CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
In academic discourses the term 'Overseas Indians' is yet to be defined. A vague and misconceived term, it is generally being employed to designate both the 'Indian Nationals Overseas' (INO) and the 'People of Indian Origin' (PIO). There is a fundamental distinction between these two categories of migrants. The factors which accentuate the distinction are: a distinct political status which the emigrants enjoy in the country of their settlement, and a variation in the period, pattern and purpose of their immigration and their population characteristics.

**Indian Nationals Overseas**

The widely used substitute in India to the term INO is Non-Resident Indians (NRIs). Primarily, the NRIs are those who had emigrated voluntarily during the post-independence period for an indefinite period of stay in foreign countries. Despite their absence in India, they are considered as Indian citizens because they continue to hold the Indian passport; the status they enjoy in the country of their settlement thus is that of an alien.

The broad categories of people identified in the Foreign Exchange Regulations Act (FERA) 1973 forming the NRI community are those Indian citizens who have indicated an indefinite period of stay abroad for employment, business, vocation or any other purpose; work abroad on assignments with foreign governments or international/regional agencies.

1. For instance, Srikant Dutt's definition of the term includes in its purview all the categories of Indian emigrants overseas. See his "India and the Overseas Indians", *India Quarterly* (New Delhi), vol.36, nos.3 and 4, July-December 1980, p.307; *India and the Third World: Altruism or Hegemony?* (London, 1984), pp.132-3.

Much confused in this regard is the Indian government too. Its spokesmen often used the term PIO to mean the INO as well as the people of Indian descendants who became citizens of country of their domicile. For example, see the Minister of External Affairs, P.V. Narasimha Rao's written answer to a Parliamentary question on population estimate of the Indians Overseas. *Lok Sabha Debates* (henceforth LSD), seventh series, vol.29, no.10, 22 July 1982, cols. 187-98. Also See *Rajya Sabha Debates* (hereafter referred to as RSD), vol.141, no.12, 10 March 1987, cols.94-104.
such as the United Nations Organisation; have been posted in Indian diplomatic missions abroad, and have been deputed by the Indian government on temporary assignments abroad.  

Who then constitute the category of Persons Resident in India (PRI)? According to the FERA, the PRI are either all Indian citizens who have been staying in India at any time after 25 March 1947, or foreign citizens who have indicated an indefinite period of stay in India for employment or business or vocation, or foreign citizens staying in India whose spouses are PRI, or citizens of India who, not having stayed in India at any time after 25 March 1947, come to India for any purpose indicating an indefinite period of stay.  

The NRIs would become PRI once they come back to India for an indefinite period of stay in the country. However, Indian citizens who go abroad for higher studies, educational training, medical treatment or any other purpose indicating their intention not to stay outside the country for an indefinite period, are considered as PRI even during their temporary absence from India. But the Indian students who take up jobs on completion of their studies abroad would attain the NRI status from the date of their joining the employment.  

The crux of the matter is that the sole criteria adopted to define the NRI are the person's intention as well as the duration of his stay outside India.

People of Indian Origin

The PIO belong to an altogether different category of the Indian communities overseas and represent a distinct phase in the history of

Indian emigration. Most of them emigrated as indentured labour during the British colonial period under the assisted emigration scheme. Unlike the NRIs, the PIO, as shown in the chart below, are, save the stateless category, well within the legal fabric of the country of their domicile. As such, their link with India is not political but purely sentimental. India is their cultural home. They keep alive their linkage with India through emotional, not political, bonds. Because they are no longer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indian Communities Overseas</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INO or NRIs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens of country of their adoption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* For example, PIO in Hong Kong.

** Until recently, a sizable number of the Indian Tamils in Sri Lanka were stateless.

Indians of India but the people of Indian descent who were either Indian citizens before their emigration or who lived in India during the period prior to 1947, or whose parents or grand parents were born in undivided India.

An NRI becomes a Person of Indian Origin when he acquires the citizenship of another country because the Indian Constitution does not envisage the system of dual citizenry. At the same time, a Person of Indian

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5. A detailed account of this can be found in the following part of this chapter.

