

Unit 15

Indian State and Diaspora

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Learning Objectives

After reading this unit you will be able to:

- Get a comprehensive view of the policies and views of the Indian state
- Trace the evolution of these policies
- Critically evaluate the changing nature of India's stand on its diaspora.

15.1 Introduction

There are more than 20 million People of Indian Origin (PIO) spread in 136 countries. They immigrated into different bursts and different capacities. The bulk of Indian migration took place during colonial period. The previous small-scale movement of Indian people turned into mass migration. They went broadly under three different capacities - (i) the indentured worker in sugar colonies of Caribbean, Oceania and Africa (Tinker, 1969), (ii) Under *Kangani* / maistry system to Malaysia, Burma or Myanmar and Ceylone or Sri Lanka (Sadhu, 1964), (iii) and free or passenger Indians primarily in East Africa (Ghai, 1971). The free Indians (called Passenger Indian) went in small number to many other places as well. During second half of 20th century, Indian emigrated as skilled and semi- skilled workers to (i) Europe, North America and Oceania and (ii) the Middle East.

There are several basis on which Indian Diaspora is classified. The Old Diaspora is referred to all those who went before independence of India and New Diaspora to those who went after independence. The People of Indian Origin (PIO) are referred to those who have undertaken local citizenship whether from the New or Old Diaspora and those Indian overseas who still have Indian passport are called Non-Resident Indians (NRI). The entire population of Indian origin in the West Asian countries is of NRI category. There are PIOs in different counties like in the Caribbean, Africa, Fiji etc who have re-migrated after a few generation to Europe, North America or to Australia and they are called Twice Migrants.

This unit would study the changes and continuity in the evolution of Indian policy towards Indian Diaspora. It will examine the imperatives, experiences, experiments and exercises of Government of India to engage Indian Diaspora since time of India's freedom struggle to the new hyperactive Indian policy which unfolded in 1990s and continues till now.

15.2 Pre-Independence Era: Legacy of Mahatma Gandhi

The initial response of India on Indian Diaspora was directed towards PIOs. South African Indians, for whom Mahatma Gandhi struggled in South Africa, whose cause India took to the UN even before becoming independent and sacrificed its substantial trade relations, South Africa was a very special issue for India. Discriminatory treatment in racially structured society of South Africa had drawn Mahatma Gandhi into active politics when he had gone to South Africa in late 19th century. Later, Indian nationalists of all shades had demanded improvement in working and living conditions of Indians settled abroad. Indian settlers protest began to be articulated in East Africa also. East African Indian National Congress, based on the model of the Indian National Congress was founded in 1914. A.M. Jeevanjee had started voicing the grievances of Indian settlers in East Africa. He had gone to the extent of advocating “the annexation of African territory” (Tangynika) to the Indian Empire” arguing that it had been an Asiatic kingdom in ancient times” (Jeevanji, 1912). Indians in Africa formed middle section in three-tier society, the whites at top and the blacks at the bottom. However, their presence was more apparent to Africans as they came directly in contact with them through their retail shops and business. At the same time, they were aggressive in commercial sector. Similarly in Mauritius and Fiji, Mahatma Gandhi had sent Manilal Doctor while coming back from South Africa to mobilise them for education and advising them to give very high importance to educate their children (Tinker, 1974). But more importantly he advised them to actively participate in local politics and demand legitimate share in the governance and economy of their new home. Indians also used nationalism to mobilise the Indian Diaspora around the world to get Indian independence. They were exhorted to identify with the Indian cause as ‘only a free India could hope to protect and safeguard their interest’. Since most of them were taken under a coercive colonial rule they were visualised by Gandhi as a segment of emerging Indian independence where they will share the socio cultural space within India. Therefore, it was a policy of identification and association but it was by and large Gandhi’s own view. Nehru who since 1930 became official in-charge of foreign policy of India within Indian National Congress had different views.

