kong, especially with a large number of regional and cultural associations. The premier among these are the Indian Association, the India Club and the Council of Hong Kong Indian Associations. Besides, there are other associations like the Gujarat Samaj, Sindhi Sabha, Rajasthani Samaj, Nav Bharat Club, Tamil Cultural Association, Jain Centre, Raja Yoga Centre, Sathya Sai Baba, Indian Muslim Association etc. L.S. Kadoori School run by the Hong Kong Government caters to the students from the Indian subcontinent and Urdu and Punjabi languages are taught there. On a religious level, there are two Hindu temples, one Gurudwara (Khalsa Diwan) and four mosques. The various associations hold religious functions throughout the year and also celebrate the secular national days like Independence Day and Republic Day. Some of the associations also organize cultural shows inviting artists from India.

21.27. Among the prominent magazines published by the Indian community are 'B.R. International', a socio-cultural monthly publication started about 37 years ago and 'The Indian', another monthly magazine being published for over 31 years. The latter has a section 'The Indians Abroad' which contains information about the social and cultural happenings among the Indian community around the globe.

Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora

21.28. Expectations of the Indian community include:

(a) help from the Government of India in interceding with the Hong Kong authorities for restoration of the three-month visa-free period (reduced to 14 days, since January 1999);

(b) more transparent investment opportunities;

(c) grant of dual citizenship;

(d) adequate number of flights from India to Hong Kong. It has been suggested that there should be daily nonstop flights between Mumbai and Hong Kong and between Delhi and Hong Kong;

(e) a formal institutionalised arrangement in the form of a Cultural Exchange Programme, which would go a long way in further strengthening of cultural ties between India and Hong Kong

(f) an early resolution by the concerned Indian banks of cases, where refunds of fixed deposits could not be obtained on their maturity by some NRIs/PIOs.

JAPAN

21.29. A few families of Indian businessmen, mainly Sindhis and Parsis migrated to Japan and settled in Yokohama areas in around 1872-73 to carry on their textile business. At around the same time, about 16 families, mostly Sindhis, also landed in Okinawa. The number of Indians gradually grew to 1,000 by the beginning of the First World War. During the War, about 60% of them left for India but returned soon after the War was over. Most of the Indians at present are concentrated in Tokyo-Yokohama and in Osaka Kobe regions, which now includes Rajasthanis and Gujaratis. Others are spread out in Nagoya, Okinawa, Sapporo, Sendai and Niigata.

21.30. Indian community in Japan is financially stable and mostly engaged in the export of electronic goods, textiles, auto parts and jewellery, and imports of handicrafts, garments, precious stones and marine products from India. The non-trading community consists of students, engineers, scholars going under the exchange programme and Yoga practitioners besides officials of the Government of India and Public Sector Undertakings. Over the years, the number of Indian engineers (particularly computer software engineers) in Japan has substantially increased from

120 in 1993 to over 800 in 2000. There are about 60 academics and translators working in various universities. About 870 Indian cooks work in Indian restaurants, which are extremely popular. Over 120 of such restaurants are in Tokyo areas alone. Most of these restaurants are owned and managed by the Japanese. There is a small Sindhi community in Okinawa providing services particularly tailoring to the American base.

21.31. Indians in Tokyo areas have formed an Association of their own called the Indian Community Activities Tokyo (ICAT), which organises cultural functions. The three main functions organised by it are Holi Musical Evening, Deepawali Get Together and Sakura Ladies Charity Bazaar. The Deepawali function is attended by over 2500 persons of Indian origin, settled in and around Tokyo. The three active associations of the Indian community in Osaka-Kobe areas in Western Japan are the Indian Social Society, the Indian Club and the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Ramakrishna Mission has a Branch there. There is a Sathya Sai Centre in Tokyo. There is also a Gurudwara in the premises of Namaskar Indian Restaurant in Tokyo where the Sikh devotees meet twice a month. Bengali and Marathi community have also set up their own cultural bodies. The Indian community has a reservoir of in-house talent for classical, folk and film music and dance, which finds exhibition at community functions and get-togethers. Shri APS Mani, Hon. Convenor, Indian Community Activities in Tokyo (ICAT) was commended by the Government of Japan for his distinguished services. Similarly, the Indian community's selfless and voluntary services at the time of the Kobe earthquake in 1994 were also widely appreciated.

