

SPAIN INDIA 2020

A joint reflection on the past,
present and future of our
bilateral relations

WORKING PAPER 9

Civil society networks and Mutual awareness



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9.1.

Framework of the mutual awareness and civil society networks

Unlike the Anglo-Saxon countries, the historical presence of Indian communities in Spain has been very limited, except for the Sindhi community in the Canary Islands. The new migration flows of the Sindhi community after the 1947 partition, together with the new Indian immigrants from Punjab since the turn of the century, and of multidisciplinary professionals in recent years, have been the backbone of a community that has become more and more robust and participatory. The exponents of the increasingly institutionalised relation of the Indian communities with Spain include the new associations and cultural spaces organised by the community, the greater presence of Indian festivities in the public space or the increasing contribution of Indian professionals and entrepreneurs to the Spanish business fabric.

The Spanish community in India, historically linked to religious missionaries, is still relatively small nowadays. However, the last decades have seen a rise in both the number of Spanish companies and of foundations involved in different projects in India that actively participate in the growth and development of the country. The presence in India of a new generation of Spanish entrepreneurs and other professionals of the cultural or sports fields is a new bilateral asset to revitalise our relations from the bottom.

Within the fabric of Indo-Spanish driven institutions, in which the Institute of Indology is the oldest, the 21st century has experienced the birth of a number of organisations that have filled essential niches in our bilateral relations. Organisations like Casa de la India in the cultural field; the Spanish Association for Interdisciplinary India Studies in the academic



The President of the Government of the Canary Islands, Román Rodríguez, during a meeting in Las Palmas in March 2003, with the Indian Ambassador to Spain, Dilip Lahiri.

field; the Indo-Spanish Chamber of Commerce in the economic-commercial field or the Spain-India Council Foundation in the mutual awareness field, form the basis for the revitalisation of our bilateral exchanges. In addition, and without being bilateral in nature, there are also several organisations that have a very significant impact in our bilateral relations like Casa Asia, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), the Instituto Cervantes, the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID, in Spanish), ICEX Spain Export and Investments or Agencia EFE.

Beyond the government and institutional work, the bilateral boost is still led by some people who, through their own professional activity or personal initiatives, set the pace of our exchanges. These Spanish and Indian citizens who aim to promote mutual awareness establish themselves as true bilateral bridges between both countries. However, the low presence of India in the Spanish university and an insufficient system of bilateral scholarships prevents the bilateral experts of the future from being trained nowadays.

ILLUSTRATION 65 / Compared and bilateral perspective of our mutual image						
Spain-India 2020 joint reflection, Spain-India Council Foundation (2020)						
Bilateral image	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Insufficient	Poor	DK/NA
Image of Spain in India (Indian perspective)	27%	48%	21%	3%	0%	0%
Image of Spain in India (Spanish perspective)	9%	25%	13%	36%	6%	10%
Image of India in Spain (Indian perspective)	18%	30%	33%	6%	9%	3%
Image of India in Spain (Spanish perspective)	4%	13%	19%	48%	12%	3%
Impact of COVID-19 on the bilateral image	Stronger	Same	Weaker	DK/NA		
Image of Spain in India (Indian perspective)	15%	39%	42%	3%		
Image of Spain in India (Spanish perspective)	4%	28%	45%	22%		
Image of India in Spain (Indian perspective)	33%	48%	12%	6%		
Image of India in Spain (Spanish perspective)	9%	54%	18%	19%		

Source: Survey of 100 participants interested in the bilateral relations (67 Spanish and 33 Indians). May/June, 2020.

Pew Research Center (2018)			
The role that India plays in the world nowadays is...	More important than 10 years ago (%)	Less important than 10 years ago (%)	The same as 10 years ago (%)
France	49%	18%	31%
United Kingdom	46%	16%	29%
Germany	38%	21%	33%
Spain	24%	22%	47%
Average 26 countries	22%	17%	34%
India	56%	14%	4%

BBC Country Ratings (2017)		
Image of the Indian influence (%)	Positive	Negative
United Kingdom	56%	38%
France	39%	53%
Average 17 countries	37%	39%
Spain	23%	35%
Germany	1%	33%
India	56%	4%

Source: Pew Research Center; BBC Country Ratings; prepared by the authors.



Image of a booth at the "BollyMadrid 2008" festival, held in Madrid's Lavapiés neighborhood in 2008 with the aim of bringing Indian cinema and culture closer to the people of Madrid.

The discontinuous mutual presence in the media also makes it difficult to increase our awareness and to improve our bilateral image. In the survey launched for this joint reflection during the months of May and June 2020, the Indian participants were more optimists on the bilateral image than the Spanish ones. More than 75% of the Indian participants value the image of Spain as excellent or good, compared to 42% of the Spanish participants who consider it insufficient or poor. Most of the Indian participants also consider the image of India in Spain positive, as opposed to 60% of the Spanish participants, who consider it insufficient or poor. Regarding the impact of COVID-19, Indian and Spanish participants agreed that the image of Spain in India will be weakened and that the image of India in Spain will remain invariable. Other surveys, like the ones carried out by the Pew Research Centre in 2018 or the

BBC in 2017, reflect that the image in Spain of the influence of India in the world is still less solid and positive than in other countries with a more consolidated relationship with India, including France or the United Kingdom, and far lower than the image Indians have of their own country (see Illustration 65).

9.2.

The Indian diaspora in Spain

DAs per the data of the National Statistics Institute of Spain (INE, by its Spanish acronym), as of 1st January 2020, 54,351 citizens of Indian nationality and 58,424 citizens born in India were registered in Spain. In terms of residence, 50,197 residents in Spain were born in India –of which a reduced number would not have a family tie with India and

would not actually belong to the Indian diaspora— and 46,540 have Indian nationality (INE, 2020). In the last decade, Spanish nationality has been granted to 6,522 citizens of Indian origin, 2,202 in 2019, of which 1,352 had been born in Spain (Observatorio Permanente de la Inmigración/ Permanent Immigration Observatory, 2019).

As per the data of the Ministry of External Affairs of India, 49,084 Indian nationals are resident in Spain and 20,904 Spanish nationals have that status of Person of Indian Origin (PIO), including those who were Indian nationals at some point, or whose parents, grandparents or great-grandparents were born in India, or are married to an Indian national or holder of a PIO card (Ministry of External Affairs, 2020). Comparing these findings of the Government of India to the findings of the Government of Spain, to which we would have to add a Spanish community of Indian origin of up to four generations that could amount to more than 10,000 people (Lopez, 2010), it is possible to estimate that more than 70,000 citizens of Indian origin live in Spain.

This Indian diaspora in Spain is relatively small if we compare it to the more than 1.7 million who live in the United Kingdom or more than 200 thousand that live in the Netherlands or Italy (Ministry of External Affairs of India, 2020). Out of the 499,553 Asians registered in Spain, the Indian population ranks third with 54,351, just behind the Chinese population, with 232,617 nationals registered, and the population from Pakistan, with 97,599 registered, and ahead of the Bangladeshi population, with 19,877. Out of the 423,800 residents in Spain with Asian nationality, 197,390 have Chinese nationality, 61,691 have Pakistani nationality, and India ranks third Asian nationality in number of residents with 46,540, just ahead of the Bangladeshi population, with 15,467. However, India is the fourth Asian country by residents born abroad, with 50,197, after China, with 176,653; Pakistan,

with 68,858 and Philippines, with 51,016 (INE, 2020). The community of Indian nationality is the Asian community resident in Spain that has grown the most in the last decade, 45%, compared to China's 24% or Pakistan's 9% (see Illustration 66). Likewise, the Spanish residents born in India have grown by 42% in the last decade, compared to the 22% born in Pakistan or the 14% born in China (INE, 2020).

