PREFACE

The diaspora phenomenon has caught the attention of a number of scholars in recent years. Its complexities can be understood in terms of its relationship with host society, homeland and other societal and political agencies. Contemporary diasporic practices can’t be reduced to epiphenomena of the nation-state or global capitalism though defined and constrained by them. Due to their widely recognized cultural, social, political and economic importance, there is an increase in academic interest in the nature, scope and influence of these diasporic entities. Thematically, such studies cover issues like social adjustment, role of state, religion, language, ethnicity, culture etc.

The study of Indian diaspora has emerged as a rich area of multidisciplinary interest. Time, magnitude, direction and policy are key variables in the analysis of Indian diaspora. Among the immigrants of diverse nationalities, overseas Indians constitute a sizeable segment. Having almost unique socio-cultural histories and being subjected to different economic and political situations, the Indian communities abroad have evolved as distinct diasporic entities. They manifest in varying degrees the survival, persistence or retention of several social patterns and cultural elements whose roots and substance can be traced to India. Based on the theoretical and empirical realities, the present study seeks to arrive at the generalities of the global Indian diaspora, while also highlighting its specificities across the two settlement societies under consideration which are Australia and the United States of America.

The study focuses on key issues related with Indian migration to the two classical countries of immigration: Australia and United States of America. Delving into the issues and factors contributing to the evolution of Indian diasporic identity in a multicultural framework, it also highlights the governmental immigration policies in both the countries of origin and destination. Largely, studies on Indian diaspora have been country specific. Comparative studies are few as constraints of opportunity, time and resources available are faced by the researcher. The present study is structured into seven chapters including a web survey conducted on Indian diasporic population in the two countries under consideration. The methodology employed in the study is both comparative and analytical. A field trip was granted to Australia (Melbourne) in
June 2008 for fourteen days, where inputs sought from experts on migration, academicians and diasporic people themselves have helped immensely in proceeding with the study.

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