21.32. Prominent commercial organisations in Japan include Indian Merchants Association of Yokohama, Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Japan-India Business Cooperation Committee and Standing Committee of the Japan-India Business Cooperation. A number of Indian Public Sector Undertakings have their offices in Tokyo. They include Air India, New India Assurance Co., Handicrafts and Handlooms Export Corporation, Bank of India, State Bank of India, Minerals and Metals Trading Corporation, Marine Products Export and Development Agency, Shipping Corporation of India, India Trade Promotion Organisation and Government of India Tourist Office.

21.33. Indians have adapted themselves fairly well and inter-community marriages are on the increase. Japanese rules and regulations for acquisition of citizenship are very tight but these are in no way discriminatory against Indians.

21.34. The emergence of India as a power in the Information Technology sector capable of supplying quality human resource in this field has resulted in a change in the profile of the Indian community in Japan. The increase in demand of the IT professionals from India and consequent relaxation in the immigration policies of Japan for these professionals will see a greater presence and contribution of the Indian community in Japan in the years to come.

Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora

21.35. The education in the Japanese educational institutes being very expensive, the Indian community tries to avail of the education facilities in Indian schools and colleges. Another problem it faces is

the restrictive visa regime of Japan. The Japanese authorities give only a 3-month single entry visa as against multiple-entry visa for a longer duration given by the Indian authorities in genuine cases.

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

21.36. The Koreans claim linkages with India going back to 2,000 years when a Princess from Ayodhya is believed to have arrived in Korea and married to a Korean King in the Southern Kimhae city. Many prominent Koreans including President Kim Dae Jung and former Prime Minister Kim Jong-Pil claim to be descendants of the Indian Princess.

21.37. The Indian business community, mostly Sindhis went to Seoul about 20 years ago and have been staying there with their families. Most of the Indians are concentrated in Seoul. Their business relations with India are minimal. They have, however, strong family and cultural ties with India. There is an Indian Merchants' Association, which has a membership of around 50, mostly Sindhis, and which holds gatherings on occasions like Holi and Diwali. Most of the members are engaged in textile trade and are generally affluent. The exports are largely destined to Dubai and other parts of the Middle East. Some members also operate in the neighbouring ASEAN region. There are also some Indian professionals in Korean companies and with MNCs. Besides the Indian Merchants' Association, there is a Satya Sai Baba Centre.

21.38. Among the organisations which organize cultural events are, Tagore Society of Korea, Korea-India Society, Korea-India Club, Indo-Korean Association, Indian Merchants' Association and Indian Women's Association.

21.39. The Indian Embassy organizes a Hindi speech contest every year to promote Hindi and Indian culture/history/traditions among the students of Hankuk University of Foreign Studies and Pusan University of Foreign Studies. These two universities have Hindi departments. Indian Council of Cultural Relations has been deputing a Hindi Professor to teach Hindi at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies. Kendriya Hindi Sansthan has been granting scholarships every year to the students from the Republic of Korea under the scheme of 'Propagation of Hindi abroad'. ICCR has also been granting scholarships every year to Korean students under the Cultural Exchange Programme.

21.40. While the community sends its children to the International schools, college education is not available locally.

NEW ZEALAND

21.41. The first Indian, whose arrival in 1853 finds a place in New Zealand's official records, was Mr. Edward Peter of Goa, who worked in the Otago gold mines. Other early arrivals were mainly seamen who settled ashore and set up various small businesses. The records of New Zealand Government indicate that six Indian were listed in the 1881 census. During the early years until World War I, the number of Indian migrants was very small. After World War I, a more educated

group of migrants was attracted to New Zealand. The changes made in New Zealand's Immigration Act in 1958 made it possible for more migrants to go there from India.

21.42. A large number of Indo-Fijians also migrated there consequent on the climate of political uncertainty in Fiji in the wake of the coup in 1987 and, thereafter, in 2000. About 10,000 Indians are estimated to have thus migrated to New Zealand on exodus from Fiji. The main areas of settlement of the Indian community at present are Auckland, Hamilton and Wellington.

21.43. The Indian migrants to New Zealand are mostly engaged in domestic retail trade. The community has also a fair number of professionals, particularly in medical, engineering and Information Technology. Some members of the community are running motels. The traders run grocery shops and restaurants. Some Indians originally from Punjab are also engaged in agriculture and dairying.