Compared to China or the Philippines, whose national population of women resident in Spain exceeds that of men, the gender gap in the South-Asian communities is reversed. 71% of the Pakistani citizens registered in Spain and 65% of the Pakistani residents are men, the same as the 64% of Indian citizens registered and 60% of Indian residents, which leads to think that during the upcoming years, the process of family reunification will continue. The average age of the Asian citizens registered in Spain is of 32.41 years, a significantly young population compared to the Spanish residents. The average age for Chinese citizens is 32.24, for Indian citizens is 31.55, for Pakistani citizens is 30.94 and for Bangladeshi citizens is 29.27. Regarding the population pyramid of residents, 33% of the population with Indian nationality is less than 25 years old, similar figures to the Chinese population, with 29%, but lower than the population of Pakistani nationality, with more than 44% in that same age group (INE, 2020).

The Indian population resident in Spain is mainly concentrated in the Mediterranean arch, the islands and in Madrid. In Catalonia there are 29,658 citizens of Indian nationality registered, 54.5% of the total, followed by the Region of Valencia with 7,976, the Canary Islands with 3,984, Madrid with 3,131 and the Balearic Islands with 3,014. Province-wise, 21,262 are registered in Barcelona, a little less than 40%, followed by Girona with 6,044, Valencia with 4,510, Alicante with 3,350 and Madrid with 3,131 (INE, 2020) (see

The three main migration flows from India to Spain

The Sindhi community is the pioneering Asian community in Spain. During the 19th century, Sindhi traders established themselves in ports of Africa, including Tangier and Casablanca, settling for the first time in the Iberian Peninsula in Gibraltar. The status of free port acquired by the Canary Islands in 1852 encouraged the arrival of these Sindhi traders to Spanish territory. However, it would not be until the partition of the British India in 1947, when the Sindh province became part of Pakistan, that the Hindu Sindhi traders were deployed around the world. Sindhi traders first settled in the cities with status of free ports, like the Canary Islands and Ceuta, and later expanded to other cities like Barcelona, Málaga or Madrid.

The 70s and 80s experienced the arrival of a new flow of Indian immigrants from Punjab, which has significantly intensified in the 21st century. At first, these Punjabi workers devoted themselves to agriculture and mining in the areas of La Rioja, Aragón or Murcia, and later moved on to the industrial and service sectors of the main industrial hubs. The Punjabi population,

which soon outnumbered the Sindhi population, is mainly concentrated in Catalonia and in the Mediterranean coast. The growth of the population of Indian nationality in Catalonia has been exponential during the 20th century – from the 1,328 residents in the year 2000 to the 26,361 Indian nationals on 31st December 2019 (Institut d' Estadística de Catalunya, 2019).

An indicator to establish the dimension of this Punjabi population in Spain is the expansion of the surnames Singh and Kaur, the first being common for Sikh men and the second for women, although this rule is not always met. Due to this peculiarity, for the Spanish administration, most of the Punjabi men of Sikh religion usually acquire the surname Singh while the women acquire Kaur. In line with this standard, 19,575 of the citizens registered in Spain have the surname Singh and 8,245 the surname Kaur, although a significant number already have the Spanish nationality (INE, 2020). Adding both figures, it could be estimated that the Sikh Punjabi population registered in Spain amounts to more than 27,000 people.

Although the Indian diaspora, majorly linked to the Anglo-Saxon world, has had little interaction with Spain due to the

non-existence of a solid network of Indian communities, the linguistic limitations, the lack of professional opportunities or the wage ceilings compared to the United Kingdom or the United States, in recent years a new generation of Indian professionals has decided to settle down in Spain. The residence visas for work granted for Indians in Spain in 2019 amounted to 784, the highest amount in all of Asia (Permanent Immigration Observatory, 2019). These Indian professionals are professors assigned to the Spanish universities and business schools, researchers in the main Spanish scientific centres or professionals of companies with high technological and innovation component, among other sectors. In this new migratory flow, the states of the south of India like Kerala are expanding their communities in Spain.



The Ambassador of India to Spain with the Minister of Finance of the Junta de Castilla y León, the Mayor of Valladolid and the Rector of the University of Valladolid at the laying of the foundation stone of the Casa de la India in Valladolid in October 2005.

Illustration 67). This same trend can be observed in the Indian nationals with registration certificate or residence card in Spain as of 31st December 2019, of which almost 70% are concentrated in five provinces – Barcelona with 15,846, Girona with 5,766, Valencia with 3,506, Madrid with 2,830 and Alicante with 2,540 (Permanent Immigration Observatory, 2019).

Spain has received three main migratory waves from India –Sindhi during the second half of the 20th century, Punjabi during the beginning of the 21st century and multisectoral professionals in the second decade of the 21st century (see In Detail 30). Out of the 4,522 long-stay visas issued to Indian citizens in 2019, –24% more than the previous year–, 2,365 were issued for family reunification, 1,246 for studies and 784 for work (Permanent Immigration Observatory, 2019). The labour relationship with Spain of this new

generation of professionals has a multiplying effect in the increase of relationships with India of the institutions, centres and companies in which they work, in the entrepreneurship of initiatives and projects in the field of innovation and technology, and in the consolidation of a professionalised fabric of Indo-Spanish civil society that promotes bilateral projects. From the perspective of the bilateral awareness and image, this new generation of professionals are the best ambassadors for the rise in mutual awareness in the business and innovation fields.

9.3.

Main groups that form the Spanish community in India

As of January 2020, 905 Spanish citizens were registered in the Register of Spaniards Resident

ILLUSTRATION 66 / Compared perspective of the Indian diaspora in Spain in 2020 compared to other Asian communities and other European countries

Asian diaspora registered and resident in Spain	China	Pakistan	India	Philippines	Bangladesh
Registration by nationality	232,617	97,599	54,351	37,001	19,877
Registration by birth country	208,667	101,329	58,424	52,397	19,468
Residence by nationality	197,390	61,691	46,540	35,760	15,467
Residence by birth country	176,653	68,858	50,197	51,016	15,561
Growth between 2010 and 2020 (%) of residents by nationality	23,5%	8,9%	45,2%	22,6%	41,1%

Main distribution of the Indian diaspora in Europe	United Kingdom	Netherlands	Italy	Germany	France	Portugal	Spain	Belgium
Residents of Indian nationality	351,000	40,000	157,695	142,585	19,000	11,393	49,084	12,386
People of Indian origin	1,413,000	200,000	45,357	42,500	90,000	70,000	20,904	8,250
Total	1,764,000	240,000	203,052	185,085	109,000	81,393	69,988	20,636

Source: INE; Ministry of External Affairs, India

ILLUSTRATION 67 / Indian nationals in Spain by main provinces of residence in 2020

Provinces of residence	Citizens in the register of Indian nationality
Barcelona	21,262
Girona	6,044
Valencia	4,510
Alicante	3,350
Community of Madrid	3,131
Balearic Islands	3,014
Las Palmas	2,370
Region of Murcia	2,024
Tarragona	1,956
Santa Cruz de Tenerife	1,614
Málaga	1,400

Source: INE, 2020

Abroad (PERE, by its Spanish acronym), compared to the 339 registered in 2009. Despite this substantial rise in the last decade, the Spanish colony in India is significantly smaller to the one in other Asian countries like China, with 5,297, or Pakistan, with 2,165 citizens registered, most of which were born in the latter country (INE, 2020). If we take into account the number of Spaniards registered in the Embassy of Spain in New Delhi and the Consulate of Spain in Mumbai, in both cases over 700, the Spanish population resident in India would amount to more than 1,400 registered citizens. However, the Spanish resident population could be significantly higher if took into account the non-registered Spaniards who reside in India.