15.3 Evolution of Nehru’s Policy

Nehru, who became the first Prime Minister of India, had long ago visualised the clash of interests of Indians overseas and local inhabitants. Nehru took up the cause of Indian diaspora, he was not the only one though: Sapru, Shastri, Kunzru, Maharaj Singh, among others, were actively involved for the cause of the Indian diaspora. Though Nehru was more involved with Indians who had migrated to Burma, Malaya and Srilanka, it was he who was responsible for evolving Indian’s policy towards the Indians settled abroad including those in the Caribbean and Africa. In 1927 when he was appointed the secretary of All India Congress Committee (AICC), a body of the Indian National Congress (INC), - he prepared a paper ‘A Foreign Policy of India’ for AICC. In this paper, for the first time, he categorically outlined the policy of INC regarding Indian settlers in other colonial countries, the role India wanted them to play in their country of adoption and the kind of support they could expect from India. He asked in the paper, “what is the position of Indians of foreign countries to-day?”. He said that Indian overseas went as “a hireling of exploiter” i.e. British government and he wanted this position to be changed. He suggested at other place that “an Indian who goes to other countries must co-operate with people of that country and win for himself a position by friendship and service... The Indians should

co-operate with Africans and help them, as far as possible and not claim a special position for themselves" (Selected Works of Jawahar Lal Nehru, 1972: 353, 368).

However, this was not a consensus view of INC. Another stream of the Congress comprising of C.F. Andrew, Srinivas Shastri and H.N. Kunzru, M.M. Malaviya, B.G. Gokhale were mainly concerned with discrimination of Indians in Africa and other places and wanted for them a parity with White settlers. Many of them visited workers recruitment centres and talked to them about problems.

The agitation of Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa was also confined to the betterment of Indian settlers cause. In succeeding years, the issue of discrimination of Indians in South Africa became a sentimental issue for Indian nationalists, as Mahatma Gandhi was very closely associated with it. Nehru represented left wing of Congress. He differed with the conservative wing whose demand was confined only for betterment of Indian overseas. Nehru believed in co-operation between Indians and Africans, however until late 1940, his sympathy and worry were also confined, only for Indians in South Africa. This contrasted with his general policy of Indian support to combined struggle of Indian settlers and Africans in which African cause was paramount. Nehru's special support to Indian settlers in South Africa was very obvious. In a message to INC of South Africa, Nehru wrote in 1939, "India is weak today and can not do much for her children abroad but she does not forget them and every insult to them is a humiliation and sorrow for her. And a day will come when her long arm will shelter and protect them and *her strength will compel justice for them* (Ibid:618). " It is this duality between Nehru's policy and the presence of two wings (conservative and left) in Congress, which help us to understand the change and continuities in Indian support to Indian settlers in Africa. However, by early 1950's it was Nehru policy towards East African Indians that ultimately prevailed even in South Africa and other countries.

Congress had set up an overseas department in 1929 and a slender contact was established with local Congress organisations in South and East Africa. Nehru took over foreign relations when an interim nationalist government was formed under him on 2 September 1946. He took the issue of Indians' discrimination in South Africa beyond Commonwealth to United Nations. After independence, Nehru expressed his views on the position of Indians in Africa and other places. Speaking in the Constituent Assembly on 8th March 1948 he said, "Now these Indians abroad what are they? Are they Indian citizen - are they going to be citizen of India or not? If they are not, then our interest in them becomes cultural, humanitarian and not political... Either they get the franchise of the nationals of the other country or treat them as Indian minus franchise and ask for them the most favourable treatment given to an alien". He advised Indian immigrants, "If you can not be, and if you are not friendly to the people of that country, come back to India and do not spoil the fair name of India (Ibid:618)."