21.44. The members of Indian community continue to have strong links with India through family ties and frequent visits to their "motherland", though they do not necessarily undertake investments or business activities with India. The degree of their integration with the local communities is minimal. The PIOs have not yet participated in the political life of the country in any significant way. We may mention among the prominent Indians, the names of Mr. Judge Anand Satyanand, one of New Zealand's two Parliamentary Ombudsmen appointed in February, 2001 for a second five year term, Dr. Rajen Prasad, who recently retired as Race Relations Conciliator and is currently a Professor in Auckland University and Mrs. Sukhi Turner, Mayor of Dunedin, Mr. Ramesh Patel, currently CEO of New Zealand Hockey Federation and Mr. Dipak Patel have played in the New Zealand's national teams for hockey and cricket respectively. A majority of the migrants and their children are well educated and are professionals – in the IT or medical sectors.

21.45. The community has made efforts to maintain its cultural links with India. There are several Indian Associations including New Zealand's Sikh society, Muslim Associations, Brahm Kumari Raj Yoga Centre, Satya Sai Organisation and two Ramayan Mandalies. . Most of these are in Auckland. There are four temples, two mosques and three gurudwaras. Prominent ethnic Indian publications include Bharat Darshan, Newsletter and Indian News Link. Access Radio broadcasts programmes which cater to the Indian community.

Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora

21.46. The main demands and expectations of the Indian community are as follows:

(a) removal of difficulties faced by them at the Immigration and Customs counters of the Indian airports and with the banks for encashment of travellers' cheques, etc.;

(b) abolition of the current dual tariff structure, under which PIOs are asked to pay more for hotel accommodation, air fare, visits to monuments and registration fees for conferences, etc. and are required to make payments in US dollars only;

(c) removal of difficulties in remitting funds to charities in India;

(d) assistance in providing religious books, like Ramayana and musical instruments to cultural societies;

(e) scholarships in the Technical Training Institutes in India; and

(f) facilities for the teaching of Hindi.

TAIWAN

21.47. Despite their relatively small number, the Indian community is perhaps the 8th largest expatriate community in Taiwan – after Thailand, Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, USA, Japan and Malaysia in that order. The community can be categorised as follows on the basis of the profession of its members:-

(i) Businessmen of Sindhi origin – At their peak in 1982-83, there were about 250 families comprising of about 1,200 individuals. It is estimated that there are about 80 such families now. They have been here for 20-25 years. The average net worth of each family would be about US $ 1 million; there would be about 4-5 families with net worth exceeding US $ 5 million. Almost all of them are engaged in export/import trade, though not with India. With Taiwan's economy showing signs of a slow-down and mainland China offering increasingly attractive prospects, their population has been declining with people moving to China. About 25 families are understood to have thus moved out during the past one year.

(ii) Diamond merchants of Gujarati origin – It is estimated that there are about 50 families of this category of the Indian community, who have come in the last 4-5 years. They are believed to be well off. Their numbers are increasing as small diamonds have in the recent years become an increasingly important component of Indian exports to Taiwan.

(iii) Scientists – There are believed to be about 150 families. They have been recruited on an individual basis on generally two-year extendable contracts and work at scientific research institutions/universities, etc. They have been going to Taiwan for the past 4-5 years. Though they maintain a low profile, they are highly regarded.

(iv) Software engineers and professionals – There are believed to be about 80-100 software professionals, mostly single (with their families in India). Their number is expected to increase further. TCS and WIPRO have small offices in Taiwan. There are 10-15 other professionals working with MNCs, banks, etc. There may be another 200 members or so in a variety of professions – self-owned business, restaurants, real estate agencies, travel agencies, students, etc.

21.48. The Indian community keeps a very low profile and has very little organised or meaningful interaction with other communities or even within its own various components. The community is law-abiding. India-Taipei Association has an office in Taipei which is a very small outfit and maintains a very low profile.

