

# Pravasis have made India proud

Overseas Indians have created huge brand equity for India. By dint of their hard work, peaceful nature and contribution to local economies, the overseas Indian community enjoys high respect wherever they reside. The high brand image of the country today as a dynamic economy and vibrant democracy owes much to the presence of Indian-origin persons in key sectors. Whether workers, professionals or entrepreneurs, people of Indian origin are successful and prosperous members of societies in their home countries. Often, the Indian community has higher levels of education and incomes, and is represented at leading positions in various fields, be it science and technology, academia, political life or business. Mahatma Gandhi represents the epitome of the Indian emigrant community, forging his path-breaking ideas in

South Africa, and returning to change the history of India and indeed, that of the world.

Examples of leadership among the Indian community abound. Indra Nooyi and Vikram Pandit are among a small but growing group of Indian-origin managers heading top global companies. According to Time magazine, Indians lead seven companies of S&P 500, while the 2009 Fortune 500 list included 13 Indians. Forbes recently named 10 youngsters of Indian antecedents in its group of '30 under 30' 'ultra impressive up-and-comers'. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas chief guest Mrs Kamla Persad Bissessar, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, heads an impressive list of political leaders including presidents, prime ministers and ministers, who are of Indian ancestry throughout the world. Five overseas Indian

leaders sit in the UK House of Commons, and two Indian-origin leaders are Governors of US states. Scientists like astronaut Kalpana Chawla and chemist Venkatraman Ramakrishnan stand out in a tribe of researchers, academics and innovators in leading global laboratories.

These outstanding individuals have left a strong imprint on the global achievement platform. But just as significant is the contribution made by ordinary people of Indian origin who have toiled to build the nations that they have adopted as their homes. Successive waves of Indians have departed from India's shores to unknown lands in extremely difficult conditions, as indentured labour to work on plantations, as traders to set up shop in the hinterland, as civil servants to build new nations, or as teachers, professors, and engineers



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with no resources beyond their own hard work and knowledge. These intrepid emigrants courageously adapted to new conditions and lifestyles, while maintaining their inherent traditions and languages. Over generations, families pulled them-

selves up by the bootstraps, stressing education and skills to give their children a better life. The contributions of Indian-origin communities to countries across the world have helped bring prosperity and knowledge and added to national development. It is however important to also keep in mind that in many parts of the world, the story of the Indian emigrant community is still one of tribulations and challenges as many people remain poor and underrepresented.

In recent years, IT professionals and skilled workers have changed the very perception about India. The rising presence of Indian companies in the global business arena brings a new breed of Indian managers to the world. India is now viewed as being at the heart of the emerging knowledge economy. The surge in emigrating workers to regions such as the Gulf

has helped fill human resource gaps in many countries. Notably, a young population of Indian origin remains true to its culture, popularizing Indian music, dance, fashion and food all over the world.

A growing group of returning emigrants is further enriching India as well, as students, professionals and businesspersons come back to seek new opportunities in their ancestral land. Bringing new ideas and new practices to India, they are also engaging strongly in development activities such as health, education, women's empowerment and rural development. These initiatives are gathering pace with many inputs emerging from the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention series.

In the final analysis, the overseas Indian community truly makes the nation proud.