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THE IMPORTANT ROLE & CONTRIBUTION OF NON-RESIDENT GUJARATIS' FOUNDATION AND DIASPORA

PROF. (DR.) M. P. DODIYA

ABSTRACT:

Gujarat State Non-Resident Gujarati's Foundation (NRGF) has been established by the Government of Gujarat to further the common interests, concerns and historical ties between people of Gujarat to NRGs (Non-Resident Gujaratis) or people of Gujarati origin living outside Gujarat.

Objectives of the Foundation include exploring the possibility of a vital role of NRGs/NRIs in the development of the state, identifying the areas where Government can help NRGs/NRIs. The Foundation has identified several such areas like communication with NRGs diaspora, preparing a comprehensive database with help of approved NGOs; studying socio-cultural issues of NRGs, assessing technical and professional skills of NRGs and to dovetail the same into Gujarat's development effort using their resources and solving their problems and so on. Vision of the Foundation (NRGF) is to create a world-class Gujarat by optimal utilization of knowledge, skill and connections of NRG and Mission of the Foundation (NRGF) is to connect the NRGs to their roots, to enhance belongingness to their Motherland; and, to conduct schemes and programs.

Gujaratis have settled abroad permanently and have acquired wealth, knowledge and skills and are very keen to use them for the betterment of their homeland. The Government has established a Division/Cell to establish a link with the NRI Gujaratis abroad and liaise with Central Government and other states if need be.

The Foundation (NRGF) has made achievements in completing important projects like creating and maintaining the 68000 NRG/NRI Database; issuance of "GUJARAT CARD"; appointing Honorary Representatives to apprise the State Government of the problems/issues of NRI-NRG community; getting financial aid for Gujarati Samaj Bhavan; establishing NRG committees at district level; starting schemes under the Vatan Seva Project; holding conferences and seminars on Gujarati Diaspora and initiating Gujarati Language Cultural Support Project; publishing books like A Guide to NRI Marriage, Vatan Seva, Beyond the

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Boundaries, and Vatan ni Vate besides a newsletter and, establishing NRG Centers.

As part of golden Jubilee celebration of Gujarat State, Hon'ble Ministers, Hon'ble MP/MLAs/District and others took visits to several states to invite NRGs to participate in the celebration and attend an NRI/NRG Sammelan, handover "Swarnim Kalash" and the holy water and soil of their country/state to Hon'ble Chief Minister.

Key words: NRGF, Objectives of the Foundation, NRG/NRI Database, NRGs Diaspora, Gujarat Card

INTRODUCTION:

Gujarat State Non-Resident Gujarati's Foundation (NRGF) has been established by the Government of Gujarat to further the common interests, concerns and historical ties that bind the people of Gujarat to NRGs (Non-Resident Gujaratis) or people of Gujarati origin living outside Gujarat, in other states within India as well as places outside the country. With a firm belief that the contact and friendship established through programs of the foundation can go a long way towards generating mutual benefits for the people of Gujarat as well as NRGs and achieving avowed objectives of the NRGF.

(1) OBJECTIVES OF NRG FOUNDATION :

The objectives of the Gujarat state Non Resident Gujaratis' Foundation ("Gujarat Rajya Bin Niwasi Gujarati Pratisthan.") are to explore the possibility as to how Non Resident Gujaratis'/ Non Resident Indians (NRGs/NRIs) can play vital role in the development of the state and to identify the areas where Government can be of assistance to NRGs/NRIs. In short time, with active interaction with NRGs/NRIs the Foundation has identified several areas and has initiated actions.

1. To establish effective communication with NRGs in various parts of the world, prepare and maintain a comprehensive database about NRGs.
2. To study from time to time, social and cultural issue of NRGs and take steps to formulate schemes for meeting their requirements.
3. To take effective steps to survey and assess the technical and professional skills of NRGs and to detail the same into Gujarat's development effort.
4. To tap the technological, managerial and financial resources of the NRGs so as to upgrade the technical and professional skills and the human resource of the state for the economic and industrial developmental of the state.
5. To channelise the saving and surplus financial resources of the NRGs into the Gujarat's developmental efforts for mutual gain.
6. To monitor the general welfare of the NRGs and in time of crisis identify specific problems of Gujarati Non Resident Indians groups and take up the same with and through Government of India.
7. To take up other such activities as may be entrusted by State Government.

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8. To do the Listing/Data Collection of NGOs who are approved by the Charity commissioner under the law.
9. To co-ordinate with the NGOs on behalf of the State Government during the natural/man made calamities.

(2) VISION :

To create a world-class Gujarat by optimal utilization of knowledge, skill and Connections of NRG.

(3) MISSION :

1. Connect to Global and Indian NRGs and bring them closer to their roots.
2. Enhance belongingness to their Motherland.
3. Conceive & implement effective schemes and conduct various Programs to achieve the above goals.

