

74

February 2021

Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism

Role of Indian Diaspora for Resetting Indo- Guyanese Relationship

Banditarani Behera



GRFDT

Global Research Forum on
Diaspora and Transnationalism

Research Monograph Series

GRFDT Research Monograph Series

GRFDT brings out Research Monograph series every month since January 2015. The Research Monograph covers current researches on Diaspora and International Migration issues. All the papers published in this research Monograph series are peer reviewed. There is no restriction in free use of the material in full or parts. However user must duly acknowledge the source.

Editorial Board

Dr. Anjali Sahay	Associate Professor, International Relations and Political Science at Gannon University, Pennsylvania, USA
Dr. Ankur Datta	Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, South Asian University, New Delhi
Dr. Els van Dongen	Assistant Professor, Nanyang Technological university, Singapore
Dr. Evans Stephen Osabuohien	Dept. of Economics and Development Studies, Covenant University, Nigeria
Prof. Guofu LIU	School of Law, Beijing Institute of Technology, Beijing
Dr. Kumar Mahabir	The University of Trinidad and Tobago, Corinth Teachers College, UTT
Dr. M. Mahalingam	Research Fellow, Centre For Policy Analysis, New Delhi
Dr. Nandini C. Sen	Associate Professor, Cluster Innovation Centre, University of Delhi, New Delhi
Dr. Nayeem Sultana	Associate Professor, Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh
Dr. Ned Bertz	Assistant Professor of History, University of Hawaii
Dr. Raj Bardouille	Migration and Development Researcher, Centre for Refugee Studies, York University, Toronto, Canada
Dr. Smita Tiwary	Research Fellow, Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi
Dr. Veena Sharma	Independent Scholar on Diaspora, New Delhi
Prof. Vinesh Hookoomsing	University of Mauritius, Mauritius
Dr. Sadananda Sahoo	Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi

Managing Editor: Dr. Monika Bisht Ranjan

Email: grfdtmonograph@gmail.com

Design and Production: Rakesh Ranjan and Feroz Khan

©Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism (GRFDT) . Printed, designed & circulated by GRFDT

Role of Indian Diaspora for Resetting Indo- Guyanese Relationship

Banditarani Behera



Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism
40/55, 1st floor, C R Park, Market – 1, Above PNB Bank, New Delhi - 110019,
Email: grfdtmonograph@gmail.com, Contact: +91-9818602718
Website- www.grfdt.org,
Facebook- www.facebook.com/diaspora.transnationalism
LinkedIn– www.in.linkedin.com/in/grfdt, Twitter- www.twitter.com/grfdt2012

Abstract

In the Globalized world, Diaspora became a new soft power tool of India's foreign policy to strengthen its relations with other countries. The people of Diaspora can create a link between the home country and the host country. Now Indian policymaker gives importance to this Diasporic group who are living in different parts of the world for the economic growth of India. In recent years Prime Minister Modi made it a point to articulately use the 25 million people spread across 135 countries in India's internal and external policy formulation process. Guyana is the only English-speaking country among all Caribbean countries. To the report of the Ministry of External Affairs (2019) the total no of overseas Indians are in Guyana 297,793 among them 300 are NRI and 297,493 are PIO. The presence of Indians in Guyana has a long history. Indians are migrated to Guyana from different states of India such as Uttar Pradesh, Southern India (Kerala, Tamilnadu, and Telangana). Indians are the largest ethnic group in the mainland of Guyana. Both these countries once became the part of British Empire. In 1838 first time Indian immigrants going to British Guyana to work in the sugar plantations. Apart from these historical relations both these countries have economic cooperation also have some cultural connections. Indian ministers are also many time visits this region and meet the Indian Diaspora. Both have signed so many programs and projects to develop their relations positively. Now, these two countries try to develop strong bilateral relations. Indian Diaspora living in Guyana is creating a bridge between these two countries for their future development process. There are many Indian Diaspora actively take part in the political participation of Guyana. Indian Diaspora act as a soft power for making bilateral bond and strong cultural ties between Indian and Guyana. They have played an important role in both the home country and the host country as well. Therefore, this paper aims to study and analyze the socio-economic conditions and political status of Indians in Guyana. Identify the demographic composition and cultural practices of Indo- Guyanese. Focus on the role of Indian Diaspora in India-Guyana relations and study the challenges and opportunities facing by the Indian Diaspora in Guyana. Finally, emphasis on the initiatives undertaken by the Indian government to connect with the Indian Diaspora for the improvement of India's relations with Guyana.

