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The Indian Diaspora in North America: The Role of Networks and Associations

Aditya Raj

The geo-political world of today has moved beyond the classificatory nation-state, and academic vocabulary has reinvented 'diaspora' to encompass social formations and cultural patterns, marked as they are by the mass movement of peoples, an information technology (IT) boom, and different focal points of global influence. Generally, 'diaspora' is used to describe de-territorialised and transnational ethnic groups, and is used to indicate a specific type of consciousness, a mode of cultural production, and a particular social form (Vertovec and Cohen, 1999). These three distinctions focus attention on the role of imagination and consciousness in the lives of people in the diaspora.

In the contemporary world, globalisation has made home and host societies a 'single arena of action' and has made it possible for individuals and groups to participate directly in global processes because their actions do not have to be mediated by the nation-state (Sheffer, 2003). Diasporas, characterised by numerous dislocated sites of contestation and resistance, counteract the hegemonic and homogenising forces of globalisation (Brazier and Mannur, 2003): for example, in the way people and culture in the diaspora, in different locations, are set not only in their

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practices but also in their lifestyles. In examining the diverse literature on diaspora and transnationalism, diaspora networks can be said to be a key component. Through these social networks, the past is retained, the present becomes a lived reality, and the future can be imagined. Moreover, the connectedness that these networks create is more obvious in the transnational sphere in which they operate than in the places of their origin (Raj, 2005).

In the case of diasporas, social networks and associations operate at three distinct levels — the household, the local ethnic community, and the ‘global Indian’ (Kurien, 2003) — and serve as resources for diaspora communities, assisting with their segmented integration, identity negotiation, social mobility, and homeland advocacy. It is, therefore, contended that the more an individual or group is connected to others through new ITs, the more there is a chance of defying the imperative of geography and operating in the transnational sphere. Most social networks at the household level are focused around the places of worship, ethnic shopping, family gatherings, and other social occasions. At the next level (i.e. the community), networks are formed on the basis of some similar interest or background; at this stage, they operate as a sort of group association and become part of other associations on a broader landscape, attempting to establish linkages with other associations with similar backgrounds or interests. New information and communication technologies have made networking at these two levels much easier and have greatly facilitated the third type of network: pan-Indian associations that represent the public image of India and its peoples. Social networking at these three levels, and associations of various types, assist people in the diaspora in different ways.

Next, the context of this article and topic is outlined; and, then, the Indian diaspora (especially in North America) is put into some perspective. This is followed by a discussion of the role of networking and associations at different levels. The activities of some prominent associations on India and its diaspora are examined, including NACOI (the National Association of Canadians of Origin in India), the AIA (Association of Indians in America), and some religious and transnational associations. However, the primary objective is to understand people-to-people interaction and efforts to make the most of life in the diaspora by creating social networks and associations.

Context of the Topic and Article

In *The Rise of the Network Society*, Castells (1996, 23) quotes Raymond Barglow (1994, 53) on understanding the ‘self’ in today’s world as the ‘[i]mage of a head

... and behind it is suspended a computer keyboard I'm this programmed head!' This metaphor is central to Castells's argument about a society undergoing momentous change, aided and driven by IT; a society in which social relations are going through a disjuncture and differentiation, and in which a constant search for identity around religion, ethnicity, territory, and nation is prevalent. Metaphors are used and meanings are negotiated not around what we do, but on the basis of who we are or who we believe ourselves to be. This process of negotiating the 'self' is more often enacted through the new ITs of telephony and the internet, justifying the argument that current patterns of negotiating the 'self' operate largely through the information networks of present-day society.