Origin can acquire the Indian citizenship under Article 8 of the Indian Constitution as well as Sections 5(1) and 6(1) of the Citizenship Act of 1955.

**Overseas Indians**

The definition of the terms NRIs and PIO in the foregoing pages makes the distinction between the two conspicuous. An attempt would now be made to find out the relevance of the term 'Overseas Indians' in the context of the present study. Actually, the term and the category of Overseas Indians are the by-product of the British colonialism in India. As a specific term to denote the PIO, it came into force at the turn of the twentieth century when the conditions of the Indian emigrants abroad aroused a strong political protest in India against the British Indian government's apathetic attitude towards them. The meaning which the term then carried had a wider applicability covering all the Indian emigrants because India was a constituent part of the larger British Empire and, therefore, all in India and abroad were British subjects. With India's independence and the introduction of voluntary emigration to countries with which India established its diplomatic relations, the term became more generic designating, as observed in the beginning, both NRIs and PIO and thereby giving rise to vagueness, misconception and confusion about the Indians Overseas.

For the purpose of the present study, the following categories of the Indian emigrants are included within the definitional purview of the term Overseas Indians:

1) all those who acquired citizenship of the country of their domicile;

7. It provides citizenship to the PIO who are residing in any country if they are registered as Indian citizens by the diplomatic representative of India either before or after the commencement of the Indian Constitution. *The Constitution of India* (Delhi, 1972), p. 6.

8. For details see Basu, n. 6, pp. 113, 115.
ii) all those who did not, or could not have valid proof of their citizenship either of the country of residence, or of country of origin.

In other words, the entire Indian communities overseas minus the Non-Resident Indian nationals, are considered as Overseas Indians. They encompass a multiple category of Indian emigrants in terms of population characteristics and period and patterns of emigration as is evident from Table 1.1. An overwhelming majority of the Indians Overseas represent the Second Phase and only a minuscule section of them, mostly settled in Europe, belong to the Third Phase in the history of Indian emigration.

The emigrants of the First Phase stand out separately from these two groups. They do not fall within the wider ambit of categories identified under the Indian communities overseas for one of two reasons: either their emigration was followed by a gradual assimilation, so much so that it is extremely difficult to distinguish either the ethnic or the social characteristics of the Indian immigrants from the native people, or the emigrants became completely absorbed and naturalised in the country of their settlement.

The present study is about the Overseas Indians. It neither deals directly or indirectly with the problems of the ancient Indian emigrants nor the NRIs.


10. S.D. Muni, "Indians in South Asia: Socio-Economic Status and the Emerging Political Order", in I.J. Bahadur Singh, ed., Indians in South Asia (New Delhi, 1984), p.159. In Nepal, even the present ruling dynasty originated from India. Similarly, the ancestors of the two majority communities -the Sinhalese and the Sri Lankan Tamils -migrated from India at various times. The ancient Indian immigrant population in South-east Asia and East Africa got assimilated with the local population.
Nomenclature for the Overseas Indians

The catalogue of nomenclature used to denote the Overseas Indians is lengthy. It varies from country to country. In East Africa (Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania) the PIO are designated as "Asians", an agglomerative term meant for both the Indian and Pakistani descendants. This term, however, as used in East Africa, does not include Arabs or other people of Asian origin.

In North American countries, the term "East Indians" is used to mean the PIO; emigrants from Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, and all those South Asian descendants (predominantly Indians) who had migrated from West Indies, Fiji, South Africa and East Africa. The designation given to the PIO in Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago is also "East Indians". In Surinam they are being called as "East Indians" as well as "Hindustanis". Countries such as South Africa, Mauritius, Singapore, Malaysia, Burma and Fiji have however retained the plain nomenclature "Indian" to refer to the PIO. "Indian Tamils" is the name given to the PIO in Sri Lanka, while the Indian descendants in Nepal are called as "Madhesias". In Britain the Overseas Indians are classified under the monolithic category of "Commonwealth immigrants", a term used to classify all emigrants from the former British colonies, including India, but the term "Indians" is also widely in use.