The number of women registered in PERE amounts to 447, similar to the number of men, who amount to 458. Of these residents, 286 are below the age of 25 and 121 older than 65, accounting to 45% of the total registered citizens, which could suggest a considerable number of returnee Spanish nationals of Indian origin (INE, 2020). Regarding their geographic distribution, the Spanish community in India is concentrated in

the northwest, mainly in Delhi and Punjab, and the Deccan plateau, which covers the economic hubs of Mumbai-Pune and Bangalore-Chennai, along with states like Goa and cities like Auroville.

The main group is formed by expatriates who work in companies, mainly Spanish ones internationalised in India, in fields like quality control for the production of goods, management of industrial production centres, activities of business development for the Indian market or projects for infrastructures, renewable energies or sustainability. There is a sizeable second group of Spanish citizens of Indian origin who reside in the state of Punjab, mainly in urban centres like Jalandhar or Ludhiana, from where the majority of the Indian colony in Spain settled in the Mediterranean arch come from. A third group of Spaniards, tied to the spirituality and religious values of India, live in different *ashrams* and communities distributed throughout the entire territory. The Spanish community resident in Auroville, the sustainable and self-sufficient city founded by Mirra Alfassa, disciple of Aurobindo, formed by more than 30 members, deserves special mention. A fourth group, which has grown significantly in the last years, is formed by sports professionals, which in the field of football exceeds forty professionals including players, coaches and technical personnel, although in the majority of cases their residence in India is limited to the duration of the sports competition.

Finally, a fifth group of Spaniards resident in India, whose work is vital for mutual awareness, is formed by aid workers. In 2020, Spain had 32 registered Spanish aid workers in India (AECID, 2020). The tradition of Spanish aid workers in India began with the religious cooperators, including the Jesuit priests, pioneers in the promotion of socio-health projects for the disadvantaged communities, like Federico Sopeña, or educational workers, like Carlos González Valles, whose work in the teaching of mathematics and Gujarati literature

was acknowledged by Prime Minister Narendra Modi after his recent death. Spanish nuns have also played an essential role in cooperation projects in India, including the deceased Isabel Martín, founder of the fair-trade cooperative Creative Handicrafts, awarded winner of the Prince of Viana Award for Solidarity, or Primitiva Vela, director of the Ankur Centre in Mumbai.

Since then, numerous development aid workers work in projects in India, both in international organisations and Spanish Development NGOs and foundations. Spanish foundations dedicated specifically to working in India include the Vicente Ferrer Foundation, the Sonrisas de Bombay Foundation, the Colores de Calcuta Foundation or the Esperanza y Alegría Foundation, along with others in the field of sports with international impact, including the Rafa Nadal Foundation or the Real Madrid Foundation, or promoted by Spanish companies, like Roca's We Are Water. In addition to their involvement with the development of India, this work by the Spanish foundations has a significant impact in the bilateral exchange and mutual awareness (see In Detail 31).

The role of the Spanish Development NGOs and foundations as driving forces of the bilateral exchange

There are 102,268 NGOs registered in India by the Indian Government (NGO Darpan, 2020). During the first meeting and launching of the platform of Spanish Development NGOs in India in 2015 (El Diario, 2015), the Embassy of Spain in New Delhi estimated that there are 54 Spanish non-governmental organisations for development registered in India. Of the organisations belonging to the Coordinadora de ONG para el Desarrollo (Coordinator of Development NGOs) in 2019, 18 of them participated in 246 projects in India with a total investment of more than 10 million euros (Informe del Sector de las ONGD/ Report of the Development NGOs Sector, 2019).

In 1969, Vicente and Anne Ferrer founded the **Rural Development Trust (RDT)** in Anantapur which, with the support of the Spanish **Fundación Vicente Ferrer (FVF)** foundation, has become the main cooperation organisation linked to Spain that develops projects in India thanks to the contribution of 134,767 collaborators and the participation on the field in India of 2,187 workers and 211 volunteers who participate in the



Vicente Ferrer, a precursor of Spanish cooperation in India, in a 2003 image.

network of schools, hospitals, rural clinics and other centres of the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, with an annual budget of more than 41 million euros (FVF, Annual Report 2019-20). The remaining Development NGOs and Spanish foundations are distributed throughout almost the entire Indian territory, including the large cities of Mumbai and Kolkata, like the **Fundación Sonrisas de Bombay**, founded by Jaume Sanlloriente, the **Fundación Colores de Calcuta** foundation, by Antonio Mesas, or the **Fundación Esperanza y Alegría**, by María Moreno, among many others.

The role of the Spanish Development NGOs and foundations in India, in addition to contributing to the development of India, in line with the main

objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG), generates knowledge and exchange between Spain and India in different areas, including the field of education. The *School to School* programme of FVF-RDT for sociocultural exchange and joint reflection on diversity, which brought together the schools of the FVF-RDT during the 2019-2020 course, and 145 schools of Spain—120 of which repeated from the previous year—, has been able to involve more than 13,000 children from Spain and more than 3,000 from India. The programme *Escuelas Sonrientes* (Smiling Schools) of *Sonrisas de Bombay* also seeks to establish lines of collaboration between Spanish and Indian schools with the aim to encourage student exchanges from both countries.

9.4.

The associations of the Indian community in Spain and their repercussion in the mutual awareness

Within the Indian associations abroad recorded in the data base of the Ministry of External Affairs of India, four of the six Indian associations in Spain are linked to the Sindhi community in Spain: Indian Association of las Islas Canarias, Indian Association of Barcelona, Indian Sindhi Association of Madrid and the Hindu Association of Valencia (Ministry of External Affairs, 2016). The creation of the Hindustani clubs of the Canary Islands, like the one of Santa Cruz de Tenerife in 1961 or the one of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria in 1972, were essential for the structuring of the Sindhi community in the islands.

The Indian Association of las Islas Canarias is made up of different groups, which currently include the **Hindustani Club of Las Palmas** de Gran Canaria, the **Hindustani Club Gran Canaria-Sur**, the **Hindu Association Tenerife-Sur**, the **Hindu Association Tenerife-Norte**, the **Hindustani Club of Fuerteventura** and the **Hindu Community of Lanzarote**. The main associations promoted by the Sindhi community in the mainland include the Indian Sindhi Association of Madrid, founded in 1982 as the Indian Association of Madrid, which has a Jhulelal temple and an enormous cultural centre founded in 2009 in the outskirts of the city, the **Indian Association of Barcelona** and the **Hindu Association of Valencia**, with its Radha Krishna Mandir. All of them celebrate the main Hindu religious festivities as well as cultural and sports events.