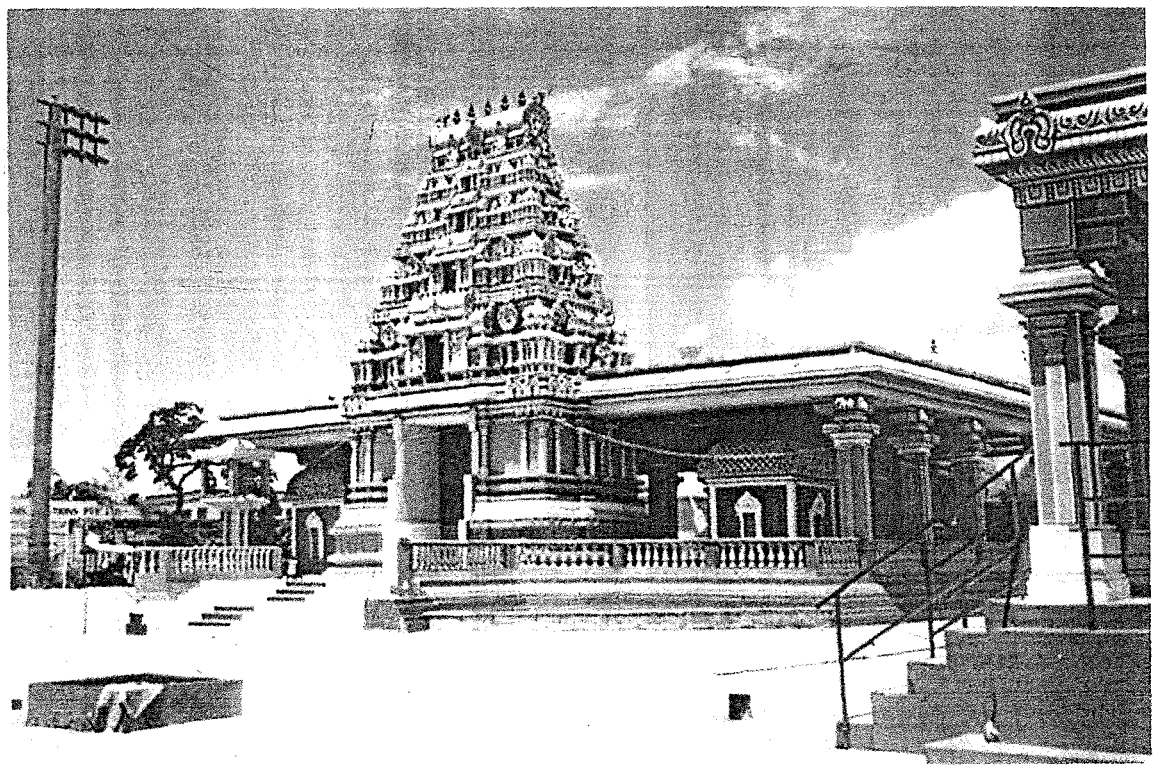
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Chapter 22

The Fiji Archipelago



Mr.Mahendra Pal Chaudhary, former Prime Minister of Fiji



Sri Siva Subramaniya Swami Temple, Nadi, Fiji

Introduction

The Fiji archipelago lies scattered over 250,000 square miles in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. In a recently published book, Shubha Singh (a fourth generation descendant of a family of indentured labourers who had gradually transferred back to India) has written a graphic account of this country. According to her, it is believed that the people of Tonga, one of Fiji's nearest neighbours, used to know these islands by the name of the largest one in the group – Viti Levu. But the Tongan pronunciation of 'Viti' apparently sounded like 'Feejee' and that is the name that has stuck to it. This archipelago, which consists of about 300 islands, ranges from low-lying coral islets with nothing but a few coconut trees on them, to lush green islands encircled by shimmering sands that yield place to thickly forested volcanic mountains. As early as the 17th century, sea-faring European adventurers had begun to explore these mysterious regions in search of new lands to exploit. Captain James Cook, the 'discoverer' of the Hawaiian Islands, which later became his grave, had recorded sighting Fiji as early as 1774. It was here that the rebellious crew of the ill-fated mutiny on the *Bounty* was said to have cast off Captain Bligh. Another castaway from another ship - Oliver Slater - subsequently managed to escape from these islands after discovering in them many precious sandalwood groves – a discovery that served as a magnet for droves of subsequent European adventurers who then traded their trinkets for its sandalwood and thus made enormous profits.

22.2. This seemingly peaceful and remote region, so reminiscent of a seaside Shangrila, has been for the Indian Diaspora that was unsuspectingly introduced on it in the middle of the 19th century, the unlikely scene of immense suffering. After a brief account of Fiji and its native inhabitants, this chapter relates the story of the induction of Indians into Fiji as indentured labour. It then chronicles the tortured years that followed their arrival in the archipelago, their heroic efforts to restore a semblance of normality in their lives after completing their contractual period, and the subsequent arrival there for permanent settlement of 'free Indians'. A subsequent section describes the sad tale of how, with the gradual improvement of their socio-economic conditions in their country of permanent settlement, the PIOs found themselves increasingly marginalised in a hostile milieu that made them feel unwelcome, notwithstanding their sterling contributions to the

development of the archipelago. The chapter concludes with a reference to the difficult political situation that has currently overtaken the Indian community in Fiji.