Throughout the present study the terms "Indians", "Indians Overseas", "Overseas Indians", "Indians abroad", "PIO", "People of Indian descent" and "Indian Tamils" (in the case of Sri Lanka) are used interchangeably to mean the "Overseas Indians". Other terms such as "Asians" and "East Indians" have also been employed in relevant places so as to conform with current usage in those countries.
Table 1.1 provides a clear picture of different phases, patterns and modes of Indian emigration to several countries. Since Indian emigrants in ancient times are not considered as a part of the Overseas Indians category, we are concerned with analysing the process of Indian emigration during the colonial and post-colonial periods alone.

**Colonial Emigration**

From the point of view of the permanent settlement of a distinctive Indian population overseas, the massive movement of Indians to British, and to some extent, French and Dutch colonies was the legacy of the long span of British colonial rule in India. Incorporating labourers as the predominant component of the immigrant population, the emigration under colonial impetus was started in the early nineteenth century and continued up to the 1940s. Three inter-connected developments in the British Empire which contributed to the Indian labour emigration on a large scale can be identified here.

First, during the nineteenth century, the Imperial government needed a large, inexpensive manpower to protect and advance its strategic and economic interests by creating the overseas wealth of Britain through economic exploitation of the raw materials of the colonies. India provided a fertile source of a cheap labour force. Its colonisation by Britain entailed exploitation of Indian manpower to extract the untapped wealth of the colonies.

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### TABLE 1.1

**PHASES OF INDIAN EMIGRATION (ABOUT SECOND CENTURY A.D. - THE PRESENT)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Pattern of Emigration</th>
<th>Mode/System of Emigration</th>
<th>Nature of Emigrants</th>
<th>Region/Country to which emigrated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First</strong></td>
<td>Ancient period</td>
<td>Unassisted emigration</td>
<td>Voluntary emigration</td>
<td>Missionaries and Buddhist Pilgrims</td>
<td>Southeast Asia, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(About Second Century A.D. - Eighteenth Century)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Traders</td>
<td>East Africa, South east Asia, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>General population</td>
<td>India's neighbourhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers, priests, scholar-officials and princes to establish law and government</td>
<td>Southeast Asia, Sri Lanka, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Second</strong></td>
<td>Colonial period</td>
<td>Organised or assisted emigration (1830-1941)</td>
<td>Indenture system (1859-1916)</td>
<td>Labourers</td>
<td>South Africa, Fiji, Mauritius, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Surinam, Jamaica.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1830-1947)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kangani system (1833-1939)</td>
<td>Sri Lanka, Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Maistry system (1876-1941)</td>
<td>Burma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unassisted emigration (1830s-1940s)</td>
<td>Free or passage emigration or voluntary emigration</td>
<td>Petty contractors, merchants, bankers, labours, shopkeepers, pedlars, teachers, artisans, clerks, professionals, skilled and semi-skilled workers, political refugees</td>
<td>Sri Lanka; South, Central and East African countries; Southeast Asia; Europe and North America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cross-sea or trans-border movements</td>
<td>Workers, businessmen, Nepal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Involuntary emigration (1810s-1890s)</td>
<td>Kidnapping and forcible deportation</td>
<td>Forced banishment of harbours, office, convicts, jails</td>
<td>Malaysia, Mauritius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Professional and technicians</td>
<td>US, Canada, UK, New Zealand, Australia etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Third</strong></td>
<td>Post-colonial period</td>
<td>Unassisted emigration (since 1947)</td>
<td>Voluntary emigration</td>
<td>Professionals and technicians</td>
<td>US, Canada, UK, New Zealand, Australia etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(since 1947)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Skilled and semi-skilled labourers</td>
<td>West Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unassisted but regulated emigration (since 1947)</td>
<td>Contract labour emigration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Second, an organised system of the Indian labour emigration on a large scale began after the abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1833. The absolute exigency for the Indian labour arose due to three inter-related reasons: First, the manumitted slaves, afraid of losing their newly gained freedom, refused to work as plantation labour. Second, in the Caribbean the emancipated Blacks, once they regressed to their nomadic stage, became definitely restive and uneconomic from the viewpoint of the new European planters. Third, the abolition of slavery in the British Empire coincided with a period of intense economic activity in the colonies of Britain. This, along with the vacancies created by the departure of the Blacks, made the demand for labour increasingly high in the plantation sector. But the supply was not keeping pace with the rapidly multiplying wants of the landed proprietors. To ensure a constant supply of labour, the Imperial administration undertook frantic measures to introduce Asiatic, Chinese and even the newly manumitted slaves into several colonies. But all these proved failures. Finally, the Colonial Office in London found India as an ideal reservoir of cheap and disciplined manpower with an element of Calvinistic ethic of hard work to be drawn upon. It is thus a cruel irony of history that Black slavery in the Caribbean and the Mascarenes became "a legacy for a new system of slavery of Indians".

