Re-imagining the British Indian diaspora in modern political discourse

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(Completed on 9th March 2012 as part of Final Honour School for History & Politics)

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Abbreviations

BOPIO	British Organisation of People of Indian Origin
IBP	Indo-British Partnership
IBPN	Indo-British Partnership Network
MOIA	Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs
NRI	Non-Resident Indian
OCI	Overseas Citizen of India
PBD	Pravasi Bharitiya Divas [initiative celebrating the Indian diaspora]
UKIBC	UK-India Business Council
UKIRT	UK-India Round Table

Introduction

Indians in the UK have for a long period of time represented a population of some statistical weight. In 1932, estimates by the Indian National Congress suggested there were just over 7,000 Indians in the UK. By 1961, there were just over 150,000 people from India in the UK.[1] Some 49.1 per cent of the ethnic minority population in the UK as of 1991 was of South Asian origin. More specifically, according to the 1991 UK-wide census (which was the first to ask respondents to categorise their ethnicity), there were over 840,000 people in Britain identifying their ethnic group as Indian.[2] This thesis is a study of how this British Indian diaspora came to be viewed in political terms and how these political attitudes have altered and developed considerably from the late 1960s right up to the early part of the twenty first century. This step change appears to be the case from both a British and an Indian perspective. I will argue that, notwithstanding the need to set developments in their global and bilateral contexts, the British Indian diaspora has been quite substantially re-imagined in both modern British and Indian political discourse, with important consequences for Britain, India and the diaspora itself. Chapter 1 looks at an era of fraught discourse mainly in the 1960s and 1970s and to some extent the 1980s. Chapter 2 highlights the ways in which from the 1980s through to the twenty first century, the diaspora has ben considered anew in Britain. Chapter 3 points to the re-appraisal of the diaspora, largely from the 1990s onwards, in their homeland of India.

To advance this line of argument, this thesis will draw on a variety of primary material. Alongside parliamentary material (including committee deliberations, statements and debates) and legislation, this thesis also draws on documentation on [see abbreviations] PBD, the UKIRT, the IBP and the UKIBC. Perhaps more unusually, I have unearthed previously unconsidered primary material in the course of my research. Following an interview with the BOPIO Founder President Mr Sinna Mani, I was given copies of two handbooks published privately by BOPIO in 1993 and 1997. BOPIO, set up as a representative group for British people of Indian origin first under a different name in 1979[3], provides an insight into what the prevailing political attitudes as regards the British Indian diaspora were by seeing what issues BOPIO was engaging with. This thesis also, given its focus on the extent to which the British Indian diaspora has been re-imagined in more recent years, makes particular effort to utilise primary material available online. This is especially pertinent as much of both the shifts in British and Indian political discourse, in terms of their engagement with the British Indian diaspora, can be observed online as ample use has been made of the internet to develop linkages and to reach out to the diaspora effectively as we will see.

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[1] R. Visram, *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes: Indians in Britain 1700-1947* (London, 1986), p190.

[2] M. Anwar, '"New Commonwealth" migration to the UK' in R. Cohen, *Cambridge World Survey of Migration* (Cambridge, 1995), p276-277.

[3] BOPIO, Footer of homepage, [http://www.bopio.org.uk/]

As this thesis is concerned with identifying and analysing the shift in political perceptions of the diaspora that I contend is increasingly notable from the 1990s, it sheds new light on an area ripe for further investigation in the following respects. First, although earlier periods in the history of the British Indian diaspora have been looked at in some detail, more recent developments have not yet undergone a similar level of attention and there is much to explore in terms of how our understanding of the diaspora can be enhanced by an investigation of more contemporary developments that have taken place in the 1990s as well as at the dawn of the twenty first century. Second, much of the scholarship on the British Indian diaspora focuses on studies of diaspora from the perspective of religion or region. For example, work has been done on very specific areas. One case is an analysis of the Gujarati community of Mochi caste, which despite as a caste representing only a tiny portion of the overall British population of Gujaratis, accounts for more or less half of the Hindu population in Leeds.[4] Another is work reinforcing the regional variety of the diasporic experience: 'The Community of the Many Names of God is situated at the end of a narrow track along the side of a valley a few miles outside the village of Llanpumsaint, some 12 miles north of Carmarthen, in Dyfed, Wales … Since it arrived here in 1973, the Community has become an important pilgrimage centre, attracting up to 15,000 Hindus and other visitors annually'.[5] Third, much of the academic contribution on the subject of diaspora is (although impressively multi-disciplinary, spanning a wide range of academic disciplines including sociology, migration studies and anthropology)[6] largely focused on the *internal* experiences of the diaspora rather than *external* political understandings of them. This thesis differs in focus from the work of, for instance, Roger Ballard who observes the attempts of young British Asians to navigate between the social worlds of their parents and that of their white peers with considerable cultural fluidity.[7] It also differs from other examples of work which studies the diaspora itself as distinct from reactions to it, including studies of the psychology of diaspora groups and their collective notions of victimhood[8] and the pattern of diasporic migratory flows of the diaspora.[9]

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[4] K. Knott, 'The Gujarati Mochis in Leeds' in R. Ballard (ed.), *Desh Pardesh: The South Asian Experience in Britain* (London, 1994), p213.

[5] D. Taylor, 'The Community of the Many Names of God: a Saivite ashram in rural Wales' in R. Burghart (ed.), *Hinduism in Great Britain: The Perpetuation of Religion in an Alien Cultural Milieu* (London, 1987), p100.

[6] J.M. Brown, *Global South Asians: Introducing the Modern Diaspora* (New York, 2006), p112.

[7] R. Ballard (ed.), *Desh Pardesh: The South Asian Experience in Britain* (London, 1994), p34.

[8] R. Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An introduction* (Oxford, 2008), p39.

[9] V. Lal, P. Reeves, R. Rai (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora* (Singapore, 2006)

It is worth establishing some clarity around definitions around the use of the terms 'discourse' and 'diaspora'. First, my thesis uses 'modern political discourse' as a byword for how something is considered in political circles not as a prelude to discourse analysis you find in sociology. The intention is to investigate the political 'conversation' as it were, including the views espoused that predominate in what we might term political 'output' such as parliamentary debates, committees, hearings and statements. This does of course entail subjective and qualitative judgements. That is not to discount the validity but rather to maintain a sense of scholarly caution in drawing too certain a conclusion. Second, diaspora is a troublesome concept. The genesis of the use of the term 'diaspora' has its origins in the Jewish tradition and experience.[10] The British Indian diaspora will be referred to on occasion in the course of this thesis simply as the 'diaspora', British Indians, the Indian community, overseas Indians, or NRIs. To add to the complexity of the task at hand, the literature often talks simply of 'Asians' as a whole, despite the lack of homogeneity in the Indian diasporic community, with its diverse array of religions such as Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Jain and Christian and vast assortment of migration departure points including Bengal, Gujarat and Punjab.[11] Any attempt to narrow the focus to the *British* Indian diaspora is somewhat challenging but necessary for the task at hand. Numerous factors complicate the picture: there is a significant presence of 'twice migrants' and according to the 1991 British census, almost 30 per cent of the Indians born outside of the UK were actually not from India but East Africa.[12] The phrase *British* Indian diaspora is also rather generic. However, this does to an extent reflect the way British politicians have generalised about 'Blacks' or 'Asians'.[13] Given that the focus of analysis in this thesis will include institutions that collectivise or homogenise the diaspora (BOPIO, UKIBC etc), this seems reasonable. At some given point, we can take it to some extent as read that Indian migrants to Britain came to constitute a British Indian diaspora. The focus on the English part of the diaspora is also not an unreasonable academic choice to make given that according to the 2001 UK census, of the estimated British Indian population of just over 1 million, the vast majority were resident in England.[14] For the purposes of this thesis, British Indian diaspora will be considered to mean migrants from India or those of Indian origin who made Britain their home. To use a scholarly definition, 'any population … which has originated in a land other than which it currently resides in, and whose social, economic, and political networks cross the border of nation-states'[15].