(5) ESTABLISHMENT OF NRGF:

A good number of Gujarat is have traditionally gone abroad and have settled there permanently. They have acquired wealth as well as knowledge and skills about the latest development all over the world. They are very keen to use their knowledge, skills as well as wealth for the betterment of their homeland. Although, the NRIs are making certain efforts on their own initiative in the fields of development, education and investment in India, there is no formal and organized link between the NRIs and Government of Gujarat. The need for such a link is very keenly felt by the government. Such a link should be on permanent basis and, hence, there should be a Division/Cell will receive a lot of request/proposals and ideas from the NRIs. They will have to be very promptly looked into by the Government. Necessary follow-up steps will have to be taken. Since speedy and coordinated approach is of paramount importance to deal with this matter, there should be an NRIs Division under the direct supervision of chief Secretary and chief Minister.

• RESOLUTION:

Government is pleased to create a separate Division for NRIs Affairs under the General Administration Department. The duties of the Division shall be as mentioned below:

1. Establish contact with organization of NRI Gujarat is abroad to inform them about the arrangements made to entertain their idea and requests.
2. Make arrangements to supply latest thinking of the Government and other important legal decisions perhaps by opening a chapter in the internet website.
3. Set up mechanism to require and deal with the requests and suggestions from NRIs.
4. Set up working modalities with District officials and secretaries for early redressal of requests from NRIs.

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5. Liaise with Central Government and other states if need be.

(6) IMPORTANT PROJECTS:

1. Creation and maintenance of the NRG Database:

The foundation is established with the main objective of creation of the database on Non Resident Gujaratis. The database is collected from individuals, members of Gujarat Card scheme, members of Gujarati Samaj, Collectors, District Development Officers (DDOs), District Superintendent of Police, Commissioners and Municipality offices in various formats. The same has been compiled in a uniform format and is available with foundation.

2. Gujarat Card:

The NRGF is issuing "GUJARAT CARD" to Non-Resident Gujarati outside Gujarat and India. "Gujarat Card" is issued at the fees of \$5.00 US or Rs.225/-amount in Indian currency on filling the prescribed application format and submitting attested copies of recent passport and photographs. "Gujarat Card" holders can avail of several rebates / discounts on products, purchases and services etc. that has been negotiated by the NRG Foundation.

The fee for Gujarat Card which can be paid by Cash or Demand Draft in favour of "NRGF" payable at "Gandhinagar" is Rs.225/- (Rupees Two hundred twenty five only) in case of Person applying from the Country. In case of abroad, the citizen is required to deposit \$5.00 US dollars or its equivalent amount with the local Gujarati Samaj and endorsement to this effect be obtained on the application form with signature and seal of the Samaj. The application form may then be forwarded to this office.

3. A Scheme of Appointment of Honorary Representatives:

The NRG Community is known for their knowledge, skill, capacity and interest in contributing towards the betterment of their Home State. The Government of Gujarat has decided to have a new scheme to facilitate and motivate contribution of NRG Community to the affairs of the State. The Government of Gujarat has decided to appoint suitable persons/organizations of eminence as "Honorary Representative of the Government of Gujarat" from the Non Resident Gujarati community residing outside the country.

The Honorary Representatives will.....

1. Establish strong links with NRI-NRG community to motivate them to participate in the development process of the State.
2. Apprise the State Government of the problems/issues faced by NRI-NRG Community.
3. Contribute their valuable suggestion and ideas to the state Government regarding the development policy of the State.

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4. Financial Aid for Gujarati Samaj Bhavan:

The Government of Gujarat has introduced a scheme extending financial assistance to Gujarati Samaj upto Rs.20.00 lacs to build, renovate or expand the Gujarati Samaj bhavan or buildings.

5. NRG District Committees:

The Government has formed NRG committees under the Chairmanship of the Collector in all the districts of the State of Gujarat for resolving any problems/issues faced by the Non-Resident Gujaratis, including those related to their property/land in the native place in Gujarat. Non-Resident Gujaratis can directly contact the Member Secretary, Resident Deputy Collector of the committee of the concerned district or can get in touch with the N.R.I. Division or The NRG Foundation.

6. Vatan Seva Project:

Govt. of Gujarat has floated several schemes for the development of the state. Donation from the public are accepted for these schemes. A book namely “Vatan Seva” of different schemes for Vatan Seva is published and distributed amongst NRG/NRI. Several NRG’s who have attachment to their homeland have offered donation for school/college buildings, Entrance Gate, Hospital, Temple, Electricity House, water pump, etc.

7. Gujarati Diaspora:

The Foundation is sponsoring every year the Gujarati Diaspora seminar arranged by North Gujarat Hemchandracharya University, Patan. NRGF sponsors this seminar to facilitate research on the Gujarati Diaspora.

