Conventional scholarship on international relations is primarily confined to dealing with politico-economic-military aspects of the transactions among states and their implications for inter-state relations. In the process, the influence of non-state actors, including ethnic minorities and immigrant communities, on the conduct of foreign relations has been either neglected or paid scant attention. The problems of Overseas Indians settled in hundred odd countries and their impact on the conduct of India's foreign relations is a case in hand.

However, the thrust of the present study is slightly different. It intends to examine the overall objectives of India's foreign policy and relations in dealing with the Overseas Indians. This is being accomplished by analysing India's policy towards the Indians Overseas, with a special emphasis on the problems of the 'Indian Tamils' of Sri Lanka. In the process, it is addressed to answer several relevant questions: Does India have a coherent policy towards the Overseas Indians? What was its reaction to their problems in various countries? How did it manage the problems of Indian Tamils of Sri Lanka? How far did India's Indian Tamil policy register a deviation from its general Overseas Indians policy? Did it subordinate its concern for the plight of the Overseas Indians often to the need to promote its bilateral relations with the countries of their domicile? Towards this end, the Overseas Indians' problems in some of the countries like South Africa, Burma, Kenya, Uganda, Fiji and Sri Lanka would be discussed. It was in these countries that their problems acquired a serious dimension, thereby impinging greatly on India's bilateral relations with them.

India's policy towards the Overseas Indians, as is critically analysed in this work, can be best described as inconsistent. In this connection, the present study puts forward three hypotheses. First, India designed its stand on the Overseas Indians' problems in accordance with the requirements
of its foreign policy and relations. Second, greater the perception of the Indian leadership of the Overseas Indians' problems as a major irritant in the bilateral contexts, brighter the chance(s) for accommodation on the part of India of pressures from the country of their adoption. Third, greater the proximity of India to the adopted country of the Overseas Indians, greater the prospects for a bilateral settlement.

The lack of any comprehensive study on the theme "India and the Overseas Indians" basically provided me the impetus to work on the present topic. Barring a few articles (Mahajani, 1977; Dutt, 1980; Thakur, 1985), no full-length study has been done on this subject. However, a plethora of literature is available on the Indians Overseas problems in the domestic context of the countries of their domicile (Kondapi, 1951; Palmer, 1977; Kuper, 1960; Mahajani, 1960; Narain, 1962; Ghai, 1965; Dotson and Dotson, 1968; Morris, 1968; Arasaratnam, 1970; Chakravarti, 1971; Gupta, 1971; Malik, 1971; Bharati, 1972; Twaddle, 1975; Nanjira, 1976; Ramchandani, 1976; Tinker, 1977; Singh, 1979). As regards the problems of Indian Tamils, there are a number of scholarly studies dealing with their historical antecedents (Chattopadhyaya, 1979; Wesumperuma, 1986; Moldrich, 1988), several protracted negotiations between India and Sri Lanka on their citizenship problem during 1940-1964 (Kodikara, 1965; Prasad, 1973) and the imperatives of the Sirimavo-Shastri Pact of 1964 and the Sirimavo-Indira Gandhi Agreement of 1974 (Kumar, 1977). However, not much work has been done on inter-governmental activities since the mid-seventies. The proposed study would endeavour to fill such gaps.

The scope of the present study is limited. It primarily deals with the citizenship problem of the Indian Tamils against the background of their socio-economic conditions in Sri Lanka because it was this issue that attracted India's diplomatic attention. Therefore, several other aspects of their problems in the socio-economic contexts have not been dealt with.
They are: evolution of the Indian Tamils as a community in the island, discriminatory policies pursued by the Sri Lankan government to deny them socio-economic equality, factors which underlined the Sri Lankan government's discriminatory policy against the Indian Tamils and forces which operated for improving their socio-economic conditions. All these issues can form a theme for a full-length, separate study in the context of the domestic political pressures and pulls of Sri Lanka.

As regards the time frame, it was originally intended to cover the problems of Indian Tamils between 1964 (signing of the Sirimavo-Shastri Pact) and 1987 (conclusion of the Indo-Lanka Accord). However, the enactment of a significant piece of legislation entitled "the Grant of Citizenship to Stateless Persons (Special Provisions) Act of 1988" by the Sri Lankan Parliament urged me to extend the analysis up to 1991.

The present study is divided into ten chapters. While providing definition of the term 'Overseas Indians', the first chapter attempts to analyse the process of immigration of the Indians Overseas to various countries as well as their population estimates. Socio-economic and political problems of the Overseas Indians in South Africa, Burma, Kenya, Uganda, Fiji and Sri Lanka are surveyed in the second chapter. Since conducting a comprehensive survey on the entire gamut of their problems is a difficult task given the limited scope of the present study, this chapter elucidates only those aspects of the Overseas Indians' problems which invited the Indian government's diplomatic intervention for a negotiated settlement or diplomatic support for their cause. The third chapter provides a critical appraisal of India's approach to problems of the Indians Overseas.

In the fourth chapter an attempt is made to analyse the socio-economic status of the Indian Tamils of Sri Lanka. While discussing briefly the historical antecedents of the citizenship problem of the Indian Tamils and
the socio-economic and political configurations which made them a factor in the dynamics of Sri Lankan politics as much as in the bilateral relations between the two countries, the fifth chapter provides an appraisal of various bilateral efforts between India and Sri Lanka during 1940-1964 to resolve the stateless issue. The inter-governmental diplomatic moves undertaken by both the countries during 1965-1981 period on the citizenship problem is the theme of sixth chapter. It also deals with several problems regarding the implementation of the 1964 and 1974 Agreements. The seventh chapter examines India's policy towards the 'Indian Tamil' problem since 1981 and elucidates the various factors and forces leading to the final resolution of the stateless issue in 1986. The process of repatriation of the Indian Tamils from Sri Lanka and the problems of the repatriates are discussed in the eighth chapter. The ninth chapter focuses on the rehabilitation programme undertaken for the Sri Lankan repatriates in India and its effects; the problems of repatriates, their socio-economic profile and living conditions in India. While summing up the discussion, the last chapter evaluates India's policy towards the Indians Overseas in general and the Indian Tamils of Sri Lanka in particular. It also examines the prospects of the Indian Tamil community in India and Sri Lanka in the context of the domestic pressures and pulls.

As a historical-analytical study, it is based on both primary source materials e.g. official texts of speeches of leaders, government reports, inter-governmental conference reports and Parliamentary debates and secondary data e.g. books, research articles, magazines, news bulletins, monographs etc. Apart from these, first-hand information on the entire gamut of the stateless problem of Indian Tamils was collected through several interviews with various prominent statesmen, political leaders and bureaucrats in Sri Lanka during my field trip to Colombo and Kandy in July-September 1990.
Until 1972, Sri Lanka was known as Ceylon. But I have used both the names interchangeably throughout the present study. Similarly, although Burma's name has been changed to Myanmar, I have retained the old name in this work.