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[10] R. Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An introduction* (Oxford, 2008), p34.

[11] K.N. Malik, *India and the United Kingdom: Change and Continuity in the 1980s* (New Delhi, 1997), p89.

[12] A.H. Halsey and J. Webb (ed.), *Twentieth-Century British Social Trends* (London, 2000), pp140-141.

[13] J. Procter (ed.), *Writing Black Britain, 1948-1998: an interdisciplinary anthology* (New York, 2000)

[14] Office for National Statistics, *'Focus On' overview of Ethnicity & Identity*, 2004, file available at [www.statistics.gov.uk/focuson]

[15] S. Vertovec, 'Three Meanings of a "Diaspora" Exemplified among South Asian religions', *Diaspora,* 6(3), 1997, pp277-299 ; discussed online at [http://www.southasianlink.sg/assets/pub_indian_diaspora.html]

The Indian presence in Britain has an extensive pre-history and has appeared in many forms and contexts, ranging from working-class to elites. As Michael Fisher has recounted eloquently, 'Between 1600 and 1857, tens of thousands of Indians from all classes formed counterflows into Britain, interacting in diverse ways with Britons and other Indians there…The experiences of these travellers and settlers differed, based on their class, gender, religion, and individual circumstances. Despite efforts by many British officials to prevent their journey and control them after arriving, Indians manoeuvred and negotiated among often conflicting British authorities in colony and metropole.'[16] As far back as the early part of the eighteenth century, it was not uncommon for Britons returning to London to English shores to be accompanied by domestic servants, nannies or maids sometimes known as ayahs.[17] Similarly, in the early part of nineteenth century, informally employed sailors from the Indian subcontinent known as lascars arriving in London numbered in the hundreds.[18] As Michael Fisher highlights, there is also an elite story of Indian presence in Britain: 'Hundreds of Indian elites made the passage to Britain to pursue their own agendas. Many represented themselves in the public sphere through writing and publishing books and pamphlets, teaching, making speeches, lobbying, and testifying in law courts. Some influenced Parliament as expert witnesses, petitioners, observers, bribe-givers, or (in one case) Member … Indian rulers (or former or would-be rulers) deployed or led over thirty Indian diplomatic and political missions that sought to shift the site of their disputes with British colonial authorities to London. There they could with more agency enter political debates and assert their legal rights, usually in direct conflict with the Company and often in alliance with opposition political factions in Parliament.'[19] Despite the deep roots of Indian presence in Britain, it was only really in the post-war period that inward migration flows took on a numerical significance. As Anwar puts it 'it is only in the last forty-five years that the UK has received in significant numbers from the former colonies workers and their dependants whose colour differs from that of the white indigenous population. They are largely from the New Commonwealth (NC) countries.'[20] In terms of the background to the commencing of large-scale migration from the Indian subcontinent to the UK, 'immigration from India and Pakistan started later than from the West Indies, but also reached a very high level from 1960

[16] M.H. Fisher, *Counterflows to Colonialism: Indian Travellers and Settlers in Britain 1600-1857* (Delhi, 2004), p431.
[17] R. Visram, *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes: Indians in Britain 1700-1947* (London, 1986), p11.
[18] R. Visram, *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes: Indians in Britain 1700-1947* (London, 1986), p34.
[19] M.H. Fisher, *Counterflows to Colonialism: Indian Travellers and Settlers in Britain 1600-1857* (Delhi, 2004), p434.
[20] M. Anwar, '"New Commonwealth" migration to the UK' in R. Cohen, *Cambridge World Survey of Migration* (Cambridge, 1995), p274.

onwards as people tried to enter the UK while there was still time'[21] with most being unskilled economic migrants clustering in industrial regions.[22]

[21] M. Anwar, '"New Commonwealth" migration to the UK' in R. Cohen, *Cambridge World Survey of Migration* (Cambridge, 1995), p274.
[22] M. Anwar, '"New Commonwealth" migration to the UK' in R. Cohen, *Cambridge World Survey of Migration* (Cambridge, 1995), pp274-275.

Chapter 1: An era of fraught discourse

This chapter examines an era of fraught discourse. In Britain, the lens of race relations seemed to be the dominant way to view the diaspora. In India, the diaspora came to be seen as problematic or even hostile.

The infamous 'Rivers of Blood' speech by Enoch Powell provides a useful entry point for discussion of the political discourse predominating into the 1970s and beyond as it was in some ways indicative of the way politicians thought about the diaspora and served to contribute to a liability-centred discourse.

Anwar paints a vivid picture of how a political climate problematizing the British Indian diaspora prevailed. The diaspora was for much of the 1970s and 80s (and even into the early 1990s) inseparable from and dogged by a complicating discourse of fear, danger, race relations issues, racist and anti-immigrant sentiment:
'The Labour government passed the second Commonwealth Immigration Act in 1968 restricting the entry of Kenyan Asians with British passports. Enoch Powell MP, who was writing in newspapers and making speeches against large-scale NC [New Commonwealth] immigration in 1967, made his 'river of blood' speech on 20 April 1968. Mr Heath, the Conservative leader, declared Powell's speech to be racialist in tone and dropped him from his shadow cabinet. However, this did not stop Powell getting some public support and making non-white immigrants a topic for his speeches in the following period. Mr Heath's government elected at the 1970 general election passed the Immigration Act 1971. Then came the expulsion of Asians from Uganda in 1972, when 27,000 entered the UK. There was intense media coverage of this development and Powell and his supporters used the opportunity to exploit public feelings about non-white immigrants. As a consequence the right-wing Monday Club started a 'Halt Immigration Now' campaign in 1972.'[23]

Beginning with the infamous 'rivers of blood' speech in Birmingham in April 1968, Enoch Powell went on to deliver a series of contributions and make a number of high profile interventions over the ensuing years. These left an indelible mark on the political discourse of the period. He not only raised public fears about what he perceived to be the great perils of future potential racial tensions but also sought to legitimise the repatriation of existing non-white settled populations alongside more established demands for the severe restriction of future inflows of migrants.[24]

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, political discourse continued to operate in a manner framing the British Indian diaspora, and indeed migrants in general, as in some sense problematic. This was true both in the mainstream and at the periphery of British political discourse. There was a proliferation of stridently anti-immigrant groups. At the civic level, this included the establishment as early as 1960 of the Birmingham Immigration Control Association and Southall Residents Association,

[23] M. Anwar, '"New Commonwealth" migration to the UK' in R. Cohen, *Cambridge World Survey of Migration* (Cambridge, 1995), p276.
[24] J. Solomos, *Race and Racism in Contemporary Britain* (London, 1989), pp55-56.

