

Our People, Our Wealth

This is about evolution of a different kind, of how a good number of our people - global adventurers and entrepreneurs — who went in search of better pastures abroad, are doing us proud by bringing laurels and turning wealth creators for their homeland and the country of their residence. An **India Now** story

Our people, in many ways have been our biggest assets. Till a decade and a half ago, we lived within a paradigm of our own creation. A paradigm that got besotted with the short-term issues that plagued the nation at large in the early decades of independence. The paradigm

was a simple and straight-forward one. A paradigm drawn and dictated by the immediate. Resources were scarce. Needs were greater. Eventually, times changed. And forced us to re-draw and stretch the lines of the paradigm we work with.

Today, India's true wealth is not its land, not its vast geographical stretch, not

necessarily its historical heritage as well. Instead, India's true wealth lies in the ranks of its people. In many many ways this wealth is resident in the heart and head of every Indian who has made it big in the market that is the world.

Among us, there is a group of early adventurous entrepreneurs and workers



SPIRITED SOULS: A daunting will to succeed

"LITTLE INDIA" ACROSS THE WORLD

IT'S estimated that some 25 million Indians live outside India. They can be found across 110 countries and include scientists, professors, students, authors, doctors, nurses, actors, musicians, entrepreneurs, chefs, cab drivers, politicians, CEOs and community leaders. Their combined wealth is pegged at \$300 billion, a little under half of India's GDP.

In today's rapidly globalising world - interconnected and interdependent - what network can better serve as champions of Brand India? Especially when the network's span, size and scope for impact far exceeds the value any marketing campaign can ever deliver. Indeed, the Indian diaspora has been an intrinsic part, perhaps even one of the key reasons, for the emergence of the India Story on the global economic scene over the past decade and a half.

What, then, can be done to leverage this potent resource? Call it an anomaly of the past. But today, the uncomfortable vacuum between the diaspora and the nation has been replaced with exciting new ideas that promise to bind the two far more symbiotically than ever before.

Some self-evident steps taken both by the government and the diaspora continue to facilitate the development of a relevant partnership. The creation of a forum like the Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas, the emergence of India-centric professional associations around the world, a dual citizenship akin programme that permits easy travel to India among other benefits, and other such initiatives have facilitated more meaningful engagement with the diaspora. The natural outcome has been a fillip in the flow of financial and human capital that's aiding India's development. Spurred by India's economic performance and a visible commitment to reform, this trend should continue.

Still, these early signs are tablestake indicators to the emerging partnership between the nation and the diaspora. For the relationship to take a truly strategic hue, more needs to be done. Traditional wisdom suggests a centrally directed strategy and programme should induce

greater involvement of the diaspora. It seems, though, that entrepreneurial efforts have fared with far better results.

One such example is the Confederation of Indian Industry's Indian American Council that was launched in April 2005. The IAC links between NRI/PIO volunteers to projects in India and facilitates skills and knowledge transfer. This is made possible by mining opportunities available in India and posting them on a website, while offline support comes from the CII's pan-India network and 750-strong secretariat. It's a self-organising system that is managed by facilitators, and follows market principles of efficiently matching supply and

demand.

Another example is the wave of second-generation young Indians rediscovering India. Whether it is as students at business schools participating in trips to India to reconnect with the nation, or as entrepreneurs exploring opportunities in the world's fastest growing free market democracy, these young folk are, today, proud to identify with India. Most of these expeditions are carried out with the help of friends and family connections to ensure the visiting groups get an accurate and meaningful experience of both credible and Incredible India. In some cases, institutional support was provided by organisations like the India

The spread of the Indian diaspora

Countries with over 100,000 overseas Indians, as of 2001

	PIOs ¹	NRIs ²	Total PIOs/NRIs ³	% of country population
The Americas				
USA	NA	NA	1,678,765	0.6
Canada	700,000	150,000	851,000	2.7
Trinidad and Tobago	500,000	600	500,600	45.1
Guyana	395,250	100	395,350	52.2
Surinam	150,306	150	50,456	34.9
Europe				
UK	NA	NA	1,200,000	2.0
Netherlands	200,000	15,000	217,000	1.4
The Middle East				
Saudi Arabia	0	1,500,000	1,500,000	6.3
UAE	50,000	900,000	950,000	39.5
Oman	1,000	311,000	312,000	11.9
Kuwait	1,000	294,000	295,000	14.4
Qatar	1,000	130,000	131,000	17.0
Bahrain	Nil	130,000	130,000	20.1
Yemen	100,000	900	100,900	0.6
Asia/Pacific				
Myanmar	2,500,000	2,000	2,902,000	6.4
Malaysia	1,600,000	15,000	1,665,000	7.5
Fiji	336,579	250	336,829	39.9
Singapore	217,000	90,000	307,000	7.5
Australia	160,000	30,000	190,000	1.0
Africa				
South Africa	NA	NA	1,000,000	2.3
Mauritius	704,640	11,116	715,756	60.2
Reunion	220,000	55	220,055	30.0
Kenya	85,000	15,000	102,500	0.3