Nehru made it clear in 1950, "In many parts of Africa-East, West, South-there are considerable number of Indians, mostly business people. Our definite instructions to them and to our agent in Africa are that they must always put the interest of indigenous populations first. We want to have no vested interests at the expense of the population of those countries" (Chhabra, 1978:15). He emphasised the same view repeatedly. He said about Indians abroad, "if they adopt the nationality of that country we have no concern with them. Sentimental concern there is, but politically

they cease to be Indian national (India's Foreign Policy-1946-61, 1957:130). Nehru asserted in 1953, "About Africa and Indians there, I may tell you, the policy we have pursued for many years.... We have told them very definitely and precisely that we as government do not encourage or support them in anything they might want and which goes against the interests of the Africans. We have made that perfectly clear (Chhabra, 1978:15)". Nehru was very clear that any overt move by the Indian government for PIOs would do more harm than good to them. He was not against people to people contacts or non-governmental association. Nevertheless, Nehru also talked about double loyalty of Indians overseas. "During Indo-Chinese war India welcomed contributions from Asians of East Africa to help boost its defence efforts. When questioned on this Nehru told to a foreign journalist that "Indians overseas have dual loyalty, one to their country of adoption and other to their country of origin" (Gupta, 1974:134). Further India deplored it as an act of disloyalty when it found that Asians were selling and promoting Chinese made goods at the cost of Indian goods.

Though Nehru stood for primacy of Africans if their interest was to clash with Indian settlers, however, when Asian Relation Conference was organised, two South African Indian leaders – Y.M. Dadoo and GM Naicker were invited but there was no black participants from South Africa. Even during Nehru's prime ministership when question of racism in South Africa was taken up in U.N., it was only the case of Indians discrimination in South Africa that was India's concern, though soon India had to change its policy to include black Africans also. This caused great misgiving in Africans (see Dubey, 1968). Between 1960-66 the gulf between India and Indian settlers abroad widened as India came to believe that Indians were more of an obstacle than an assets in its diplomatic relations with Africa. After the Chinese attack, it seemed a matter of smaller consequences if PIOs were to face some degree of discrimination.

When Nehru formulated India's position on Indians overseas, most of the countries in the Third World were under colonial rule. Before independence the Indian concern about the treatment of Indian settlers abroad was with the intention of making British rulers of our country responsible for the welfare of overseas Indians and securing for them fair treatment and justice in relation to White settlers. The assumption that such responsibility continued was occasionally expressed in parliament and press. Immediately after India's independence, Government of India was not in a position to assist for full justice to Indian settlers. Moreover, the leaders of white settlers in Kenya and South Africa had seen Indian independence as a threat to British rule in Africa. They called Nehru as a Hindu communist who wanted to replace European rule by Indians. Their propaganda about Indian sinister design on African colonies where Indians were in substantial number, and the image of Indian settlers in Africa as an exclusive community whose only interest in Africa was economic exploitation, made Indian leaders very sensitive on the question of Indians overseas. The condition of Indian migrants in neighbouring countries like Burma, Malaysia, Uganda were ignored. Since Ceylon was very close to India, some protests and noise were made during Nehru's time also. India protested against Citizenship Act of Ceylon, which was disqualifying the PIOs. It was long and protracted involvement, though somewhat in subtle ways that PIO issue was kept in bilateral relation between two countries. In fact the problems of PIOs in different countries were so diverse, the positioning and status so different and the reach of India so varied that a nascent Indian state did not find itself equipped and strong enough to address the diaspora issues head on, besides this, Nehru had other priorities like mobilisation of Afro Asian

countries to keep them away from cold war rivalries. For such mobilisation, the issue of PIO was not to be emphasised in Africa.