both regions where there was a notable presence of Indian migrants in particular. At the party political level, this included the National Front (which was formed in 1966 and went onto fight numerous elections on an explicitly anti-immigration footing in the 1970s) and the contesting of the 1972 Rochdale by-election by the British Campaign to Stop Immigration. Moreover, anti-immigrant sentiment filtered into the very heart of political discourse: although one cannot ignore the electoral imperative to reflect a powerfully emerging anti-immigrant refrain in public opinion, it is nonetheless telling that aspiring prime minister and then Conservative party leader Margaret Thatcher spoke of public fear of Britain being swamped by migrants of different cultures in a television interview in January 1978.[25] The anti-immigrant discourse not only found civic and party political expression but also permeated through to the very highest political channels, influencing government policy on the availability of vouchers (essentially permits for migrants to work in certain industries) which were sharply reduced over the course of the 1960s, from slightly over 30,000 in 1963 to just 2290 by 1972.[26]

The impact of the influx of African Asians on political discourse should not be underestimated. In the early 1960s, following Kenyan Independence in 1963, it became apparent, much to the chagrin of the British political establishment, that Kenyan Asians were not likely to readily take up Kenyan citizenship and as such, plans were laid to design and impose immigration restrictions on the Kenyan Asians likely to seek redress and new settlement in the UK. The Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962 then in operation ensured that any Kenyan Asian not taking up Kenyan citizenship was entitled by law to de facto UK citizenship and settlement rights, leading government officials to raise a note of alarm: 'the Asians are showing no inclination to acquire local citizenship and the majority are likely to remain our [Britain's] liability at least for an initial period'.[27] With the arrival of sizeable numbers of East African Asians from Uganda and Kenya in 1965 and 1967, 'sections of the media and MPs started to call for action to be taken to stop their arrival [and] a heated political debate ensued in late 1967 and early 1968'.[28] The racial dimensions of this increasingly ill tempered and partisan political skirmish on the subject of immigration were clear to see and the intertwining of a focus on race with the issue of immigration would continue to be a feature of political discourse at the very least through to the general election of 1970.[29]

There are deep roots when it comes to the matter of non-white immigrants or foreigners or the outside 'other' in Britain causing alarm or being on the political radar for negative reasons. Muhammad Anwar has conducted an analysis of Cabinet Papers that reveal just how long running are the political currents conceiving non-

[25] M. Anwar, '"New Commonwealth" migration to the UK' in R. Cohen, *Cambridge World Survey of Migration* (Cambridge, 1995), p276.
[26] J. Solomos, *Race and Racism in Contemporary Britain* (London, 1989), pp52-53.
[27] R. Karatani, *Defining British Citizenship: Empire, Commonwealth and Modern Britain* (London, 2003), pp158-159.
[28] J. Solomos, *Race and Racism in Contemporary Britain* (London, 1989), p54.
[29] J. Solomos, *Race and Racism in Contemporary Britain* (London, 1989), p55.

white migrants into Britain as somehow problematic or in some form a liability. As Anwar points out, 'The arrival of the *Empire Windrush* in 1948 created some interest in the House of Commons in the form of MPs questioning relevant ministers, and the government set up an interdepartmental working party to look into the issue of non-white immigration. This working party and another interdepartmental committee in 1950 recommended ways and means of keeping colonial immigrants out of the UK.'[30]

For some, a discourse of liability persists. The predominance of a 'threat' discourse right up to the very end of the 1980s, and arguably beyond, is an important claim in the scholarly literature: 'Perhaps the most important theme in contemporary political discourse about race in British society, even after successive attempts to develop anti-discrimination policies, is the image of blacks ['blacks' used in this context refers to non-white ethnic minorities] as a whole or particular groups of them as a threat to the unity and order of British society … In the language of the new-right black people are increasingly portrayed not as an enemy without but as an enemy within: as a threat to the cultural and political values of the nation. They are increasingly presented in the media and other channels of communication as a threat to the way of life of the majority white community and as a group which is difficult to integrate into the mainstream of British society'.[31] Anti-immigrant political narratives have continued to resonate at the ballot box periodically. As recently as 1993, the British National Party saw electoral success at local council level in Tower Hamlets.[32] Although this might appear to indicate the enduring 'danger' discourse around the British Indian diaspora, the political picture as regards race relations and anti-immigrant posturing is rather complicated, perhaps more so than it once was in the UK. On the one hand, the BNP have advocated (including in their manifestos) broadly anti-Asian policies including repatriation that would suggest anti-Indian hostility (and of course resentment of other diasporic groups). However, on the other hand, a more specific anti-Muslim agenda seems to have become their political priority in respect of ethnic minority communities. The large Muslim population with origins lying in the Indian subcontinent (particularly the substantial Bangladeshi community[33]) living in Tower Hamlets would seem to support the hypothesis that 'danger' discourse, when it surfaces, has evolved to become predominantly and more specifically anti-Muslim as opposed to anti-Asian or anti-Indian.

The establishment of the Commission for Racial Equality and the evolution in the way they discussed the issue of race relations provides some interesting insight. The

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[30] M. Anwar, '"New Commonwealth" migration to the UK' in R. Cohen, *Cambridge World Survey of Migration* (Cambridge, 1995), p275.
[31] J. Solomos, *Race and Racism in Contemporary Britain* (London, 1989), pp134-135.
[32] M. Anwar, '"New Commonwealth" migration to the UK' in R. Cohen, *Cambridge World Survey of Migration* (Cambridge, 1995), p276.
[33] J. Eade, 'The Bangladeshi community in East London' in C. Clarke, C. Peach & S. Vertovec (ed.), *South Asians Overseas: Migration and ethnicity* (Cambridge, 1990), p318.

first annual report of the commission for racial equality was published in 1977, and on the then sensitive subject of employment discrimination, the commission stressed that 'Equal opportunity in employment is obviously of crucial importance, and there is ample evidence, particularly from the research carried out by Political and Economic Planning, that discrimination in this field is still widespread. Our work in employment will be one of our main priorities, and we have devised an overall strategy of formal investigations and promotional work for tackling discrimination and other causes of disadvantage'.[34] The rather different discussion of employment matters in the commission's 1989 annual report demonstrates the significant extent to which the political debate had moved on, although the report does point out persisting areas of challenge: 'Our recent work in employment has focused on results rather than on the processes involved in implementing equal opportunity policies. Increasing numbers of employees are aware of the need to adopt such policies. We welcome this change in attitude, as a first step, but more is needed to get significant change … The need for employers to move from procedures to outcomes was emphasised by Michael Day, Chair of the Commission, to a joint conference with the Confederation of British Industry, and underlined by several leading employers and the CBI Director-General'.[35]

From an Indian perspective, one major issue that brought the diaspora to the fore of Indian political discourse for all the wrong reasons was the Sikh diaspora. The angry Sikh response to then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's attack on their holy Golden Temple included much violence (Air India flight bombing of 1985 ; Khalistan separatist movement) and Indira's eventual assassination. A sense of being a diaspora without a homeland living, perhaps uneasily, in a host nation may have contributed to the diasporic community coalescing around a strategy of political violence, as occurred with the creation of militant Sikh organisations demanding Sikh sovereignty.[36]

Britain became a hub for Sikh separatism to the fear of India. As Axel has recounted, 'Although certainly not supported by all Sikhs, the idea of Khalistan has nevertheless become intimately linked to the transformation of British Sikh life … After Indira Gandhi's attack on the Golden Temple complex in Amritsar in June 1984 … Formerly constructed networks of Sikhs around Britain were used to mobilize protests … Sikhs attempted an attack on the Indian High Commission in London and organized protests all over England culminating, on 10 June, with a march on India House, with more than twenty-five thousand Sikhs led by Jagjit Singh Chauhan, in the presence of several thousand London police officers. In Southall, on 1 November, after the assassination of Indira Gandhi, thousands of militant Sikhs celebrated in Havelock Road outside the Sikh *gurdwara.* … Southall became one of the many places for organizing the fight for Khalistan. Jagjit Singh Chauhan, the president of Khalistan,

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[34] *First Report of the Commission for Racial Equality June 1977-December 1977*, (London, July 1978), p11.

