CHAPTER VI

INDIAN COMMUNITY IN BRITAIN
A legacy of the British Raj in India is the presence in Britain of about a million people of Indian origin, consisting of those who migrated directly from India and those who came in via former British colonies in Africa. By virtue of their number and economic influence, they exert notable influence on the politico-economic and social life in Britain. Their contribution to the economy, politics and society has been widely recognised across the political spectrum in the country. Observers have pointed repeatedly how the Indian diaspora exerts an important influence on the bilateral relationship between India and Britain. The significance of the role the immigrants play in the relationship between the two countries is evident from the space and time devoted to it by the media and the attention paid to it by the Indian and British governments, political parties, chambers of commerce and associations of business and industry, educational institutions and external fora.¹

A spirit of tolerance and assimilation towards different races inhabiting the commonwealth was the basic promise of Britain's racial policy during the post war

1. K.N. Malik and Peter Robb, eds., India and Britain : Recent Past and Present Challenges (New Delhi, 1994), pp.31-32.
period. This policy rested on the belief of the British people in the concepts of multi-racialism and racial equality. When the Commonwealth became a multi-racial association after the independence of India, Pakistan and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in 1947 and 1948, Britain had little difficulty in harmonising its functions with the ethos of a multi-racial Commonwealth.  

Britain's immigration policy in the post war period was to promote the national economy and to relieve distress by "admitting immigrants who satisfy the Home Secretary that they are desirable, so far as may fairly be done without detriment to the interests of the existing population". 3 This policy, largely influenced by economic priorities, was free from the racial factor at least until the 1960s, when Britain first introduced legislation to restrict Commonwealth immigration. Thus, after the Second World War, a Commonwealth citizen, including an Indian citizen was treated at par with a British citizen, and whatever his colour, a Commonwealth citizen had absolute right of entry into Britain and, upon entry, to enjoy all the rights, privileges and immunities that were open to a


3. Ibid, pp.188-89.
British citizen. However, the racial factor got slowly entangled with British immigration policy from 1958 onwards following racial clashes in certain localities in Britain which gave rise to tension.4

The Commonwealth Immigrants Bill, 1961 sought to control the immigration of British protected persons and citizens of the Commonwealth for an initial period of five years. The Commonwealth Immigrants Bill, 1961, sought, among other things, to control the immigration of British protected persons and of citizens of the Commonwealth and of the Irish Republic for an initial period of five years. Persons exempted from the provisions of the bill included those born in Britain: citizens of the United Kingdom and colonies holding passports issued by the government of Britain, etc. India expressed her dissatisfaction in this regard. Lakshmi Menon, India's deputy minister for external affairs, indicated that in view of the British legislation, the Indian government might review the free entry into India by holders of British passports.5

Relations between Britain and other Asian and African Commonwealth countries started deteriorating over the

5. Ibid.
question of immigration in the late 1960s. In 1968, the 'Kenyanisation' programme in Kenya led to the easing out of all British passport holding Asians from jobs and business enterprises and were almost virtually thrown out of Kenya. Now, these British passport holders decided to settle down in Britain, and thus causing, in the process, new social tensions. Britain was thus in the horns of a dilemma. As a result, in 1968, the Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1968, was passed which provided for the application of immigration controls to citizens of the United Kingdom and colonies, who, inspite of having British passports had "a substantial connection" with Britain. It provided, first, that all citizens of the United Kingdom and the colonies would be subject to immigration controls, except those who had been born, adopted, or naturalised in Britain, or who had obtained citizenship by registration under the British Nationality Acts of 1948 and 1964. Anybody who held a British passport and whose father or paternal grandfather fulfilled any of the above conditions would also be exempted from control. This provision virtually invalidated the British passports held by the Asians in East Africa.6

Further controls on Commonwealth immigration were introduced when Edward Heath became Prime Minister in 1970. He gave a clear indication of his thinking on Commonwealth, when the Immigration Act, 1971, was enforced. It placed Commonwealth citizens and aliens, for the first time, under a single system of immigration control. The intention seemed to be to discourage immigration from the Commonwealth countries of Asia and Africa and also to assure the British people, as promised in the Conservative Manifesto of 1970, that "there would be no further large scale permanent immigration". The Act created a new right, the "right of abode", for a certain kind of Commonwealth citizens, the Patrials. A non Patrial would need a work permit, specifying his job and place of employment, to gain entry into Britain, and he would also be subjected to certain conditions of stay. A Patrial, on the other hand, would be free from immigration control, he might freely take up permanent employment and travel at will to and from Britain. A Patrial, defined as one (1) who was a British citizen by birth or who became a citizen by adoption, registration, or naturalization; (2) who had come from across the sea and who had at any time previously

settled in Britain for a continuous period of five years or more (3) or who, being a Commonwealth citizen, had a parent born in the United Kingdom. On the whole, the Act discriminated between those who held British passports, between immigrants from white and non-white Commonwealth countries, and between coloured immigrants. 8

The British Nationality bill of 1981, also imposed stringent restrictions on immigration to Britain. Under this bill, people who have been registered or naturalised in Britain will have the same rights to transmit their citizenship as people born in Britain, and that children born and then resident in Britain for ten years will be able to apply for citizenship as an entitlement, irrespective of their parents' status. 9

Peace and tranquility in Britain was seriously disrupted by a spate of riots in different parts of the country from April to July 1981. These riots, which affected Birmingham, Brixton, Liverpool, Manchester, Southall, etc. caused damage to properties worth about £45 million. Although some commentators have collectively


characterised these riots as 'racial', a closer look into their nature and participation revealed that the riots were caused by a combination of factors, including race, unemployment, hooliganism, alienation of the youth, unsatisfactory housing conditions, suspicion over the impartiality of the police, etc. ¹⁰

However, by and large, there was practically no Indian involvement in these riots. The riots that were sparked off in Southall, which has the largest concentration of immigrants from the Indian subcontinent in London, was caused by the intervention of racist elements from outside. The Indian immigrants in Southall are basically from Punjab and it has been widely recognised that community relations between whites and non-whites in Southall were by and large harmonious. In 1979 and 1981, when Southall witnessed riots, they were caused by skinheads and white extremist members of the National Front through provocative actions against the Asians. ¹¹

In September 1986, the British government made it mandatory for citizens of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Ghana and Nigeria to have a valid visa to enter the United

¹¹ Ibid, p. 56.
Kingdom. This was severely criticised by all these countries and had the potentiality to embitter the relationship between India and Britain.\textsuperscript{12} A spokesman for the Indian government stated that the decision would cause "avoidable and unnecessary hardship and harassment to bonafide Indian visitors and adversely affect the long standing friendly relations between the peoples of India and Britain".\textsuperscript{13}

Britain went in for immigration control for a variety of reasons like social tensions that arose from colour prejudice and problems in sectors like housing, employment and education. However, there is no reason to question the commitment of the British government to multi-racialism. At the government level specially, it was genuine and unequivocal.\textsuperscript{14}

The presence of Indians in Britain can be traced to the early seventeenth century. Available records refer to Indians brought to England as slaves and domestic servants. Rozina Visram, in her book, \textit{Ayahs, Lascars and Princes}, also refers to the condition of Indians or Asiatics, as

\textsuperscript{12} The Times (London), 2 September 1986.
\textsuperscript{13} The Times, 4 September 1986.
\textsuperscript{14} Vivekanandan, n.2, pp.205-6.
Looking at the historical profile of the immigration of Indians into Britain, the migration period of more than three decades can be divided into five phases, each varying in the volume of flow and length of phase. The phases reflected both changes in British immigration policy and political events like the 'Kenyanisation' programme in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. Migration from India has been in progress for a very long time, but on a large scale it is mainly a post-Second World War phenomenon.

