



Indiawijzer

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NRI's can now vote for parliamentary elections in India - Proposal of Foundation for Critical Choices for India in early 1980s finally being implemented¹

Foundation for Critical Choices for India, a Think Tank of Non-Resident Indians and People of Indian Origin set up in the Netherlands in 1980, had quite early on taken up this issue along with other issues relating to relationship between Indian Diaspora and Government of India. A Background paper based on comparative analysis of pros and cons, as well as an analysis of similar practices in other countries was prepared and presented to the First European Seminar of Non-Resident Indians in Noordwijk, the Netherlands in April 1982 and also to the First International Conference of NRIs in New Delhi in January 1984, attended by late Rajiv Gandhi and many ministers and VIPs..

Based on reactions in the above Seminars Foundation presented petitions to the Prime Minister of India as well as to the Petition Committee of Rajya Sabha requesting favourable decisions on the issue of Voting Rights as well as on related issues of representation of NRIs in Indian Legislature, possibility of NRIs standing for elections in India, creation of a special Ministry for Overseas Indians and appointment of a separate Ambassador for Overseas Indians. The Petition Committee of Rajya Sabha selecting Foundation's petition from among hundreds submitted to it and examined it thoroughly and sympathetically. They consulted the State Governments in India with a sizable NRI residents abroad, concerned ministries of Government of India, eminent legal experts like Nani Palkhiwala and also visited some countries with sizable concentration of NRIs/PIOs. In its 93rd Report presented to the Rajya Sabha on 29th March 1988 the Petition Committee commented extensively on various proposals of the Foundation, including that of Voting Rights.

Foundation has been continuously focusing attention on these issues at its various conferences and in interactions with Indian leadership visiting Europe. As a result some of the proposals relating to creation of a separate Ministry of Overseas Indians, appointment of Indian Ambassador for Indians Abroad, nominating certain members of Rajya Sabha to raise issues relating to NRIs, grant of dual nationality, etc, were already implemented. Ultimately

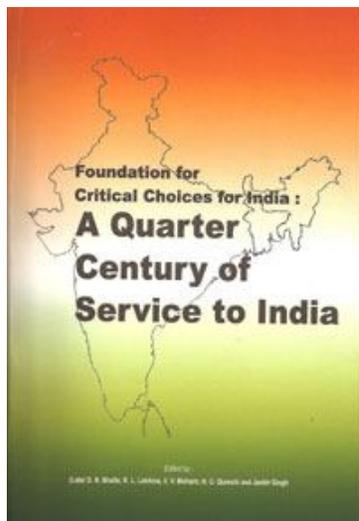
¹ Over a period of more than 25 years the Foundation for Critical Choices for India (FCCI), a Netherlands based organisation has published different policy papers and submitted to government of India, the European parliament etc. The Indiawijzer intends to bring to the attention of the public some of the research papers. Here is one such publication. In this publication a proposal on representation of NRIs in Indian Legislatures is mentioned. A background paper on this issue will follow soon.

Wahid Saleh

at the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas at New Delhi in early January 2007, Minister for Overseas Affairs, Hon'ble Vayalar Ravi announced Government's willingness to look at the issue of Voting Rights sympathetically. Finally, at the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas held from 7th to 9th January 2010 in New Delhi, Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh announced Government's decision giving Voting Rights to NRIs and the procedure for it.

Foundation is very glad that though it has taken a long time for the Government to realize its proposals, finally government and the people of India have appreciated the rationality of Foundation's proposals. It is in the nature of the work of Think Tanks like Foundation to be patient, work on issues systematically and present policy oriented proposals to the authorities concerned. It takes time but if the proposals are sound and will lead to better development of India, they will receive sympathetic attention.

The detailed text of these proposals as well as comments on their present status can be seen in Foundation's recent book "Foundation for Critical Choices for India : A Quarter Century of Service to India, 2008, pp. 89-98, 388-392).



A complimentary copy of Foundation's book (399 pages) can be obtained against payment of postage and packing charges from:

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