[35] *Annual Report of the Commission for Racial Equality January to December 1989* (London, June 1990), pp28-29.

[36] R. Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An introduction* (Oxford, 2008) p172.

lived in Bayswater on the western edge of central London. Gurmej Singh Gill, the prime minister of the Khalistan government in exile, was based in Smethwick (Birmingham). Jaswant Singh Thekedar, the defense minister of Khalistan, was based in Southall, along with other leaders of competing Khalistani governments.'[37] The presence of a hostile diasporic population overseas in the UK certainly made an impact on Indian political discourse. At the very highest level of government, concerns were raised about the threat posed by a de facto British safe haven for Khalistani separatists. In 1988, for instance, via a series of high-level political conduits including his High Commissioner in London and his commerce minister, then Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi raised directly with Margaret Thatcher the issue of what were in his view dangerous Sikh extremists operating unhindered in Britain. Indeed, more generally, for much of the 1980s, the Indian government perceived the British line on elements of the diaspora hostile to India to be rather relaxed.[38]

[37] B.K. Axel, *The Nation's Tortured Body: Violence, Representation, and the Formation of a Sikh "Diaspora"* (Durham and London, 2001), pp178-179.
[38] K.N. Malik, *India and the United Kingdom: Change and Continuity in the 1980s* (New Delhi, 1997), p106-118.

Chapter 2: The diaspora considered anew in Britain

This chapter examines how the diaspora came to be considered anew in Britain. The main features of this include the development of initiatives to leverage the diaspora in Britain's efforts to engage with India and the increasingly vocal presence of diasporic representatives in the public sphere.

In recent decades, British Indians have become increasingly politically engaged. In recent years, particularly since the 1970s, the increasing electoral clout of the 'Asians' in Britain has become ever more apparent. The numerical concentration of Asian electors in certain constituencies bolsters their influence at the ballot box and in numerous regions this means they are a force to be reckoned with and eminently worthy targets for courting by politicians[39], a claim reinforced by the higher rates of turnout amongst Asian voters which a survey estimated to be as high as 81 per cent at the 1983 general election.[40]

Proactive efforts to engage the British Indian and more generally the British Asian diaspora, principally conducted by the two major political parties, appear to be paying some dividends. Initiatives set up in the mid to late 1970s such as the Conservative party ethnic minority unit and the Labour party race and action group have attracted the attention of intended ethnic minority audiences to some degree. Moreover, in the elections of the 1980s, a significant proportion of the ethnic minority parliamentary and local council candidates have been of Asian background. The story in this respect for the 1980s has been one of an unparalleled track record of electoral success with, for instance, over sixty councillors returned to the Greater London borough in May 1986 and a historic election win for Keith Vaz who was elected to parliament at the 1987 general election.[41] These encouraging developments for the diaspora give witness to their admittance into the political mainstream and the growing power of their political voice with which to articulate their concerns. It is perhaps telling that Vaz used his maiden speech, amongst other themes, to speak to his hopes of the normalisation of ethnic and cultural diversity in Britain ('[Leicester's] religious toleration should be the envy of Britain … It is possible for the tourist and visitor to Leicester to be greeted in many of the local dialects') and to make a bold claim to be the diasporic heir to a previous parliamentarian of Indian origin over sixty years prior ('Saklatvala, with whom I feel a special bond and

[39] M. Anwar, 'The participation of Asians in the British political system' in C. Clarke, C. Peach & S. Vertovec (ed.), *South Asians Overseas: Migration and ethnicity* (Cambridge, 1990), p300.
[40] M. Anwar, 'The participation of Asians in the British political system' in C. Clarke, C. Peach & S. Vertovec (ed.), *South Asians Overseas: Migration and ethnicity* (Cambridge, 1990), pp305-307.
[41] M. Anwar, 'The participation of Asians in the British political system' in C. Clarke, C. Peach & S. Vertovec (ed.), *South Asians Overseas: Migration and ethnicity* (Cambridge, 1990), pp310-312.

who is tied with me through the threads of history')[42]. His election and the message on his entry to parliament appears very much to represent something of a fresh start and to affirm, or at least hint at, the re-imagining of the diaspora in British discourse in part led by the oratorical contributions of members of the diaspora themselves. The active participation of members of the British Indian diaspora in the political process is a trend with deep roots. As far back as before the second world war, three MPs were elected with origins in the Indian subcontinent, with Dadabhai Naoroji, Sir Mancherjee Bhownagree and Shapurji Saklatvala each scoring election victories when representing the Liberals, Conservative and Labour in 1892, 1895 and 1922 respectively.[43]

There is however a strong case for suggesting the existence of 'top-down' or elite as well as 'bottom-up' or community-based pressure on political discourse led to a reconsideration of the British Indian diaspora. Although much had been made of Thatcher's 'swamping' comment about immigration in a 1978 television interview, she was by the mid-1980s on record as having praised the values, skills, work ethic and economic contribution of the Indian community to Britain's well being. This sentiment was to be echoed almost a decade later when John Major hosted a dinner at Downing Street attended by leading British Indians in 1992.[44] In June 1993, in a letter to BOPIO (reprinted in their 1993 Handbook), John Major further underlines this point in his warm praise of the forthcoming Festival of India event held in the UK in August 1993 organised by BOPIO: 'It gives me great pleasure to send a message of support for the festival being organised by the British Organisation of People of Indian Origin. This event will provide people from various communities with an opportunity to enjoy the richness and diversity of Indian culture and tradition. I applaud the aims of the British Organisation of People of Indian Origin as it seeks to promote greater understanding and respect between the different races and cultures in our society'.[45] Leading politicians, it would appear, were coming to recognise the advantages of building links with prominent members of the British Indian diaspora as well as showing appreciation for the valued role they played in British society.

There is certainly evidence that to some extent, the British Indian diaspora came to be conceived anew and was courted by political elites seeking to curry favour with prominent or influential diasporic figures. The efforts by high-ranking members of the Conservative party to court affluent Gujarati Hindus in British suburbia has been

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[42] Keith Vaz, *maiden speech in parliament*, available at [http://www.theyworkforyou.com/debate/?id=1987-07-03a.757.0]

[43] M. Anwar, 'The participation of Asians in the British political system' in C. Clarke, C. Peach & S. Vertovec (ed.), *South Asians Overseas: Migration and ethnicity* (Cambridge, 1990), p299.

[44] K.N. Malik, *India and the United Kingdom: Change and Continuity in the 1980s* (New Delhi, 1997), p90.