The first trickle of Indians to Britain occurred during the period of the British Raj and involved sailors, students and emissaries. However, a major influx of Indians to Britain did not take place until the 1950s and early 1960s when the expanding British economy called for more labour. Indians came to Britain, brought their families over and eventually re-established their families and accumulated material assets in the new surroundings. Chain migration was the main feature of the transplantation of Indian communities in Britain during this period.

Towards the end of the 1960s and early 1970s, a comparatively new kind of overseas Indian community arose, that of 'twice migrants'. These people were from East African countries like Kenya and Uganda where the Africanisation programme was taking place.¹⁷

In 1949, there were only 8,000 Indians in Britain including professionals, businessmen, students, sailors and others. About 1,000 were doctors, 100 practicing in London.¹⁸ The number increased considerably between 1957 and 1962 when a large member of Indians arrived in Britain to beat the Commonwealth Immigrant Act, 1961, which became enforceable in 1962. Most of these immigrants came from Punjab, mainly from Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur districts. The main driving force for their immigration to Britain was socio-economic status. They were inspired to immigrate mainly by the post war shortage of labour in the expanding British economy and the general portrayal of Britain as a 'land of great opportunities'. They were mostly people who found jobs in factories around Southall and Heathrow airport or in the West Midlands. They had little or no political influence and they were in no position to

¹⁸. Sodhi Ram, n.16.
influence Indo-British relations.\textsuperscript{19}

In the next period, between 1962 and 1974, two groups of people of Indian origin came to England: (a) those who came directly from India on vouchers issued for employment in Britain; and (b) people of Indian origin from the East African countries, who were British passport holders. Those who came directly from India were educated - some were doctors, engineers, lawyers and teachers. Many of them were political activists and many among them had jobs which were of lower status than their educational qualifications and had to face racial discrimination from neo-fascist groups in Britain like the National Front.\textsuperscript{20} The coloured population in Britain in 1958 was only 1,90,000 out of which about 50,000 were from the Indian subcontinent.\textsuperscript{21}

In 1981, Britain had a coloured population of about 2.3 million, of which about 7 lakhs were from the Indian subcontinent with an Indian component of about 4 lakhs

\textsuperscript{19} Malik and Robb, n.1, pp.35-37.
\textsuperscript{21} UK, House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates, Session 1957-58, Vol.585, Col.1422.
mainly drawn from a few districts of Punjab.\textsuperscript{22} The 1961 census shows that there were 2,000 Commonwealth immigrants in Southall — 1,600 from India.\textsuperscript{23}

The second group of Indian immigrants who came from the East African countries were mainly of Gujarati origin — skilled workers, businessmen, middle level managers and professionals such as doctors, lawyers and engineers.\textsuperscript{24}

The Indians in Britain have been one of the rapidly growing groups. The table below shows the growth of the Indian population in Britain over the years.\textsuperscript{25}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>5,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>10,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>17,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>3,07,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>3,90,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983-85</td>
<td>7,63,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988-89</td>
<td>8,00,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{22} Vivekanandan, n.10, p.52.
\textsuperscript{23} The Times, 9 June 1976.
\textsuperscript{24} Malik and Robb, n.1, p.38.
\textsuperscript{25} Vaughan Robinson, "The New Indian middle class in Britain" Ethnic and Racial Studies (London), Vol.11, No.4, November 1988, pp.463-64.
At the outset, it is important to note the basic characteristics of immigration from India to the industrialised world in the period since independence. For an overwhelming proportion of these migrants, the destinations were the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom, possibly because of common ties with the English language. However, the following table shows the trend of immigration from India to the United Kingdom from 1979 to 1990. It shows that immigration slowed down in the 1970s and stabilised at a significantly lower level in the 1980s. It also shows that migration flows to the United Kingdom has been heavier before the Nationality Bill was introduced in 1981.26

### TABLE - 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>United Kingdom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>9,270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>7,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>6,590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>5,410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>5,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>5,140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>5,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>4,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>4,610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>5,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>4,580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>5,040</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table-2 shows the dimension and significance of immigration from India to the United Kingdom.27

**TABLE -2 (number of persons)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>1,25,600</td>
<td>83,040</td>
<td>51,480</td>
<td>2,60,120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in this Table show that the average inflow of immigrants from India to the United Kingdom was to the tune of 12,560 persons per annum in the 1960s but dropped to 8304 in the 1970s and further dropped to 5148 in the 1990s.

Unfortunately, no information is available on the occupational distribution or the skill composition of immigrants from India to the United Kingdom. It is assumed that until the early 1960s a large portion of emigrants from India to Britain was made up of unskilled, semiskilled or skilled workers. This was attributable in part to the post-war labour shortage in Britain and in part to the absence of immigration controls on Commonwealth citizens. The patterns of immigration, as also the underlying factors, were perhaps reinforced by post colonial ties and

27. Ibid.

For Britain, data are not available prior to July 1962. Hence the figures on immigration to the United Kingdom in the columns for 1961-70 and 1951-60 relate to the periods 1962-70 and 1962-90 respectively.
the associated bonds with the English language. This conjecture is borne out by some indirect sample survey evidence from the United Kingdom. The Labour Force Survey 1987-1989, estimated the occupational distribution by sex among ethnic groups and found the following composition for the work force of Indian origin. Among males, 55 per cent were engaged in non-manual work (of which 41 per cent were in managerial or professional occupations with the remaining 14 per cent were in clerical or other non-manual occupations) and 45 per cent were engaged in normal work (of which 19 per cent were in craft or skill based occupations while the remaining 26 per cent were in other manual, presumably unskilled, occupations). Among females, 63 per cent were engaged in non-manual work (of which 23 per cent were in managerial or professional occupations while the remaining 40 per cent were in clerical or other non-manual occupations) and 37 per cent were engaged in manual work (of which 12 per cent were in craft or skill based occupations while the remaining 25 per cent were in other manual, presumably unskilled, occupations). It needs to be stressed that these proportions do not quite reflect on fresh migrants from India because, by late 1980s, the work force of Indian origin in Britain was not made up of the first generation Indians alone, but included second generation, if not third
The 1991 British census was the first to include a question on ethnic status. The ethnic group of Indians as enumerated was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indians</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total born in Britain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>840225</td>
<td>417364</td>
<td>352448</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As per this census they constituted 1.5 percent of British population.

The Indian immigrants in Britain tended to live in more populous regions, the majority living in the South East and West Midlands and North-West. The Indian professionals make a lot of contribution to British life in particular and to Indo-British relationship in general. Not only are they actively engaged in primary and secondary health care, either as general practitioners, consultants, psychologists or specialists in other particular branches of medical care, they are employed in educational, business

or the financial sector also. Many are scientists, barristers, solicitors, civil servants, architects or in the media or cultural positions. However, according to the 1991 census, Indians are the largest single group among all the ethnic minorities in Britains.