Third, economic underpinning was the most important determining force underlying the Indian labour emigration. For the great majority of Indians, emigration was not a natural process; nor did it take place out of emigres' free choice. Indeed, it was their impoverished condition that forced their recruitment as labour.

12. The argument was advanced by Hugh Tinker. See the first chapter, "The Legacy of Slavery", in Tinker, *Ibid.*
In addition to the economic factor as an inducing force for emigration, there were people whose emigration took place under pressure from certain local circumstances. Emigration was an escape route for people who were in trouble in their village or wanted by the police. Many emigrants were people who had left home in search of temporary employment. Some of the emigrants were misled about the distances they had to travel and the nature of employment.

Thus emigration largely relied upon both 'push' and 'pull' factors: the need of people to obtain relief from a situation which was no longer tolerable as well as the demand of colonialism. To the negative 'push' of land scarcity, there was the 'pull' of the dream.

During the colonial period, the growth of the Overseas Indian population was largely facilitated by three distinct patterns of emigration—Organised or Assisted emigration, Unassisted emigration and Involuntary emigration (see Table 1.1).

Assisted emigration was conducted under three systems of contract—Indenture, Kangany and Maistry.13 Indenture was a form of social contract in which the labourer remained under the personal jurisdiction of the master; the prerogative of the master, in practice, far exceeded his contractual rights. In the event of the original contract of indenture expiring, the labourer was usually re-indentured.14 A vast proportion of Indians Overseas population had been built up under the close grip of the Indenture system. Although it began to operate in the 1830s, the spectacular movement of indentured emigration took place in the 1880s and the 1890s.15

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15. For figures see Tinker, n.11, pp.56-57.
throughout the remainder of the indentured period, i.e. up to 1916 (legally, the indenture system was finally abolished in 1920 when the British Indian government implemented the Abolition of Indenture Act, 1916).

In the 1840s and 1850s, labour was supplied to Mauritius\(^{16}\) and British Guyana\(^{17}\) from Chota Nagpur. In the following decades a large proportion of labourers were exported from the rural districts of Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh to various colonies including several Caribbean countries,\(^{18}\) while the South Indian labourers continued to respond to demands from South Africa\(^{19}\) and Fiji.\(^{20}\) Among more than a dozen countries to which indentured emigrants were exported, a good portion went to Mauritius, Fiji, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica.

The early fading out of the Indenture system of emigration to Sri Lanka and Malaysia had facilitated the introduction of Kangani system for labour recruitment. Under this system, the British Indian government controlled and supervised the labour emigration through Kangani (labour headmen) who


were not only the leaders of the labour corps but also the principal agents for the recruitment and placing of Indian labour abroad for the colonial governments concerned. Kangani were authorised to obtain recruits only from their own districts of origin.21 As the system operated mostly in South India (until the Government of India placed a ban on labour emigration to Malaysia in 193822 and to Sri Lanka in 1939),23 a great majority of the emigrants were drawn from the impoverished and depressed section of the people in Tamil Nadu.

As far as labour recruitment to Burma was concerned, the Maistry system was adopted, in which some of the features of the Indenture system of recruitment were manifested.24 Under this system, a large number of South Indian labourers flocked into Burma;25 the process continued until the ban on emigration came in 1941.