Fiji Before the Arrival of the British Settlers

22.3. On the basis of inconclusive archaeological evidence, some people believe that the Fiji archipelago was inhabited by waves of Melanesian people about 3,000 years ago. On the other hand, contemporary school textbooks in Fiji apparently state that the ancestors of present day Fijians came from Africa. Whatever their historic origin, the natives of Fiji are essentially a Melanesian people, possibly with a strong mixture of Polynesians. They are generally very tall, dark in complexion, and have muscular bodies. When the first European traders, whalers and missionaries happened to sight these islands, they found them in a state of anarchy with native tribes and chiefdoms vying for supremacy with clubs and spears. In the course of time, an adventurer named Charles Savage, who had been shipwrecked in Fijian waters, is credited with having introduced them to the destructive power of guns. He soon became a high-ranking warrior in the retinue of the chiefs of Bau, an island off the coast of Viti Levu.

22.4. Many years later, Seru Cacobau, the young Chief or *Ratu* of the Bau tribe, was able to win the support of some of the Europeans who had established themselves on the island of Ovalau. They had 'bought' land to set up coconut plantations to replace the sandalwood forests that had already disappeared. The Fijians could not understand the European concept of land ownership as, according to their own customs and tradition, land belonged to the entire community. Having won the support of some of the Europeans, Cacobau began to consider himself as the leading Chief in the Fiji islands and called himself *Tui Viti* or King of Fiji. – a title that was not universally recognised. When some Fijians plundered the American Consul's house after it had caught fire in 1846, the American government insisted that it was his responsibility to pay reparations – or face the consequences - as he called himself King of Fiji! Harassed in this manner from time to time, both by other Chiefs and by foreign settlers, Cacobau decided to seek the reluctant protection of any European power that was willing to accept his offer of cession. Finally, a Deed of Cession was signed on 10 October 1874 whereby Fiji became a Crown Colony of Great Britain. In requesting the British emissary to convey his love to Her Majesty Queen Victoria, he is reported to have told him that he fully confided in her and in her sons. He added for good measure, that her successors would also become 'kings of Fiji, to exercise a watchful control over the welfare of his children and people who, having survived the barbaric law and age, are now submitting themselves under Her Majesty's rule, to civilisation.' Meanwhile, in 1854, he had been persuaded to embrace Christianity and today, the indigenous people of Fiji are all Christians.

The Advent of Indentured and of 'Free' Indians to Fiji

22.5. The British planters who had arrived in Fiji by the early 1860s soon discovered that cotton cultivation was going to be very profitable for them. This was because of civil war in the United States, which had disrupted cotton exports from that country. They tried initially to employ the

natives of the Fiji islands to work in their cotton plantations. But that did not turn out to be feasible as the Fijians were unwilling to move away from their homes to provide the labour needed to work in far-flung plantations. Accordingly, the planters then imported workers to assist them from the other Pacific Islands such as New Hebrides, the Solomon Islands, Gilbert, Kingsmill and Tokelau. They hoped that the labour inducted from there would not feel tempted to abscond frequently from their work stations as they would have no families near by to distract them. But apparently, that experiment also failed and they were constrained to dispense with the labour that they had imported from those islands.

22.6. With the gradual revival of American cotton production, and with the collapse of the French market after the Franco-Prussian war, many of the planters wanted to switch to sugarcane cultivation. But owing to the shortage of labour, they were often constrained to live from hand to mouth. After the British annexation of Fiji in 1874, however, the colonial government decided to introduce a system of importing indentured labour from India. This was at the instance of Sir Arthur Gordon, the first British Governor, whose earlier career had taken him to places like Mauritius and Trinidad where he had been impressed by the benefits derived by British planters from the system of inducting Indian indentured labour.

22.7. Governor Gordon has been characterised by many people as part idealist and part pragmatist. He is generally esteemed in Fiji - by its indigenous population - for his deliberate decision to preserve the Fijian social organisation and the prevailing system of land ownership, as well as the system of local administration by the Fijians themselves under their traditional Chiefs. This entailed also the prohibition of further land alienation. One of his first decisions was the vesting of most of the remaining land, not already possessed by the Crown, with the Fijian communities. He also enjoined restrictions on the engagement of Fijian labour by the planters as he felt that, it would be tantamount to interfering in their traditional life style. All these measures resulted in his getting the voluntary support of the natives who outnumbered the British settlers at that time by 100 to 1!