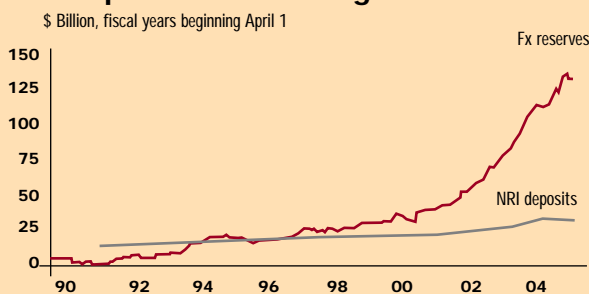
1. Persons of Indian origin. 2. Nonresident Indians. 3. Incl. some classified as stateless.

Source: Government of India (from the JP Morgan Economic Research Special Report: The Indian diaspora catalyzes India's global ambitions, March 24, 2006)

Net non-resident deposit flows



NRI deposits outstanding and fx reserves



Source: JP Morgan Economic Research Special Report: The Indian diaspora catalyzes India's global ambitions, March 24, 2006

Brand Equity Foundation. Now, recognising the value of such endeavours, IBEF runs the "Experience India" initiative.

Yet one more example is the transformation of the Indian identity overseas facilitated by the transformation of India itself. Today, being "desi" in a foreign land carries much more brand appeal. It is hip and cool. It has led to the proliferation of new genres of music, movies, books, cuisine, clothes, and accessories. Indeed, being "desi" is a lifestyle statement. From DJ Rekha who can be found entertaining audiences in New York's Basement Bhangra, to Nagesh Kukunoor's Hyderabad Blues that perhaps spawned an entire genre of similar productions, to Gautam Malkani's Londonstani, Brand "Desi" has arrived.

These three examples represent a fundamental shift in perception of how the overseas Indian thinks and feels about India. And quite rapidly, it is also affecting the way the overseas Indian interacts with India.

How can we leverage this opportuni-

ty to maximise the impact for both India and the diaspora? It needs to begin with the recognition that more than India itself, what gets us all going, is the idea of India. That idea permeates across all boundaries and borders, geography and history, caste and creed, mindsets and attitudes. It's that idea which fills us with positive belief about what the future holds for India, and for Indians everywhere. Today, the India that resides in our hearts and minds has begun to resonate with the India we encounter in the physical world. There is intent, there is action, and there is change. This is a powerful endorsement. And a great opportunity...

Any effort to build a strategic partnership between the Diaspora and the nation must begin with community-building. This is perhaps the single most important activity that can enable a vibrant partnership between the two. By becoming the single thread that weaves the diaspora and India together, facilitated community-building initiatives can do much more for Brand India than any

marketing effort. Here are a few ideas that are low-hanging fruit.

India has manifested itself physically in the form of "Little India" across the world - from Singapore to the UK to the USA. As India transforms itself, these "outposts" of India must be transformed as well to bring them closer to the changing reality of India, perhaps even exceed it. They will serve as effective pegs to rally around and bring the overseas Indian community together, and over time emerge as powerful symbols of Brand India.

The study of India is being carried out in the best Universities across the world - from Harvard Business School to INSEAD. More can be done to abet this trend. The establishment of "Chairs" co-funded by the diaspora and India, at leading educational institutions to ensure the study of India is encouraged, is one additional step in the direction of building a strategic partnership.

The IBEF has initiated a Brand India Volunteer Network that aims to serve the diaspora by equipping them with marketing tools that will enable them to better represent the India Story. This was actually done to institutionalise the already-existing trend of diaspora members reaching out to IBEF for support to pitch Brand India in their local communities. Another example of simply and efficiently matching latent demand to supply. By merely logging on to www.ibef.org, a plethora of resources can be accessed, but more specific and customised help is also at hand in case it is required.

Eventually, it will be more such ideas, initiated independently, and not via any centrally directed programme that will build a strategic partnership between the diaspora and India. And this partnership needn't be captured in any Memorandum of Understanding. Instead it will manifest itself through the emergence of an entrepreneurial global community of Indians that shares a common positive belief in the future of India, and that takes decisive action to enable that future. After all, isn't that the idea of India itself?