Nehru's policy of exhorting Indians to identify themselves with locals in Asia and Africa was not based only on his ideological commitment. In Kenya, the presence of Indian settlers was larger than European community and the Kenyan Europeans wanted to keep Kenya as Whiteman's country. A strong anti-Indian campaign was being pursued by Whites in Africa and several riots broke out in Kenya, Uganda, and South Africa involving Indians and Africans during 1944-49. If African's struggle was to be weakened and divided there was every likelihood that White Kenyan settlers could have extended South African model in East Africa. Therefore, it was necessary that Indian settlers joined hand with blacks in opposing white settlers even sacrificing their short-term gains. The Caribbean Indian were so far off that knowingly their problems and their marginalisation by black diaspora community as well as by colonial rulers were ignored. Unlike the problems of Indians in Ceylon or in Burma or even in Africa, it created little pressure from Indian leaders and masses at home. Therefore, it was the distance, the absence of connectivity with India that led to the maximum neglect of the Indian Diaspora in the Caribbean by Nehru and other Indian leaders.

Nehru said in constituent Assembly on 9th August 1948, "The Indian Commissioner will not be entitled to discharge consular function in respect of Indians who may not be considered to be (Indian) national, that is permanent resident in those territories or to act as spokesman of such Indians". When Mau Mau rebellion (1952-53) broke out in Kenya very few Indian settlers in Kenya sided with the British; they were accused of being with rebels. "There were few Europeans in Kenya who do not insist that New Delhi through its official and non-official representatives in Africa has encouraged and added the rebellion of Mau-Mau" (Blundell, 1953). The Indian ambassador to Kenya, Aba B. Pant was charged in British Parliament for fomenting Mau-Mau trouble. Unlike what it did in South Africa, India took a softer stand and recalled Pant under pressure.

During late 1950s, Indians were considered as hurdles in consolidating Indo-African relations. 'But after Indo-Chinese war of 1962 when Indian isolation was exposed. Mrs. Indira Gandhi in her capacity as official delegate toured African countries in 1964. She continued to emphasis that Indian settled in Africa must identify themselves completely with the African people and make their fullest contribution to the societies in which they lived. However, as seen by her tour programme in Africa, besides her official engagements, she made it a point not to miss Indian settlers, leaders and members of the community though in certain small location their number even did not exceed even fifty (see Gopal, 1984;15). She also called Indian settlers as "Ambassador of India" in Africa. Similarly while touring Fiji , Mrs Gandhi said that "I feel like a mother concerned about the welfare of a married daughter who has set up home far away"(Thakur, 1958:356). It shows a subtle departure from Nehru policy, as Indian settlers became now a useful instrument for generating goodwill for India. Their position as 'ambassador of India' implied that they were no more excluded from policy considerations of India. These shifts became more noticeable in many areas when Mrs. Gandhi became the Prime Minister of India. By second half of 1960s there was increasing realisation that Indians in Africa, whatever passport they may hold, should not be put outside India's Africa policy. This also suited the Indian move of economic diplomacy in Africa and other developing countries as Indian settlers in East Africa had requisite capital and will to share it with Indian economic initiatives in African countries.

Reflection and Action 15.1

What was the position of Indians in South Africa in mid 20th Century?

What is the main thrust of Nehru's Policy towards Indian Diaspora?

What was the shift in Indira Gandhi's policy towards Indian Diaspora as compared to Nehru?

15.4 Testing the Pro- Diaspora policies of 1970s and 80s

In 1967, the Government of Kenya started the Kenyanisation of its economy when all non-citizens, largely Indians, were asked to take work and residence permit. It allowed them to trade only in restricted areas and items. Though it was purely an internal policy measure of the Kenyan government, India advised them to surrender British passport and get local citizenship. Indian diplomats too mobilised PIOs in favour of this move but not many responded to it. For PIOs accepting the advice to mix with African meant giving their daughters in marriage to local Africans. PIOs were not willing to migrate to England because of social insecurity, apprehension regarding cultural degeneration of their children in Western culture. Going back to India and being trapped in vicious trap of poverty, filth and unemployment was out of question. Partly, Indian policies also did not allow them to forget their old links as it appealed to them, thrice in two years, for financial help for defence fund to contain China and Pakistan. A large number of visitors from India, religious leaders, fund collectors for charity and politicians kept coming and made contact with PIOs. All these were strengthening the feelings of mutual dependence. When they were in crisis this time India did not react in the same way as it used to do. The Indian parliament discussed the issue at length. Mrs. Indira Gandhi made intervention during debate to assure the members that government was monitoring the situation.