The Spanish Hindu Community of Indian origin also has temples in other parts of the territory, including Benalmadena, Ceuta and Melilla, which together with the temples and monasteries promoted by the Hindu communities of Spanish

origin, gather up to 15,000 people, according to data from the Hindu Federation of Spain. The **Hindu Federation of Spain** (FHE by its Spanish acronym) was founded in 2015 by four associations and promoted after the third Hindu Meeting of Spain (*Tercer Encuentro de Hindúes*). The FHE, chaired by the Hindu priest Juan Carlos Ramchandani (Krishna Kripa Dasa), is registered in the Ministry of Justice of Spain since 2016, is a full member of the Hindu Forum of Europe and its objectives include obtaining the *notorio arraigo* (a legal status that any religious denomination may request from the Spanish government that certifies not only the presence in Spain of a particular religion or its rooting, but also its prominence) for Hinduism in Spain.

The Sikh communities of Punjab, predominant in Catalonia and the Mediterranean Arch, are fundamentally structured around their gurdwara temples. The more than 23 places of worship of the Sikh community are in along 16 municipalities of 7 provinces, mainly in the Mediterranean Arch and Madrid. The first one to be founded was the **Gurdwara Nanasakar**, established near the Mercat Nou market of Barcelona in 1992 (see Illustration 68). Within the Sikhs, the Ravidassia community has its own registered associations, the *Ravidass Bhawan Society* of Badalona and the *Shri Guru Ravidass Dhar* of Valencia (Ministry of External Affairs, 2016), and its own *gurdwaras* in the provinces of Barcelona, Girona and Valencia.

The new immigration flows of the last decades, coming from different parts of India, have favoured the creation of new associations like the **Association of Malayalees** of Barcelona, founded by Malayalees from Kerala in 2005, as well as groups in the social media or specific information portals for the Indian community in Spain, like **Catalunyaar**. The creation of the **Indian Culture Centre** (ICC) of Barcelona in 2018, promoted by Robert Masih and inaugurated by the Indian Ambassador D. B. Venkatesh Varma, has allowed



Members of a dance troupe from the Indian province of Gujarat celebrate the Indian National Day in Madrid's Plaza Mayor in 2005.

the Indian families of Barcelona, regardless of their religion or geographic origin, to have a space that serves as meeting point for all the members of the community, available premises for the celebration of festivities, educational programmes that seek the inclusion of the Indian families in the Barcelonian society and the celebration of several events that seek to spread the India culture in Catalonia. Casa Asia has played an essential role in spreading knowledge about India in Barcelona in the last 20 years, also in collaboration with the Indian communities (see Case 18).

Thanks to the boost of these associations, the Spanish cities not only celebrate the main Indian festivities within their cultural centres and temples, but also in the streets, using urban areas in the last few years to involve their neighbours

in their traditions. Although *Diwali*, the main Hindu festival, is still celebrated among families and communities promoted by the different associations, other religious festivals such as *Ananta Chaturdashi*, in honour of the God *Ganesh*, is celebrated in beaches of different Spanish coastal cities like Adeje. The Sikh community of Catalonia also celebrates the festivity of Baisakhi, birth of the Sikh religion, every year in the streets of the Raval neighbourhood of Barcelona.

Perhaps the most popular festival of Indian origin in Spain, beyond the communities of Indian origin, is *Holi*, which welcomes spring and the harvest season by throwing coloured powders and water. In the last ten years, the celebration of *Holi* has expanded throughout the entire Spanish geography, beyond the major cities. Whether in the format of a race, festivals in



Indian piece of religious art called "Cauvisi with Jina Parsvanatha", belonging to the exhibition organized by Casa Asia in Barcelona in 2005 on the traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism between the second and eighteenth centuries.

CASE 18

Casa Asia, a continuous boost to our mutual awareness

Casa Asia is an organism of **public diplomacy** formed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain, the Government of Catalonia and the City Councils of Barcelona and Madrid. This institution, whose head office is in Barcelona and also has a centre in Madrid, is aimed at improving the mutual awareness and promoting the relations between the societies of Asia, the Pacific and Spain. The continued boost being carried out by Casa Asia in

initiatives with India in the institutional, economic, cultural or educational fields has been critical in creating a permanent platform of knowledge between both countries.

2021 will mark 20 years of initiatives of Casa Asia with India. During those years, Casa Asia has spun a **network of institutions with which it collaborates in building bridges with India**, including organisations of global reach, like Metropolis –global network of cities and metropolitan areas–, of Asian reach, like Réseau Asie –European network of research centres on the Asia-Pacific–, or of Indian

reach, like the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) or the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), with which it organised five editions of the Spain-India Tribune. Casa Asia has also collaborated with private organisations like Horasis Group in organising the Global-India Business Meeting.

Within the educational initiatives, Casa Asia organises different **training activities about India**, including Hindi classes and courses of business protocol in India or for reception in Spain of tourism from India and other South-Asian countries. The Asian Studies Meeting

organised by Casa Asia, which celebrated its eighth edition this year, promotes the knowledge and exchange of studies and lines of research and knowledge about Asia, including South Asia. In the line of work of Casa Asia with the Asian communities, there is a close relationship with the **main associations and leading representatives of the Indian citizens resident in Spain**, as well as with Spanish citizens of Indian origin. Casa Asia participates in some of their initiatives and collaborates in the organisation of traditional festivities like *Diwali*, among others.

In the cultural field, Casa Asia organises **numerous activities related to culture and to the performing arts** in collaboration with Casa de la India and the Indian for Council Cultural Relations (ICCR), or festivals like the *Kochi Muziris Biennale*, whose curator for the 2020 edition, Shubigi RAO, was the guest of Casa Asia in the last edition of the Asian Maps programme, where she presented her Biennale project. In the Asian Film Festival Barcelona (AFFBCN), benchmark festival of Asian cinema in Spain organised by Casa Asia since 2003, India has played a leading role in all the editions, as well as in the cycles and retrospectives. Moreover, within the film industry, the Casa Asia Channel on Filmin has allowed

Indian films to have a place in the Spanish digital platform.

In the literary field, Casa Asia has developed diverse collaborations with Spanish publishing houses, including **presentations of Indian Literature and organising conferences and meetings**.

Regarding the artistic field, the exhibition *Indian Narratives in the 20th and 21st centuries: Between Memory and History*, organised by Casa Asia in its centres of Barcelona and Madrid in 2009, with the participation of ten Indian artists, has been one of the major milestones of bringing the Indian contemporary art closer to Spain. India has also been progressively playing a larger role in the Asia Festival, multidisciplinary event focused on the traditional and contemporary artistic creation of Asia in Spain with a focus on the scenic arts and music.

Casa Asia has shown high adaptability in the current pandemic, promoting **new training and virtual knowledge programmes**, with a renewed and ambitious commitment towards India, in which the pioneering cycle of webcasts *Romipé/Gitanidad: (Romipé/ Gypsiness) East in the West*, about the gypsies and their roots in the Indian subcontinent. The digital dialogues organised include the one held with Ariadna Álvarez about the

publishing of books about architecture in India; the one with Jesús Aguado about his poetic work, focused on India, and with Indian and Spanish dancers about space and dance in the context of the pandemic. The training courses offered in online format include one about *Anthropology of Contemporary India*, taught by Agustín Pániker, and the one about the *Introduction to the Hindi language*, by Deepti Golani.