Castells (1996, 470–471) further suggests that the architecture of the relationships between networks configures the dominant processes and functions in society. A 'network' is a set of interconnected nodes, and the nature of the nodes depends on the context of the social situation. The typology defined by networks determines that the distance (or intensity and frequency of interaction) between two points (or social positions) is shorter (or more frequent, or more intense) if both are nodes in a network, rather than if they do not belong to the same network. The network morphology is a source for the dramatic reorganisation of power relationships. Individuals and collectives that can influence the nodal points in the networks exercise influence to determine these social processes. Vertovec (2001) highlights the usefulness of social networks in his explanation that interpersonal relationships cut across boundaries like neighbourhood, kinship, and class, both at the individual and at the collective level. He points out that for migrants, social networks are crucial for finding jobs and accommodation, circulating goods and services, getting psychological support, obtaining information, and generally, for *socio-cultural reproduction*. In fact, migration itself is precipitated by networks, both in the sending and receiving environments.

People of Indian origin (PIOs) across the globe have created different kinds of network which have increased during the information age, and these serve multiple functions. Most networks operate online, or are working towards 'catching up' with internet technology. Social relations on and through cyberspace are no less valid than 'real life' in maintaining links with the community. In fact, people feel a sense of belonging through these networks and associations. But it must be pointed out that people in the diaspora experience varying degrees of rupture or dislocation and, therefore, networks that help to renegotiate life assumes particular

importance. Social networks characterised by ties with Indians inside India and in the diaspora provide emotional and practical support for people but, on the other hand, they also decrease their chances to benefit from other networks in their host societies. Erickson (2003, 25–30) argues that it is not just what you know, but who you know that matters in society; for example, she has pointed out that people living in North America find jobs with the assistance of a contact roughly half of the time. Besides employment opportunities, networks also help to improve one's quality of life through better information about educational and health services. However, the diversity of networks accessed is more important than the mere number. Erickson (2003, 25) says:

Knowing many kinds of people in many social contexts improves one's chance[s] of getting a good job, developing a range of cultural interests, feeling in control of one's life and being healthy. Sometimes knowing many kinds of people is helpful because it improves the chance[s] of having the right contact for some purpose: hearing of an attractive job opening, borrowing a lawnmower, getting the home cleaned.

The needs of people in the diaspora vary according to the stage of their experience in the environment in which they find themselves. Those who have just arrived look for basic links to help them feel less alienated; later, they diversify their social network to include co-ethnics and other people. Associational activities fill a space between the state and the market, and provide a medium to negotiate the 'self' and the homeland culture amidst a corporate global culture. Two perspectives on associational activities can be borrowed from Riley's (2005) work. Associations provide people with the means to act without invoking the state and, moreover, they counterbalance state authority by creating alternative power centres. The more developed the sphere of associational activity that enables members to have their own say, the more difficult it is to establish authoritarianism. Riley's other perspective on associational activity comes from Antonio Gramsci, who argued that associations are not necessarily opposed to the state; they can be absorbed by the state or even be an extension of the state. According to this viewpoint, the sphere of associations provides battlegrounds for hegemony and schooling for the intricacies of political engagement.

It is contended here that while associational activities provide individuals with organisational sparring opportunities at the level of the local ethnic community, they function as constraints at the pan-Indian level since they are concerned with the

presentation of a particular image (see Kurien, 2003). A detailed analysis of the various associational activities of the Indian diaspora in North America will make this argument clearer. However, before doing so, a brief discussion on the Indian diaspora from a socio-historical perspective is needed, especially on the diaspora in North America.

The Global Indian Diaspora

The word *diaspora* has an ancient origin, although it has been given a modern flavour with the passage of time (Gilroy, 1991). Like the people who inhabit the spaces designated by this term, it is 'a transient and travelled word' (Mishra, 1995). Initially the word was used to describe the Jewish 'dispersion' or 'scattering', but through the ages it had acquired different meanings. Nevertheless, the boom in IT has bridged the gap between diasporas (Patel, 2000), and the current era of globalisation has enhanced the practical, economic, and affective role of diasporas (Cohen, 1995).