Keywords: Diaspora, Soft Power, Economy, Bilateral relations, Policy formulations

Author(s): Banditarani Behera, M.Phil in Diaspora Studies Central University of Gujarat, Gandhinagar
Contact: Email Id- bandita614@gmail.com

Statement: All the views expressed in the paper are of the author(s).

Role of Indian Diaspora for Resetting Indo- Guyanese Relationship

Banditarani Behera

1.1 Introduction

India has long accepted the significance and contribution of the Indian Diaspora towards its home country. Since the economic liberalization of the 1990s, the Indian diaspora became an important and discussing part of the policymakers and research scholars of India. They are having various socio-cultural engagements with India. In the age of transnationalism, there is much more focus given to the connection of Indian Diaspora in the advanced western countries and give less importance to the old Indian diaspora living in the Caribbean region. In British Guyana, there is a large number of Indian indentured immigrants who come to this land to work as indentured labor and settle there. Many generations later this Diaspora continues to hold on to their cultural customs and traditions. It may vary from current cultural practices in India. Now they became played an important role in the economic, political, and cultural life of the country. The majority of the population of Guyana is of African origin (29.2 percent), mixed heritage (19.9 percent), and East Indian (39.9 percent) descents (2012 Census), Indo-Guyanese are the dominant group in this region (Singh, 2019). The rest of the population is of European, Chinese, or indigenous origin. The Indian presence has immeasurably enriched the Guyanese nation. Descendants of indentured laborers continue to contribute to the economic development of the nation. The contributions of Indian indentured immigrants and their descendants to the building of Guyana are always lauded, so that the country is now richer, culturally, socially, and politically because of these contributions. Indian indentured immigrants played an important role in the transformation of the economy. They turned their indentureship into the citizenship (Kaieteur News, 2019). India's relations with Guyana are warm and cordial with a high degree of understanding. The interaction is structured through periodic joint commissions, foreign office consultations, cultural exchange programs, and ITEC. The emotional connection between India

and Guyana continues even today, for example, India has the partner of Guyana's celebration of the 180th anniversary of the arrival of East India immigrants to Guyana as 'Arrival Day' on 5 May 2019. India has been a long-time partner and closely connected with Guyana in many ways and contributes to different areas of development. Indians in Guyana observe Indian festivals and cultures. The cultural practices, religious linkages, and economic trends of Indian indenture emigrants help Guyana to take the country forward in a different way than the other countries of the Caribbean region (Srinivasa, 2020).

1.2 Historical overview

There is a saying 'history is the past politics and past politics is the present history'. Without knowing the past there is no present. The presence of the Indian diaspora in the Caribbean is traced back to the Indentureship system that lasted mainly from about 1838 to 1917. In this period, the British had transported many Indians from the different parts of India through ships to the Caribbean region to work in a sugar plantation. A large percentage of Indians migrated to mainland Guyana to work in agricultural and sugarcane fields. The presence of Indian's in Guyana has a long history also creates a glowing picture in the immigration history of both these countries. Till 1966 may 26 Guyana know as British Guyana situated on the northeastern shoulder of South America. The Indian presence began with the arrival of Indentured immigrants in British Guyana on May 5, 1838, primarily to work on the sugar plantation (Financial Express, 2019). There had always been a labor shortage in the sugar industry and planter's anticipated that the emancipation of enslaved Africans would precipitate an exodus that could aggravate that situation. That did not quite happen nevertheless indentured immigrants were brought from various European countries, the largest group being the Portuguese who had been recruited from Madeira and

started arriving as early as May 1835. Three years after the start of Portuguese immigration and four months before African emancipation in August 1838. Indian's started to arrive over the next nine decades, 239,909 Indian immigrants would arrive until the termination of the system in 1917. A few hundred others come up to 1928 of these 75,547 returned to India under the terms of their contract. The ethnic origins occupations diversity and a large number of Indian's were important determinants of their destiny and the development of the country. Many were recruited from the heavily populated, Bhojpuri-speaking area that come to be known as the United Provinces roughly the present-day Uttar Pradesh (Stabrock News, 2009). Indo- Guyanese are consist of 40% of the country's total population. Nearly 62% population are from Uttar Pradesh, 21% of immigrants are from Bihar, 6% are from Bengal, 3% are from Jharkhand, 3% are from Tamilnadu and 3% are from Central India and 2% are from the rest of India. Among them 85% are Hindus and 15% are Muslims (Srinivas, 2020). The Indian presence has immeasurably enriched the Guyanese nation.

