

INDIA AND ITS OLD DIASPORA: GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND ITS RELEVANCE TOWARDS THE INDIAN GRIMITIYA DIASPORA TO CONNECT HOME

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ABSTRACT

Indian Diaspora is one of the most powerful Diaspora in the world. India is leading with 31 million Diaspora (312, 33,234) across the world except San Marino and Holy See. Indian Diaspora consists two sections and they are labelled as a Person of Indian Origin (PIO) and Non Resident of Indian (NRI). The PIO refers to a foreign citizen (except a national of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, Iran, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Nepal) who at any time held an Indian passport or who or either of their of parents/ grandparents/ great grandparents were born and were a permanent resident in India as defined in Government of India Act, 1935 and other territories that became part of India thereafter provided neither was at any time a citizen of any of the aforesaid countries or who is a spouse of citizen of India or a Person of Indian origin (www.mea.gov.in). Share of the PIO is 58 percent of Indian Diaspora (179, 05,796) and 42 percent of Indian Diaspora is NRI population (133, 27,438).NRI refers to an Indian citizen who is ordinarily residing outside India and holds an Indian passport. Aforesaid percentage of the PIO population shows its depth and relevance. Now Indian Grimitiya Diaspora is connecting to home land through their successors as PIO. Government of India has been careful about Indian old Diaspora from time to time and they have been implementing different policies for the same, especially for the old Diaspora to connect them to their home land. Adal Bihari Vajpeyi, the former prime minister of India is the first Prime Minister to appoint a high level committee under the Chairmanship of the L H Singhavi to study about Indian Diaspora thoroughly. On the basis of the recommendation of the Singhavi committee, the Government launched different policies to make a bridge between one's host land and home land of Indian Diaspora especially old Diaspora as Indian Grimitiya Diaspora. This Paper mainly talks about the Government's different policies towards Old Indian Diaspora (Indenture/ Grimitiya) and how did these policies connect them to their home land. The paper also tries to see whether the government policies have helped the Grimitiya Diaspora to connect with their home land socially and culturally.

Keywords: India Diaspora, Indian Grimitiya Diaspora, Person of Indian Origin, Government policies, New generation of PIOs

Introduction

Movement of people from one place to another is not a new phenomenon. Migration in small and large groups, and the establishment of new homes, have been among the strongest creative processes in the peopling and settling of the world's land mass and making of human history (Brown 2007). Movement of people from India across the world has its own history. Now the Indian Diaspora is the most powerful overseas population in the world. Latest report of the Ministry of External Affairs specifies that the overseas population of India is 31.1 million (Population of Overseas Indians, 2017). Indian Diaspora spreads over the world's 205 countries except San Marino, Holy See and Pakistan. According to the world population Report 2015, India has the largest Diaspora in the world (World Population Report 2015, 2016). There is a vast history behind the spread of Indians across the world. The first large scale movements out of Indian sub-continent occurred in the 19th and early 20th centuries, when India was part of British Empire (kip.gov.in). The indenture labor movement played important role in the spread of Indian Diaspora across the world. Britain was compelled to prohibit slavery in its colonies due to different protests and agitations in 1833. Prohibition of slavery led to the scarcity of plantation laborers in colonies and colonies made complaint to Britain about the scarcity of laborers. The abolition of slavery in the British Empire prompted the migration of Indian Indentured labor (Sekhar, 1999). The recruitment of Labourers under a contract of indenture for a specified number of years developed from the 1830s in response to abolition of the slave trade and of slavery in British Empire (Brown 2007). Colonies were facing the problem of shortage of laborers and it affected their production also. In 1838, in Jamaica, sugarcane rotted in the fields due to the lack of people to harvest it, and the following year only limited planting was done (Northrup 1995). Then British Government started to recruit indenture labor from different countries. But often laborers were not apt to work in plantations. Britishers' made success in the case of Indian Indenture laborers recruitment to their colonies because Indians are effective in plantation works. About 1.5 million people moved from India as Indentured laborers between 1834 and its ending in 1917, with the largest numbers going to Mauritius, British Guiana, Natal and Trinidad (Clarke et al 1990). British took Indenture labor as an experiment and first they experimented in Mauritius. Before moving from India as Indenture laborers, only few labors knew about their journey and destination. Majority were unaware about their destinations and circumstances in the host land. The laborers were recruited mainly to Mauritius, Fiji, Suriname, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago. These Indentured laborers themselves called as "Grimitiya". Grimitiya is a Bhojpiri word which means contract or agreement. The initial contract of the indenture labor was for five years. After the contract, they could extend the contract or return to

their home land. Scholars observed that Indenture labor was another form of slavery. The only relaxation is that after one's contract tenure, he or she could leave. Indian Indenture labor system paved the strong foundation of Indian Diaspora. The descendants of Indenture laborers in the host countries are generally known as Grimitya Diaspora. This paper mainly discusses about the government of India's policies on the Grimitya Diaspora and analyses whether the efforts of the government yielded any results in terms of connecting the Indian diaspora to their homeland.. This paper is trying to understand how the new generation of the Grimitya Diaspora approaches the Government of India's policies on them. This paper is mainly based on secondary data collected from the Government publications, articles and books.