The operation of the assisted emigration system led to the inauguration of 'free' or 'passage' emigration of Indians in response to enormous jobs and commercial opportunities in several parts of the British Empire, including those colonies where the indentured labour population flourished

23. For details see Chapter IV.
with unabated vigour. Most of the Indians went to East Africa\textsuperscript{26} under this system of emigration. Other countries which received passage emigrants were South Africa, Burma, Singapore, Malaysia and Sri Lanka.

Indian immigration to Europe and North America\textsuperscript{27} also took place under the voluntary system of emigration. Telescoped as it was into a few years in the first two decades of the twentieth century, the Indian emigrants to North America was only a small part of the large Indian diaspora in almost all continents\textsuperscript{26}. Most of the emigres were labourers, professionals and students. Most of the Sikhs who made up the majority of the Indian immigrants to America in the early twentieth century, were workers and farmers.\textsuperscript{29} As regards Britain, Bengali Muslims and Gujaratis were the prominent groups of Indian emigrants during the nineteenth century. After the Second World War, a new wave of immigration pulled into its vortex the middle class and rich peasantry from the same caste, religions and regional communities. In the first half of the twentieth century, Sikh soldiers,

\begin{enumerate}
\item[26.] Kenya was one of the few countries to which there was no labour emigrated under the assisted system of emigration. Uganda had its share of Indian indentured labour. It was toward the end of the nineteenth century that the British African government negotiated with the British Indian government for the import of labourers to build the Ugandan railways. Out of 32,000 workers who were exported to East Africa, all but 6,724 were either repatriated, invalidated, or had died. J.S. Mangat, \textit{A History of the Asians in East Africa} (Oxford, 1969), p.39. On Indian emigration to East Africa see H.E. Mohamed, \textit{The Asian Legacy in Africa and the White Man's Color Culture} (New York, 1979), pp.1-171 and Robert G. Gregory, \textit{India and East Africa: A History of Race Relations Within the British Empire 1890-1939} (Oxford, 1971), chapters I and II.
\item[27.] For an exhaustive account of the Indian emigration to North America, see Joan M. Jensen, \textit{Passage from India: Asian Indian Immigrants in North America} (New Haven, 1986).
\item[28.] See \textit{Ibid.}, p. 1.
\item[29.] Punjabi emigration to California began at the turn of the twentieth century. For a succinct account of this subject see Karen Leonard, "Punjabi Pioneers in California: Political Skills on a New Frontier", \textit{South Asia} (New South Wales), vol.12, no.2, December 1989, pp.69-81.
\end{enumerate}
professionals, pedlars, money changers, etc. were the other important
groups of Indian emigres in Britain.30

The system of emigration to India's neighbourhood can also be described
as one of a series of cross-sea or trans-border movements of Indian
workers. Most of the emigres of this pattern were initially temporary
sojourners. Their frequent across the border movement later led to
shifting of families and thereby created a permanent settlement. Till 1937
Burma was a part of the Indian administrative system, with the result that
there were no regulations properly governing the trans-border movements of
Indians between India and Burma. Similarly, since Sri Lanka was governed
from Madras till 1802, the cross-sea traffic of labourers to the island and
back was a common phenomenon. Such movements of workers from Tamil Nadu
continued to take place on a minor scale even after the termination
of the assisted system of emigration. In the case of Nepal, the settlement
of a large number of Indians, especially in the Terai region, was
attributed to its geographical proximity, with the open and contiguous
border, and the ethnic affinities with people across the border.
Significantly, the Indian immigration to Nepal has been a continuous
process even in the post-independence period under the Peace and Friendship
Treaty of 1950.31

To a minuscule number of emigres in a few colonies, the pattern of
emigration was involuntary--kidnapping and forceful deportation, and forced

30. For a brief sketch on this subject see G.S. Aurora, "Some Aspects of
Social Adjustment of Indian Workers in Great Britain", in Anirudha
Gupta, ed., Indians Abroad: Asia and Africa (New Delhi, 1971), pp.44-
54.