Another significant source of immigrants was the Madras Presidency, in Southern India, of which the present-day state of Tamil Nadu is a part and where the principal emigration port was Madras (now Chennai). Today, the descendants of the immigrants from these parts are still called Madrasis. 43% of the population is of Indian origin descendants of Indentured laborers brought here between 1838 and 1917 and they belong from lower agricultural caste such as artisan caste, cultivator caste, grazier caste, landholding caste, and priestly caste. Indian indentured laborers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries successfully transplanted their skills from their old homes onto their new homelands. Indians were largely absent from the political scene throughout the indentureship period. By 1925, although Indians had increased to 40 percent of the population, they comprised only 13 percent of registered voters. Gradually, they became more organized in politics and society. At the political level, eligibility to vote in the early 20th century was determined by literacy in the English language, income, age, citizenship, and property qualification (Financial Express, 2019). Dr. Cheddi Jagan (Indian Origin) was elected to the Legislative Council in 1947; therefore, a tradition of Indian legislative representation had already existed for over 30 years. The most important political phenomenon was the founding of the People's Progressive Party in 1950 and the introduction of universal adult suffrage in the 'Waddington Constitution' of 1952. Dr.Cheddi

Jagan became leader of the party's legislative group and, eventually, the most beloved Indian-Guyanese of all time. The last shipment of immigrants – consisting of 437 persons and originating from both Madras and Calcutta – arrived in 1917. Nevertheless, over 400 immigrants were brought on contracts to work on the sugar plantations in 1921-1922 and other Indians also came as ordinary settlers. Immigration from India ended in 1928 after almost exactly 90 years (Srinivasa, 2020).

1.3 Socio-Economic Profile of Indians in Guyana

Indo Guyanese have made a significant contribution to the development of the country. They came as indentured laborers to augment their meager earnings. They engaged in farming and later they expand their business in the large-scale agricultural sector. The indentured workers were called "coolies" and up to this day, Indo Guyanese are labeled as coolies. Today, thousands of Indians have received high education and they are scattered all over the world — many of them are world-renowned in the field of medicine, technology, and other important areas. Hundreds of Afros did extremely well in the educational, cultural, sports, and other areas. Indian indentured immigrants played an important role in shaping Guyana's internal economy. From an economic point of view, the Indian Diaspora helps to transform the country's progress on underdevelopment to the development process. Indian skills in paddy and vegetable farming, coconut cultivation, and cattle-rearing; and their skills as boatmen, charcoal-burners, goldsmiths, fishermen, hucksters, milk and sweetmeat vendors, shopkeepers, and tailors enriched the entire economy. These are skills they brought from their homelands. All of these skills enriched Guyanese society. After the hard toil and struggle, Indians have attained the both economic status and political eminence. East Indians also helped to transform their own lives and the lives of other immigrants who came to British Guiana, through their resistance to abuse, brutality, confinement, and domination of plantation life. India has been a long-time partner in prosperity and growth and is still closely connected with Guyana in many ways and still contributes in various areas of development. Indo-Guyanese are the largest ethnic group in Guyana as identified by the official census, about 40% of the country's population of about 750,000 in 2012(Persaud, 1986). They have built many temples and mosques to set up their own cultural and religious associations. After the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the UN general assembly in 1948, a huge number of Indian indentured labor resulted in a huge Indian Diaspora. Indian-origin cricket players are very

much famous in the West Indies cricket team (Rohan Kanhai, Alvin Kallicharan, Shivnarine Chandepaul, and Ramnaresh Sarwan) (Khan, 2020). After 2015 Guyana society economically transformed with the discovery of rich offshore oil. Guyana's economy is based on natural resources and the agricultural sector. Indians in Guyana engaged themselves in such sectors. Indian government tries to keep connect with these Indo- Guyanese Diaspora and several schemes and MOU's signed between these two countries for the improvement of the socio-economic conditions of these people. An Education Exchange Programme was signed in August 2003 between the Governments of India and Guyana. This provides for the grant of scholarships, the establishment of Chairs of Studies, Academic Exchanges, and other arrangements in the field of education. The cooperation between the two countries in sharing developmental experience is mainly routed through the Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation (ITEC) under which 50 scholarships are granted to Guyana every year in various courses.

Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation program popularly known as ITEC was launched in 1964 as a bilateral program of assistance of the Government of India. Scholarships are offered for short-term courses of 3 weeks to 6 weeks, in 1250 courses for skill development, in the fields of Hydrology, Engineering, Cyber Technology, Management, Education, Agriculture, Horticulture, Banking, and Financial Services, Environment Protection, Public Management, and many more (Britannica, 2020). More than 500 Indo- Guyanese have been trained under the ITEC scheme in various institutions of repute in India. Besides, some experts are also deputed to Guyana from time to time on request in specified areas of activity such as Meteorology, Transmission, and Broadcasting, Legal Experts, Disaster Management, Coconut, Spices, Institutional Development (Stabroek News, 2009). The Government of India offers various scholarships and schemes for Indo- Guyanese nationals to study or get trained in India or to visit India for pilgrimage or as their ancestral homeland. Several other scholarships are also available to Guyanese to pursue long-term courses, to get acquainted with India, and to learn Indian music, dance, etc. in India. India continues to empower Indo- Guyanese and provide services in the area of Information Technology, Engineering, Agriculture (Rice and Sugar), Research and Development, Medicine, among others. In Guyana today, many Indo- Guyanese youths returned from India with Master and Doctorate Degrees and are serving the country in various fields. India is deeply

involved in partnership cooperation with Guyana by providing developmental assistance under the Indian Development and Economic Assistance Scheme (IDEAS) for use in mutually accepted designated fields for various projects. These projects help the development of the country's economy and improve people's livelihood (Mohammad, 1974).

1.4 Changing demographic profile Indians in Guyana

Guyana's population is made up of six main ethnic groups: Amerindians, Africans, Indians, Europeans, Portuguese and Chinese. Ninety percent of the inhabitants live on the narrow coastal plain, where population density is more than 115 inhabitants per square kilometer. The present population of Guyana is racially and ethnically heterogeneous, with ethnic groups originating from India, Africa, Europe, and China, as well as indigenous or aboriginal peoples. The largest ethnic group is the Indo-Guyanese, the descendants of indentured laborers from India, who make up 39.8% of the population, according to the 2012 census (Bahadur, 2015). Indo- Guyanese are the largest ethnic group at 44% of the total population and Afro- Guyanese are 30% of the descendants of African slaves (World Population Review, 2021). Therefore, these two largest groups, the Indo-Guyanese and Afro-Guyanese, have experienced some racial tension. Most Indo-Guyanese are descended from Bhojpuri-speaking Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Bengali migrants. Many Indo-Guyanese are also Tamil-speaking Tamils from Tamil Nadu and Telugus of Andhra Pradesh in South India. The distribution pattern in the 2002 census was similar to those of the 1980 and 1991 censuses, but the share of the two main groups has declined. Indo-Guyanese made up 51.9% of the total population in 1980, but by 1991 this had fallen to 48.6%, and then to 43.5% in the 2002 census. In the 2012 census, Hindus consist up 24% of the total population (Stabroek News, 2009).

1.4.1 According to the census data of Guyana percentage of Indian Diaspora:-

- Census 1946- 163,434(43.5%) of the total population.
- Census 1960- 267,840(47.8%) of the total population.
- Census 1980- 394,417(51.9%) of the total population.
- Census 1991- 351,939(48.6%) of the total

population.

- Census 2002- 326,277(43.4%) of the total population.
- Census 2012- 297,493(39.8%) of the total population. (World Population Review, 2021)

Although the great majority of the East Indian immigrant workers were from northern India, there were variations among them in caste and religion. Some 30 percent of the East Indians were from agricultural castes and 31 percent were from low castes or were untouchables. The highest caste Brahmins constituted 14 percent of the East Indian immigrants. About 16 percent were Muslims. The only acknowledgment the colonial government and the plantation managers gave to caste differences was their distrust of the Brahmins as potential leaders. East Indian workers were housed together and placed in work gangs without consideration of caste. Unlike the African slaves, the East Indian indentured workers were permitted to retain many of their cultural traditions. But the process of assimilation has made the culture of the modern Indo- Guyanese more homogeneous than that of their caste-conscious immigrant ancestors (Guyana Travel Information).

1.5 Political Scenario of Indians in Guyana

The political footprint of Indians in Guyana was made more prominent by the Barbicans like Joseph Luckhoo, who was the first Indian elected to the Combined Court. Later on other Indo- Guyanese such as E.A. Luckhoo, A.E Seeram, and J.B. Singh, Peer Bacchus, C. R. Jacob, A.M. Edun, and, later, Dr. Cheddi Jagan and others have created a glorious picture in the Guyanas political sector. Dr. Jagan's contribution is perhaps the most outstanding of Indo Guyanese in the struggle for national liberation. India and Guyana all along viewed each other as strategic partners and cooperate in the international arena where there exists a clear convergence of views on issues of mutual interest. Exchange visits from both sides create more strong these two countries relations. In 1968 Smt. Indira Gandhi and in 1968, Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, Former President of India visited Guyana. Vice president of India Bharion Singh Shekhawatin 2006 and President Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo visited India in 2003 and 2004; Prime Minister Mr. Samuel Hinds visited India October 2012, President Donald Ramotar visited India in January-February 2013 and again in January 2015 to be the Chief Guest of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas held at Gujarat, President David Granger visited India in March 2018 (Kaleteur News, 2019). In the elections