Most immigrant Indians in Britain today are British, and not Indian, citizens. They are a heterogeneous lot, as far as language, religion and communities are concerned. They are not just isolated individuals, but are members of a great number of Indian communities and are independent citizens of Britain. Indians in Britain are getting themselves assimilated deeper into British life, more through their children born in Britain. The two principal languages spoken in Britain by the Indian community are Punjabi and Gujarati. Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Tamil and Marathi are also present, though many young Indians in Britain understand only English. Among the religions, Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Jainism, Christianity, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and Judaism, all have adherents among Indians in Britain. The main Hindu communities, whether from India or East Africa, are large groups such as the Patels,

32. Ibid.
Lohanas, Mistrys or Punjabi Jats. Among the Gujaratis, the Swaminarayan Hindu sect is very popular. Many educated and professional Hindus from West Bengal are followers of Rama Krishna Vivekananda centres. The largest Muslim communities from India are from South Gujarat — from places like Surat and Broach. Pertinently, the oldest Indian community association in Britain, established as early as 1863, was that of the Parsis (Zoroastrians). 33

Indians in the United Kingdom, by and large, are structured around open and closed networks. Through family, caste, professional, ethnic or religious networks, small groups function successfully and coherently, taking into account, the Indian 'context'. In Britain too, the Indian immigrants operated along the same sort of codes and customary practice and amassed large fortunes, while at the same time, strengthening their religious and caste identities. Indians, on the whole, came to Britain with more complete family units compared to Pakistanis, Bangladeshis or West Indians and the joint family system has helped to ensure a better deal for the Indian youth in Britain. However, presently, there are signs that the joint family system in Britain among Indians is slowly

33. Burjor Avari, "Becoming British, Remaining Indian: A Point of View About Indians in Britain", in Malik and Robb, n.1, pp.295-96.
breaking down. Indians in Britain have worked their way to the top positions in various walks of British life, coping with various kinds of stresses and discriminations (mainly racial). 34

The economic success of Indians has been recognised. It is reflected in a generally prosperous profile of the members of various Indian communities. There are proportionally more people of higher professional status among Indians than among other ethnic communities and thus the level of earned income is relatively high. 35

Many of today's wealthy Indians in Britain practically started with nothing, but ideas. With ideas, however, went many other things, commercial skills and vital cultural capital such as hard work, thrift, etc. They also learnt lessons from past experiences in Gujarat and East Africa and were quick to grasp business opportunities as soon as they saw them. The entrepreneurial system which was ushered in by the Conservative government after 1979 provided these Indians with a lot of opportunities. Starting from a small but tenacious hold over small retailing, the Indian entrepreneurs have branched out over

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the last ten years or so in sectors as diverse as textile manufacturing, super market, fast foods, luxury hotels, property and various financial services, while simultaneously expanding their hold on independent retailing.\textsuperscript{36} Nazmu Virani who was voted the Asian of the year in 1994-95 came to own 23 hotels and 770 pubs worth £650 million. The corporate wealth of the top 100 Indians owned companies in Britain must be running into billions of pounds.\textsuperscript{37}

Part of this wealth is channelled to kith and kin in India and through remittances sent to India. But, a large amount is re-invested, mostly in further business improvements and expansions, in Britain. The Indian government has also shown keenness to promote investments in India by the NRI's (Non-Resident Indians).\textsuperscript{38} The following table shows estimated composition of remittances to India from Britain and Australia (in Rs. million).\textsuperscript{39}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|}
\hline

36. Ibid. \\
37. Ibid. \\
38. Burjor Avari, n.33, pp.320-21. \\
39. Nayyar, n.26, pp.44-45. \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

251
Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Britain and Australia (in Rs. million)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970-1</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971-2</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972-3</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973-4</td>
<td>442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974-5</td>
<td>443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975-6</td>
<td>620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976-7</td>
<td>590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977-8</td>
<td>1,026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978-9</td>
<td>1,013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979-80</td>
<td>1,613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-1</td>
<td>2,548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981-2</td>
<td>2,195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982-3</td>
<td>2,494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983-4</td>
<td>2,460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984-5</td>
<td>2,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985-6</td>
<td>3,224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986-7</td>
<td>3,675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987-8</td>
<td>3,740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988-9</td>
<td>3,236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989-90</td>
<td>3,488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-1</td>
<td>4,844</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is evident from the above table that, beginning in the mid-seventies, there was an increase in the remittances from Britain and Australia and the increase continued through the second half of the 1980s to reach a level of Rs. 4,844 million in 1990-91.40

The outstanding deposits at the end of each year to the foreign currency non-resident accounts in India in pound sterling accounts and the estimated inflows during

40. Ibid.
each year in pound sterling accounts from the NRIs in Britain are evident from the table given below.  

Table 4  
Foreign currency Non-resident Accounts in India: Stocks and Flows  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Outstanding deposits at the end of the year</th>
<th>Estimated inflows during the year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pound sterling Accounts (In £ million)</td>
<td>Pound sterling accounts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(In £ million)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981-2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982-3</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983-4</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984-5</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985-6</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986-7</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987-8</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>-84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988-9</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989-90</td>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-1</td>
<td>89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991-2</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that in pound sterling denominated accounts, outstanding deposits increased at a comparable pace from £20 million at the end of 1980-1 to £218 million at the end of 1984-5, stagnated in the range of £200 million during the mid-1980s, declined in subsequent years but registered a substantial increase to attain a peak level of £445 million in 1991-2;  

therefore, the net inflows which were negligible or negative during the second half of the 1980s were, surprisingly, large and positive in 1991-2.\textsuperscript{42}

**EDUCATIONAL CONTRIBUTION OF INDIAN IMMIGRANTS**

One of the biggest educational contribution of India to Britain lies in the migration of vast numbers of Indian trained doctors and other professionals since the Second World War.\textsuperscript{43} Out of this substantial gift of valued and skilled personnel are emerging the second, third and fourth generations of Indian youngsters who are achieving so highly in educational terms. Another factor is the East African factor. This has made substantial contribution towards Indian achievement as children from the East African Asian families have a much better command over English, which is an absolutely vital key to any sort of educational achievement in Britain and other parts of the world. Indians, by and large, avoid being trapped in white cultural clones, partly through the ownership of houses and by greater mobility. Indian students in British academic institutions and universities are much more

\textsuperscript{42} Nayyar, n.26, pp.53-57.

\textsuperscript{43} Professor Bhikhu Parekh has estimated the value of this contribution to over £ 900 m. in "The changing British Perceptions of India" in Malik and Robb, n.1, pp.341-56.
conscientious and they are encouraged to compete over the institutions' terms. They are, therefore, less rebellious and are more willing to learn whatever is offered.\(^{44}\)

The reality of high standards of educational achievement among Indians is yet to yield proper results in terms of either promoting Indo-British relationships within Britain, or enhancing the Indian image in the wider British community. This is partly due to the reason that a particular interpretation of education held by the Indians, with its serious pitfalls. Indian professionals in Britain have been strongly influenced by the functional view of education, where education becomes a kind of intellectual rat-race, where knowledge takes precedence over attitudes and values. The general propensity of the Indian youth to choose careers which are financially more rewarding later on, has led to drop in the number of students opting for fields which have a social orientation. Thus social work, counselling, psychiatry, community medicine, police, youth work and teacher training, etc., occupy a lower priority, and computers, pharmacy, accountancy and business studies and medicine are the favourites.\(^{45}\)

\(^{44}\) Burjor Avari, n.33, pp.321-22.