31. See Articles 6 and 7 of the Treaty. India, Lok Sabha Secretariat,
Foreign Policy of India: Text of Documents 1947-59 (New Delhi, 1959),
pp.31-33. The problems arose out of this peculiar kind of emigration
are discussed in Paramanand, "Indian Community in Nepal and the
Nepalese Community in India: The problem of National Integration",
banishment of convicts. The former was a part of the illegal export of coolies with the clandestine support of the local officers-in-charge of emigration. It was carried out mostly to the West Indies through Pondicherry and Calcutta in the later part of the nineteenth century. 32

The British government also considered convicts as cheap labour when the demand for labour in the colonies made a steep rise. Mauritius and Malaysia were benefitted from the labour of convicts, the greater number of whom had been banished for murder and serious crimes. 33

Post-Colonial Emigration

The pattern of large-scale post-colonial Indian immigration into the advanced industrial societies of the West and few others in Pacific region and oil producing countries of West Asia has been unassisted and voluntary. Other salient features of the immigration under the Third Phase are: unlike the Second Phase, the emigres were not unlettered labourers who lived under the condition of dire poverty and duress at home, but highly educated professionals and skilled or semi-skilled industrial workers. Nor did they move overseas only in response to the overwhelming demand of the economy of the West, or save an economy which was at the brink of disaster as it was the case with the nineteenth century British economy, but with a view to "better themselves". Initially, the receiving countries in Europe and North America accommodated them because they were found useful and easily available source for the advancement of science and technology in their countries. Later, when the professional emigration acquired a momentum of its own, the receiving countries had no other recourse except imposing


control over the rate of flow of emigrants. To another set of countries, mostly in the Arabian Gulf region, the Indian emigration has primarily been to meet the bourgeoining needs of human resources of those countries in their development. The need for the immigrant work force has been created by the shortage of indigenous skilled and unskilled labourers and the booming oil economy.

Having said this, the motivating factors--'pull' and 'push'--underlying their emigration should be viewed altogether in a different perspective: unemployment, under employment, poor working conditions, low wages and competition for higher posts have been the push factors. The common pull factors for the emigrants both to the West and West Asia have been the lure of better living and working conditions and handsome salaries. Some specific pull factors relevant only to the Indian emigres to the West are prospect of advanced training and practice and better opportunities for their children. Knowledge of the English language and presence of, and contact with, Indians already settled in the metropolitan countries of Europe and North America provided an advantage for the entry of the Indian emigrants to these countries.

Another important characteristic feature of the professional emigration to the West has been its 'non-contract basis' as a system of emigration. Unlike the immigrants to West Asia, their emigration was facilitated by the mere possession of a visa issued on the strength of the emigres' professional qualifications. A substantial number of Indians who emigrated primarily on student visas for higher studies, were attracted by the rosy

picture of prospects in the West and settled in the country of their domicile on completion of their studies. With the introduction of several regulations, the 'primary' Indian immigration seems to have declined, especially to Britain. However, what keeps the cycle of immigration from India to the West moving still, is the 'secondary immigration', i.e., emigration of dependants of those emigres who became nationals of countries of their domicile.

The fact to be reckoned in the context of Indian emigration to the UK is that the Overseas Indian population in Britain does not share a common home of departure. Although an overwhelming majority of them emigrated directly from India, a significant number arrived in Britain via East Africa and a small proportion came from the Caribbean countries, South Africa (as political refugees) and Mauritius.

The process of emigration to West Asia has been voluntary and temporary in its nature. However, it has been, unlike the professional emigration, regulated by the Indian government. Most of the emigres were semi-skilled and skilled workers, recruited by agents operating in major metropolis of India. As such, they were governed by the contract detailing nature of job, duration of employment, emoluments, etc.