The modern Indian diaspora across the world dates back to the third decade of the nineteenth century when it was mainly a forced migration of indentured labourers under British imperialism. Later, in the twentieth century, the Indian migration to the developed, Western countries has been, by and large, voluntary, industrially and commercially oriented, more gender-balanced, and more educated. A twentieth century migration to West Asia has also occurred, although 'the law of the land' does not permit Indian immigrants to become naturalised citizens (Jain, 1989). However, the *Indian diaspora* is a generic term used to describe the people (and their descendants) who have migrated from territories that are currently within the borders of the Republic of India. It is estimated that this diaspora numbers approximately 20 million people, composed of non-resident Indian citizens and PIOs (who have acquired the citizenship of some other country). To varying degrees, these people have retained their emotional, cultural, and spiritual ties with their country of origin, India. Thus, the Indian diaspora is constituted of people from different regions of the mother country, and from diverse religions, castes, and occupations. Yet, in spite of these differences, they have managed to develop distinct identities, lifestyles, and thought patterns in the various locations in which they have settled down. In fact, they carry 'Little India' with them: Indian cinema, cuisine, and cricket, along with the technology of the internet, have managed to keep the Indian diaspora together (Lal, 1999). They have

benefitted from local ethnic networking and other associational activities, as well as the power of a shared identity. But their mode of adaptation to the host country and society is marked more by a clear preference for economic, rather than cultural integration (Sharma, 1989).

People of the Indian diaspora are beginning to establish social, economic, cultural, and other ties with their counterparts in India and with other Indians across the globe (Parekh, 1993). The Indian diaspora is scattered over many countries (Sheth, 2003, 12) and has established a significant economic and political presence in quite a few, including Canada and the USA. Following Armstrong (1976), it can be argued that the Indian diaspora in North America may be characterised as a 'mobilised' diaspora, rather than a 'proletarian' diaspora. Clearly, the majority of Indian migrants in North America today are better educated and better skilled, also with a more balanced gender ratio, compared to earlier migrants who were mainly indentured labourers. This is because of the fact that in the period after the 1960s, when the immigration policy of the 'host' country became skills-based, the majority of migrants to North America came as professionals.

The Indian Diaspora in North America

A quick look at the composition of the Indian diaspora in North America reveals that in the 1980 US Census, immigrants from India were enumerated as a component of the American ethnic mosaic, as 'Asian Indian'. Historical records show that from 1880 onwards, a trickle of Indians (mostly from the Punjabi farming regions) started to settle down in the rural areas of California. By 1910 they numbered around 1,000, and this was considered so alarming that the 'Asiatic Exclusion League' and the 'American Association of Labour' branded them as a 'tide of turbans' and a 'distinct menace'. As a result, Indian immigration to the USA declined after 1910 until the repeal of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 triggered a new influx of immigrants from the sub-continent. Consequently, almost 40 percent of all Indian immigrants who entered the US in the decade after 1965 arrived on student or exchange-visitor visas and, in some cases, with their spouses and dependants. Most of these students pursued graduate degrees in a variety of disciplines. Often they were able to find promising jobs and to prosper economically, and many became permanent residents and even citizens (Pavri, 1999). And, more recently, there has been an influx of engineers who were trained at the Indian Institute of Technology, the best in India.

In its initial phase, the Indian diaspora in Canada was constituted mostly of immigrants from the Punjabi farming areas, who settled on the West Coast finding employment with the Canadian Pacific Railway and in the lumbering industry. In their new home in Canada, they experienced the same kind of uneasy race relations as their countrymen faced during the early part of the twentieth century in the USA, as well as the indignity of name-calling and outright discrimination. For example, the Vancouver riots of 1907 led to strict measures to check the number of immigrants from India, whereas the 'points system', introduced in the 1960s, ironically triggered an unprecedented influx of immigrants. Today, the number of people in the Indian diaspora in Canada is estimated to be more than 2 percent of the total Canadian population, while the Report of the High-Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora (Government of India, 2000) puts the figure at 2.8 percent. According to Buchignani (1989), the Indian diaspora is one of the most rapidly growing ethno-cultural groups in Canada. The majority of the community is from the Punjab, although 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 percent of Indo-Canadians were Sikhs, 24 percent were Hindus, and around 10 percent were adherents of other religions. The Indian diaspora community is highly urbanised and almost 90 percent live in metropolitan areas such as Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, Calgary, and Edmonton (Government of India, 2000). The emigration of people from India to Canada, like all emigration destinations, can be explained in terms of a 'push-pull' factor — the 'push factor' operating in India and the 'pull factor' generated in Canada (Jain, 1989).