The concentration of the Indian students in technical and business education restrict them to contribute in a wider array of occupations which would have otherwise helped them to integrate in a deeper and more meaningful way into the fabric of British society. A wider choice of career would help to place Indians into a variety of occupations, which can politically have positive implications for Indo-British relationships at all levels. Vast sections of Britishers would be introduced for the first time to Indians interested and involved in their work, with opening new vistas for material earning.\textsuperscript{46}

\textbf{THE INFLUENCE OF THE INDIAN IMMIGRANTS ON BRITISH POLITICAL LIFE AND ON POLITICAL PARTIES IN BRITAIN}

Another aspect of the role played by Indian immigrants in Britain, which was also an important factor in bilateral relations in the 1980s, was the level and nature of the Indian community's contacts with British political parties. Historically, most Indians and most Asians, Carribbeans and Africans, supported the Labour Party. The reason for this has been the immigrants' connections with the trade unions in factories. Labour's anti-racist and

\textsuperscript{46} Burjor Avari, n.33, pp.322-23.
anti-discriminatory policies and its support for Indian independence, anti-colonialism, and Third World interests attracted them towards it. 47

However, on the whole, the Labour Party, more than any other political party in Britain, has campaigned for immigrant causes and has been sympathetic to Indians. During the 1980s, the Labour Party has consistently supported the abolition of the primary purpose rules for immigration. Later, in response to media reports about shifting Asian votes and charges of continued discrimination by black sections, the Labour Party appointed a National officer for ethnic Minorities at party headquarters. Its stance on foreign policy issues has also been relatively sympathetic to India. 48

The Conservative Party, which has been in power since 1979, has never had many Indians and other minorities supporting it. It was mainly perceived that the Conservative Party was taking an anti-third World stance on political, strategic and developmental issues and also on immigration policies, as reflected in the speeches and declarations of its important leaders like Norman Tebbit

47. Malik and Robb, n.1, pp.39-41.

48. Ibid. Primary purpose rules for Immigration refers to the basic clauses of the immigration laws.
and Margaret Thatcher. The number of Indian Conservatives represented in the local Councils is also negligible. However, since the 1980s, the Conservative Party has increasingly become aware of the growing economic and political influence of the Indian Community in Britain and in some key constituencies. It created a Community Relations Department early in 1980 and set up an Anglo-Asian Conservative Society, dominated by Indians, to garner Asian support. However, in the mid 1980s, the Society was infiltrated by anti-India Khalistani and pro-Pakistani activists, which led the party to disband it, and form a new society called the One Nation Forum, consisting of representatives of all ethnic minorities.

The general elections of 1987 is regarded as a watershed in the history of Indian immigrants political involvement. The election was remarkable because three persons of Indian origin were elected to the House of Commons. Nirj Deva of Indian origin, was elected as a Conservative party M.P. from Hammersmith in London. Keith Vaz was elected as a Labour candidate from Leicester (East) and Piara Singh Khabra was elected from Ealing Southall on

50. Malik and Robb., n.1, pp.50-52.
a Labour ticket.\textsuperscript{51}

In the 1980s, however, a negative impact of The Indian diaspora was evident, due to the secessionist Sikh agitations in Punjab for Khalistan and the movement of the Kashmir militants in Jammu and Kashmir. The movement for Khalistan took a violent turn in India in June 1984, leading to the 'Operation Bluestar', when Indian security forces entered the Golden Temple at Amritsar to flush out the terrorists from there. It led to prime minister Indira Gandhi's assassination on 31 October 1984. In areas like West Midlands and Southall and Ealing in Greater London where a large number of Sikhs are settled, a small but vocal minority indulged in violence against moderate Sikhs and other Indians. A moderate Indian overseas congress leader, a Sikh himself, Tarsem Singh Toor, was assassinated. Several gurdwaras and places of worship became hot beds of extremist politics and militancy, resulting in alienation of the Sikhs in Britain from the mainstream British social life, and the Sikhs being looked upon with great suspicion by the British people in

It may be noted that before 1980, the Khalistan movement did not have much support base among the Sikhs in Britain. The self-styled leader of Khalistan movement in Britain, Jagjot Singh Chohan was not very vocal and active before Operation Bluestar. But after the Bluestar operation, Chohan's presence was made felt in the local gurdwaras and in the local Punjabi newspapers. The first time he was given prominence in Britain was when he was interviewed by BBC Radio 4 in June 1984. His inflammatory speeches and asking the sizable Sikh community in Britain to join him in his fight against the Indian government for an independent Khalistan resulted in a lot of bitterness and bad blood between the two countries and also among the Indian community in Britain. Violent speeches were made and funds were collected for buying arms and ammunition for Khalistan. The jubilation of Chohan and his band of extremist Sikhs at the assassination of Indira Gandhi on 31 October 1984 also generated a lot of bitterness.

However, the Non resident Indians (NRI) in Britain have emerged as a significant component in India's economic planning. They have become the largest creditors in India's

external debt profile for 1994-95. They are the fourth largest group of investors in India after the United States, Switzerland and Japan whose investment proposals rose by 22 times from Rs. 19.7 crores in 1991 to Rs 439.13 crores in 1992.

The Indians of Britain, however, could not remain uninfluenced by events in India, particularly pertaining to religion. Over the years, the religious institutions played an active part in giving emotional and psychological strength to the Indian communities settled in Britain. But, during the last fifteen years, a noticeable change has taken place in the way the faiths view themselves and others. As a result, the Indian secular ethos was facing challenges even in Britain, specially due to the rise of supporters in Britain for forces of fundamentalism in the Muslims, Sikh and Hindu communities.

In his inaugural address to the Conference on Indo-British Relations, held in the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, in September 1992, the Indian

53. Shankar Raghuraman, "NRIs turn into India's largest creditors", The Pioneer (New Delhi), 12 August 1993.


Home Minister, S.B. Chavan, said that the presence in Britain of about a million strong Indians gives a unique dimension to Indo-British relations. The Indian professionalism, has made a positive contribution to the political, economic and social life in Britain. The challenge, the Indian Diaspora faces is to integrate itself, harmoniously and contribute creatively to the British way of life, even while preserving its cultural heritage and emotional links with the country of origin. That the expatriate Indian Community has achieved this is itself a tribute both to the pragmatic policies of successive British governments and to the ingenuity of the community". 56

CONCLUSION: The Indian community in Britain, has had a long history of migration and settlement in Britain, stretching over two centuries. They came from all communities and all sectors of life, from slaves to princes. 57 But, the single largest Indian migration to Britain took place during 1960-1980, and largely consisted of Punjabis and Gujaratis, known for their migratory habits in India. As more Indian families got settled in

56. Malik and Robb, n.1, pp.xviii-xix (Inaugural address by the Home Minister of India, S.B. Chavan).

Britain with little desire to return to India, the Indian community in Britain became prosperous. Many businesses which they established in 1960s and 1970s became profitable. A new breed of professionals has emerged out of the succeeding generations and has taken advantage of the benefits of English education.