8. Awareness about NRI marriages:

Government of India has published a book on NRI Marriage. Foundation has translated it in Gujarati. The book contains details of important matters to be considered before wedding to NRI. The book is useful for the welfare of the public. This can be viewed on our website www.nri.gujarat.gov.in. A seminar of Guidance for marriage with NRI is arranged every year in co-ordination with several NGO’s and Mahila Vikash Nigam to guide parents about marriage with NRIs. The main idea is to bring public awareness about what precautions should be taken before marriage status of married woman under foreign laws, rules of prevention of harassment etc.

9. Gujarati Language Cultural Support Project:

Our NRGF has initiated a project to develop Gujarati learning CD-Roms, distributes books and other material for self-teaching of Gujarati Language and creation of awareness about Gujarat, its’ past and present. This would be specifically useful to those who have not

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received any formal in Gujarati language. The Copies of Gujarati learning CD-Rom are available to NRGs Free of cost.

10. Establishment of NRG Centers:

1. Ahmedabad:

Government has established NRG Center at Gujarat Chamber of Commerce & Industry (GCCI) as they offered necessary place for the center free of cost. Government has spent Rs. 18, 50,000/- to establish NRG Center and recurring expenditure up to Rs. 40,000/- per month was also sanctioned. This expenditure includes expenditure of two staff members and one peon and other miscellaneous expenditure such as magazine, telephone, electricity, internet, postage, courier, transportation etc.

2. Anand:

This center has started with the collaboration of Sardar Patel Education Trust, Anand. Government has given Rs. 5 lacs for one time to establish the center. Remaining expenditure to establish the center was born by the Trust and recurring expenditure is also born by the Trust.

3. Vadodara:

This center has started with the collaboration of Vadodara Chamber of Commerce & Industry (VCCI). Government has given Rs. 5 lacs for one time to establish the center. Remaining expenditure to establish the center was born by the VCCI and recurring expenditure is also born by the VCCI.

4. Surat:

This center was recently inaugurated by Hon'ble Minister Shri Jay Narayan Vyas. This center has started with the collaboration of Southern Gujarat Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SGCCI). Government has given Rs. 5 lacs for one time to establish the center. Remaining expenditure to establish the center was born by the Southern Gujarat Chamber of Commerce & Industry and recurring expenditure is also born by the SGCCI.

• Activities of the Centers are as follows:

1. to provide information on travel and hotel accommodation
2. to provide information of the Foundation activities and its schemes
3. to provide road map for touring places in Gujarat
4. to provide information for transport and its route
5. to accept the applications of Gujarat Card and issue of Gujarat Cards.
6. to accept applications or representations from Non Resident Gujaratis for resolving their issues on various aspects.
7. to provide information for exchange of foreign currency

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8. to provide information for medical services
 9. to arrange minimum four lecturers of prominent Non Resident Gujaratis.
 10. to provide any other information related to NRGF.
- Proposal to start NRG Centers at Rajkot and Mehsana are under consideration.

(7) ACHIEVEMENTS:

1. NRG/NRI Database:

A total of 68,000 databases of NRI/ NRG are available with the foundation. It consists of 16,170 database of email. Gujarati Samaj database consists of

1. Domestic - 425 Samajs
2. International - 195 Samajs

2. Gujarat card introduced:

The Gujarat State Non-Resident Gujaratis' Foundation (NRG Foundation) is issuing GUJARAT CARD to the Non-Resident Gujaratis living outside the state. Such cardholders would get special attention from the Gujarat Government agencies while dealing with them. In addition, the cardholders would be in a position to avail of the facilities of the NRG Bhavan set up by the NRG Foundation, and will also be able to avail of several rebates/discounts on purchases etc. being negotiated by the NRG Foundation. All the District collectors have been authorized to issue Gujarat Cards.

A total of 4128 Gujarat cards have been issued upto now from which 1950 cards have been issued this year which is the highest response received up till now from the previous years and yet the number is increasing.

3. Financial Aid for Gujarati Samaj Bhavan:

The Government of Gujarat has introduced a scheme for Non-Resident Gujaratis' to extend financial assistance to Gujarati samaj up to Rs.20.00 Lacs to build or expand to Gujarati Samaj bhavan or buildings. Such Financial support/aid for Gujarati Samaj Bhavan has been extended to Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh, Nagpur in Maharashtra, Salem in Tamil Nadu, Kanyakumari in Kerala, and Udaipur in Rajasthan.

4. Vatan Seva Project:

Govt. of Gujarat have floated several schemes donation from the public are accepted, several NRGs who have attachment to their homeland have offered donation for School/College building, Entrance Gate, Hospital, Temple, Electricity House, Water pump, etc.

A book namely "Vatan ni Vate" has been published by the Foundation to circulate the details of donors amongst Non Resident Gujaratis.