Clearly, the Indian diaspora in North America has also been affected by race relations in the host societies (Lal, 1999). A number of measures have been taken and many strategies developed to adapt to the 'host' societies, and for maintaining the 'home' culture and identity. Ethnic associations and social networks can be viewed as direct offshoots of these efforts and they have assisted in transforming the image of the diaspora communities, as well as promoting the interests of the 'homeland'. Also, the Indian diaspora provides a typical case of 'adaptive schizophrenia': that is, a compartmentalised, bicultural approach in response to an incompatible set of norms. Indians abroad tend to retain their distinct ethnic identity, which can be treated as a sub-category of a much broader concept of identity (George and Brown, 1987). However, when it comes to civic participation, they try to adjust to the 'host' society. By developing ways and means of fronting up

against discrimination, they aim both to maintain their ethnic identity and to participate in the public life of their adopted home, the country in which they now live.

Indian Diaspora Networks and Associations

At individual and household levels, networks develop through personal contact with co-ethnics, as well as with other individuals known either through work or leisure activities. Contacts may be initiated by referral from a kin or friend, or by an 'out-reach' action at the place of residence. Ultimately, networks are transformed into associational activities on the basis of common origin, language, class, religious background, socio-cultural and artistic preference, or professional interest. By these means, the 'self' acquires psychological moorings and a sense of community develops, thereby assisting with identity negotiation and informal education. As Kurien (2003) points out, it also helps in the transition to become residents and, eventually, acquire full citizenship.

The large number of ethnic Indian associations in North America enhances the level of networking. In the so-called Singhvai Report (Government of India, 2000), it is noted that there are more ethnic Indian associations in the USA than in Canada, and that they reflect the Indian diversity in foreign lands. It also points out that virtually every religious denomination back in India has a representative body in the USA. Cultural associations are formed, celebrating national functions and Indian festivals such as Republic Day and Independence Day (Government of India, 2000, 171). Ethnic, linguistic, and regional cultural associations, such as the Federation of Kerala Associations in North America, the Federation of Gujarati Associations in North America, the Telugu Association of North America, and the Bengali Association of North America, hold national conventions from time to time, events which are frequented by large numbers of people. These associations are like spatial locations on which ethnic networks are etched, or in which ethnic networks are socially embedded. The diversity of networks that are formed through these associations assist people in better adapting to their 'host' societies. The Singhvai Report (2000, 171–172) also notes that thousands of members, along with their families, assemble during these associational conventions to participate in cultural and culinary events, and to patronise handicraft displays. Large political associations, such as the American Indian Foundation and various professional bodies for US entrepreneurs (e.g. The Indus Entrepreneurs, TIE), the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce, and the Network of Indian Professionals

(Netsap), provide excellent opportunities for better networking with other minority groups, as well as with individuals in the 'host' society.

Ethnic networking and social embeddedness are useful resources for any community. An examination of the structure of relations among various community actors is really an investigation into 'social capital', which can be transformed into human capital (Coleman, 1988). The use of exchange theory (Blau, 1964) suggests that in the 'mobilised' Indian diaspora in North America, interaction exists between the elite of the diaspora community and those of the dominant group. The ethnic Indian elite acquire the means and skills to deal with the mainstream society, whereas others in the diaspora community rely on their experiences (Armstrong, 1976). Only when reciprocal exchange fades away, or does not even commence, does conflict with other communities arise. And, quite importantly, Erickson (2003) argues that the diversity of networks considerably increases life chances within diaspora communities.