The 1991 census indicated that Britain is a multi-racial society with a non-white ethnic minority of about 5.5 percent of the total population. This was caused by substantial immigration of people from former British colonies in the Caribbean and the Indian subcontinent during the 1950s and 1960s. The 1991 census also shows that Indians are the largest ethnic group in Britain numbering more than 800,000, which constitute about 1.5 percent of the total British population. The Indian immigrants in Britain have proved themselves to be well motivated and industrious workers. Their contribution to industries and services as public transport, hospitals, catering, bakeries, rubber, glass, iron and steel foundries, have been very valuable to British economy. In their work situation, they generally get along well with


their British work-mates though sometimes their lack of knowledge of English might be an impediment. Immigrants owning business establishments have acquired wide clientele which consists both of Britons and Indians.60

Generally, Indians in Britain are law abiding and even during the racial riots in Britain in 1981-82, there was no Indian involvement and riots in Southall had been caused by racist elements from outside.61

The Indian immigrants have made significant contribution to the British way of life, by being actively involved in the National Health service, in professions, as lawyers, barristers, teachers, professors, accountants and also as successful businessmen.

Besides, the remittances the Indian immigrants send back to India has been growing since 1970s, along with the capital inflows into the pound sterling accounts of the Foreign currency non-resident accounts in India.

The Indian immigrants have also been actively involved in British polities. Traditionally, the Indian immigrants have supported the British Labour Party, but now many of

them support the conservatives too. In the 1987 elections, three candidates of Indian origin were elected to the House of Commons — one as a Conservative candidate and two as Labour candidates.

The British government, on its part have tried to maintain racial harmony by promulgating Race Relations Act in 1976, which made racial discrimination unlawful in a wide range of circumstances. The independent Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) was set up by the Act to work towards the elimination of discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between the people of different racial groups and to keep under review the operation of the Act.62

The Indian immigrants in Britain have played an important role in British Society and in forging Indo-British relationship. The Indians, educationally much better off than the other South Asian Communities, have been successful professionals, servicemen, businessmen, etc. However, according to Robinson, three issues would be crucial in determining the future prospects of the Indian community in Britain: (a) the time that would require before the public freely acknowledges the

contributions which Indians make to British socio-economic and political life; (b) the kind of education Indians would give their children and, therefore, maintain the momentum of upward social mobility; and (c) whether opportunities would really exist, through education or entrepreneurship, for large members of talented young British Indians.63

However, though Britain has a multi-racial society, scholars have argued that there is a distinct English hegemony. Despite frequent protestations to the contrary, the British people have yet to really take the idea of multiculturalism to the heart. Ethnic minorities and immigrant groups are more frequently seen as problems and though Indians have been in Britain for quite a long time, attitudes towards them, at times, have been entrenched.64

Thus, the role played by the Indian immigrants in Britain, in strengthening Indo-British relationship in the period 1979-91 has been quite successful. Whether it is in the forms of remittances, the NRIs send back to India or the positive contribution they make to the British society,

63. V. Robinson, n.25, pp.463-64.

Indians in Britain have been treated as an enduring asset for strengthening the relationship between India and Britain (both ways) in a positive manner. That both the Indian and the British governments treat these NRIs as important assets in their bilateral relationship is evident from the space and time and the numerous references to it by readers of both the countries in their respective speeches in the Lok Sabha and the House of Commons debates. Both India and Britain realise the importance of the immigrant Indians in shaping the course of the relationship between the two countries.

Finally, the Indian Community is a significant political, economic and even cultural presence in Britain. Although it represents roughly about 2 per cent of the population, it is concentrated in important constituencies. More important, it has the power of the purse and is generous with its donations to political parties, especially the conservatives, in the recent years. This is one of the cardinal reasons for the importance, these immigrants exert on the whole gamut of the relationship between India and Britain.65

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65. Parekh, n.43, pp.354-55.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION
The foregoing analysis shows that the relationship between India and Britain during the period under review remained complex, though friendly and stable as ever before. The complexities emanated partly from historical legacies and partly from changed international environment. On the positive side, many historical factors bound them together — a shared history of about two centuries, the English language as the common medium of communication, a shared democratic tradition, belief in the rule of law, respect for civil liberties and fundamental freedoms, belief in discussion and dialogue as a methodology of solving problems, etc. Indeed all these common factors are steeped in the psyche of both the countries. In addition, they are superimposed by bilateral political, cultural and economic ties based on mutual interest. There is also a wide range of non-governmental connections which is strengthened also by a sizable presence of the people of Indian origin, which give stability to these connections. Moreover, both the countries have all along shown respect for each other's civilisational past.

On the negative side are the memories of exploitation, humiliations and personal tragedies caused by the British rule in India. Despite its exploitation based imperial administration and the tragedies it caused during the
freedom struggle, Britain was given a graceful farewell from India in 1947 partly because the transfer of power took place in a cordial atmosphere, and partly because of the recognition that despite exploitation Britain had left many positive contributions also in India, especially in terms of institutions, infra-structure and also in terms a unified Indian national identity, though truncated by a tragic partition. As a result, their attitude to each other mattered a great deal for them. However, as years rolled by, the past negative features of British imperialism in India became less and less a factor in the construction of new relationship between India and Britain. As a result, a new bond convoluted by economic, political, cultural and emotional factors was forged between the two countries since 1947. How this close relationship was valued both in London and New Delhi could be gauged from the manner in which the Commonwealth association was modified in order to accommodate the republican India in it and to maintain continuity and closeness of their relationship. From these bases, emerged a natural affinity and a mutuality which sustained their close relationship, unruffled by many stresses and strains in 1950's and 1960's. If the Indian attitude to the British action in the Suez in 1956 and the British attitude to Indo-Pak war in 1965 caused strains in the relationship, the unequivocal British support to India
during the Chinese aggression in 1962 has been cherished in India as an expression of genuine British friendship for India. The British attitude to India during the Bangladesh crisis in 1971 was also appreciated in India.

It may be noted that in the 1960s and 1970s the Indo-British economic relationship suffered comparative neglect in the wake of the British attempt to join the European Economic Community (EEC), and its subsequent struggles inside the Community to get a fair treatment from other Community partners. Although Britain joined the European Community, there has always been an element of uncertainty in it which made it natural and prudent for it to keep its extra-European connections, including with India, intact as far as possible. Indeed, it is still not a closed issue. Therefore, Britain continues to maintain a stable relationship with Commonwealth countries and the United States. Indeed the British attempts to Europeanise itself has still not met with complete success. Its global outlook, influence and involvement, in whatever small measure it may be, and its widespread global economic and security interest prevents Britain from completely submerging itself under the European identity. That is still a continuing British dilemma. However, the British closeness with the United States and the Indian closeness with the Soviet Union stimulated divergences in their
perceptions of superpowers in the cold war politics of 1970s. And, most of these were continuing factors which enriched this 'love-hate', yet close, relationship between the two countries.