Casa Asia, with its head offices in Madrid and Barcelona, has a privileged position to **host, promote and support platforms of bilateral dialogue** from the civil society in strategic sectors of our bilateral relations. These spaces for bilateral exchange in fields in which Casa Asia has already shown its leadership capacity, like governance and urban innovation and tourism, and in other areas yet to be explored, like gastronomical sustainability within the framework of Barcelona's world quality of capital of sustainable food during the year 2021, represent an opportunity to revitalise the relations between both countries.

ILLUSTRATION 68 / Location of the main temples and places of worship of the Indian-origin communities in Spain



esplanades or charity events, numerous Spanish cities and towns now celebrate *Holi*, even though they have a commercial or charity element that the traditions and culture of its place of origin do not have. Likewise, the choreographies of Bollywood have reached all corners of Spain with their presence in celebrations like the carnival, although they can be more of a reflection of an orientalist vision of India than an image of the contemporary India. Even if on many occasions they are not linked to the traditions of India, the expansion of the celebration of *Holi* and the choreographies of Bollywood reflects the interest and even fascination there is in Spain for Indian culture, and they are platforms that are still not being used enough to promote mutual awareness.

9.5.

The network of Hindu-Spanish organisations that underpin the bilateral civil society

Ever since bilateral relations were established between both countries in 1956, the governments and bilateral embassies have been the ones to maintain the momentum of our relations in different areas. This government action has not been accompanied by a network of bilateral organisations of the civil society until recent decades which, despite having grown in recent years, is still smaller than the bilateral networks of Spain in other Asian countries like China, Japan or South Korea, or of India in European countries like Germany or France. The first organisation of our bilateral network of organisations of civil society,



Holi celebration at Centro Niemeyer in Aviles, in 2017.

which is still active, is the Institute of Indology. Founded in 1995 in Madrid by Rafael Iruzubieta and Pedro Carrero, the **Institute of Indology** is a private, non-profit organisation formed by scholars and professionals of different areas interested in India, which organises different activities and courses to spread the knowledge about India in Spain.

The first Indo-Spanish institution with participation of the Government of India is **Casa de la India**, created in 2003 in Valladolid. Casa de la India is a cultural foundation under the joint sponsorship of Spain and India, including the Government of India, through the Embassy of India in Spain, the City Council of Valladolid and the University of Valladolid, subsequently joined by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR). On the other hand, the first bilateral

organisation with participation of the Government of Spain is the **Spain-India Council Foundation**, promoter of this joint reflection, a private non-profit organisation founded in 2009 which falls within the Network of Council Foundations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain, formed by representatives of both private and public organisations, including from other ministries of the Government of Spain.

This network is joined by other sectorial bilateral institutions that have been created in different areas of our bilateral relations. In the academic field, the **Spanish Association for Interdisciplinary India Studies (AEII in Spanish)** was founded in 2007 in the University of Cordoba as a scientific-professional association with the aim to develop the studies on India from an interdisciplinary perspective and to increase

The solidarity of the bilateral communities and organizations in view of Covid-19

The commitment of the bilateral civil society with the environment in which they work has again been shown during the COVID-19 pandemic. An illustrative example has been the solidary initiatives of the Indian communities and associations in Spain. The project **Solidaridad Alimentaria Barcelona**, an initiative of the **Indian Culture Centre** of Barcelona and the **Indali Foundation**, with the support of the Indian community in Barcelona, has distributed more than 12,000 kilograms of food to more than 15,500 beneficiaries of the different Asian communities from the Raval neighbourhood through different points of distribution. Other initiatives promoted by

the Indian associations of the Canary Islands include the one from the **Hindustani Club of Fuerteventura**, which has donated 2,784 kilos of food to be distributed among needy families of the island, or the one from the **Hindustani Club Gran Canaria-Sur** which, in addition to having donated 3,500 kilos of food, has also supported the role of the social services.

Spanish NGOs and foundations in India have also mobilised. The Rural Development Trust's Bathalapalli Hospital has been designated as a COVID-19 Hospital by local authorities, treating more than 5,500 patients from the pandemic. The work of the **Vicente Ferrer Foundation** has also had an impact on awareness campaigns and direct support for the most vulnerable sectors. **Fundación Sonrisas de Mumbai** has been another of the Spanish

foundations that reacted quickly, in collaboration with the Municipal Corporation of Mumbai, by distributing meals and basic kits, awareness campaigns and support for online teaching.

Companies from both countries have also participated through direct contributions during the pandemic. As an example of the involvement of Spanish companies in India, **Acciona** was one of the first companies to constitute the National Covid-19 Funds, promoted by the Government of India. In the case of the Indian companies established in Spain, in April 2020, **Accord Healthcare** donated 180,000 vials of injectable paracetamol to the field hospital set up at IFEMA, Madrid.

the cultural and scientific relations between Spain and India, alternating every year the organisation of a congress and an international seminar on India, and promoting the academic output through its electronic magazine *Indialogs*, *Spanish Journal of India Studies*. In the economic-business field, the **Indo-Spanish Chamber of Commerce**, which collaborates in this process of joint reflection, was founded in 2016, and is the only Chamber of Commerce of Spain in India and the only one recognised as official by the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism of Spain in 2019 (see Illustration 69).

The Spanish organisations, associations and bodies in India and the Indian ones in Spain complement this network of civil society, of which it is worth highlighting the aforementioned Development NGOs and foundations on the Spanish side and the associations of Indian communities in Spain. These are joined by the Spanish companies established in India and the Indian ones established in Spain, together with the student associations mentioned in previous work documents, which are an unquestionable part of this fabric that promotes mutual awareness. The commitment of these associations and

ILLUSTRATION 69 / Main organisations and bilateral institutions or with bilateral representation		
Main organisations and bilateral institutions	Year of foundation	Head office
Institute of Indology	1995	Madrid
Casa de la India	2002	Valladolid
Spanish Association for Interdisciplinary India Studies	2007	Córdoba
Spain-India Council Foundation	2009	Madrid
Indo-Spanish Chamber of Commerce	2016	New Delhi
Other institutions with representation in India and Spain	Centres/Offices	
ACCIÓ-Agència per la Competitivitat de l'Empresa	Barcelona and Mumbai	
Agencia EFE	Madrid and New Delhi	
Basque Trade & Investment -Agencia Vasca de Internacionalización	Bilbao and Mumbai	
Centre for the Development of Industrial Technology (CDTI)	Madrid and New Delhi	
ICEX Spain Export and Investments	Madrid, New Delhi and Mumbai	
Instituto Cervantes	Madrid and New Delhi	
Turespaña	Madrid and Mumbai	

Source: Prepared by the authors

organisations with the environments where they work and reside has also been proven through solidary initiatives during the Covid-19 pandemic (see In Detail 32).