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5. Gujarati Diaspora:

The Foundation is sponsoring every year the Gujarati Diaspora Seminar arranged by various universities of the state. NRGF sponsors this seminar to facilitate research on the Gujarat Diaspora.

6. Awareness about NRI marriages:

Recently, a book has been published and distributed no. of Copy's by the Foundation on marriages to NRIs. The book contains details of important matters to be considered before wedding to NRI. The main idea is to bring public awareness about precautions should be taken before marriage, status of married woman under foreign laws, rules of prevention of harassment etc.

7. Gujarati Language Cultural Support Project:

Our NRGF has initiated a project to develop Gujarati learning CD-Roms, distributes books and other material for self teaching of Gujarati Language and creation of awareness about Gujarat, its' past and present. This would be specifically useful to those who have not received any formal in Gujarati language. The Copies of CD-Rom are available to NRGs Free of cost.

8. Interactive Website Developed:

NRGF has developed an interactive website in order to interact with the NRI Gujaratis and to provide support to them via web. Following are some of the features of website:

1. Become a Member
2. Vatan Seva Contribution
3. Feedback Form
4. Multimedia
5. Gujarat : Explore Gujarat and a lot more

9. Bankers Conference:

A conference of Bankers Meeting was held on 8/10/2009 at Circuit House, Annexe, Ahmedabad with all the dignitaries of the well-known Banks in the presence of Hon'ble NRI Minister Shri Jay Narayan Vyas, in order to avail the benefits to NRI and NRGs in different schemes.

10. NRG Centre:

Out of 8 districts the following four Center's have already started working:

1. Ahmadabad: with the collaboration of Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI).
2. Anand: with the collaboration of Sardar Patel Education Trust.

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3. Vadodara: with the collaboration of Vadodara Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
4. Surat: with the collaboration of the Southern Gujarat Chamber of Commerce & Industry.
For Remaining four centers at Navsari, Kutch, Rajkot and Mehsana, the process is under progress.

11. NRG Publications:

The foundation has published various publications like

1. A Guide to NRI Marriage
2. Vatan Seva
3. Beyond the Boundaries
4. Vatan ni Vate
- 5.

12. NRG Maha Sammelan – 2010:

NRGF has organized a function Swarnim Gujarat Vaishwik Gujarat (NRG Summit) on 30th April, 2010 at Gujarat University Convention Center/Exhibition Hall, Ahmedabad as a part of Swarnim Gujarat Celebration-2010. Large Number of NRG's/NRI's were Present. The function was Headed by the His highness Governor, Dr. Shrimati Kamla and Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Narendra Modi. Representative of various state's and Country were Given Swarnim Kalash by the Chief Minister to Celebrate Gujarat Swarnim Mahotsav in their respective state and Country and received the Kalash from them of holy Water and Soil From the different Places of their respective state and Country in the Bhoomi Pujan of Mahatma Mandir at Gandhinagar on 1st May, 2010.

13. Newsletter:

Foundation has decided to publish a newsletter quarterly regarding Swarnim Celebrations held in different parts of the state as well as countries. This newsletter will highlight the Swarnim celebrations done by the Swarnim Kalash recipients so as to encourage their spirit. The first newsletter publication is under progress.

(8) CONCLUSION:

Gujarat State has completed its 50 Golden years. On this occasion, Government of Gujarat decided to celebrate Golden Jubilee year from 01/05/2010 to 01/5/2011. As a part of this celebration a high level Delegations headed by Hon'ble Ministers alongwith Hon'ble MP/MLAs/District Panchayat Presidents took visits in several states for giving invitation to NRGs to participate in the celebration on 30/04/2010 and 01/05/2010.

Government of Gujarat organized NRI/NRG Sammelan to handover "Swarnim Kalash" to NRI/NRG leaders of respective countries/states on 30/4/10, at Ahmedabad. On 01/05/10, Government organized a Khatmuhurt of Mahatma Mandir at Gandhinagar. All NRI/NRGs leaders also handed over the holy water and soil of their country/state to Hon'ble Chief Minister. The golden memories of above celebrations are shown herewith.

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1. High Level Delegation Visits
2. Inauguration of Golden Jubilee Celebrations by Government of Gujarat
 1. Briefing Meeting at GMDC Hall, Ahmedabad on 30th April, 2010
 2. NRG Maha Sammelan at Gujarat University Hall, Ahmedabad on 30th April, 2010.
 3. Swarnim Kalash Giving Ceremony at Gujarat University Hall, Ahmedabad on 30th April, 2010.
 4. Mahatma Mandir, Gandhinagar – Giving of Holy Water & Sand on 1st May, 2010.
 5. 1st May Evening Celebration at Sardar Patel, Stadium
3. Golden Jubilee Celebrations by NRIs in various countries
4. Golden Jubilee Celebrations by NRGs in various states.

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3. Articles.