22.8. The first of the sailing ships taking Indian workers to Fiji, the *Leonides,* docked in Fiji on 15 May 1879 with 463 persons. It had been stricken *en route* with cholera and dysentery because of the miserable and unsanitary conditions on board. The last of 87 ships, the *Sutlej-V,* arrived there on 11 November 1916. When the indenture system was finally terminated after considerable opposition in India because of the inhuman treatment meted out to the indentured Indians, a total of almost 61,000 persons are reported to have been transported to Fiji. They had been compelled to work under deplorable conditions on the sugar plantations that had begun to dominate the local economy after the demise of cotton as the preferred cash crop. About 75% of these Indians had been recruited from what are now UP and Bihar, and the remaining 25% from Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. As in the case of the indentured labour in South Africa and elsewhere, they had been taken there to work for assigned employers on a five-year contractual agreement. This was referred to as a *girmit* in the popular parlance of the illiterate Indian labour,

who soon came to be referred to as *girmitiyas*. After the contractual period, they were free to move to another employer, or work for themselves. At the end of ten years in the islands, they were entitled to a free passage back to India if they so desired. But most of them neither returned to India nor remained in the plantations to which they had been assigned initially. Instead, they preferred to settle down wherever they could find land to cultivate on their own with the new skills that they had acquired.

22.9. The British colonists soon discovered that it was going to be difficult to maximise profits by extending their plantations to new areas due to the dearth of locally available capital to finance them. Accordingly, the Australian Colonial Sugar Refining Company ('CSRC') was encouraged by the colonial government to enter the picture from 1880. In spite of the principle of native land ownership laid down by Gordon, the CSRC was initially allowed to purchase a thousand acres of prime land, with the option to acquire another thousand. By the 1920s it had come to own almost all the plantations and sugar mills in the Fiji islands. Owing to the problems encountered in managing such extensive estates in a centralised manner, the company soon initiated a scheme of small farmer cultivation. Its vast holdings were divided into 10-12 acre blocks and offered under contract to Indian labourers as and when they had completed their compulsory period of indenture. These lessees had to plant the land with cane under the supervision of company officials and sell it to the company at an agreed price. This meant that they had to adopt the latest cultivation and harvesting methods that had been introduced into Fiji by the CSRC. As the scheme developed and prospered, the company's supervision was relaxed and the organisation of their farms was left more and more to the lessees themselves.

22.10. In the initial period of indenture, the Indian expatriates in Fiji had been fully occupied in trying to find their feet in an alien land, and under hostile and unsympathetic conditions. The proportion of women to men was totally skewed during that period. A settled family life was impossible in the barracks provided to them by the planters. The different castes and even the more distinctive religious differences between Hindus and Muslims had become dimmed by having to live together, and thus compelled to forget the divisions that had separated them in India. Christian missionaries from Britain and elsewhere, who had succeeded in converting most of the Fijians to one or other of the various Christian sects, had little effect on the Indian settlers who remained loyal to what they recalled of their ancient religions and traditional customs.

22.11. Gradually, 'free immigrants' (corresponding to the 'passenger Indians' of South Africa) began to arrive from India to seek their fortunes. Along with returning former indentured labourers, they represented a wide spectrum of various professions. Some of them were farmers from the Punjab; others were Gujarati craftsmen and traders. There were also religious teachers among them, even a few lawyers. The local government or private employers brought in clerks, policemen, artisans, gardeners, doctors and school teachers. These waves of voluntary immigrants were endowed with better education and had greater material resources at their command, with which to start a new life on the islands. Already by 1920 there were two or three thousand of them. With

their arrival in Fiji, there was a revival among the earlier Indian settlers, of the complex social structure existing in India. And very soon, there was also an awakening of political awareness and a desire to remedy their skewed position in the country's civic and political life. A former indentured labourer and self-educated *sanatani* priest, Totaram Sanadaya of Rewa and later, Manilal Mohanlal Doctor who had come from Mauritius, provided leadership to the Indian community. But by this time the problems of the Indian settlers had mounted considerably.

The Souring of Inter-racial Relations

22.12. The British planters resented the Indian immigrants – both the former indentured labourers as well as the free Indians who had arrived subsequently. This was partly due to the fact that those who had obtained land leases from the CSRC had been selling their cane to it at a much lower price than what the white planters were willing to offer. The white colonists looked down on the frugal life style of the Indians, whom they branded as dirty and unhygienic. They tried to keep the native Fijians and the Indo-Fijians apart as much as possible, not even permitting the establishment of racially mixed schools. They resented the political activism of the PIOs and their urge to protect their *izzat* and their *swabhiman*. They considered their fight for civic and political equality as presumptuous. Their overall attitude of prejudice and hostility towards the Indo-Fijians was summed up by James Michener in his *Return to Paradise* where he etched the following pen picture about them: 'It is almost impossible to like the Indians of Fiji. They are suspicious, vengeful, whining, unassimilated, provocative aliens in a land where they have lived for seventy years.'