Indian Minister of State for External Affairs BR Bhagat was sent to Nairobi carrying personal message of Mrs. Indira Gandhi to Kenyatta. Bhagat when returned to India accepted in parliament that there was rampant rumour in Kenya that India was going to interfere in internal affairs of Kenya because "he was going there to ask them to slow down their policy" (Indian Lok Sabha Debate series-4, 1968:101, 114). Bhagat had a prior appointment with President Kenyatta but the later cancelled the appointment when Bhagat reached Nairobi. Bhagat met vice-president and other officials but came without delivering Mrs. Gandhi's letter to Kenyatta. Indian parliament felt that cancellation of Bhagat's appointment was to snub India. India suspected British hand as Britain was propagating that India wanted to interfere in Kenya's internal affairs. Public opinion was raged in India as well as in Nairobi. *The Times of India* wrote: "But if the implication is that president Kenyatta fell into a trap laid for him by a third party, it does little credit to his political acumen" (*Times of India*, 1963). Justifying the cancellations of appointment *The Daily Nation* (Nairobi) criticised the decision of Bhagat not to hand over the message for Kenyatta to somebody else and called his conduct as bad tempered. The then Indian High Commissioner, Prem Bhatia narrated the incident in his book later. "My opposition made no difference. I was informed that move was based on political decision and that it had already been announced as a government commitment. In the event I had no alternative but to prepare myself to make the best of a bad job" (Bhatia, 1973:130). Nevertheless, government of Kenya extended the permit to non-citizen for a longer period varying from one to two years with the prospect of renewal.

Indian government had started economic initiatives at bilateral level to bring Indian settlers in Kenya within the policy framework of India. It proposed to establish Africa-India Development Corporation with Kenyan PIOs and Indian capital, its aim was to seek integration of the Indian community in the economic life of Kenya, thus fortifying the foundation of a multi-racial society (AICC, 1966). Though finally it could not materialise, due to reasons other than disinterest of India, but it did show the shift, which was coming in Indian policy for PIOs in Africa. Uganda was another country in East Africa where India's policy on Indian settlers demonstrated the shift. When Idi Amin came to power in January 1971 in Uganda, he wanted to put the entire Ugandan economy in the hands of Ugandans of African origin. He said that 80,000 Asians in Uganda were sabotaging the economy and encouraging corruption and therefore there were no rooms for them in Uganda. All PIOs who were Kenyan citizen, British and Indian passport holder had to leave in 90 days before November 8, 1972. Amin called the expulsion of PIO "as part of the war of liberation". Indian Deputy Minister of external affair said in parliament, "We are in touch with the Ugandan authorities and I can assure the house that we shall do everything we can to protect the interest of Indians there". The Indian president while in Lusaka denounced the expulsion and stated "The happenings in Uganda have a heavy clouds of doubt and uncertainty over the minds of many people of Indian origin in several countries of Africa.... The pernicious doctrine of racialism may permeate even free Africa" (quoted in Gupta, 1974:232).

Though public opinion was aroused in India it refuted strongly and ridiculed Amin's allegation that India was planning to invade Uganda along with Tanzania and Zambia. However, India made it clear that it was going to support any international move, which would persuade Amin for extending the expulsion deadline. India did not take the tougher line because Indian move against a purely racial issue would have been interpreted as Indian interference and design in Africa. Indian support for Afro-Asian solidarity was another constraint. But the main consideration of India in not taking a tougher line on the issue seemed like since "there is nothing to be gained by using strong words, if they can not be backed by meaningful action in Uganda, any show of strong sentiment may trigger off an anti-Asian wave" (*Times of India*, 6 October, 1972). Years later India faced the same constraints when Bavadra government was dismissed in Fiji and anti-PIO move started there.