There are also other institutions and organisations which, without having bilateral vocation, have a significant impact in our bilateral relations. In the Spanish case, **ICEX Spain Export and Investments**, **Agencia EFE**, the **Centre for the Development of Industrial Technology (CDTI)**, by its Spanish acronym), **Instituto Cervantes**, **Turespaña**, **Acció** or **Basque Trade & Investment**, with its centres and offices in India, are key institutions thanks to their projects and the use of their centres for bilateral activities. Likewise, the initiatives of different Spanish institutions have an important bilateral impact, including the network of assistantships, the national plan of External Cultural Action of Spain (PACE in Spanish) of the **Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID)** in Spanish), or the programme for the

internationalisation of the Spanish culture (PICE in Spanish) of **Acción Cultural Española (AC/E)**. Finally, there are a number of Spanish institutions that actively involve Indian representatives in their programming and initiatives, like the **Ramón Areces Foundation** (see Case 19). In India, the **Indian Council for Cultural Relations** is an essential institution for bilateral promotion, thanks to its scholarship programme, “India-Spain Cultural Exchange Programme” and to cultural activities that they promote and finance in both countries.

The Ramón Areces Foundation, a key player for promoting scientific awareness about India

The Ramón Areces Foundation (FRA in Spanish) is a private cultural foundation, created in 1976 under the legacy of the businessman Ramón Areces, which has focused since its creation on **scientific patronage** by promoting research, contributing to the generation of human capital and disseminating knowledge. The main goals of the FRA are to contribute to the creation of a solid scientific and technological structure in Spain, to make it possible to improve people's lives, and to search for solutions to the challenges that society is facing mainly in the scientific, economic and educational fields. The FRA also encourages networking and mutual understanding with other countries, including India.

Numerous Indian experts and experts about India from different scientific fields have participated in the conferences, congresses and activities organised by the FRA. In 2019, on the occasion of the International Year of the Periodic Table, the chemistry professor **Eluvathingal Devassy Jemmis** gave a dissertation about "The Periodic Table: known, unknown and novel aspects - a personal selection"; in 2017, the Indian economist Seema

Jayachandran, an expert in economic development and its effect on children's health and well-being with a gender perspective, participated in the scientific meeting COSME: Gender Economics; or in 2014, the scientist **Harleen Grewal**, an expert in clinical trials in tuberculosis in India, spoke at the International Symposium on "Preventive Vaccines Against Tuberculosis: A New Horizon".

Foremost among the conferences organised by the FRA to increase awareness in Spain about contemporary India as an economic power, global actor and leader in innovation, are those given by the internationally recognised **Sam Pitroda**, former President of the National Innovation Council of India and father of India's Telecommunications Revolution, about "Innovation in India: Initiatives and Opportunities"; **Brahma Chellaney**, professor of strategic studies and one of the leading thinkers about India today, about "India as a Major Actor in the Emerging Global Order"; or by the Indian economic historian and Professor of Economic History at the London School of Economics, **Tirthankar Roy**, about "Can India grow faster? Answers from History". The FRA also collaborates with other institutions, such as the Spain-India Council Foundation, hosting initiatives like the "**Spain-India Dialogue on Global, Geoeconomic and Defense Challenges**", organised

in 2015 with the aim to promote exchange between Indian and Spanish think tanks and to increase mutual awareness in the fields of economy, security or international relations.

Within the scholarship programmes, the FRA Call for Further Studies Abroad in Social Sciences has also promoted **research on contemporary India**. As an example, in its 30th call in 2016, the FRA awarded the Indian researcher of the Navarra Center for International Development (NCID), Joseph F. Gomes, a grant to study how the relationship of different ethnic groups within a country can affect the individual perception of public goods and, with it, their supply, analysing the two specific cases of sub-Saharan Africa and India.

Other organisations that have been created following the legacy of Ramón Areces include the **Editorial Centro de Estudios Ramón Areces**, which has also published reference manuals and monographs on India including the annotated translation, unprecedented in the Spanish publishing scene, "*La Constitución de la India*" (The Constitution of India), by Santiago Sánchez González, and featuring a presentation by the lawyer and Padma Shri Rafael Iruzubieta; or the essay "China, India and the Future in a Global Democratic Context" by José Miguel Andreu García and Rita Dulci Rahman.



The Ramón Areces Foundation.

9.6.

The fabric of Indo-Spanish experts and professionals who act as vectors of mutual awareness

The main promoters of mutual bilateral awareness between Spain and India have been Indologists, Hispanic Scholars, bilateral experts and Indo-Spanish professionals. In the world of Indology, from key figures in Spain such as the late **Raimon y Salvador Pániker**, to **Rafael Iruzebieta**, the *Padma Shri* awardee granted by the Government of India, numerous experts have promoted mutual knowledge from their professional activity and personal drive. In the educational field, the pioneering work of teachers including **Carmen García-Ormaechea**

in the field of art history, which today is led with great success by **Eva Fernández del Campo**, or **Ana Agud** in the field of linguistics, in recent years has spread to other areas such as philology, with **Antonia Navarro** from the University of Córdoba; international relations, with **Mario López** from the Pontifical University of Comillas; or contemporary history, with **Teresa Segura** from the Pompeu Fabra University.

Figures like **Agustín Pániker**, **Gonçal López Nadal** or **Enrique Gallud** have regularly promoted publications, courses and conferences on India, and experts like **Eva Borreguero**, **Ana Ballesteros** and **Ruben Campos** have contributed from the media and/or publications in think tanks. In the cultural field, **Guillermo Rodríguez** from Casa de la India, **Fernando Casas** in the cinematographic

production or **Mónica de la Fuente** in the world of dance, are a continuous source of bilateral cultural projects. In the parliamentary field, to which the Spain-India Council Foundation dedicated the fourth edition of 2015, it is worth highlighting the work of former MPs, including **Inmaculada Riera**, current Director General of the Spanish Chamber of Commerce, in actively promoting exchanges with India.

Since the arrival in India of the Spanish philanthropist **Vicente Ferrer** or Professor **Antonio Binimelis**, several Spanish experts have contributed to mutual awareness from India. These include the Indologist **Álvaro Enterría**, established in Varanasi, and the Sanskrit expert **Òscar Pujol**, trained in Varanasi and twice director of the Instituto Cervantes in New Delhi. The work of Spanish professionals residing in India has an indisputable bilateral impact, including the cases of the editor and architect **Ariadna Álvarez**, the expert and curator of photography **Lola McDougall** or the chef **Manuel Oliveira**. The involvement of representatives in India of Spanish companies in our bilateral relations has been boosted since the creation of the Indo-Spanish Chamber of Commerce promoted by **Pradeep Bhargava** and chaired by **Óscar Esteban**.

Ever since the pioneering Indian professor **Susnigdha Dey**, the work of Hispanic Scholars has been essential in the expansion of awareness about the Hispanic world and culture in India, including a first generation that includes, among others, **Vibha Maurya**, **Shyama Prasad Ganguly** or **Anil Dhingra**, which today is led by second and third generations of Hispanic Scholars. These Hispanic Scholars are accompanied by a generation of Indian professionals from different fields who have completed part of their training in Spain, including, among many others, the Chairman of the Indian Chapter of the Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA) **Praveen**

Kumar, the poet **Subhro Bandopadhyay**, the Director of Diva India **Shariq Jamil** or the flamenco dancer **Kunal Om**.