A great deal of intra-ethnic networking is based on religious associations. The Singhvai Report (Government of India 2000, 171–172) shows that a large number of the temples, *gurdwaras*, mosques, and churches of the Indian diaspora community in North America are flourishing, serving as centres of religious, cultural, educational, charitable, and social activity. The Hindu *Swayamsevak Sangh*, the Hindu *Vishu Parishad*, the *Ramkrishna* mission, the *Chinmaya* mission, and the *Swaminarayan Sanstha* all have national and regional centres. All the Indian religious festivals such as *Holi*, *Deepavali*, *Dussehra*, and *Gurupurab* are celebrated with traditional enthusiasm. In 2000, in Los Angeles, Indian Christians established an umbrella association called the 'Indian Christian Association', while the 'Federation of Indian Muslim Associations' is the major body representing Indian Muslims. In fact, the religions of immigrant groups play an important role in the pluralistic societies of North America; religion has served as a major symbolic resource in the building of communities and affirming ethnic identity. Rayaprol (1997) refers to Warner (1993), who associates religion in the USA with societal differences and argues that it is common for immigrants to become conscious of their distinctive religious identity in a pluralistic society. For Indian immigrants, as for others, religion is one of the identity markers that assist them in preserving their individual self-awareness and group cohesion (Rayaprol, 1997, 16).

Religious activity in diaspora communities (not only in Hinduism, but in many other Indian religious denominations) is a common phenomenon in most North

American cities. A case in point, which focuses attention on the role of religion and, therefore, networks and associations based on it, is alluded to by Linda (1999, 393) who describes the process leading up to the construction of the Vishnu Temple in California. She points out that the 'Hindu Community and Cultural Center' was incorporated as early as 1977; then, between 1980 and 1983, land was acquired in Springtown and Livermore, a home adjoining the property was purchased, and construction of the temple could begin. Subsequently, fundraising took place through newsletter calls, serving as an extension of temple activity. As religious buildings, temples serve many different purposes, including being a setting for the teaching of Indian languages, while Sikh *gurdwaras* are examples of how communities use ties established through community networking to maintain their ethnic identity.

Typical of Indian society is the dominant role of the male, not just in the family but also in all other social settings; women rarely voice their opinion. However, in the diaspora setting the role of women has changed. In her study of the *Sri Venkateswara* Temple in Pittsburgh, Rayaprol (1997) found that the role of women had metamorphosed: they were in charge, controlling, and managing almost everything. Her study has yielded important insights into the gender dynamics of the Indian diaspora population in North America. She contends that, instead of being limited to the traditionally defined domestic sphere, women have assumed leadership positions even in the temple (Rayaprol, 1997, 137). By performing ably in such bureaucratic roles, women have succeeded in infusing public institutions with their more private aspirational inclinations, thereby feminising them.

Rayaprol (1997) also refers to the role that a mother is supposed to perform in the home, the socialisation of the young in traditional values and passing on the 'Indian-in-me' to the next generation. This is done at the individual household level; although at the community level, women perform this function through religious organisations. For example, language and dance classes given at temples and *gurdwaras* assist in conveying traditional cultural values and practices to future generations. In her study of Hindu immigrant women in Ontario, Pearson (1999, 430) found that the most important means by which Hindu tradition is being passed on to the next generation is through the personal example set by parents, as well as through books, cultural events (festivals), practices (dance), and attending the temple. However, women are the bearers, not the controllers, of tradition in the Indian diaspora setting; most women see their mission in life as carrying forward the

tradition of the 'home' society in the 'new' diaspora community, at least in symbolic terms. Moreover, kinship ties, along with region, religion, and language, are major determinants of social embeddedness in Indian diaspora communities, and these constitute the bases of social networks. In turn, social networks are defence mechanisms against systemic racism, besides helping to create a sense of community in a new society.

There are several other Indian diaspora associations in North America, and some of them have a pan-national reach. However, it is from the small informal networks beyond the confines of these associations that the members of the Indian diaspora draw their social strength. But most of these supposedly pan-Indian diaspora associations are driven by factionalism and elitism, and they hardly address the specific needs of diasporans. Yet, a look at the larger associations is needed, because they are the public face of India and the Indian diaspora in North America. The next section, therefore, discusses prominent pan-Indian associations. Here, the objective is to move beyond mere description of these associations and to present their obvious functions and, then, to analyse their more latent functions (see Merton, 1957).