22.13. As for the native Fijians, they lived separately in their own communities under Gordon's 'benevolent' dispensation. Like the whites, they too had begun to regard the Indians as unwelcome aliens with unfamiliar religions and strange cultural mores. The PIOs had not normally been permitted to enter their native townships. On the occasional instances when some Indians happened to go there, they had often received an unfriendly and hostile reception. It was rare for an Indian to marry an indigenous Fijian as both communities frowned upon miscegenation.

22.14. On the other hand, by the 1940s and 50s, the diligent and worldly wise Indians had acquired, with their interest in education, a new impetus for economic progress. Many of their children were being sent abroad to study in foreign colleges and universities. There was also a gradual urbanisation of the Indian settlers as they migrated to the new towns that were coming into existence. Many of them had moved from the plantations to occupy themselves in trade and commerce, which became almost an Indian monopoly. In the main streets of the growing towns, Gujarati names were prominently displayed on the shops. Some of the Indians drove the latest models of British and Japanese cars, even as the Fijians languished in subsistence agriculture, despite owning 83% of the land area of Fiji. The all-too obvious prosperity and higher standards of living of the Indians led to growing resentment by the indigenous people, who felt outclassed in what they regarded as their own country.

22.15. On more than one occasion, the Great Council of Chiefs had voiced the alarm of the Fijians at the growing number of the PIOs. Pio Manoa, a native Fijian, wrote in the 1940s that there were even some rumours that the Indians were going to be loaded into ships like cargo and forcibly repatriated as they would soon be outnumbering the Fijians. They were already dominating the economic life of the country, which was intolerable. The rumours turned out to be mere wishful thinking. But they were certainly indicative of the inter-racial relations that had already become part of the local scene by that time. Pio Manoa described these developments as 'marking the end of innocence and the beginning of stereotype formation in the country'.

22.16. Meanwhile, as the Japanese forces came within striking distance of Fiji in the Pacific sector during World War II, the Indo-Fijians came under fire for their reluctance to enrol themselves in the armed forces. Out of a total of about 11,000 persons who had enlisted, 1070 were Europeans and only 264 were Indians, the rest being native Fijians. This had earned the Indian community considerable criticism. They were accused of being more interested in making money; and also of disloyalty to their adopted country. It has been suggested later by some of the PIOs that there may have been many reasons why they had held back. The community's leaders had demanded the same scale of pay as the Europeans and, as this was summarily rejected, they did not want to submit to such discriminatory treatment. Another reason advanced by them was that, as Indian leaders in India had initially given a call to boycott the war effort, the Indo-Fijians had decided to do likewise. But reasons of this kind did not seem to cut much ice with the indigenous Fijians.

22.17. If the indenture system had been a facet of economic imperialism, the sustaining factor of colonialism in the Fijian islands was race. At the top of the pyramid were the white settlers in their privileged position. The indigenous Fijians occupied an intermediate position because of the paternalistic policy pursued from the time of Gordon's governorship. The Indian settlers constituted the lowest rung. In fact, a subtle form of apartheid had become part of the local scene from the very beginning of the indenture system and throughout the colonial period. It is not surprising, therefore, that the colonial legacy of racism was continued after the country's independence. If anything, it was further aggravated when alarm bells rang to announce that the PIO population had overtaken the native Fijians. When independence was granted to the archipelago, the departing British gave a farewell gift to the indigenous population which was very much in the spirit of Sir Arthur Gordon's legacy of perpetuating the special status of the indigenous Fijians in the new political system.

The Contemporary Scene in Fiji

22.18. Indo-Fijians have always worked for the peace and prosperity of Fiji and have made enormous contributions to the economy of Fiji in terms of its agriculture, trade and industry. Indo-Fijians have also contributed to the social, educational and cultural advancement of Fiji. The Legislative Council of colonial days had, however, ensured that the Indian members would not be able to form a government on their own strength. A similar pattern of weighted representation was

repeated in the constitution that was gifted to Fiji when it attained freedom – exactly 96 years to the day after cession, on 10 October 1970.