To sum up, the Indian emigration pattern was mixed: both 'assisted' and 'unassisted' in the case of almost all the countries except Nepal and some East African countries, for which the prominent pattern of emigration was

35. In 1971 about 80,000 Asians who were born in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, were domiciled in Britain. Hugh Tunker, The Banyan Tree: Overseas Emigrants from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh (Oxford, 1977), p.166.


only 'unassisted'. Despite several patterns and modes of emigration, a considerable number of Indians trooped to overseas colonies only under the indenture system. In other words, a majority of the present day Overseas Indians are the descendants of the indentured labourers. Indentured immigration was not confined to the British colonies and settlements. Apart from thirteen British colonies, there were five French colonies, one Dutch and a Danish colony to which organised emigration was at one time or the other undertaken. 38

Another point to be emphasised is that the entire colonial and post-colonial emigrations were characterised by a two-way process. Several Indians after completion of their emigration period returned to their mother land; of whom, many, mostly during the colonial period, re-emigrated to either the colony of their first emigration or new places. Out of 30 million Indians who emigrated to different parts of the world during the period between 1834 and 1937, around 24 million returned home, resulting in the net emigration of only 6 million. 39

### III

**POPULATION ESTIMATE OF THE OVERSEAS INDIANS**

There is a considerable statistical bewilderment about the exact number of Overseas Indians. The usual difficulties encountered in any attempt to enumerate their total population are: first, the census figures are often inflated. As such, collecting reliable cross national data regarding the Overseas Indians is a difficult task. In some countries censuses are not taken regularly. Second, in several countries Indians are too small in number to be considered for separate enumeration. 40 In many others they

38. Lanka Sundaram, *India in World Politics* (Delhi, 1944), p.186.


40. For example, the population of PIO in Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana, Lesotho, Philippines, Qatar, Seychelles and Somalia is less than 500. There are several countries where the number of Overseas Indians is even less than 100. See for figures LSD, n.1.
are classified under a monolithic category and computed with one or more minority groups. Another intricacy is that there are no separate figures available for the total number of Indian descendants who migrated from, for example, West Indies, South and East Africa, Fiji and Mauritius to Britain, Canada and the US. Rather, they are identified, as a sub-category, with other emigres from the country of their departure (for instance, the Caribbean immigrants and the Asians of East Africa in Britain) to form a broad category such as 'Asians' and 'Commonwealth immigrants'. Above all, there is a high risk involved in relying on the Indian government's estimates because, as observed in the beginning, its figures suffer from a defect that in some cases it comprised both Indian nationals and PIO. All these difficulties suggest that almost all population estimates of the Indians Overseas are unreliable. As such, any attempt to compile accurate and definitive statistics will not be productive.

Despite these difficulties, various rough estimates made from time to time, as shown in Table 1.2, suffice to give a fair idea about the total Indians Overseas population.

**TABLE 1.2**

OVERSEAS INDIANS' POPULATION ESTIMATES, 1930s-1980s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Estimate</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1920s</td>
<td>2.4 million 4²</td>
<td>The enumeration was for the year 1928-29. In 1929-30, their population was estimated at 2,610,000. ⁴³</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

41. Indians in Tanzania and Zimbabwe, for example, are not only counted with other Asians but also Europeans and Arabs. In Britain, the Commonwealth immigrant category comprised of Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, West Indians and others. The population of Indians and Pakistanis in East Africa is combined together to form 'Asians'. As such, it is very difficult to know how many of them are Indians. All emigres from Asian countries to the U.S. are grouped under 'Asians'.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Estimate</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930s</td>
<td>3.51 million$^{44}$</td>
<td>Another estimate available for the same period was 3717043.$^{45}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940s</td>
<td>4 million$^{46}$</td>
<td>Kondapi's estimate was 3468873$^{47}$ and Rajkumar's enumeration (4.5 million) exceeded all other estimates.$^{48}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950s</td>
<td>4.34 million$^{49}$</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960s</td>
<td>7 million$^{50}$</td>
<td>Another source put their number at 8 million$^{51}$. Heimsath and Mansingh enumerated the total for the mid-1960s as between 4 and 5 million$^{52}$. Closer to their number were figures (4 million) compiled by the Indian Labour Bureau of the Ministry of Labour and Employment$^{53}$. Keeping in mind the previous decade's position, the figure nearer to reality was 6 million.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>7.9 million$^{54}$</td>
<td>Tandon estimated at 6.5 million$^{55}$. Tinker's estimate was 3468873. $^{47}$ and Rajkumar's enumeration (4.5 million) exceeded all other estimates.$^{48}$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^{44}$ N. Gangulee, n.13, p.238. He counted only sixteen countries.