Prominent Pan-Indian Associations and Their Roles

The NACOI and the AIA are two of the more prominent associations. NACOI's role is to harness skills and resources from within the diaspora community, to develop and facilitate local, regional, and national community-based social and economic development strategies and programmes, and to seek grassroots support. In order to achieve common goals and objectives, affiliated associations in most Canadian cities work in close co-operation with NACOI chapters. Together these associations serve as a forum for the Indian diaspora community to exchange ideas, to resolve issues, to air common concerns, and to provide a national platform and voice for the protection of individual rights. They also stress the importance of recognising the contributions made in Canada by 'Canadians of Origin in India'. Furthermore, NACOI's activities include community and public education, networking with politicians and government officials at the municipal, provincial, and national levels, and working with other associations that share common concerns.

Similarly, the AIA provides a forum for common action to all whose Indian heritage and American commitment produce a unifying bond. Its objectives include the social welfare of 'Asian Indians', who have decided to live in the

USA: for example, helping them to become part of mainstream American life. Through charitable, cultural, and educational activities, the association facilitates the involvement of members of the Asian Indian community in American public affairs, while it calls for its members (and others with similar concerns) to participate in the development and progress of India. It sponsors academic and community service awards for the youth of the Indian diaspora community, as well as hosting performing arts, literary arts, and scientific exhibitions; organises a community health fair; and provides medical assistance and referral services to elders of the diaspora community, a service made possible by community doctors who donate their Sunday mornings to conduct tests and offer advice. In addition, the AIA sponsors a lecture series, including the important Distinguished Scientist Lecture, in collaboration with other Indian diaspora organisations. But it does not seem to be reaching the ordinary people, and its actual impact on the Indian diaspora community is therefore debatable. However, as a result of the efforts of the association, the US Census Bureau agreed to reclassify immigrants from India as 'Asian Indians'. Over the years, it has tried to assist the diaspora community in addressing racial discrimination and maintaining community ties. To this end, it has resolved to influence the educational system of the 'host' society to highlight the strength of Indian culture and civilisation. In September 2001, aiming to draw attention to India and its culture, an event entitled 'Reflections of Our Spirit' was organised in conjunction with the American Museum of Natural History in New York, the programme appropriately modified to reflect the mood in America after the events of 11 September 2001.

Although often these pan-Indian associations do not reach the ordinary people, Lal (1999) feels that they have done some of their most intense and useful lobbying at the local level. Partly, this lobbying takes the form of attempts to have some 'great' Indian statesmen memorialised: for example, in Jersey City a school has been named after Mahatma Gandhi, and the same city has renamed a portion of one of its main thoroughfares after Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar (a prominent *dalit* leader and the chief architect of the Indian Constitution). Also, Lal (1999) says, statues of Gandhi can be found in numerous American cities, including New York and Atlanta, and the US Congress has approved the construction of a memorial to Gandhi in the diplomatic enclave of Washington, DC, the capital city, not far from the memorials to George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Franklin D Roosevelt.

Indian diaspora professionals have formed their own associations to counter discrimination. As laws were tightened governing the admission of doctors from abroad

into the American medical profession, the American Association of Physicians from India (AAPI) was formed in the 1980s to further their cause. Again, Lal (1999) notes that Indian doctors comprise an extraordinary 4 percent of the medical profession in the USA and that none other than President Bill Clinton attended the Annual Convention of the AAPI in 1995. Several other associations have emerged to enhance and safeguard Indian diaspora interests: for example, in 1985 the National Federation of Indian American Associations (NFIA), together with some other groups, agitated against proposed legislation that would have deeply curtailed Medicare funding to hospitals employing doctors with foreign medical degrees. Moreover, the NFIA has emphasised the way in which the politics of the Indian sub-continent is reflected in American society. In 1987, the NFIA mobilised the Indian diaspora community, with apparent success, to persuade the US Congress to cancel the sale of sophisticated airborne warning and control system (AWACS) planes to Pakistan.