Government of India's Initiation towards its Diaspora

India has around 31.2 million overseas Indian population spread over 205 countries across the world (MEA, Government of India). During the first three decades of independence, Government of India didn't give much attention about its overseas population. The government gave little attention when Reserve Bank of India gave a definition to Non-Resident Indians (NRI) to attract their deposit in the middle of 1970s. NRI refers to a citizen of India, holding an Indian passport, but she or he is residing in overseas countries. NRI has every privilege as citizens of India. Indian former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi invited a few NRIs to come back to help in the development of some core sectors including telecommunications in the 1980s. The economic liberalization policy of Narasimha Rao Government gave an important chance for NRIs and PIOs (person of Indian origin) to become active in home land. Person of Indian Origin (PIO) means a foreign national who has Indian origins or Indian ancestors (MOIA, Government of India). It was only a few steps from Government's side towards its overseas population. Government of India did not appoint any committee or commission to study about its overseas population and their needs and problems till the 1990s from independence. After 1990s Government realized the importance of the overseas population and finally Sri A B Vajpayee, prime minister of India appointed a High Level Committee under the chairmanship of Dr L M Singhavi (Member of Parliament), with the mandate to make an in- depth study of the problems and difficulties; possibilities of interventions and hope and expectation of overseas Indian population in September 2000. It was the first major initiation of Government of India towards its Diaspora. In addition to the chairman, the members of committee were Shri J.R Hiremath, Shri. Balaswar Agarwal, Shri R L Bhatia and Shri J C Sharma, the secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs. The major task before of the committee was to prepare a detailed report on the overseas Indian population. Indian Diaspora is vast and spread over 205 countries across the world. The committee prepared the report within limited time with the support of Non Resident Indians (NRI) and Person of Indian Origins (PIO). The High Level Committee submitted its reports on overseas Indian population to Prime Minister Adal Bihari Vajpayee on 8th January

2002. These reports mention about all spheres of Indian Diaspora and how to create a healthy relation between India and its overseas population in detail.

Based on the High Level Committee's Report, the Government of India decided to establish separate ministry for its overseas population. The Ministry of Non Resident Indian Affairs was established in 2004 May. Till the establishment of a separate ministry, it was the subject of Ministry of External Affairs. In September 2004, the Ministry of Non Resident affairs was renamed as the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA). Shri Vayalar Ravi was the first minister of this ministry. It was a major step towards its Diaspora from the government's side. As a part of reducing ministry and increasing work, the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs merged in to The Ministry of external Affairs on 7th January 2016.

Government initiatives towards Grimitiya Diaspora

Aiming to connect Indian Diaspora to home, the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs launched several programs. These programs were mainly aimed to ensure the participation of the Indian Diaspora towards the home land's growth and development and created a healthy relation with Indian Diaspora. Important programs are the following :

Know India Programme

Know India Programme is the initiative of the Government of India to connect Indian Origin Youth (18-30 years) to their Indian roots and contemporary India through the three week orientation programme (www.mear.govt). An important aspect in this programme is that preferences are given to PIOs from Grimitiya Diaspora. Main intention behind this programme is to create awareness about their roots, its richness and growth. Now approximately 1460 Indian Origin Youths have participated in this programme. To attend the programme, Indian Origin Youth have to apply through the online portal to the mission or post in abroad. Know India Programme includes various activities and sessions. It will give presentations about India's culture, tradition, politics and development. As a part of the programme, delegates have an interaction session with the faculty and students of various esteemed universities and colleges. It will arrange field visits to various industries and will give detailed explanation of the process. The important aspect of the program is that delegates have understood the typical village life of their origin land and programme includes village visits also. The programme will focus on one or two states in India and will give a chance to explore those states. States will change time to time. Visiting of the historical monuments and place is the important part of the programme and it will share immense knowledge about the home land culture. They will have opportunities to observe and enjoy various Indian arts forms. Yoga is something that symbolized India's position in the world; Delegates will get special training to practice yoga. This programme will also give the

opportunity to attend the speech of high dignitaries which may include President, Prime Ministers, and Vice President etc. This programme mainly focuses on Indian Origin Youths; because today's children are tomorrow's citizens. In the economic year of 2017-2018., Ministry of External Affairs planned to conduct six Know India Programs and conducted them successfully. A maximum 40 Indian origin youths will be selected for a session with full hospitality in India. Indian origin youths who are interested apply for this programme. Criteria of selection for this programme is that the applicant should be an Indian origin youth (18-30 year) and should be a graduate. He or she has to know English for communication.