of 1992, which were deemed reasonably free and fair by international observers, the PPP (People's Progressive Party) returned to power with Cheddi Jagan once again becoming president. However, the outcoming of the PNC (Peoples National Congress) led to serious riots by mainly Afro-Guyanese supporters who complained of fraud and election rigging. With the PPP (People's Progressive Party) in power, it was Afro-Guyanese who now began to complain of discrimination. Ethnic tensions increased; especially criticisms regarding the firing of civil servants who had served under the previous administration (mostly Afro-Guyanese), and their replacement with Indo-Guyanese. The economy continued growing during the Jagan years, but average wages remained low, and labor unrest continued. Following Jagan's unexpected death in 1997, his American-born widow was elected president and sworn in during a secret ceremony just before being served a court order barring her from office. Dr. Jagan's contribution is perhaps the most outstanding of Indo Guyanese in the struggle for national liberation. Indians were able to preserve the rights of Guyanese and President Jagdeo was the Chief Guest at the 2nd Pravasi Bharatiya Divas celebrations and received the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award, the contributions that they made have been able to make the lives of all Guyanese more dignified (Newsroom, 2018). Shortage of Indian women in indentured society, there is very less relationship develop between Indian men and black women. So. In recent times conflict was taken place about their roots, origin, and voting process. After that 'Douglas Politics' concept started. Therefore, these days some ethnic tensions took place among the Guyanas politics.

1.6 Cultural practices of Indians in Guyana

Indians have left a rich legacy of art, dance, literature, and music. Traditional cuisine- the perennially popular curry, puri, roti, Bara, kheer, and other vegetable dishes, are widely consumed. Festivals including the colorful Holi, Diwali, and Eid- ul- Fitr is today national holidays. Traditional Indian wear the shalwar, Sari, Kurta though no longer everyday wear, have remained very popular especially at festivals, wedding, and religious ceremonies. The contributions to sport, especially in the present-day feats of 'Shivnarine Chanderpaul' and 'Ramnaresh Sarwan' have become a national legend. Guyanese continue to observe Indian festivals such as Phagwah (Holi), Diwali, Navratri. This soft power of India in this country is the most remarkable Indian contribution in Guyana. The cultural linkage, religious practices, and economic trends brought with

them during the time of indentureship helped Guyana to take the country forward in a different way than the other countries in the Caribbean region. In the cultural field, India and Guyana concluded a Cultural Agreement in 1974 which came into force on 31 March 1977. According to this agreement, the first Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) for 1994, 1995, and 1996 between the two countries was signed in 1993 in New Delhi during the visit of the then Guyanese President Cheddi Jagan. The current CEP for 2007, 2008, and 2009 facilitate the visit of cultural troupes from India to Guyana; exchange of Archivists and records of mutual interest, training of Guyanese officials in Archives Management by the National Archives of India, exchange of exhibitions between National Art Galleries of the two countries (International minority group, 2018).

An MOU on Cultural Exchange Programme 2018-2021 was signed on 31 January 2018 during the visit to India by Second Vice President and Minister of Foreign Affairs Carl B. Greenidge. Cultural troupes from India under the CEP, and outside the CEP, have been visiting and performing in different parts of Guyana from time to time. Indian Cultural Centre (now known as Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre - SVCC) in Georgetown was established in 1972 to strengthen cultural relations and mutual understanding between India and Guyana and their peoples. The Centre runs regular classes in Yoga, music, and Kathak dance. The teachers and students of SVCC (Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre) participate in events by the local community on culture, mythology, and works of eminent scholars and authors. Apart from running regular classes in Yoga, music, and Kathak dance, the Centre in recent past introduced the teaching of Indian Folk Dances which have become very popular with young girls (Danns, 2014). In furtherance of expansion of its activities, the Centre has been imparting training in Vocal and Harmonium. Due to the strong presence of the Indian diaspora and PIO among Guyanese, Indian films and songs, especially Bollywood films, are very popular here. Fulfillment of their aspirations and wishes, the Centre also on monthly basis organizes screening of Indian films in its auditorium which gets admiration from one and all. The multifarious activities of the SVCC (Swami Vivekanda Cultural Centre) helped the Indo- Guyanese to maintain their deep cultural ties with their home country India (Seymour, 1997).