There are several associations among the Indian diaspora in North America that have been involved in the politics of the homeland from the days of the *Khilafat*, to Punjab militancy, and to support for India's nuclear deterrent, although in the initial phase of the struggle to build a secure and comfortable life, links with the homeland tended to become few and far between. However, as people settled down and became economically prosperous they increased their efforts in support of 'homeland development', and a number of associations in North America have taken up this challenge. The AAPI has funded several health projects in India and established clinics in rural Indian villages. The AAPI Trauma Care Center in Latur, an area in northern India devastated by an earthquake, is an exemplary case in point. Also, the AAPI has collaborated with other associations in utilising the latest medical technology for surgical and cancer research projects at the Hinduja Hospital in Mumbai. And countless teams of disease specialists from the USA have organised clinics in selected areas in India (Sheth, 2003).

TIE of Silicon Valley in California has helped with the transfer of state-of-the-art technology to major IT centres in India, and they have also been instrumental in establishing chapters in many Indian cities to provide assistance to young technologists to run high-tech businesses. In support of the general population of India, PIOs in Chicago have founded 'Action India' to promote better water management, environmental protection, and access to technology (Sheth, 2003). Khadria (1999) views these developments as a welcome change from India's previous 'brain drain'. He is of the opinion that the return of PIOs as facilitators of investment funding and

Table
Other Prominent Associations

Name	Role
GOPIO (Global Organisation of People of Indian Origin)	Generating finance to support the worldwide Indian diaspora and homeland development
SIPA (Silicon Valley Professionals Association)	Local association of expatriates for homeland development
WIN (Worldwide Indian Network)	Intellectual/scientific diaspora network
The International Association of Scientists, Engineers and Technologists of Bharatiya Origin	Developing an intellectual/scientific diaspora network
INRIST (Interface for Non-Resident Indian Scientists and Technologists)	Networking and homeland development

partners in technology transfer will serve as catalysts for the development of India's economy. Also, many other transnational associations in the Indian diaspora are engaged in developmental activities inside India. As they are mainly based in the USA, they have a much bigger operational scope than most other associations, while trying to maintain linkages among the worldwide Indian diaspora. It is well-nigh impossible to mention all these associations, but an attempt is made here (see Table) to list some of them and their nature of involvement.

People in the Indian diaspora have also managed to build effective transnational business networks that stretch from their places of origin to their places of settlement. Basu (2003) has examined the transition of ethnic Indian entrepreneurs from immigrants, to local-market operators, to global-market players. According to her, this process of globalisation has changed the patterns of business behaviour inside India and the Indian diaspora community. Clearly, the most successful Indian diaspora entrepreneurs have gained a clear competitive advantage by developing international business links.

Conclusion

Associations are a fertile ground for the Indian diaspora community to establish social networks, which serve to augment social capital. Portes (1998, 2) argues that the novelty and heuristic power of social capital come from two sources. First, the concept focuses attention on the positive consequences of sociability,

while putting aside its less attractive features. Second, it places those positive consequences in the framework of a broader discussion on capital and calls attention to how such social activity can be a source of power and influence, providing leverage to developmental activities. Since associations define social networks, they play an important role. This role seems more pronounced in the USA than in Canada, and it is therefore presumed that the Indian diaspora community in the USA is more successful and, thus, in a better position to further the needs of Indians in North America, as well as in India.

The resultant social capital increases the capacity of people in the Indian diaspora to embed themselves in their culture and values and this, in turn, assists them in their identity negotiation. Those who interact with the larger associations are more transnational in their social interactions and continue to draw both from the country of origin and the geographical locale of their residence. Those involved only at the local level are assumed to be low-income earners, of limited educational background, and therefore, have less promising career opportunities. Probably, it also says much about their inability to properly utilise their networking and connections, and drive home their advantage. The emerging social capital through these networks and associations has several disadvantages, too. They assist in perpetuating the status quo and, at times, can become a constraint for those, including women, aspiring for change.

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