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD): It was an important step by the government of India towards its overseas population to connect to one's home land. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas has been celebrated on 9th January each year to remember the contribution of overseas Indians to the development of their home country since 2003. The day, 9th January indicates the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi (father of nation) from South Africa to India in 1915. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas celebration was the recommendation of the High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora under the chairmanship of L H Singhvi. The main intention behind the celebration is connecting Indian Diaspora to its mother land and accelerating economic investment. Adal Bihari Vajpayee (the prime minister of India) received the high Level Committee report on 8th January and declared 9th January as Pravasi Bharatiya Divas. Since 2003, 9th January has been celebrated as the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas. This programme was sponsored by the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA), Confederation of Indian Industry and the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region of India. The programme is held on 7 -9 January each year. The overseas Indians from different parts of the world attend this programme and discuss various problems faced by overseas Indians across the world. It will present **Pravasi Bharatiya Samman** award to the overseas Indians. This award recognizes the achievements of overseas Indians, their contribution to strengthening India's relation with other countries and promoting honor and prestige of India and fostering the interest of Overseas Indians. Celebration of Pravasi Bharatiya divas faces criticism from different parts of Indian overseas population. It is waste of time and money as the same old promises are being repeated for 11 years (Jabir, 2014). So Government of India made some changes in this programme of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas since 2015. Thirteen years after the first Pravasi Bharat Divas was organized to celebrate the contribution of Indian Diaspora to the development of mother country, its format has been changed and changes have largely been welcomed by the core audience (Duttgupta, 2015). New format is that Pravasi Bharatiya Divas will be celebrated every alternative year and a small programme will be conducted at New Delhi on 9th January every year. Singapore hosted the Regional Pravasi Bharatiya Divas of 2018. Regional Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is the initiative of the Ministry to attend the Indian Diaspora those who were not able attend the programme in India. It had got high recognition among the Indian Diaspora across the world. Majority of Indian Diaspora are not able to attend

the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Celebrations in India for various reasons. So Regional Pravasi Bharatiya Divas celebration is a common platform for the Indian Diaspora to meet each other and it helps to increase the network of Indian Diaspora.

India Development Foundation of overseas Indians: it is a “not for profit trust” established by the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) to provide a single window for Diaspora’s philanthropy. The Indian Development Foundation leads Diaspora philanthropic capital to conduct projects for the development of the social sector. Main intention behind this programme is connecting the Indian Diaspora through the helping Indians by different projects. It gives an opportunity to Indians overseas to be part of the welfare of their home country. Now Indian Development Foundation is very active in two projects of Government of India; that is National mission of clean Ganga and Swachh Bharat Mission. Chairperson of the India Development Foundation is Mrs.Sushma Swaraj, the Union Minister of the External Affairs and it includes eminent Overseas Indians also.

Overseas citizenship of Indian Scheme

This is long time demand of overseas Indians to implement dual citizenship to them. But Indian Constitution does not have the option of Dual citizenship. Even though, Government of India launched a scheme of Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) by amending the citizenship Act 1955 in August 2005 (www.mea.gov.in). In this scheme, the person of origin can apply for Overseas Citizenship of India those were citizen of India on 26th January 1950 or thereafter or were eligible to become citizen of India on 26th January 1950, except who is or had been a citizen of Pakistan, Bangladesh or such other country as the Central Government, By notification in the official gazette, specify (www.mea.gov.in). But is not like Dual citizenship which is provided by European countries. A registered OCI is excluded from the political rights and equality in opportunities guaranteed by the article 16 of the Indian Constitution to Its citizens. A Registered Overseas Citizen of India can visit India at any time without any restriction. They are exempted from the Registration with Foreigner Regional Registration Officer (FRRO) or Foreign Registration Office for any duration of stay in India. Main intention behind this programme is to connect with maximum of the Indian overseas population to their home land. Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced in 2014 that PIO and OCI cards would be merged and the Indian Diaspora would be given maximum possible benefits (The Economic Times, 2017).