The vast majority came from the Hindustani (or Hindi) speaking areas of North India. The most popular dialect spoken was Bhojपुरi (spoken in east Uttar Pradesh and

west Bihar), followed by Awadhi (spoken in central Uttar Pradesh). 96.8% of all the Indian Immigrants to Guyana left the port of Calcutta in North India, and 3.2% from the port of Madras in South India. Indenture documents showed as Hindu by caste consisted of 11% Brahmin, Bhumihar, Chatri, Rajput, and Thakur castes; 1% merchant or writer castes; 30% medium agricultural castes; 9% artisan castes; 2% petty trading castes; 2% fishermen and boatmen castes; 25% menial or Dalit castes; 3% Hindus who were Madrasis; 2% Hill Coolies or Tribals (Srinivasa, 2020).

1.6.1 Language Spoken

English is the official language of Guyana. It is the only South American country with English as the official language. Some American languages are also spoken by a minority of the people including some Caribbean languages. Other languages are also spoken including Chinese, Hindi, and Tamil (Financial Express, 2019).

1.7 Role of Indian Diaspora in India-Guyana relationship

Today, the Indian Diaspora's involvement in India's development process is increasing. They are not just part of India's soft power, but a fully transferable political vote bank as well (Drishti, 2020). After the abolition of slavery in 1833, the first batch of Indian Diaspora came to work on the plantations. In due time they are come as large numbers of indentured laborers and became the largest ethnic group of Guyana. After independence Indians started to refers to themselves Indo- Guyanese. Unlike the Indian Diaspora in the USA, UK, Canada the Indian origin in Guyana has no economic ties to India. But they are very proud of their Indian heritage (Both religion and culture) after leaving several years India. They are politically insignificant and respect Indian foreign policy interests. However, the Indian missions in the region have played an important part in providing support to cultural activities and facilitating travel between India and Guyana. India set up joint commissions, FICCI (Federation of Indian chamber of commerce and industry), and Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) in Guyana with the responsibility of increasing interaction with India. India also set up embassies or high commissions in Guyana (Maharaj, 2017). But in the 20th century, bilateral diplomatic ties were severely hampered because of a lack of economic and cultural interaction and the absence of Diaspora-oriented policy. So that, vast geographical distance separate this region from India. In the 21st century gap between India and

Guyana are finished. The government of India placed several high-level visits by ministers and met Indian Diaspora there and try to reset India's relation with this region. India started to working in South-South cooperation to develop new bonding with the nation. This is the new phase of the India- Guyana relationship that a high-level ministerial delegation from Guyana visited India, in a move anticipated to improve bilateral relations between the two countries. This delegation discussed in detail the prospects of Indo- Guyana relations. Three MOU's signed on cooperation in Renewable energy, Cultural- Exchange program and agreement on International Solar Alliance. David Pollard, the High Commissioner of Guyana talks about the prospects of Indo- Guyanas relations and the way forward in Guyana's participation in ISA (International Solar Alliance) (Businessworld, 2018)

1.8 Challenges and Opportunities

For decades, Guyana's political environment has suffered from deep-seated tensions between the country's two main political parties, the People's Progressive Party (PPP) and the People's National Congress (PNC). The composition of their popular support was heavily split along ethnic lines, with the People's Progressive Party (PPP) prioritizing the interests of the country's Indo-Guyanese (who amount to around 40 percent of the population) while the People's National Congress (PNC) focused on the Afro-Guyanese population, who also comprised around 30 percent of the country's citizens. The PNC was able to hold power until 1992 although it was accused of vote-rigging and manipulation. When free and fair elections were finally allowed, the PPP subsequently held onto power through a series of elections in 1997, 2001, 2006, and 2011, when despite the PNC (now reformed as A Partnership for National Unity, APNU) and other opposition parties winning the greater share of votes, as the leader of the largest party the PNC's Donald Ramotar nevertheless served as the country's President (Kuznetsov, 2006). In recent years, however, there has been a movement away from ethnic politics towards a more inclusive, multi-ethnic platform. It remains to be seen whether this positive step will substantially transform Guyana's political environment. The current president is David Granger, who has a background in the PNC but headed a coalition between the APNU and other parties. The coalition won the 2015 election (Hinds, 2011).