An IBEF contribution

The US will be very, very short on this count. There will be a shortage of 17 million working people out there!



DOING BUSINESS: Many an Indian has made it big in the US market

of every kind, who had the courage and spirit to leave the shores of the country to alien lands in the quest of the different and at times the dangerous. These spirited souls were the ones who first extended the boundaries of India in a seemingly real manner.

These souls used the power of personal spirit, adventure, entrepreneurship and a daunting will to succeed, right in the early days. Every Indian who left the shores of India in the early days left the country amidst the grey if not dark cloud of "brain drain" as the slogan of the era. This was tough.

These early adventurers left their country and the comfort of its social structure, family support systems, the food they loved and the temples and churches and mosques they found themselves so comfortable with. They landed in foreign lands, much like uprooted adventurers. They landed out there and everything was new. Everything had to be made anew. And they did that. With grit and vigour of purpose. No wonder then that we have numbers that are truly exciting to boast today. Let's peek at some of them.

Thirty eight per cent of doctors in the USA, 12 per cent of scientists in the USA, 36 per cent of NASA scientists, 34 per cent of Microsoft employees, 28 per cent of IBM employees, 17 per cent of INTEL scientists, 13 per cent of XEROX

employees, are Indians!

The Indian has arrived in every corner of the world. Wherever the Indian lives in this seamless world, whether it be in neighbouring Colombo or a nearby Kuala Lumpur, or whether it be as far away as a space-craft in which we have a Sunita Williams carrying a packet of Samosas into space with her, the Indian has arrived. And with this arrival, a piece of India exists in every corner of the world, and indeed beyond.

India has always benefited from a rich tradition of entrepreneurship. Look keenly at our early years. Our first set of global adventurers went as labour out to the plantations of the East and West alike. Look at the populations that moved base into Sri Lanka. Into the terrains of the African continent and into the gut of the plantations of Singapore and Malaysia.

The times changed. In came the need from newer rich economies such as the Middle East and so also the clamour for labour from the thriving economies of Hong Kong and Singapore alike. The skilled Indian now saw an opportunity to make a mark. We had climbed a notch higher. The skills we exported were those of the mason and the carpenter alike.

The times kept changing. We kept evolving in our response to the people needs all around. The higher skill was in demand. We were just about moving from brawn power to brain power. The doctor

and engineer were in demand. Perhaps not at the will and volition of the government as much as at the will and volition of the individual seeking prospects that were monetarily enticing, these entrepreneur-doctors went to the UK, just as entrepreneur-engineers arrived on US shores. The architect and the scientist of many a hue came from India and found herself joining the commercial enterprise of many a nation.

We kept evolving. We kept climbing the ladder till we reached the top. The doctor, the engineer and the teacher (academic gurus of every kind) occupied pedestals in every market we sent them to. Today, we come full circle. The global Indian adventurer and entrepreneur are finding new ways to leverage their roots. The BPO revolution as we call it today is an articulation of this trend at large that we live with and thrive in today.

In retrospect, brain drain was perhaps the best thing that happened to India in the decades that have gone by. If not for this, India would not boast of the number of individual ambassadors of the country sprinkled all over the earth for sure. An Indian heart, wherever it lives, will always beat for the country at large. The umbilical link is a valuable one. An emotionally valuable one for sure.

This true wealth of India is a largely un-assessed one. One that is often taken for granted. Time to really harness this



DIRECTOR'S SPECIAL: Mira Nair with Sabrina Dhawan at an Indian Diaspora film festival in New York

This true wealth of India is a largely un-assessed one. One that is often taken for granted. Time to really harness this real wealth.

"real wealth" of "real India". Remember, real India lives not necessarily within the political boundaries of its physical land space. Time to harvest it to the benefit of the country and the benefit of the Indian out there in the land that is distant in its physical reach.

Harvesting the true blue wealth of India must be the prime objective of both the government and the non-government sector alike. The time is indeed ripe for every initiative there is to roll-out in smoothening out the rough edges of such a relationship.

The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is a great start for one. What is even more important is facilitating the creation of a positive nexus between the Indian abroad and the Indian on the soil. A continuous ambassadorship programme that is run through every embassy of ours across the world. A continuous programme that tracks the well-being of the Indian abroad. Proactively. And not necessarily only when approached! A programme that looks to harness not only the financial, intellectual and emotional resources of the Indian abroad to the benefit of the country, but which in return is forever planning for the emotional and financial prosperity of the Indian abroad as well.

This relationship needs to be a two-way relationship. A relationship of give and take. It's time to make it happen!