The Indian communities and communities of Indian origin in Spain are, without a doubt, a unique asset in our bilateral relations, exercising an essential task in promoting awareness about Indian culture and its traditions. This role, originally played by the Sindhi community in the Canary Islands, Madrid and Barcelona, is currently being played by relevant figures in the Indian and Indian-origin communities in Spain including **Robert Masih**, founder of the Indian Cultural Centre in Barcelona, **Juan Carlos Ramchandani (Krishna Kripa Dasa)**, Chairman of the Hindu Federation of Spain, or **Nachatter Singh**, of the Centre d'Estudis Demogràfics of the Autonomous University of Barcelona, who has published important studies about the Indian diaspora in Spain. In the field of culture, different musicians and dancers promote Indian culture from Spain, such as the Indian classical dancers **Sohini Roychowdhury** in Madrid or **Shreya Nag** in Barcelona.

It is worth mentioning the Indian or Indian-origin businessmen and tradesmen in Spain, whose work is essential in bringing both business networks in contact. The business success and entrepreneurial spirit of these entrepreneurs also contributes to the growth and internationalisation of the Spanish economy and the promotion of bilateral exchanges (see In Detail 33). The union of Spanish and Indian entrepreneurs and professionals has also become a successful formula internationally, as demonstrated by Chano Fernández, from Extremadura and Aneel Bhusri, from the United States, who are co-CEOs of the American technology company Workday.

IN DETAIL 33

The business success of the enterprising Indian community in Spain

The Indian diaspora is internationally recognised for its educational and business success. In countries like the United States, about 70% of immigrants born in India have university studies, their salaries are significantly higher than the average salaries associated with the same level of training, and there is a greater predisposition to entrepreneurship and innovation, as shown by the fact that the population of Indian origin, with only 1% of the total population, promotes 8% of total technology companies or one third of the start-ups of Silicon Valley (Chakravorty, Kapur & Singh, 2016).

This business success of the Indian diaspora is also visible in Spain. Since pioneering businesses in the Canary Islands in the second half of the nineteenth century as **Chanrai, Chellaram** or **Metharam Bros. & Co**, the Spanish Sindhi community has shown great talent for business, with the investor **Ramchand Bhavnani** being a great exponent of this success, and an entrepreneurial character, as shown by **Vashi Nanwani**, founder of the Vashi jewelry brand. Other members of the Sindhi diaspora around the world, including **Harry Mohinani** of Platinum Estates, with offices in Madrid and Barcelona, have also chosen Spain as the main destination for their international investments.

Cities like Barcelona, Madrid, Valencia or Málaga, where Indian professionals have been established for decades, have seen the arrival of new and successful Indian professionals. Along with this new network of professionals, there are two groups that facilitate the business connection between both countries. On the one hand, advisers and consultants of Indian origin, such as **Alan D'Silva, Aparna Viswanathan, Sudhanshu Karandikar** or **Thomas Joseph**, play an essential role as bridges between the two business fabrics. On the other hand, professors and researchers, such as **Jatinder Singh** at EADA in Barcelona or **Kiron Ravindran** at IE Business School in Madrid, contribute to mutual economic and business awareness from their own academic work.



Platinum Estates will open a luxury Hilton hotel on the Costa del Sol in 2022.

Mutual knowledge through the media, think tanks and social media

In contrast to the six media that have had representation in India in the past through a network of correspondents and freelancers residing in India, including *El País*, *El Mundo*, *ABC*, *La Vanguardia*, *El Periódico de Catalunya* or *Público*, the last of which was Ángel Martínez Cantera for *El País*, currently no Spanish media has resident representatives in India. The crisis of the media, the lack of informational interest about Asia in Spain, except for the case of China, and the difficulties for international journalists to obtain a visa in India if they do not have a strong backing from some international media, could be among the main causes.

The **Agencia EFE** delegation, which coordinates South Asia from Delhi, is currently the only Spanish representation in India and, therefore, the only source for the Spanish media to collect news and reports directly produced in Spanish. The Agencia EFE is, as an instrument of Spanish public diplomacy, also an essential asset for the dissemination of awareness about Spain and Latin America in India. EFE launched an English multimedia service at the end of 2019 from Bangkok which compiles the main EFE news in Spanish that may be of interest to its Asian clients, as well as news written directly for the English service by EFE correspondents throughout Asia. The commercialization of a news service in English for India would be a key tool for the dissemination of news about Spain in India.

Within the representation that India has in the Spanish media, it is worth highlighting the most detailed reports for specific sections, like the ones included in the *Planeta Futuro* section of the newspaper *El País*. Similarly, correspondents

residing in other countries carry out an important task in reporting about India, such as the former correspondent in India, **Jordi Joan Baños** from Istanbul for *La Vanguardia*; collaborations with foreign media for the publication of news about India, such as *Eldiario.es* with *The Guardian*; or Spanish media professionals with specific knowledge of India, such as the Spanish journalist of Indian origin **Noor Mahtani** for *El País* or the photojournalist **Bernat Parera** for the *5W Magazine*. However, the presence of news and opinion articles about India in the Spanish media is usually scarce, without continuity in the main current affairs and tending to reflect anecdotal news, such as the repercussion in the Spanish written press during the pandemic of the theft by primates of samples of patients with COVID-19 in India.

No Indian media or news agency has direct representation in Spain, mostly resorting to the main international news agencies to report about Spain. Except for journalists who have shown a special interest in Spain and Latin America, such as **Om Marathe**, or Spanish figures, such as **Shivani Naik** about Carolina Marín, both in the *Indian Express*, the presence of Spain in the Indian media is scarce. This absence of Spain in the Indian media, with the exception of sports, is significant. It is worth mentioning the impact in India of the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic in Spain, which aroused unusual interest in the first weeks and which might have contributed to the image of Spain in India being weakened after the pandemic, according to the results of the survey of the Spain-India Council Foundation of June 2020.

With the aim of promoting interaction between Indian and Spanish journalists, the **Spain-India Council Foundation** dedicated its second edition of the Indian Leaders Programme in 2014 to Indian journalists such as Sonia Singh, M. K Venu or Shaili Chopra, who at that time worked



Image from the website of the Spain-India Council Foundation.

in reference media such as NDTV, The Financial Express, The Hindu or the India Today group. The Indian Leaders Programme organised by the Spain-India Council Foundation in other sectors have also had the participation of specialised journalists, such as the one dedicated to education. In the sports field, **LaLiga** organised in 2016 the visit to Spain of a delegation of journalists from Indian print media such as the Times of India, Hindustan Times or The Hindu.

India and Spain maintain a low presence in the research and scientific production of their think tanks. In order to promote the interaction between bilateral think tanks, the **Spain-India Council Foundation** organised in 2015 the “Spain-India Dialogue on Global, Goeconomic and Defense Challenges” at the Ramón Areces Foundation, which was preceded by a meeting between Indian and Spanish think tanks in the Diplomatic School of Spain. The collaboration between the Spanish think tank **Real Instituto Elcano** and the Indian think tank **Observer Research Foundation** has been strengthened in recent years with the completion in 2017 of the

joint report “Spain and India: seeking stronger bilateral relations”, which also had the support of the Spain-India Council Foundation, and the visit to India in 2018 by the Chairman of the Elcano Royal Institute, Charles Powel.