The majority of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana's inhabitants are concentrated along the coast, and are of

African and East Indian descent, with Indo-Guyanese being the dominant group in government and business. Tensions between these two groups have been played out in the political arena, with rival parties regarded as representing the interests of one particular community. However, despite a long history of divided politics, the most recent elections in May 2015 saw the incumbent PPP toppled by an alliance between the APNU and a coalition of parties achieved victory on an explicitly inclusive platform that actively rejected the ethnic divisions that had characterized the preceding decades, bringing hope for a new chapter in the country's troubled political climate. The composition of the current cabinet is diverse, including many Afro-Guyanese, Indo-Guyanese as well as several Amerindians. The question remains whether the legacy of ethnically driven politics can so quickly be overcome (Samuel, Wilson, 2009).

Nevertheless, the country continues to suffer marked disparities between its center and less developed hinterlands, creating significant inequalities that impact particularly on its indigenous population. Locally termed Amerindians, they are concentrated in the vast and remote savannah, riverain, and heavily rain-forested interior. Amerindians share many national cultural traits with Afro- and Indo-Guyanese; however, the traditional Amerindian communal hinterland lifestyle and the use of ancestral idioms (as opposed to English) as their first language serve to set Amerindians apart from the more urban mainstream coastal population. The standard of living of indigenous peoples in Guyana also remains lower than most of the non-indigenous population. Indigenous peoples such as Indo- Guyanese continue to receive poor social services, inadequate education, and lower incomes and have limited opportunities to participate in decisions affecting their lands, cultures, traditions, and allocation of natural resources (Outar,2018). Underlying much of these problems is the continued threat posed to indigenous communal territory, even titled land, by mining concessions. While the 2006 Amerindian Act was supposed to resolve these issues, problems persist with weak implementation and continued obstruction by authorities to community claims. During the 15th session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in May 2016, for example, the Chairman of the National Toshias Council testified on the need to reinforce its provisions to ensure indigenous land rights were respected in practice (International minority group rights, 2018). Illiteracy was another problem facing by Indians in Guyana, particularly Indian women and children. It is the main obstacle to growth and development, owning property, and voting

rights among Indian women. The Indian communities through the British Guiana East Indian Association (BGEIA) recognized this problem and engaged in promoting education by collecting funds to built Hindu schools and popularize the importance of education (Roopnarine, 2021). These efforts are promoting loyalty, patriotism, individuality, and unity among the Indian origin population. These are some challenges that Indo- Guyanese Diasporas are facing in Guyanese society.

1.9 Policy Initiatives Undertaken by Indian Government

Indo-Guyanese settled or living in North America may not display emotional or cultural links with India but with the Indians in Suriname. This means that the Diaspora decides to reconnect at their choosing, but this does not mean that they have lost their 'Indianness'. The Indian Government has recently taken note of these changes but still has a long way to go. Through the Know India Programme (KIP) the later generation Indians outside to reconnect and build their understanding of India so that they may strengthen their relationship and ties with India. The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is an annual event that commemorates the contribution of the overseas Indian community to India's development and helps resolve issues that the Indian diaspora faces in their respective host countries. At this celebration in 2017, Prime Minister Narendra Modi specially recognized India's special bond with the Indians of the Giritiya countries like Guyana and promised to make obtaining OCI cards easier. While these changes have made a positive impact, more can be done especially to involve and reconnect with the transnational Indo-Caribbean youth. Having frequent interactions by sending experts to the host countries, scholarships, or instituting more programs such as KIP is essential as it opens up several possibilities to reconnect on both sides. In recent times both these countries have very good and cordial relations in terms of economic, cultural as well as political also. Today, India is still closely connected with Guyana in many ways and still contributes to various areas of development. There is a permanent High Commission to India in Guyana and many bilateral agreements. India continues to empower Guyanese and provide services in the area of Information Technology, Engineering, Agriculture (Rice and Sugar), Research and Development, Medicine, among others. There is a Know India Program (KIP) and an Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program which is a fully-funded program operated by the Government of India to encourage cooperation & partnership among

developing countries, for mutual benefits. In Guyana's present time many Indo-Guyanese youths returned from India with Master and Doctorate Degrees and are serving our country in various fields. At present, there are thousands of Indo-Guyanese who have received higher education, and they are scattered all over the world, many of them are world-renowned in the field of medicine, technology, business, and other important areas.

