

**Absentee Patriotism: India, the Indian Diaspora and the
*Pravasi Bharati Divas***

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ABSTRACT Absentee patriotism is about taking the issues of *nationalism*, *nation building* and *ethnicity*, as well as the notion of *imagined communities* beyond the borders of nation states. It serves as a critique and extension to the work of writers such as Eric Hobsbawm, Anthony Smith, Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson, whose eloquent work on these issues need to be revisited against the increasing numbers of migrants who continue to show affinity to either their countries of birth or their ancestral homelands. Such affinity is often demonstrated in the ways that they maintain their ethnic identities while rebuilding their lives and futures for their successive generations in the countries to which they relocate. In maintaining their ethnic identities they often show attachment to their countries of birth cum ancestral homelands by way of regular visits or remitting parts of their earnings, either to support families or to develop their countries. A country such as India is replete with these instances and provide an adequate basis to explain how the notion of “absentee patriotism” may remain alive as an extended form of nationalism in out-of-state existences and which challenges notions such as “imagined communities” that ignore the realities of history, ongoing contact and real investments in their countries of birth and ancestral homelands.