Ever since the end of the second world war Britain was constantly engaged in a process of readjustment in order to come to terms with the new global environment, with its reduced power status. But it could not comfortably relocate itself politically or economically. Its rendezvous with the European Community in 1970s and 1980s has not been happy nor successful. It did not help improve Britain's standing in the European Community. Rather, its standing seems to have declined after it joined the Community.

However, the way the Indo-British relations evolved since independence has given certain continuity and cordiality to it.

Although mid 1970s witnessed strains in Indo-British relations following Indira Gandhi's declaration of internal emergency in India and the incarceration of opposition leaders, the warmth of relationship between the two countries was restored as soon as democracy was restored in India in 1977 under the Janata Party government headed by Morarji Desai. It augured well as the new government in India could establish close and friendly relationship with
Pakistan during 1977-79. As a result, Indo-British relationship under the Prime Ministership of Morarji Desai and James Callaghan was warm and cordial. There was constant interaction between the two governments on many bilateral and multilateral issues. That position remained unchanged until the Soviet Union intervened in Afghanistan in December 1979 and until Indira Gandhi returned to power in India in January 1980. In Britain as well, a governmental change took place in 1979 in which Margaret Thatcher became the new prime minister. Pertinently, the new leadership in both the countries had divergent perceptions on the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

Therefore, the period under study begins with discordant notes between New Delhi and London in their perceptions and attitudes towards the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, as cold war politics returned sharply in their bilateral relationship. Margaret Thatcher's vociferous criticism of the Soviet action and Indira Gandhi's oblique reaction sympathetic to the Soviet position in Afghanistan put the political relationship between the two countries on a rather uneasy path. Though the issue was not bilateral, it cast its shadow on Indo-British relationship as Mrs. Thatcher, in the context of cold war politics, held strong views on the Soviet Union's direct attempt to expand. India's basic position
that the Soviet Union alone was not to be blamed in the case of Afghanistan, was not appreciated in Britain. That dichotomy in the perceptions of India and Britain remained unsolved until Mikhail Gorbachev decided to withdraw the Soviet troops from Afghanistan in 1990. However, that divergence is quite understandable as Britain was coordinating its policy with its close ally, the United States, whereas India under Indira Gandhi remained friendly with the Soviet Union.

But there were more prominent areas of discord between the two countries during the period under review. The demands raised by a small Sikh militant group in Punjab for the establishment of Khalistan, and the moral and materiael support this group was receiving from a section of the Sikh community settled in Britain, became a major contentious issue between the two countries. Britain had, for a long time, refused to accede to the Indian proposal to conclude an extradition treaty between the two countries to effectively combat terrorism in India. The British explanation as to why it could not take action against those who extended support to terrorist activities in Punjab did not convince India. The British argument that it was not in a position to do anything against such elements unless they directly violated the British law was viewed as unhelpful to combat the anti-India activities from the
British soil. India was unhappy over the negative publicity which was widely given in the British media to the actions of the Indian security forces to flush out terrorists from the Golden temple in Punjab. It also did not like the way in which the views of the supporters of the Punjab separatists got projected in Britain and in the British media. The publicity given to the rejoicement of the supporters of Khalistan over the assassination of the Indian Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, in October 1984 was viewed with shock and dismay. Neither the BBC's public apology nor the British governments' statement strongly condemning the assassination could dilute the outrage felt in India in the matter. Besides, the way the self-styled Khalistan government in exile was allowed to function from the British soil, with currency notes issued in the name of Khalistan, etc. was seen as tacit support to the Sikh separatists. As a result, the wide gap in the perception of the two governments on how to deal with the British supporters of separatism in Punjab and their terrorist activities continued to bedevil Indo-British relations.

However, it must be acknowledged that after the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi, there was a perceptible change in Britain's attitude to terrorist activities of Punjab extremists, although in concrete terms it did not
mean much until the conclusion of extradition treaty between the two countries in 1992.

Of course, Britain's basic attitude to terrorism was shaped by combating the prolonged terrorist activities of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Northern Ireland, which tried to force the province's merger with the Irish Republic undemocratically. The IRA's terrorism, which claimed about 3,000 lives, including that of Lord Mountbatten, did not make any dent on the British resolve not to submit to terrorist methods to settle political questions. In the process, the British Prime Minister, Margret Thatcher herself had a narrow escape from an IRA terrorist bomb in Brighton in 1984. Britain was also active diplomatically in seeking support of foreign governments in combating terrorism in Northern Ireland. Moreover, Britain was unequivocal in its resolve to combat international terrorism. Therefore, its policy towards terrorism was shaped basically by domestic and international compulsions. Yet, it did not do enough to curb the activities of the British supporters of terrorism in Punjab. It is possible that the British government was constrained by an apprehension of adverse political reaction of the British Sikhs on any government more against a section of their
community. Therefore the safe thing which the government could opt for was to do nothing effectively against such elements and constantly explain the situation away in legalistic terms, though it did not satisfy New Delhi at all. How exasperated India was on the British attitude to supporters of terrorism and separatist movement in Punjab was made explicit to Geoffrey Howe, the British Foreign Secretary, during his visit to India in April 1986, when India's External Affairs minister, Baliram Bhagat, quered how a small group of Sikh separatists/militants could openly operate with impunity from Britain. Howe had to face a barrage of similar questions at many meetings in New Delhi during that visit, which forced the British government to change its track and think in terms of concluding an extradition treaty between Britain and India — the first one Britain ever concluded with any Commonwealth Country. Obviously, the treaty went a long way to contain terrorist/separatist activities in Punjab, by making deportation of Sikh fugitives to India more easy. Otherwise, to get a fugitive offender deported from Britain to India under the Fugitive Offenders' Act, which Britain was quoting all along to book the culprits, was too cumbersome a procedure, which the government of India was not satisfied with. Moreover, India was more interested in
preventive action against promotion of terrorism in India. However, the treaty undoubtedly helped to curb the flow of external support to Punjab terrorists.

Perhaps, until Howe's visit to New Delhi, Britain had not realised the seriousness of its inadequate understanding of the Punjab problem and how it was posing a threat to Indo-British relations. However, the Punjab militants' violent activities had its toll in Britain itself where some moderate Sikhs in Britain, who supported India's unity and integrity, were either gunned down or seriously wounded by the extremist elements in 1985-86. Some of them were accused of plotting assassination of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, during his visit to London in October 1985.

It is well known that the British supporters of separatist movement in Punjab gave financial and propaganda support to it, besides giving shelter to fugitive terrorists. Yet, the British government chose to turn a Nelson's eye on those activities. They were able to use the BBC as a channel of their propaganda, inimical to India's unity and integrity. The impression was that there was obviously no political will to move against Punjab militants in Britain. But the extradition treaty signed in September 1992 and the subsequent moves of the British
government have removed the misgivings in India on the matter. Indeed, it has contributed substantially to restore normalcy in Punjab.