[45] BOPIO *1993 Handbook* (published by LAAY Services, 1993), p4.

well documented.[46] There is even some support for the notion that British politicians were in thrall to the diaspora.[47] Part of this 'asset' discourse might be not just the idea of commercial asset but of making a net positive contribution in other senses. In education the British Indian diaspora distinguishes itself, even from other strands of the broader South Asian diaspora: 2003 figures reveal Indian students both male and female score significantly above the national average for the attainment of five satisfactory passes at GCSE level, in contrast to white students whose performance matches the national average and in yet sharper contrast to the below average grade performance of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis.[48] The British Indian diaspora, as distinct from the broader British Asian diaspora, does appear to have been remarkably successful in both educational and economic terms. Gujaratis and both Hindu and Sikh Punjabis from the Jullundur Doab region of India, for example, have excelled in the competitive field of vocational tertiary education, and British Indians make up the lion share of the 20 per cent of the places won by British Asians at medical schools across the UK.[49] Empirical research supports the notion of an economically prosperous British Indian community. They are, for the most part, well-educated, employed in professional occupations and enjoy sizeable purchasing power.[50] To some extent, this appears to have filtered through to political consideration of the British Indian diaspora as making a net contribution to Britain – a 'contribution' discourse so to speak.

The political voice of the diaspora became increasingly assertive. Although something like it existed in previous forms, 1990 saw the establishment of BOPIO as a 'secular, non-sectarian, body to fight in the UK for the rights and interests of people from the Indian Subcontinent … Over the past two years, BOPIO has intervened regularly in public and political debates on key issues of concern … BOPIO has also played a key role in exposing the discriminatory basis of the operation of the Primary Purpose Rule [immigration policy said to be centred on restricting conditions of entry into the UK], commissioning new research into the matter and publishing its own evidence on the matter. This BOPIO pamphlet was launched at an official Fringe Meeting at the 1991 Labour Party Conference. More than 300 copies were also sent to key decision-makers, including the Ministers at the Home Office'.[51] This primary source material indicates how the British Indian diaspora were capable of forging substantial and powerful issue-based campaigns which impacted on a variety of decision makers, seeking to be a part of the political discourse on major policy issues.

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[46] R. Ballard (ed.), *Desh Pardesh: The South Asian Experience in Britain* (London, 1994), p28.
[47] [http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/tag/robin-cook/]
[48] J.M. Brown, *Global South Asians: Introducing the Modern Diaspora* (New York, 2006), p132.
[49] R. Ballard, The South Asian presence in Britain in B. Parekh, G. Singh and S. Vertovec (ed.), *Culture and Economy in the Indian Diaspora* (London and New York, 2003), p202.
[50] A.H. Halsey and J. Webb (ed.), *Twentieth-Century British Social Trends* (London, 2000), p167.
[51] BOPIO *1993 Handbook* (published by LAAY Services, 1993), pp96-97.

Indeed, the BOPIO 1997 Handbook hails the decision of the Home Secretary to remove the Primary Purpose Rule as at least in part the result of concerted BOPIO campaigning: '[The rule removal] had something to do with our campaign over the past years. Massive amounts of literature was produced, every member of the House of Commons was contacted, community group efforts were co-ordinated, conferences and seminars were held, and Labour Party national conferences were lobbied'.[52]

However, the older and more negative strains in political discourse that serve to problematize the diaspora cannot in any meaningful sense be said to have disappeared altogether. For instance, the publication in 2000 of the Parekh Report on the future of multi-ethnic Britain acted as a reminder that issues such as race relations, community cohesion, loyalties and identities are still very much alive and of continuing political concern, even if they are nowadays couched in rather different and somewhat less alarmist terms. In his executive summary, Parekh contends that 'England, Scotland and Wales are at a turning point in their history. They could become narrow and inward-looking, with rifts between themselves and among their regions and communities, or they could develop as a community of citizens and communities … Building and sustaining a community of citizens and communities will involve: rethinking the national story and national identity; understanding that all identities are in a process of transition; developing a balance between cohesion, equality and difference; addressing and eliminating all forms of racism; reducing material inequalities; building a pluralistic human rights culture.'[53] Having said that, it is perhaps telling that the report was commissioned not by government but instead by the Runnymede Trust (an institution focused on matters of racial equality). This does perhaps indicate a more politically relaxed approach to the issue in that it was felt possible for these issues to be addressed in a reflective manner over the course of two years at the civil society level rather than being handled in some urgent and reactive manner by the government of the day. However, even if the 'threat' discourse has lessened for British Indians, it is still very much there in the case of other parts of the South Asian diaspora. There is a great deal of concern and indeed alarm in the political sphere about the threat of Muslims becoming radicalised and therefore posing a danger to key Western political interests.[54]

The creation of several important institutional forums to bolster relationships with the emerging Indian world power is notable as well as the way the diaspora was leveraged to help in this task. The UKIRT was first chaired by Lord Paul[55] and the IBPN and UKIBC by Lord Bilimoria.[56] The business of creating institutions, and the

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[52] BOPIO *1997 Handbook* (published by LAAY Services, 1997), pp136-137.
[53] Chair: Bhikhu Parekh, *Report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* (London, 2000), pxiii.
[54] R. Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An introduction* (Oxford, 2008) p172.
[55] UKIRT website [http://ukinindia.fco.gov.uk/en/about-us/working-with-india/india-uk-relations/uk--india-round-table]
[56] UKIBC's history [http://www.ukibc.com/about_ukibc/]

utilisation of members of the diaspora in those institutions, to improve the UK-India relationship is very much an on going process. As recently as 2009, an All-Party Parliamentary group on UK-India Trade and Investment was established[57] and members included two prominent British Indian MPs (Priti Patel of the Conservatives and Virendra Sharma from Labour) and a British Indian member of the House of Lords (Lord Bilimoria).[58]

There is clear evidence in the primary material I have been able to investigate and consider that efforts were being made to leverage the role of the British Indian diaspora in the facilitation of bilateral trade with India. In the BOPIO 1993 Handbook, Frank Hunt the then Head of the South Asia Group at the Department of Trade and Industry makes a pointed appeal to the diaspora to aid the cause of Indo-British trade: '[This] is a key time for Indo-British trade with the focus on our bilateral commercial [relations] greater now than at any other time in our 400 year trading history … Everyone is welcome to take part in making the Indo-British Partnership Initiative a success. Together with my staff in the Department of Trade and Industry we look forward to hearing from the members of the British Organisation of People of Indian Origin who are interested in developing exports to India or perhaps establishing investment'.[59] In 1997, with the Indo-British Partnership by now securely established, attempts to engage the British Indian diaspora with the process of bilateral trade very much continued. On a similar note to 1993, the BOPIO 1997 Handbook spoke of the need for the continued involvement of the Indian community: 'All companies and business people are encouraged to take part in developing the Indo British Partnership's success … The Secretariat is based at the Department of Trade and Industry in London. They would be delighted to hear from members of the British Organisation of People of Indian Origin who are interested in developing exports, co-operation and investment with India'.[60]

A UK Investment brochure reveals the primacy of commercial considerations. The foreword from then Prime Minister Tony Blair read as follows: 'India and the UK are long established partners in trade and investment. The India-UK Investment Summit 2006 demonstrates our shared ambition to develop a deeper, stronger trade and investment relationship, one which will not only contribute to the future economic growth of our nations, but to the growth and prosperity of our alliance. Last year saw a 110 per cent rise in the number of inward investment projects into the UK from India, a success worth over £1 billion. India has steadily risen up the UK's Foreign Direct Investment league table, and is now our third biggest investor after the USA and Japan…The number of Indian companies that have a base in the

[57] Indian High Commission to the UK, Discussion of parliamentary exchanges between the UK and India [http://hcilondon.in/indiaukbilateral.php] (last accessed: 2 March 2012)
[58] House of Commons Register of All-Party Groups, [http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmallparty/register/india-trade-and-investment.htm]
[59] BOPIO *1993 Handbook* (published by LAAY Services, 1993), pp42-45.
[60] BOPIO *1997 Handbook* (published by LAAY Services, 1997), pp43-44.