22.19. The PIOs successfully overcame this legacy by forming a multiracial government under the leadership of Timoci Bavadra, a non-racist Fijian. This was one of the factors which led to the launching of Sitiveni Rabuka's two military coups in May and November of 1987. Those coups heralded a period of violence and mayhem. PIOs, including many leading persons among them, migrated in their thousands to Pacific Rim countries like Australia and New Zealand, Canada and the United States. International sanctions and the country's growing economic difficulties compelled Rabuka to end his military intervention. A revised constitution was adopted in 1990. It sought to introduce a more balanced distribution of legislative seats than before. What followed after that is current history and may be summed up as follows:

The leader of the Labour Party won a landslide victory in the elections in May 1999 and Mahendra Pal Chaudhry became the first Prime Minister of Indian origin. On 19 May 2000, Chaudhry and his colleagues were taken hostage by George Speight, a failed businessman. The military under Commodore Frank Bainimarama finally intervened and hostages were released after 56 days. Giving a ruling on the petition filed by an Indian, the Fiji High Court ordered reinstatement of the Chaudhry Government. It stated that the Interim Government put in place by the military was unconstitutional. The Interim Government went in appeal and Chaudhry could not resume the office of the Prime Minister and the rule of the illegal interim administration continued. The Fiji Court of appeal dismissed the appeal of the interim administration against the ruling of the High Court Judge, Anthony Gates. Mahendra Chaudhry met acting President and advised him to dissolve the Parliament and order fresh elections. The Great Council of Chiefs had meanwhile reappointed Ratu Iloilo as President who formally dismissed Mahendra Chaudhry on March 14, 2000 and appointed Ratu Tevita Momoedonu in his place. On the advice of Momoedonu, Ratu Iloilo dissolved the Parliament. Following Momoedonu's resignation, he appointed Laisenia Qarase as caretaker Prime Minister till the elections. Fresh elections were held leading to hastily patched up majority for Qarase. He refused the Constitutional requirement of including Mahendra Chaudhry and other Opposition MPs in his Cabinet although they had obtained sufficient seats in the Legislature to be so appointed.

22.20. The future of the Indian Diaspora in Fiji appears to be rather bleak. It can only change if there is a change of heart towards it on the part of the indigenous Fijians. That does not, as of now, seem at all likely. Meanwhile, many Indo-Fijians are planning to migrate again from the land in which they or their forbears had settled down. This second migration is not likely to be back to India, the land of their ancestors, but to any developed country that would agree to accept them. It would, in all probability, be to one or other of the Pacific Rim countries, where many other Indo-Fijian PIOs have already settled down and started a new life of 'trans-national Indians'. This was the main ambition that was projected to the Committee when, during our visit to Sydney in July 2001, we met a group of PIOs who had already migrated to Australia after the Rabuka coups.

Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora

22.21. It has not been possible for the Committee to make a detailed assessment of the demands and expectations from India of the Diaspora in Fiji. The political situation currently prevailing in that country, briefly touched upon in the previous section of this chapter, has been so complex and turbulent that the Committee was not able to visit that country. We were only able to interact with some Indo-Fijians who were visiting India, as well as with those who have migrated to countries like Australia and Canada. The demands and expectations articulated by various groups of Fijian expatriate communities are summarized below:-

a) India should explore all possible avenues to bring international pressure to bear on the Fijian government, so that it gives up its racist and discriminatory policy towards the Indian Diaspora in Fiji.

b) Several thousand young Indo-Fijians should be sponsored for migration to India.

c) Facilities should be provided for such persons to pursue vocational studies that would enable them to go back and start a new life in Fiji, without being thwarted by the current system of only the indigenous Fijians owning all the land.

d) The more talented Indo-Fijian youth should be assisted to pursue professional courses that would make them eligible for migration to a developed country. From there, they could sponsor their near and dear ones in Fiji to join them and thus escape from the problems currently encountered in Fiji

e) India should assist the Indian community in Fiji to establish a university in the country. Such an institution would enable Indo-Fijians to get good quality education.

f) A Cultural Centre should be set up in the Asia-Pacific Region to meet the cultural aspirations of the Indian communities in that region.

g) Facilities should be provided to enable Indo-Fijians to learn Hindi.

h) Religious books like the *Ramayana,* as well as some Indian musical instruments should be provided to Indian associations in Fiji.

i) Indian associations and societies in Fiji should be provided with funds to enable them to organise seminars and other functions to project in the country a positive image of modern India.

In subsequent discussions, the Committee has learnt that the demands listed at (b), (c) & (d) have very little support among the Indo-Fijian communities. The PIOs living in Fiji as well as overwhelming majority of the Indo-Fijian communities abroad would like India to make all out efforts to help PIOs in Fiji achieve political, economic and social rights at par with indigenous Fijians.