Social media have played an essential role in recent years in the dissemination of mutual awareness. The Embassy of India in Madrid, which has more than 33,190 followers on Facebook, 2,700 on Instagram, 1,060 on YouTube and 7,250 on Twitter, has achieved a great impact on mutual awareness thanks to an intense activity on Twitter that in the month of October 2020 exceeded 130 direct publications, more than 4 daily tweets of their own content (Twitter of the Indian Embassy in Spain, 2020). Spain’s social media accounts in India include those of the Spanish Embassy itself, the Instituto Cervantes and ICEX India, recently joined by a new ICEX account entirely in English to promote investment and business with Spain, “Spain Business – India”. Between the four Twitter accounts they have more than 9,700 followers. This work of the bilateral embassies on social

ILLUSTRATION 70 / Mutual awareness in bilateral perspective						
Spain-India 2020 joint reflection, Spain-India Council Foundation (2020)						
Bilateral awareness	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Insufficient	Poor	DK/NA
Awareness about Spain in India (Indian perspective)	6%	18%	24%	48%	3%	0%
Awareness about Spain in India (Spanish perspective)	0%	6%	10%	63%	12%	9%
Awareness about India in Spain (Indian perspective)	6%	9%	30%	42%	9%	3%
Awareness about India in Spain (Spanish perspective)	0%	4%	12%	58%	21%	4%
Most prominent Spanish and Indian figures (classified by the most mentioned figures in spontaneous answers)	1st	2nd	3rd			
Most prominent Spanish figures in India (Indian perspective)	Rafael Nadal	Penélope Cruz	Football players/LaLiga			
Most prominent Spanish figures in India (Spanish perspective)	Rafael Nadal	Football players/LaLiga	Vicente Ferrer			
Most prominent Indian figures in Spain (Indian perspective)	Narendra Modi	Mahatma Gandhi	Nehru-Gandhi family			
Most prominent Indian figures in Spain (Spanish perspective)	Mahatma Gandhi	Rabindranath Tagore	Narendra Modi			
<i>Source: Survey of 100 participants interested in the bilateral relations (67 Spanish and 33 Indians). May/June, 2020</i>						

media has significant credit, as it is carried out by their own staff, most of whom are not specialised in the creation and dissemination of content on social media.

In the survey carried out in this process of joint reflection, more than 50% of the Indian participants have considered that the awareness of India in Spain and of Spain in India is insufficient or poor, more than 75% in the case of Spanish participants. Faced with this bilateral unfamiliarity, the survey also reflects that there are several figures with great bilateral relevance that can serve as vectors to promote mutual interest and knowledge. In the Spanish case, they are represented by athletes, highlighting Rafael Nadal, and in the case of India, by historical and current figures, such as Mahatma Gandhi or Narendra Modi (see Illustration 70).

Ideas and proposals for the revitalisation of relations in the field of civil society networks and mutual knowledge

The historical deficit of our bilateral exchanges means that Spain and India lack robust civil society networks that dynamically promote our bilateral relations, as is the case with other countries. However, in recent years, both countries have had important vectors for civil society to boost our bilateral relations. These include the Indian community in Spain, increasingly structured and participatory; the Spanish entities and professionals in India, committed to the country where they reside as shown by the multiplier effect of the projects in which they participate; and a group of organisations and personalities with a bilateral vocation that serve as a bridge between both countries and societies. The image of both countries is positive and the bilateral references, although scarce, are driving forces of increasing mutual interest. Despite the geographical, social and cultural distance that separates both countries; social media and bilateral platforms have become efficient assets to create a bridge of exchange and mutual awareness.

The measures collected in this process of joint reflection that could continue to weave the civil society networks and promote our mutual understanding include:

1. The new network of bilateral organisations that has been created in the last two decades forms an optimal institutionalised base to promote our bilateral relations, although it would be appropriate to extend it to areas such as scientific, educational or urban. **The organisation of meetings and coordination meetings between bilateral organisations or those with a bilateral impact would** facilitate the multiplier effect of their initiatives and the generation of joint projects.
2. The Indian communities in Spain, increasingly structured and organised, are one of the main assets to promote awareness of Indian culture in Spain. Their interaction with other Spanish institutions could serve as a vector to boost the presence of India in Spanish cultural and social life. Institutions such as Casa Asia in Barcelona are important **platforms both to facilitate coordination between the different Indian associations and to foster collaboration with other cultural and social organisations.**
3. The centres created by the associations of the Indian community or those of Indian origin in Spain, such as the cultural centre of the Indian Sindhi Association in Madrid, or by members of the community, such as the Indian Culture Centre in Barcelona, promoted by Robert Masih, have been essential as spaces for holding meetings and Indian festivities. To ensure that the environments of these communities can participate in these festivities and understand their traditions, it would be appropriate to **support the use of public spaces for the celebration of the main Indian festivities such** as the Hindu *Diwali*, which is organised annually in Trafalgar Square in London, or the Sikh *Baisakhi*, which already holds parades through the streets of Barcelona..
4. The number of Indian professionals working in Spain and of Spaniards working in India is increasing. Others who have worked or studied in India or Spain keep their ties to the country. Many of them interact through social media, including Facebook and WhatsApp groups, or organise themselves in associations such as alumni groups. The **creation of networks of professionals in each of the countries that would bring together current and former residents** would facilitate exchange, entrepreneurship and joint projects.

5. Spain and India have a group of Indologists, Hispanic Scholars, bilateral experts and Indo-Spanish professionals who have a vocation to promote knowledge and exchanges, and who act as true bilateral bridges. As main connoisseurs of bilateral relations in their own sectors, **the involvement of these experts in the definition and implementation of the bilateral strategy** is essential to energise our bilateral relations with a perspective from the field.
6. The deficit in the generation of articles and publications about India in Spain and about Spain in India is one of the obstacles to the generation of mutual knowledge. In addition to supporting existing collaborations between think tanks and bilateral publications, it would be convenient to encourage the **research centres of the main universities and organisations with a bilateral vocation to participate in the generation of academic articles and Indo-Spanish publications.**
7. The presence of the Agencia EFE in India is a key vector for the expansion of bilateral mutual awareness through the media. An English news service for India from the Agencia EFE, as already carried out by other international agencies such as AFP, which has among its clients the main news media in English in India, is essential for the dissemination of news about Spain in the Indian media. **Supporting the commercialisation of an Agencia EFE news service in English for India**, with both staffing and financial resources, would translate into a greater presence of Spain in the Indian media.
8. The presence of news about India in the Spanish media was significantly higher when these media had journalists living in India. The absence of these correspondents and freelancers hinders the continuity of India's presence in the media in Spain and the generation of news from a South Asian perspective. **The support to Spanish freelancers representing Spanish media in India**, thus facilitating visa as journalists, would promote the continued presence of India in the Spanish media.
9. Spain and India have in their recognised athletes, innovative scientists or successful entrepreneurs some of the main assets to promote their bilateral image. **The participation of these references in campaigns on social media would** increase mutual interest, improve the image of both countries and increase the impact of bilateral initiatives.
10. Social media and the virtual world have become one of the most efficient tools to generate awareness and mutual interest. **A joint and coordinated action in the institutional social media of Spain in India, together with the professionalization and adaptation of content** through agreements with local communication agencies, would boost the impact of the network strategy and improve mutual awareness.

* The proposals and ideas contained in this working paper do not necessarily reflect the position of the Spain-India Council Foundation, nor that of its trustees, nor of the Indo-Spanish Chamber of Commerce or any of the organisations or persons that have contributed to this paper.

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The overview and anonymous considerations of 200 people and institutions interested in our bilateral relations have also been compiled through polls and online forms, as well as that of 80 stakeholders through virtual interviews.

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