Scholarship Programs for Diaspora Children

This is another scheme of the Government of India to provide scholarship for Diaspora Children to study in India except medical and other related courses. Government of India gives opportunity to study in esteemed Indian Universities and colleges with economic support. Under the scheme

Person of Indian Origin or Non Resident Indian students are awarded scholarship of up to US\$ 4000 per annum for payment of tuition fee, admission fee and post admission services for undergraduate courses for engineering, technology, humanities, liberal arts, commerce, management, journalism, hotel management, agriculture, animal husbandry and some other courses (www.mea.gov.in). Ministry of external Affairs had received number of application from different part of Indian Diaspora and granted scholarship for around 800 students.

India and Grimitiya Diaspora

Government of India is trying to connect its diaspora to home land at maximum level. Diaspora is one of the core elements of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's foreign policy. Narendra Modi has addressed the overseas Indian population with the words that "no matter where you are, I believe your ancestors will be very happy to see all here, your achievements (as legislators in your country) are a point of pride for us. Even when you are nominated for political office anywhere, we are very happy, you affect geo politics and the world and frame laws. Indians watching these developments are very happy to hear about your achievements" (Ved, 2018). From the words of Prime Minister Mr Narendra Modi, it is very clear and visible about his intention towards Indian Diaspora. Grimitiya Diaspora is an inevitable part of Indian Diaspora. Because their ancestors had suffered that much in the voyage of Indenture labor, it is not an easy task to connect the new generation of Grimitiya Diaspora to their home land. But it is our responsibility to connect them with us. The Indian Diaspora is more prosperous than before and its involvement in India's Development is increasing. Indian Overseas is conscious of their opportunities in India (Sreenivasan, 2016). It is very important to see how Indian Diaspora observes the Government of India's initiatives for them. Under the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Conference 2016 titled as "Connecting contemporary India to Diaspora in Grimitiya countries: Link to Past for a shared future" was organized on 23rd August 2016 at New Delhi. Delegates of the conference were the policy makers, stakeholders and academician those engaged with Indian Diaspora in Grimitiya countries (Mauritius, Fiji, Suriname, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago) (pddindia.gov.in). The participants of the conference made some recommendations to Government of India to make strong relations between the Government of India and the Grimitiya Diaspora. Main recommendation was that Government of India has to keep the history of Grimitiya diaspora in the form of Documents. It will help the new generation of Grimitiya Diaspora to understand the depth and richness of their origin. Grimitiya diaspora required the Government to allow submitting application forms for Overseas Citizenship of India with alternative documents. Establishing an academics linkage with Grimitiya country and working together in transfer of knowledge and skills in information Technology, cooperation in sports like cricket and hockey, cultural exchange and e medicine with Grimitiya Diaspora and India are the requirements of the Grimitiya Diaspora. Grimitiya Diaspora suggested establishing a Person of Indian Origin Village

in south or north or central part of India. It will help the new generation of Indians to understand about their ancestors who migrated from here. The session discussed and understood the culture and society of Grimityas to integrate the Diaspora with the local communities. It will promote Indian arts, culture, and yoga with the help of missions in Grimitya countries amongst many others (pbdindia.gov.in). Grimitya diaspora moves in the memory of Indenture labour days. In 2014 Mauritius celebrated 180th anniversary of the arrival of the Indian Indenture labour on 2nd November 1834. It was a great experiment of Britain as they succeeded in this experiment and continued it till 1917. Now Government of India's major concern is to connect the second and third generation of Grimitya Diaspora to India. Know India Programme and Scholarship for Diaspora Children is an example of it.

Conclusion

It is a fact that Indenture labor system played a crucial role in the spread of overseas Indian population across the world. This Grimitya Diaspora played an important role in both home land and host land. Now we are in the 100th anniversary of prohibition of Indenture labor. This is the time to recall the memories of the Indenture labor. Government of India has taken a lot of efforts to connect Grimitya Diaspora to home country. This is the time that Diaspora is more conscious about their home land. One aspect is that the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi treated Indian Diaspora as core part of India's foreign policy. For the overseas Citizenship of India scheme, Government of India had made amendments in the existing act also. But an important problem of the existing policies of the Government of India is that it is not able to represent all Diaspora. It often favors the educationally, politically and too economically advanced sections of diaspora. And it is a challenge to connect second and third generation of Grimitya Diaspora to home land. But Government of India has tried to connect its Grimitya Diaspora through all possible manners and Grimitya Diaspora also responds positively by giving suggestion to improve the connection between home land and host land.

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