UK has increased tremendously and now stands at nearly 500…Since the Indian Government relaxed their foreign exchange controls there has been a significant increase in the number of Indian companies who have turned to acquisition as a method of market entry…I would like to see trade between the UK and India not only increase, but double over the next few years. I believe that initiatives such as the Joint Economic and Trade Committee and the Asia Task Force will provide a framework for this increase…The key factors attracting Indian business to the UK are its strong economy; embracing of free trade and international competition; acceptance of the off shoring business model, and our commitment to deregulation. It is also a gateway to Europe, all major attractions for Indian companies. The factors that attract UK companies are the tremendous growth in all areas of the economy with over 300 million Indians with disposable income and ambitious plans to modernise much of the country's physical infrastructure.'[61] It is notable that this brochure has no written contribution from any prominent British Indian and no mention is made of the diaspora as having a part to play in developing the commercial relationship. To some extent, the diaspora is just trying to insert itself into what is just a bilateral process. Lord Bilimoria's self-praise for his role (after all, it is difficult to imagine IBPN statements such as this not having been seen or influenced by Bilimoria) as having re-energised the IBPN is perhaps a notable case in point.[62]

[61] UK Trade & Investment brochure/communiqué from 2006 India-UK Investment Summit published October 2006 by UK Trade & Investment – available in Bod Law Library Official Papers section reference O.GB/T.3/2008(36)

[62] Select Committee of Trade & Industry hearing [http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmselect/cmtrdind/881/881we18.htm]

Chapter 3: A re-appraisal of the diaspora in India

This chapter examines primarily the opening up of the Indian economy and the re-engagement that brought about with the diaspora.

It is important not to go too far with the notion of a closed Indian economy prior to the 1990s as this would be misleading. Global economic inter-connections between India and other nations were long established and active. For one, the European Economic Community in 1980 was by some distance India's largest trading partner, with Britain a major recipient of Indian exports.[63] Moreover, connections going in the other direction from Britain to India were also substantial: between 1948 and 1973, British foreign private investment in India grew at a compound annual rate of nearly 6 per cent.[64] Nonetheless, notwithstanding the numerous cultural, travel, social and familial bonds linking the diaspora to the homeland there was little in the way of meaningful political engagement with the diaspora until the early 1990s. It does seem to be the case that after many years of neglecting the diaspora, India awoke to the possibilities permitted by the rapidly developing economic prosperity of the Indian diaspora, especially the potential for gains in remittance income to help combat the weakening state of the country's foreign exchange reserves. This strain of thought was in tandem with the work of the Malhotra Committee which had made recommendations to the to the Indian finance ministry to boost measures to attract financial inflows from the diaspora.[65]

Economic liberalisation tapped into the NRIs: 'After the fiscal crisis of 1991 and the subsequent shift in industrial policy which began to dismantle the economic controls first set up under Prime Minister Nehru, the Indian government, and individual state governments, made significant attempts to attract more deposits and direct foreign investments from those who became known as NRIs – Non-Resident Indians, with some success. The strategy was not surprising, given that it is thought that NRIs worldwide may have from $130 to $200 billion to invest'.[66] Numerous bodies and web portals (including a new Ministry in 2004) were created to engage the diaspora[67] but this proliferation of diasporic engagement was not unique to the UK but rather a more general engagement with the global diaspora. The web portals feature warm pronouncements recognising the diaspora: 'The Government of India recognises the importance of Indian Diaspora as it has brought economic, financial,

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[63] S.A. Anwar, *The European Community and Indo-British Trade Relations* (Delhi, 1983), p3.
[64] S.A. Anwar, *The European Community and Indo-British Trade Relations* (Delhi, 1983), p89.
[65] K.N. Malik, *India and the United Kingdom: Change and Continuity in the 1980s* (New Delhi, 1997), pp87-88.
[66] J.M. Brown, *Global South Asians: Introducing the Modern Diaspora* (New York, 2006), p155.
[67] Numerous assorted diaspora web portals [http://www.oifc.in/] ; [http://moia.gov.in/index.aspx] ; [http://www.pbdindia.org/]

and global benefits to India'.[68] However, the British diaspora was very actively engaged and the strong UK presence from the very outset of PBD is evidenced by the attendee list.[69] Furthermore, the UK features prominently in the awards lists in the main statements emanating from the inaugural PBD in 2003.[70] The internet has served to facilitate a growing level of interconnectedness with multiple polarities of belonging, allowing individuals in the diaspora to link ever more strongly to an ever more dispersed and disparate set of social, cultural and perhaps political loyalties.[71] In the UK, older diasporic animosities began to fade. The passage of time since Operation Blue Star and its bloody and protracted aftermath and the efforts made by a series of new Indian High Commissioners in London from 1990 onwards helped to ease the old tensions with the Sikh community and presage a move to a new dialogue with the diaspora with the aim of advancing Indian business interests.[72]

The Indian administration of Prime Minister Rao appealed to British Indians directly. Rao reserves especially warm words for British Indians in his praise of the Festival of India event held in the UK in August 1993 organised by BOPIO. Moreover, he conveys a directly commercial message seeking to court the British Indian diaspora, revealing a great deal about the extent to which Indian political discourse is re-engaging with people of Indian origin overseas on a commercial basis, in this case via a direct appeal to the British contingent of that community: 'I am very happy to hear of the Festival of India which is being organised by the British Organisation of People of Indian Origin to coincide with the 46th Anniversary of India's Independence Day. I am sure that this will be a useful and enjoyable opportunity for people in Britain to increase their awareness of India, its tradition and culture. I am also happy that the occasion is proposed to be utilised for encouraging interaction with the business community in Britain on investment and trading opportunities in India. This is particularly timely in view of the significant steps being taken to open up the Indian economy'.[73] Rao's commercial message is reiterated in a lengthy passage later in the BOPIO 1993 Handbook from the Commercial Department of the Indian High Commission in London who set out in detail the opportunities Indian economic reforms represent for Non-Resident Indians, placing NRIs at the centre of their appeal ('The Indian policy for the promotion of investment focuses on NRIs') even providing a comprehensive breakdown of commercial opportunities such as tax exemption, interest rebates and subsidies in a range of Indian states including Goa, Kerala and Gujarat.[74] This suggests a concerted and coordinated attempt to commercially engage the British element of the Indian diaspora specifically.