Equally contentious was the way in which supporters of Kashmir terrorists were treated in Britain. Britain was accused of half heartedness in dealing with Kashmiri militants, who enjoyed considerable patronage from Pakistan as well. India was dissatisfied the way in which the British government handled the case in which an Indian diplomat in Birmingham, Ravindra Mhatre was murdered by the Kashmir militants in February 1984, and how the killers were allowed to slip out of Britain and escaped arrest. As in the case of Punjab, the Kashmiri militants, operating in the Kashmir valley, too received a lot of financial and propaganda support from the Kashmiri settlers in Britain. But, here again, for a long time, the British government was found wanting in its initiative against them. The extradition treaty helped to alleviate the situation on the Kashmir question too.

It appears that the Pakistani dimension of the Kashmir issue was a factor which constrained the British government from taking action against the British supporters of Kashmiri militants.
Although there was Indian pressure on Britain to clamp down on the British supporters of terrorist activities in Punjab and Kashmir, it did not dilute India's constant concern, during the period under review, over how the people of Indian origin were treated in Britain. It is a fact that despite close and friendly relationships between the two countries, there was little respite in the harassment meted out to the Indian immigrants, and to even temporary visitors, in Britain's entry points like the Heathrow airport. The memories of virginity tests, bone marrow tests, etc. were still lingering on throughout the period under study. In addition, India was not happy about the introduction of a racial bias, in the British Nationality Act of 1981, although the Act was brought about to curb influx of fresh immigrants, into Britain, through harsh immigration laws. The inclusion of a patrial clause in it was viewed as racially biased, affecting a large number of Indian immigrants in Britain. Obviously it caused some strain in the Indo-British friendship. The introduction of the visa system in both countries in 1986 for visitors from each other indicated the gradual erosion of the informality that governed the people to people relationship between the two countries for long.
On many multilateral issues, differences between the perceptions of both countries persisted. Britain under Margaret Thatcher was opposed to any economic sanctions against the Union of South Africa for practicing Apartheid. Indeed Mrs. Thatcher was not willing to go beyond the confines of expressions of disapproval of the Apartheid system in South Africa. The pretension was that economic sanctions against South Africa would adversely affect the South African Blacks rather than the Whites. But the real reason behind it's opposition to economic sanctions was Britain's economic and commercial interests in South Africa, which substantially added to its annual invisible earnings. Its commercial connection was also quite strong. To throw away such concrete economic advantages in protest against the racial policy of the government of the Union was difficult for Britain. That was why Britain consistently opposed Indian suggestions at various Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings for imposing economic sanctions against apartheid regime in South Africa during the period. Moreover, Britain argued that the best way to influence the South African Whites was to keep arguing with them in a friendly way rather than treating them contemptuously. However, the dismantling of Apartheid in 1991 and the introduction of democracy in South Africa
and the return of that country to the Commonwealth has removed that long irritant in Indo-British relations.

Change in the international situation in late 1980's and the end of cold war brought an automatic end to the prolonged contentious security issues like the Great Power military activities in the Indian Ocean, which bedevilled Indo-British relations in the 1970s. Notably, on this question, both India and Britain held different perceptions, largely influenced by their friends, the Soviet Union and the United States respectively. The change in the attitude was visible from mid 1980s onwards when Mikhail Gorbachev assumed power in the Kremlin and moved towards a phase of disengagement in the super power rivalry. In consequence, the power rivalry in the Indian Ocean became less and less important and the chances of enhanced military activity in the Indian Ocean region became increasingly remote. In the new situation, the controversy over the issue of Deigo Garcia Naval Base ceased to figure prominently in the Indian strategic thinking.

Another major strategic issue on which disagreement on their perceptions persisted was the nuclear non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). While Britain, along with the United States and others, wanted India to accede to the
NPT, and cap its military nuclear programme, India opposed it on the ground that the treaty was discriminatory. India wanted that any treaty on the subject should be non-discriminatory and be aimed at total elimination of nuclear weapons from the world. But Britain supported the United States and others to put pressure on India to sign the treaty, though it avoided putting any direct pressure on India, possibly because of its implicit recognition that India's neighbour, China, with whom India has a long standing border dispute, is a nuclear weapon power. Asking India to forego the nuclear option at this stage would be giving China a permanent strategic advantage over India in the context of Asian strategic balance. For India too, that is an overwhelming consideration, rather than the Pakistani factor, for not signing the NPT.

During the period under review, the economic relations between the two countries remained strong, and in certain respects it registered improvement. The period witnessed a qualitative improvement in the Indian exports to Britain -- gradually moving from largely primary products to manufactured items. Many Indian manufactures found their way to British markets during the period. Moreover, there was a substantial growth in Indo-British trade during the period, which by 1992 hit a £2 billion mark. It may also be noted that Britain remained India's leading trading partner
in Europe throughout the period under review, except in 1990-91 when Germany overtook Britain as India's biggest trading partner in Europe. This should not, however, obscure the fact that while from the Indian point of view, Britain remained a major trading partner, from the British angle, India was not, as India's share was only one per cent of total British trade. According to a British official, India's balance of payment position has improved primarily because of the steady rise of Indian exports to Britain and also due to a qualitative change in the Indian imports from Britain. The Indian exports to Britain has been rising than British exports to India. According to him, the overall economic relationship in the decade of the eighties has been upwardly mobile and improving than what it was in the seventies. In his view, this improvement in the economic relations was aided by the Indian economic policies becoming liberalised in a phased manner, over the years.¹ However, a notable feature of Indo-British trade relationship during the period under review was that in terms of balance of trade, the advantage was all along favourable to Britain. In 1991-92, India's trade deficit with Britain was Rs.160 crores. In terms of foreign

¹ Mr. Frank Hunt, Head of the India desk, at the South Asian Section of the Department of Trade and Industry, said this in an interview to the present author on 10th October, 1995 in London.
investment, Britain remained a major foreign investor in India. By 1992, the British investment in India also reached a level of £2 billion, in about 250 companies. Moreover, the period also saw the strengthening of their third country joint ventures.

During the period under review, India remained the largest recipient of British aid, although the aid money has been found used considerably to promote India's purchase of goods and services from Britain, sometimes without adequate justification for such purchases in terms of quality and utility of the goods and services purchased, as was found in India's purchase of 21 Westland Helicopters in 1985 from Britain, costing £65 million. While India was not keen to purchase these helicopters as they were not the best one available in the market, the British official circles, in an attempt to induce India to go ahead with the purchase in order to salvage the sick Westland helicopter company indicated that if India did not go ahead with the purchase of helicopters, it might lose the Grant money needed for the purchase from the British total aid package of £200 million, that year for India. The fact that the aid money, though presented as grants, was used generally for promotion of Indian purchases of foods and services from Britain, could be gauged from the fact that out of £200 million earmarked in 1985 for British aid to India,
£65 million was for the purchase of Westland helicopters, £22 million to meet the local costs of British contracts, £16 million for technical assistance, £13 million for building a power station by the British General Electric Company, £9 million for the purchase of railway equipment from Britain, and only £20 million for poverty alleviation programmes. Therefore, one should not lose sight of this aspect of the British aid programme.