1.10 Conclusion

India and Guyana may be miles away from the geographically distinct country but yet very strong bonding between the two countries not geographically but culturally. There are so many areas of cooperation between India and Guyana that will be looking forward to. Guyana is open to many investors and many prospects to trade with India. Indian Diaspora living in Guyana that much not connected with India, but still they hold their Indianness. Indian foreign policymakers with the outcomes of the Singhvi Committee report started culturally connect with them. ICCR, Pravasi Bharatiya Divas such organs, and programs help India to connect with them and create a new phase of connectivity. Indian music and Bollywood were creating a major impact among these Diasporas to connect with India. The role of Indian women in Bollywood Movies is attracted Guyanese East Indians Diaspora by the themes of duty and respect. Those Indo- Guyanese are migrated to New York in the 21st century with roots in both India and Guyana, now they are able in a position of double Diaspora. In New York, they now have new opportunities to meet and interact with recent Indian immigrants in their new host country. India wants to keep connect with these Indo- Guyanese Diaspora and create a favorable image of India among them for the fulfillment of the national interest of India. India uses various soft power tools towards Guyana for the new phase of the India- Guyana relationship and Indo-Guyanese Diaspora is the main source of them.

Reference:

a. Edited Book:-

Rauf, M. A. (1974). *Indian Village in Guyana: A Study of Cultural Change and Ethnic Identity*. BRILL.

Samuel, P. S., & Wilson, L. C. (2009). Structural Arrangements of Indo-Guyanese Family: An Assessment of the Assimilation Hypothesis. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 40(3), 439–454. JSTOR.

b. Journal Article:-

Indian festivals source of soft power in Guyana—Dr. K J Srinivasa. (2020, January 24).

Centre for Soft Power.

Outar, L. (2018). Touching the shores of home: Guyana, Indo-Caribbeanness, feminism, and return. *Cultural Dynamics*, 30(1–2), 52–58.

PERSAUD, N. (1986). A Study of Corporativism and Change in Guyanese Society. *International Review of Modern Sociology*, 16(1), 51–67. JSTOR.

Refugees, U. N. H. C. for. (n.d.). *Refworld | World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples—Guyana*. Refworld. Retrieved May 31, 2020.

ROOPNARINE, L. (2003). Indo-Caribbean Migration: From Periphery to Core. *Caribbean Quarterly*, 49(3), 30–60. JSTOR.

c. Web Page/ News Paper:-

Indian, African-Guyanese numbers continue to decline, census finds. (2016, July 19).

Stabroek News.

Indians made significant contributions to Guyana. (2019, May 2). Kaieteur News.

President hails contributions of Indians; says Guyana is richer ‘culturally.’ (2018, May 6). *News Room Guyana.*

Staff, G. I. (2019, October 22). India’s Contribution to Guyana’s Culture. *Guyana Inc. Magazine - Guyana’s Premier Business Magazine.*

The Indian presence in Guyana. (2009, May 28). *Stabroek News.*

Why India needs to elaborate on its policy towards the ‘Indo-Caribbean diaspora. (2019, August) *The Financial Express*. *New York Times called out for labelling Indo-Guyanese people ‘descendants of farmhands.’* (n.d.). Retrieved June 12, 2021, from <https://theprint.in/world/new-york-times-called-out-for-labelling-indo-guyanese-people-descendants-of-farmhands/377324/>

Guyana—Independence | Britannica. (n.d.). Retrieved June 12, 2021, from <https://www.britannica.com/place/Guyana/Independence>

India Population 2021 (Demographics, Maps, Graphs). (n.d.). Retrieved June 12, 2021, from <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/india-population>

Businessworld. (2018, March 23). *This is a new phase in the Indo-Guyana relationship.* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U8VpCb5e1ck>

India’s Diaspora. (n.d.). Drishti IAS. Retrieved June 12, 2021, from <https://www.drishtias.com/daily-updates/daily-news-editorials/india-s-diaspora>

Badri-Maharaj, S. (n.d.). *India’s Relations with the Latin America-Caribbean region.*

Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism (GRFDT) is a consortium of researchers and policy makers drawn from national and international universities, institutes and organizations. GRFDT is presently based in India and is shaping as the largest such group focusing specifically on the issues related to diaspora and transnationalism.

The GRFDT works as an academic and policy think tank by engaging national and international experts from academics, practitioners and policy makers in a broad range of areas such as migration policies, transnational linkages of development, human rights, culture, gender to mention a few. In the changing global environment of academic research and policy making, the role of GRFDT will be of immense help to the various stakeholders. Many developing countries cannot afford to miss the opportunity to harness the knowledge revolution of the present era. The engagement of diaspora with various platform need to be reassessed in the present context to engage them in the best possible manner for the development human societies by providing policy in-put at the national and global context.