Ugandan crisis made India realise that the leadership and political system of African states vary considerably from country to country and Indian support to Afro-Asian solidarity had to be qualified by longer national interests. These expulsions brought home another point to India. Despite Indians consistent support to African decolonisation and Afro-Asian solidarity none of the African countries howsoever friendly to India and opposed to Idi Amin's action, offered to accommodate expelled Indians even in small number as a gesture to sympathise with India. As far as India was concerned, it was never its policy to debar entry of PIO if they wanted to resettle in India with their saving and assets. Government of India made special provisions and gave inducement for Asian to resettle in India with their savings and assets. Despite such offer, almost all of them opted not to return to India. The restraint approach of India, however, succeeded in getting Amin to pay compensation for business and properties of Indian passport holders, which was not given to Indians of other nationalities.

Fiji: Subsequent to East African experience was the experience of Fiji. The changing attitude of Government of India got reflected in 1987 military

coups in Fiji. The changing Indian attitude was visible in the press. The issue of overthrow of pro-Indian Fijian government was aggressively reflected in the press and in other media. India did not have capacity to forcibly change the situation. It decided to mobilise the regional powers like Australia to side with India in its effort to change the situation in Fiji. The NAM Summit, the Commonwealth group, the UN and other forums were utilised by India to highlight the discrimination and injustice to Indian Diaspora. This was in clear contrast to what India was doing so far on PIO discrimination issues.

South Africa: Indian settlers in South Africa had been a separate case for India. Long before Mahatma Gandhi used his tactics of non-cooperation, civil disobedience, *satyagrah* and peaceful protests in Indian freedom struggles in 1920, he made maiden use of many of these methods in South Africa in late nineteenth century. The personal insult heaped on him in South Africa and his strong feeling against racial discrimination of Indians in South Africa became a sentimental issue for the followers of Gandhi in the Indian freedom struggles. The racial discrimination of Indians in South Africa received constant condemnation from Indian leaders and the cause of Indians in South Africa always remained high in India's foreign policy consideration.

The Asiatic Land Tenure Act also known as Ghetto Act became law in June 1946. It was directed against Indians confining them to specified areas alone. When on 3 September United Nations General Assembly session started, the Indian representative Chhagla articulated Indian concerns in United Nations Sub-Committee. He condemned South Africa's "discriminatory treatment of Asians in general" as a denial of human rights and the Ghetto Act, both of which impaired friendly relations between India and Africa. The Franco-Mexican resolution - supported by India - calling for treatment of Indians in South Africa to be in conformity with international obligations and charter of United Nations - was passed. Indian approach of special support to Indian settlers in South Africa lasted until late 1950s. Till then, resolution of the Indian National Congress used to articulate and strongly support Indian settlers' cause in South Africa, though it used to express support to South African non-Indian sufferers too but in general terms.

Once India raised the issue of South African Indian settlers exclusively within the U.N., based on human rights clause; it soon realised that it was not possible to keep the issue confined to Indian settlers alone. Because of the provisions of non-racial treatment, India had to extend support to all groups and communities subjected to racial discrimination in South Africa. Further, the policy of exclusively supporting Indian settlers was in contrast to Nehru's policy of advising Indian settlers in other parts of Africa, where he counselled paramountcy of African cause and advised Indian settlers to integrate themselves with African cause and aspiration and not to seek special position or privilege. Meanwhile the Group Areas Act of 1950 had formally institutionalised the Apartheid policy affecting Indians as well as Black Africans.