The period also witnessed initiatives to promote cultural contacts between India and Britain. Of course, there is a sizable presence of Indian diaspora in Britain. However, while from the British side, the activities of the British Council in India, and its 13 libraries located all over the country, in the promotion of English language education, technical cooperation and strengthening of cultural contacts continued as ever before, India took an unusual initiative in this context by organising the Festival of India in Britain, in 1982, to popularise Indian culture among the British public. It was a successful venture, as it provided an opportunity for the new generation of British people, and for the new generation of British born Indian immigrants as well, a glimpse of India's cultural heritage, its diversities, tradition, art, food, etc. It generated a new enthusiasm among the younger people in Britain that many British began to make India as
their tourist destination in subsequent years. Undoubtedly, its impact will continue to be felt in future as well.

It may be mentioned that Indo-British cultural contacts in terms of higher education suffered a setback during the period under review. This was largely because of the new policy of the Conservative government headed by Margaret Thatcher to bring in market approach in education in Britain whereby the British universities hiked fees for foreign students. As a result, a new generation of Indians have found it virtually impossible to have education in Britain. The effect was that the number of students from India (not the British born Indians) in the British universities came down to negligible proportions. A marginal improvement was effected through the institution of a few scholarships, like the Nehru centenary fellowships, to enable some Indian students to have higher education in Britain, but their number remained very small. The negative impact of this shortsighted commercialisation of education in terms of goodwill and diplomacy will not be felt immediately. But, it must be underlined that one of the stable, but unnoticed, invisible assets Britain enjoyed in the post war period in all Commonwealth countries was the presence of a large number of British educated elite at various decision making levels everywhere. That facilitated the effectiveness of British
diplomacy in all these countries, despite the decline of British power in the post-war period, and it had its beneficial impact on political, economic and cultural relations. Moreover, due to that old nondiscriminatory educational policy, the British always maintained certain level of influence everywhere without much cost. But, the new education policy introduced by Mrs. Thatcher's government, calculated on crude shortsighted commercial terms, during the period under review, might have undermined the potential goodwill for effective British diplomacy in future. The absence of British educated or British trained elite in the developing Commonwealth countries will make the task of British diplomats more difficult in the coming years. Therefore, this new education policy is unlikely to bring any long-term benefit for Britain.

Cooperation in areas of science and technology education remained strong and fruitful during the period. The British support for Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) were substantial and fruitful. Under the Indo-British technical training cooperation programme, funded by the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) for improvement in manpower resources, a large number of Indian engineers, scientists, railway officials, etc, could obtain training in Britain. It has great potential for future cooperation.
Defence ties between India and Britain showed improvement during the period under review. India acquired new defence equipment from Britain, including an aircraft carrier, INS Virat (formerly HMS Hermes), purchase of Sea Harriers and Sea King helicopters for the Indian Navy, more Jaguar aircrafts for the Indian Air-force, etc. Exchange visits of defence personnel from both the countries also continued as ever before.

It has to be acknowledged that the people of Indian origin settled in Britain have played an important role in strengthening Indo-British relations. Over the years, they have built up a good image for themselves as hardworking and law abiding. But that did not prevent occasional racist attacks on them in Britain, which remained a matter of constant concern for India. However, the British official circles have repeatedly acknowledged the positive contribution that the Indian immigrants have made in many areas of British national life, whether in manning the National Health Services, business, politics, art and literature or professions — lawyers, accountants, academicians, etc. Many Indian industrialists in Britain have achieved considerable success and some of them have been found among the richer strata of the British society during the period under review.
One pertinent question to be asked is how far Pakistan remained a factor in Indo-British relations during the period under review? On the whole, Pakistan per se as a factor was marginal, although in the wake of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan it acquired new significance in the super power rivalry which made Britain to support arming of Pakistan, as the Indian stand at that time was not at all assuring to Pakistan. Perhaps, if India continued the policies pursued during the Janata government of 1977-79, reassuring Pakistan's security against any external aggression, there would have been less need for Britain to support the re-arming of Pakistan in early 1980s which, in due course, had its spillover effects on India's border states like Punjab and Kashmir.

But, otherwise, politically, Britain observed caution, during the period in its dealings with Pakistan, keeping in view of India's sensitivities on the British move in support of Pakistan. It may be noted, in this context, that even on the Kashmir issue, the British concern was mostly confined to the human rights question, rather than extending any support for the separatist movement in Kashmir. The Shimla agreement was repeatedly cited by Britain as a proper basis on which bilateral issues between India and Pakistan should be resolved. That remained the basic British position in resolving all bilateral problems.
It may also be noted that during this period, Britain took the initiative to facilitate Pakistan's return to the Commonwealth for which India's support was necessary. Keeping in view of India's larger and long term interests, India did not stand in the way of Pakistani return to the Commonwealth on 1st October, 1989.

Britain has been in search of potential large markets outside Europe during the period. After a long period of neglect, following the British switch to Europe, Britain belatedly rediscovered the significance of the potential Indian market. Indeed, the presence of 120 million affluent consumers in India is a new attraction for the British business community. Though traditionally the Indian market was a British preserve till half a century ago, in the changed context, caused by the prolonged neglect, Britain will have to compete for its space in the Indian market along with other major trading nations competing for a foothold in India.

For various reasons, Britain has accorded high priority to its relations with India. In the British perception, India is a growing country with enormous potential to play a significant role, both in regional and global contexts, in future. The expectation is that as India grows as an economic and strategic power, it can become a contributor not only to the British economy but
also to the British standing in the world. At the same
time, Britain also could contribute in many ways to the
social and economic development of India. This
complementarity also has great potential. Therefore,
Britain attaches great importance to its relationship with
India.

It may be noted that the period under review saw
personal warmth between the political leaderships of India
and Britain. There was excellent personal rapport between
Margaret Thatcher and Indira Gandhi. Indeed, Thatcher had
admiration for Indira Gandhi which she had publicly
acknowledged repeatedly. It had certain beneficial
fallouts as well at multilateral conferences, like the
Cancun summit, in 1981, between the developed and the
developing countries where President Reagan showed better
appreciation, of the Indian position on North-South
dialogue, at Mrs. Thatcher's reasoning with the US
President. Similarly warm was the personal relationship
between Mrs. Thatcher and Rajiv Gandhi, although it became
handy for Mrs. Thatcher in her pursuit of business
nationalism for Britain. While at personal level, close
and warm relationship existed between the leaders of both
countries, at the policy level, many disagreements
persisted, particularly on matters pertaining to cold war
politics. India was not happy about Britain's blind
support for American adventures, like bombing of Libya for example, in world politics. But that is still understandable in the overall context of the special relationship existing between Britain and the United States. But such disagreements could hardly upset the Indo-British friendship. That healthy approach became possible because the relationship between the two countries had reached a mature stage. The period under review has sustained and deepened that maturity. There is a natural affinity and a mutuality of interests attached to it. After all, among all the Western countries, for India communication with Britain is easy and ties are stable as both countries understand and respect each other’s psyche very well. As Peter Robb observed, "India and Britain have been too intimately connected as complementary or antagonistic civilisations, evolving together and colliding as great forces of equal weight. Britain and India today are still profoundly involved, with each other, containing much of each other". That surmises the Indo-British relations at the end of the period of this study.

2. Peter Robb, "India and Britain: some reflections on their material and cultural interaction since independence," in Peter Robb and K.N. Malik, eds., India and Britain: Recent Past and Present Challenges (New Delhi, 1994) p.17.