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[68] [http://india.gov.in/overseas/diaspora/nri.php]
[69] [http://moia.gov.in/pdf/Pravasi-Bharatiya-Divas-2003.pdf]
[70] [http://indiandiaspora.nic.in/ppbd.htm]
[71] J.M. Brown, *Global South Asians: Introducing the Modern Diaspora* (New York, 2006), pp169-170.
[72] K.N. Malik, *India and the United Kingdom: Change and Continuity in the 1980s* (New Delhi, 1997), p137.
[73] BOPIO *1993 Handbook* (published privately by LAAY Services, London, 1993), p6.
[74] BOPIO *1993 Handbook* (published privately by LAAY Services, London, 1993), pp52-56.

One has to be mindful of claiming too much for the re-appraisal of the British Indian diaspora in Indian political discourse as this is a phenomenon with global characteristics. India is reaching out to its diaspora all over the world and not simply the portion of it in Britain. Nonetheless, there are reasons to think the British element in this story is of importance. In the BOPIO 1993 handbook, organisers and representatives of the Global Convention of People of Indian origin are keen to extoll the virtues and principal aims of the global convention with 'over 2,000 delegates from all over the world … the convention will focus on attracting more NRI [Non-Resident Indian] investments to India'.[75] It is telling that the *British* Indian diaspora is considered an important community for this message to reach, indicating something of its perceived ability to contribute financially to the cause of the Indian homeland. Indeed, not only are the British Indian diaspora a potential source of commercial and financial gain, they have also proved in some respects to be a venue for the furthering of Indian political ideologies and movements. For example, the *Hindutva* agenda has found expression in the UK through the establishment of some sixty branches of the Hindu nationalist group RSS (Rashtriya Swayemsevak Sangh), annual national events, publications and university student conferences.[76]

However, the direct appeals to British Indians evidenced in BOPIO materials and elsewhere cannot be divorced from more global pronouncements on diaspora that are undoubtedly also a feature of this period. Prime Minister Rao was indulging in a worldwide public relations exercise to attract the interest of the global diaspora, for example in a speech in Singapore in 1994: 'Indian businessmen have established joint ventures all over the Asia-Pacific – 148 in the APEC economies. The overseas Indian community, which retains strong links with its homeland, but prefers to live and work abroad, constitutes a vital link between India and the countries of the Asia-Pacific. We have a stake in their prosperity, as they have a stake in our future.'[77] This attempt by the Indian government to re-engage with the diaspora has undoubtedly yielded benefits in recent decades. According to Reserve Bank of India figures, so-called non-resident deposits increased from just £18.3 million in 1974-5 to £11.05 billion in 1994-5.[78]

In seeking to make sense of the manner in which India re-engaged with the British Indian diaspora more generally, it is important to remember that the fulfilment of bilateral trading opportunities (of which Britain is just one) remain of supreme concern. Discussion of engagement with the diaspora must be seen within this context. The nature of the five day visit made by Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee in 2002 to Britain, Cyprus and Denmark underlines this point. Vajpayee's speech on the

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[75] BOPIO *1993 Handbook* (published by LAAY Services, 1993), pp18-19.
[76] J.M. Brown, *Global South Asians: Introducing the Modern Diaspora* (New York, 2006), pp167-168.
[77] P V Narasimha Rao, 'The Singapore Lecture, September 8, 1994' in *A Long Way - Selected Speeches* (Kottayam, 2002), p79.
[78] K.N. Malik, *India and the United Kingdom: Change and Continuity in the 1980s* (New Delhi, 1997), p127.

eve of departure stresses the plethora of business dialogue with European nations that awaits him ('In Denmark, I will lead the Indian delegation to the 3rd India-EU Summit and also address a special plenary session of the India-EU Business Summit. Our growing relationship with the EU is reinforced by strengthening political relations with its member countries and an increasing economic engagement with the EU. The Summit and the Business Summit will provide an opportunity to review the state of relations, identify bottlenecks to progress and to chart out an agenda for future cooperation.') as well as similar discussions to be had in Britain ('On my way back to India I will stop over in London for discussions with the Prime Minister of U.K. [sic] Tony Blair and I have established a process of regular bilateral consultations, which benefit the bilateral relationship and enable discussions on a number of important international issues. While in London I hope to meet a cross section of the Community of Indian origin.')[79] The business tone is telling, especially the desire to operate at a European and not simply a British level, and little more than lip service is paid to the diaspora in Vajpayee's passing acknowledgement of the British Indian diaspora (although the fact that the British Indian diaspora is noted at the highest level and communicated to an Indian audience on the eve of departure is not to be totally ignored).

The duration of Vajpayee's five day visit saw repeated reminders of the centrality of commercial considerations, the absence of sentimentality in any bilateral relationship and the primacy of Europe as a nexus for Indian trade demands. For instance, Minister of External Affairs Yashwant Sinha, in his speech at the Inaugural Dinner of the 3rd India-EU Business Summit on 10th October 2002, speaks to the opening up the Indian economy to Europe: 'These have, as I said, been also momentous days for India because we have transited from a somewhat controlled economy to a market economy. We have integrated with the rest of the world and today as has been pointed out here by speaker after speaker that there is natural synergy between Europe and India and this is the foundation on which we must build our future.'[80] Towards the close of the five day visit, in a press conference in London, the Minister for External Affairs reiterated the hard headed tinge of bilateral and commercial realpolitik (the decision to reserve Prime Minister Vajpayee's personal presence at conferences to the European segment of the visit was indicative of the Indian mindset): 'The two Prime Ministers reviewed the progress of bilateral relations on the basis of the New Delhi Declaration … Prime Minister Blair expressed his satisfaction at the progress which has been made in all spheres of bilateral relationship. The Prime Minister of India told him that perhaps there was a need to

[79] Vajpayee's statement on the eve of departure in New Delhi on October 7 2002 in Ministry of External Affairs, *Visit of Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee to The Republic of Cyprus, The Kingdom of Denmark, The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland October 7-13, 2002* (New Delhi, 2003), pp5-7.

[80] Minister of External Affairs Yashwant Sinha speech at the Inaugural Dinner of the 3rd India-EU Business Summit on October 10, 2002 in Ministry of External Affairs, *Visit of Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee to The Republic of Cyprus, The Kingdom of Denmark, The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland October 7-13, 2002* (New Delhi, 2003), p36.

push ahead with respect to certain areas, especially in the trade and economic field and suggested that there should be more visits of British Ministers to India to provide a fillip in this direction with which Prime Minister of UK agreed immediately.'[81]

Indian attitudes to citizenship have changed markedly over time. Since independence, the prevailing thinking in government was to sever any ties of political loyalty to the homeland of any Indians who had chosen to settle elsewhere. Notions of a duality of loyalty or indeed formal citizenship were more or less non-existent and not something under consideration.[82] In more recent years, there has been an expansion of interest in this area on the part of the Indian government to politically and culturally reconnect the diaspora to India. Any individual in the diaspora who could trace Indian origin even as far back as their great-grandparents could be granted a PIO (Person of Indian Origin) card and a committee chaired by former UK High Commissioner L.M. Singhvi (it is worth noting that Singhvi had been based in the UK and hence immersed in the lives of the British Indian diaspora) was established to look into Indian diaspora in 2000. Judith Brown encapsulates the revolution in political relationship the Indian government's re-engagement of the diaspora entailed: 'It was clear that the Indian government was actively wooing Indians overseas, and it also inaugurated annual celebratory and information-providing Diaspora Days in India from 2003 on the anniversary of Gandhi's return from South Africa in 1915 after two decades abroad … This trend culminated in the decision in 2004 to grant overseas Indians Indian citizenship. At the time of writing the details of this still have to be worked out [as we have seen, they now have been with the passing into law of the OCI Act 2005]. It is, however, a very significant step for Indians in the diaspora, as it will undoubtedly ease a whole range of their continuing connections with India itself, and will be a new affective as well as material link binding the diaspora to their old homeland.'[83]