Above considerations started a shift in Indian approach to South African issue. India started associating discrimination of Black and Indians together. India's President Dr. Rajendra Prasad in his address explained the shift to parliament in 1952. He said, "The question is no longer merely one of Indians of South Africa; it had already assumed a greater and wider significance. It is question of racial domination and racial intolerance. It is question of Africans more than that of Indians in South Africa". India and other countries and raised the question of racial conflict

in South Africa resulting from apartheid policy and succeeded in appointment of a U.N. commission to study the racial situation in South Africa. From then onward, the issue of Indians in South Africa was merged with larger issue of apartheid policy in South Africa, which involved both Indians as well as Black Africans. Indian policy then worked for establishment of majority rule in South Africa and merging of Indian settlers cause with that of Black Africans.

During the interim Prime Ministership in March 1946, Nehru recommended termination of trade agreements and breaking up of diplomatic ties with South Africa. Lord Wavell, the Indian viceroy did it immediately. This strong step was taken when India was free in foreign relations but not free internally. The stakes involved were high. India at the time of independence needed economic support from all quarters but this decision deprived India 5% of its trade.

For India PIO remained the main concern until late 1950s. The defeat of India in Indo-Chinese war of 1962 and its isolation in Africa changed Indian priorities. Diplomatic support vis-à-vis China and Pakistan became the most important consideration. By the time India overgrew its inferiority complex by becoming self sufficient in food, creating Bangladesh, detonating atomic bomb and launching satellites, it also emerged as the country having third largest skilled and trained manpower. Its economic consideration became paramount in third world countries like Africa where its technology and skills can be sold at very competitive prices. The South-South umbrella suits India to sell its manufactured and value added goods in Africa. The issue of PIOs has receded to background since it does not fit in or helps in contemporary concern of India. The current euphoria of India on the end of apartheid is not just because Indian settlers and Blacks have become free from racialism. It is also largely because India wants to convert its goodwill for South Africa, this time, into economic favour by having a favourable access to its large and strong economy. Whether this expectation will be reciprocated or not is a different question but this time India does not expect as return of its contribution to struggle against apartheid, a favourable treatment of South African Indian settlers.

Both domestic and international changes have altered the priority and agenda of India's policy towards PIOs . The major concern of India during colonial rule in Africa was to see to it that the colonial government gave equal privileges to PIOs compared to European settlers. It advised PIOs to join Black Africans in freedom struggle and to become one of them without seeking special privilege or status. With abolition of colonialism, both internal and external, such imperatives did not exist. Second, in post colonial phase of Africa India by its experience realised that expectation of 'dual loyalty' and inclusion of PIO in policy framework neither wins them over for Indian investment or other economic needs nor does it please African governments who have to deal strongly with PIOs according to domestic imperatives and pressures. Even the PIOs after their experience in Zanzibar, Uganda, Zambia and other countries have realised that Indian support for their protection is going to be limited because India's own capacity to intervene for this is limited. Even during their crisis the PIOs themselves did not respond to Indian offer to come and invest in India and get Indian citizenship. Thirdly, PIOs have historically and politically become a part of African states and the issue of PIOs has receded as major concern. Therefore, it is not surprising that in aggressive diplomatic and economic initiatives of Indian government

during 1970s and 80s the issue of PIOs hardly got an important place. Perhaps India learnt through its East African experience that it is unrealistic

and counter productive to expect extra care for South African Indian settlers from South African government as a reciprocal gesture for Indian contribution to struggle against apartheid. The real test of this policy will come when Indian settlers may have to share the burden of economic and social restructuring programme in South Africa. Such pressures and demands from black groups have already started surfacing openly. However, because of the long isolation of South Africa from India they will not have, unlike East African Indian, a 'dependency' attitude towards India. Therefore, India does not have to respond to a non-existent expectation of PIOs. But it does not mean that PIOs have no place in Indian policy.