$^{45}$ Dharam Yash Dev, *Our Countrymen Abroad: A Brief Survey of the Problems of Indians in Foreign Lands* (Allahabad, 1940), pp.63-65. Figures are from Indians in sixty one countries.

$^{46}$ Davis, n.39, p.98.

$^{47}$ Kondapi, n.13, pp.527-8.


$^{49}$ The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of External Affairs, Sadath Ali Khan's reply to a question, LSD., second series, vol.11, no.5, 14 February 1958, cols.800-1.


$^{54}$ Singh, n.9, pp.259-61. His enumeration did not include 2.6 million Indian nationals.

The official figure of the Government of India for the early part of the 1980s was around 6.6 million (besides 4.2 million Indian nationals). Around 8.4 million, besides 3.3 million Indian citizens, was Singh's enumeration. Jain's figure of 12 million covered both the PIO as well as the Indian nationals. So was the figure (i.e. 12 million) given by an Overseas Indian. On the side of overestimation, nothing can surpass the Indian government's figure of 89.3 million (both PIO and Indian nationals) in 1987. Some official statistics published in the newspaper fantastically underestimated the Overseas Indians population at 2770790.

Whatever the closest estimate to reality, the most important conclusion is that there has been a phenomenal increase (about 6 million) in the total volume of the Indians Overseas population since India's independence.

Factors attributed to such a steep increase were: the consistent natural
growth of the Indians Overseas population in several countries as is evident from Appendix II and the large scale influx of Indian emigres into Europe and North America. There was a decrease in number of Indians in East Africa since the mid-sixties following, in some cases, immigration caused by growing political uncertainties and expulsion. For example, in the case of Uganda, there was immigration to Britain and, to a certain extent, India. However, this hardly affected the total volume of the Overseas Indians population in the 1980s. This was because most of those who emigrated from East Africa found their destination in the UK, where they were categorised under Commonwealth immigrants. Sri Lanka is the only other country, among a dozen countries where the Indians form an important group, in which the Overseas Indians population registered a sharp decline (from 12 per cent in 1953 to 5.5 per cent in 1981) due to their repatriation to India under two bilateral agreements signed in 1964 and 1974.65

At present, thePIO form the majority of the total population in Mauritius (68 per cent) and Guyana (51 per cent); the single largest ethnic group in Fiji (50 per cent) and Surinam (37 per cent). Trinidad and Tobago is different from most other states in that all its peoples are minorities [the Indians are the second largest group (40 per cent) after the Blacks (43 per cent)]. In several other countries the Indians' position is third or fourth in the population ranking -- Malaysia (9 per cent), Singapore (6.4 per cent), Sri Lanka (5.5 per cent). They also form an important group in French Guiana (12 per cent). Everywhere else, the PIO are small and marginal in political terms, but a sensitive group in the economic context, forming less than 3 per cent of the total population.66

65. This subject basically forms the main theme of the present study. See Chapters V-VII.

66. See Appendix II.
IV

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have endeavoured to show the evolution of the Overseas Indian community in different parts of the world. It is evident from the foregoing analysis that the majority of the Overseas Indians emigrated during the British rule in India and immigration of only a minuscule section of them took place in the post-colonial period.

The history of colonial emigration is fairly long, spread over a century, in the making of which the British Imperial policy played a conspicuous role. The 'Coolies' who constituted the core of the Indians Overseas population were the victims of the pressures of poverty at home, which drove them across the sea to run the economy of the British Empire. Exploited and despised, even during the colonial period, the British government, when it departed from colonies, left their future at the mercy of post-colonial governments of the independent states.

The post-colonial emigrants represented a different echelon in the Overseas Indian community. Most of them were skilled and semi-skilled labourers and professionals, whose emigration took place on a voluntary basis and under circumstances different from that of the colonial emigres.

To most post-colonial societies, the Overseas Indians are Indians, while India consider them foreign nationals of Indian origin. For the Overseas Indians, however, India is their ancestral home.