The amendment to the Citizenship Act of India to create a new category of Overseas Citizenship of India, enacted on 24 August 2005, represented a considerable concrete change in the nature of India's engagement with her diaspora: 'Registration of overseas citizens of India.-The Central Government may, subject to such conditions and restrictions as may be prescribed, on an application made in this behalf, register as an overseas citizen of India-(a) any person of full age and capacity,-(i) who is citizen of another country, but was a citizen of India at the time of, or at any time after, the commencement of the Constitution; or(ii) who is citizen

[81] Press Conference by Minister of External Affairs Yashwant Sinha in London, September 12, 2002 in Ministry of External Affairs, *Visit of Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee to The Republic of Cyprus, The Kingdom of Denmark, The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland October 7-13, 2002* (New Delhi, 2003), pp85-86.
[82] J.M. Brown, *Global South Asians: Introducing the Modern Diaspora* (New York, 2006), p159.
[83] J.M. Brown, *Global South Asians: Introducing the Modern Diaspora* (New York, 2006), p159.

of another country, but was eligible to become a citizen of India at the time of the commencement of the Constitution; or(iii) who is citizen of another country, but belonged to a territory that became part of India after the 15th day of August, 1947; or(iv) who is a child or a grand-child of such a citizen'[84] This new form of citizenship was generous and quite globally inclusive in its definition of citizenship, reflecting no doubt a desire to re-engage with the Indian diaspora including those overseas Indians who Indian political elites had failed to recognise or cultivate. It would appear that through legal recognition, the Indian government was and is keen to court the diaspora, even to the extent of incorporating large numbers of diaspora populations who are somewhat removed or disconnected from India (for example, so called twice migrants from east Africa whose forefathers were originally from India and who, as we have already discussed, form a large number of the British Indian diaspora, were made eligible for Overseas Citizenship of India in law.

[84] Indian Ministry of Law and Justice Legislative Department, *The Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2005*, can be viewed at [http://indiacode.nic.in]

Conclusion

In this thesis, I set out to investigate how the British Indian diaspora was considered in the political sphere and to understand the shift in political understanding of the diaspora from the late 1960s to the early part of the twenty first century. It appears from this investigation that there has been a marked shift in political discussion of the British Indian diaspora – a re-imagining of the British Indian diaspora in both British and Indian political discourse. This re-imagining occurred over many years but the latter part of the 1980s and early part of the 1990s can be considered a crucial period of re-assessment and attitudinal change.

In Chapter 1, we saw how the late 1960s, and the 1970s and 1980s had been an era of relatively fraught discourse. In Britain, a discourse of threat prevailed, heightened by the anti-immigrant posturing of mainstream and periphery politicians and by the challenges of reaching a political accommodation as regards the arrival of Asians from Kenya and Uganda. In short, issues of race relations came to the fore. In India, the British Indian diaspora was viewed through the lens of liability, posing great danger to the motherland as Sikh Khalistani separatists plotted abroad and issued hostile pronouncements from overseas. In Chapter 2, we discussed how the British Indian diaspora came to be considered anew in Britain. Not only did British Indians assert themselves politically in new and powerful ways but there was a proliferation of initiatives and institutions (that made some use of the British Indian diaspora) seeking a new dawn in UK-India relations. Moreover, in the late 1980s and the 1990s older narratives gave way at least in part to a new discourse of contribution in respect of the diaspora. Finally, in Chapter 3, we gained an insight into the Indian re-appraisal of the British Indian diaspora. As the tensions with the Sikh diaspora subsided, the 1990s saw the opening up of the Indian economy coupled with a global strategy of re-engagement with the diaspora. But it was in the early part of the twenty first century that the most substantial efforts of re-appraisal came to fruition. The global diaspora, with the British segment of the diaspora being courted heavily, were connected with India like no point since they had departed the homeland, with recognition taking many forms (most notably expressed in PBD and legal OCI status).

In short, developments – especially those that have occurred since the 1990s – highlight how political conceptions of the diaspora have undergone a substantial transformation in recent decades. From being viewed as a liability or with indifference, the diaspora is now recognised rather fondly in the political mainstream perhaps above all synonymous with economic prosperity. This thesis, by analysing the political re-appraisal of the diaspora in recent decades has brought the picture up to date from the existing scholarship analysing perceptions prior to the 1990s and also addressed areas of relevance to the study of diaspora beyond internally oriented questions of identity. An understanding of how the diaspora has been portrayed in the political sphere is a helpful contribution in this regard.

It is important to point out a number of caveats and limitations to this thesis. First, although effort has been made to demonstrate a discernible shift in political discourse, there are persisting continuities (the continued statements of the

Commission on Racial Equality in respect of race relations being a case in point). This thesis provides only a partial and far from exhaustive survey of political discourse. It is simply an attempt to shed some light on how in some senses political perceptions of the diaspora have developed over time, and mindful of the burden of proof in determining shifts in discourse resting on dealing with the *predominant* discourse of each era under consideration (inevitable elements of both change and continuity in any period). This is further complicated as the political discussion of the diaspora is very dispersed across different fora, hence the use of a variety of different primary materials. This thesis chooses to focus on how the discourse developed in respect of the attempts by both the British and Indian governments to advance commercial interests. Second, the shift in political discourse regarding the view of British Indian diaspora cannot be divorced entirely form broader global and bilateral contexts. Although the British Indian diaspora was of specific value to India, the attempt to reach out to British Indians was not unique but part of a global approach to courting the diaspora. Similarly for Britain, to some extent the increase in Indo-British activity including various initiatives is not just a reflection of a re-consideration of the utility of the British Indian diaspora. It is instead part of a strategic desire to develop a strong bilateral commercial relationship with an emerging power, which the British Indian diaspora comes to be involved in. Indeed, the relative paucity of reference to or presence of British Indians on occasion is somewhat surprising. Third, the re-imagining of the British Indian diaspora is highly tentative. The recent successful political re-consideration of the diaspora rests on unsure footing, given that it is a status granted by transitory commercial concerns and the desire of particular government administrations to engage with and involve the diaspora. Furthermore, re-imagining is a highly sectional and elite phenomenon, centred on the professional and commercial classes, at least the re-imagining which has been the preoccupation of this thesis.

Finally, these developments are on going phenomena and there is still a great deal to be uncovered. First, the British Indian diaspora continues to be framed more positively than it perhaps has been in the past. For example, David Cameron lauded the diaspora in a recent trip to India when he spoke of the 'deep and close connections amongst our people, with nearly two million people of Indian origin living in the UK [making] an enormous contribution to our country – way out of proportion to their size – in business, in the arts, in sport'[85]. Second, the eventual release of currently confidential official government papers will provide more candid accounts and a fuller picture of the motivations behind the actions of the 1990s and early part of the twenty first century.

[85] David Cameron Speech in Bangalore on 28 July 2010, [http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/pms-speech-in-india/]

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