Indian Diaspora in the Gulf region: The oil boom of 1970s enabled a large number of Indians rushing to the Gulf region. A sizeable number of them remained employed for a long period though they have no chance of getting settled or acquiring local citizenship. As a result they have to repatriate all their earning and savings to India under this compulsion. This benefited India foreign exchange reserve, which was a very scarce resource in the early 1990s. The government of India moved strongly on this. Created better banking and other facilities for repatriation of foreign exchange. It raised the interest rate on foreign exchange deposits. It took up the issue of welfare of its migrant workers in west Asian countries. It came out with policy and enactment for compulsory registration of recruiting agents of labours to avoid exploitation and deportation of the work force. Recently Indian Government under its changed Diaspora policies, which has been discussed below , announced special insurance scheme of Indian Diaspora in the Gulf region.

Reflection and Action 15.2

In what way has the perception of Indian government about the diaspora change with people migrating to the Gulf region?

What are some of the concrete steps that Government of India took to attract remittances from abroad ?

15.5 Pro-Active Interest of the Indian State Towards the Diaspora

Since the early 1990s there is a proactive interest of the Indian government in Indian overseas. This started with appreciation of foreign remittance from NRIs in Gulf region and from North Africa. This provided meaningful addition to India's foreign reserve requirements. Further when liberalisation started in early 1990s, government of India tried to rope in first NRIs and then Indian settlers abroad to attract foreign direct investment. It organised meetings for NRIs and promised many incentives to attract their investment. PIOs were an equally relevant overseas segment to rope them in India's new drive for globalisation. But the Congress government of India was cautious and slow towards this segment. Because of its historical position it was over cautious in including PIOs under overt policy framework. When Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) came to power Indian policy changed very fast for this segment. Historically Rastriya Swayam Sewak Sangh (RSS), a support base for BJP, had maintained very close people-to-people contact through its branches among overseas Hindu settlers. In contrast to Nehru's policy of active dissociation of PIOs from Indian foreign policy objectives, BJP stood for active and overt association of PIOs for foreign policy objectives of India. It helped to organise the first ever conference of Parliamentarians of Indian Origin in New Delhi. Indian Government established a broad based, what is called, a high powered committee to suggest the Government of

India to come out with policy recommendations on Indian Diaspora. The Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas on 9th of January every year, the Bharat Samman to distinguished PIOs and NRIs were part of the Committee recommendations. On the basis of this report Government of India issued PIO card which provided very substantial advantages to PIOs compared to other foreign nationals. In 2006 January India gave Oversease Indian Citizenship (OIC) under dual citizenship scheme. On the side of PIOs also things changed which enabled them to look towards India from different footing. By mid 1990s, except in South Africa, PIOs got long enough time to prove their loyalty to the country of their adoption. They emerged from isolation at home and emerged as a confident identity group. They also emerged as one the most prosperous and organised ethnic groups in their countries. By 1990s they saw no contradiction, after proving their loyalty to their countries, between their citizenship and getting a favourable commercial deal from their countries of origin. Many countries have successfully used the presence of different diasporic community to mobilise economic and diplomatic support for the country. In fact by 1990s diasporas - Black, Jewish, European, Chinese or Indian are not centrifugal , sectarian force which need to be contained or crushed, rather they have emerged as secular, acceptable identity force at international level. In such changed scenario the proactive interest of India in 1990s does not have any element of imperialist design or racist preference as was likely to be construed during the Nehru period.

15.6 Conclusions

We tried to present to you a broad overview of the various policies that Government of India undertook towards its diaspora. We trace the evolution of these polices and stances by the state, by tracing it to Gandhi and subsequently, discussing in detail, the polices of Nehru. There have been some shifts in the way India perceived it disapora during Indira Ghandi's time but a major shift occurred when remittances from the gulf region made their impact on forex reserves. In the recent past the government has been actively cultivating the Indian diaspora, especially the NRIs from the Western countries. The politics of the discrimination between PIOs and NRIs has also been discussed in this unit.

15.7 Further Reading

Dubey, Ajay, 1990. *Indo- African Relations in the Post Nehru Era* ,Kalinga Publication:Delhi

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