

Indian Diaspora in the New World – North America

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Learning Objectives

After going through this Unit, you will be able to explain:

- the Indian diasporic situations in Canada and the United States;
- the process of Indian diaspora formation in North America;
- the various facets of growth of Indian diaspora in Canada and the United States; and
- the position of Indian diaspora in North America.

11.1 Introduction

The ‘New World’ is a problematic term for many reasons. First, it was not actually a *new world*, because the inhabitants of America had known of its existence for at least twenty thousand years. Second, the Americas were also not isolated continents that were really ‘discovered’ by any European, because the Icelanders had landed in Canada and settled along its coastline earlier on in the thirteenth century. However, as these were unknown facts about the existence of the Americas, it was Christopher Columbus (1451-1506), a Genoese navigator, who convinced Isabella, the Queen of Spain, to underwrite a *western expedition to the eastern countries* via the Atlantic because that would be a shorter trip. The general view then was that a western voyage to India would be a disaster, for the ship would have to travel thousands of miles over the open ocean and the crew would starve or die of dehydration long before the journey was complete. But, Columbus believed that the world was considerably smaller than was imagined in the general view. He was, of course, completely mistaken and, in the process, as the Europeans believed, ‘discovered’ the new continents of the Americas, which they called the ‘New World’. As for Columbus, he never acknowledged or believed that the Americas were anything other than Asia. He consequently believed that the ‘West Indies,’ where he landed was India, although he was puzzled because the ‘easterners’ were not what the 200-year-old accounts of the Orient by Marco Polo had described them to be. Columbus’ voyage of 1492 was intended to discover a shorter all-water route to China and India than the route around Africa that was being opened up by the Portuguese - both aimed at avoiding the Muslim and Byzantine middle-men in the land route through which the spices of the East used to reach Western Europe.

Although Columbus died still believing that he had opened up the ‘East Indies’ to Spain – which is why Europeans called the native inhabitants of the Americas ‘Indians’ – it was Amerigo Vespucci after whom the Americas came to be named, who was the first to suggest that a ‘new world’ of great land mass with gold, silver, and opportunities lay between Europe and the spices of the East.

The term ‘North America’, when employed in a context other than geography, may mean different things to different people. To many Americans and Canadians the term, in common usage, is often taken to mean “The United States of America and Canada, only”, excluding Mexico and the countries of Central America. This is due to the fact that culturally and economically, the USA and Canada are more like each other than they are to the rest of North America. ‘North America’ thus occupies the northern portion of the landmass generally referred to as the New World, the Western Hemisphere, the Americas, or simply America. Although Columbus himself never set foot on the mainland of North America, the mistaken identity of the ‘New World’ did establish an early, even if only psychologically, a link between it and India some 500 odd years back. It was much later though, in the early twentieth century that Indians migrated to Canada and the United States in any substantial numbers that could eventually result in the formation of distinctly visible diasporas there.

11.2 Indian Diaspora in Canada

Present Profile

In 1981, there were about 110 thousand Indians in Canada, a number that rose close to 425 thousand in 1991, and under a million by 2001, constituting about 3 per cent of Canada’s population of 30 million. Indians ranked the second most rapidly growing ethnic expatriate community (defined as the ‘visible minority population’ in the Census), after the Chinese during 1991-2001, thereby contributing a significant share in making Canada the world’s second most populated country by the proportion of foreign-born at 18 per cent, after Australia’s 22 per cent, and ahead of the USA with 11 per cent at the third place. More than 150 thousand Indians immigrated to Canada during 1991-2001, comprising 8.5 per cent of all immigrants, next only to the highest figure of 200 thousand Chinese immigrants at 10.8 per cent amongst a total number of 1.8 million immigrants coming to Canada from all countries. This was a big jump in India’s ranking which figured nowhere amongst the top ten countries of birth of immigrants entering Canada before 1961, whereas the Chinese did figure at rank 10th (see Census 2001, Canada). The majority of the immigrants who arrived in Canada during the 1990s were in the working age of 25 to 64 years. Of the 1990s immigrants who spoke a non-official language, about one-third reported Chinese as the most common language spoken at home in 2001; 7 per cent spoke Punjabi, and another 5 per cent Arabic, respectively as the second and the third most common language spoken at home. In terms of the major source countries of the 1990s immigrants, while those born in mainland China were the most likely to report as being unable to conduct a conversation in an official language (29 per cent), immigrants from India (15 per cent) and Taiwan (13 per cent) had the next highest proportions of those unable to converse in either official language, viz. English or French.

Although most of the principal linguistic and ethnic groups of India are represented in the Indo-Canadian population, over one half of all Indians in

Canada today are Sikhs, a quarter Hindus, and the rest belonging to other religions. While movement from India to Canada has been mainly from Punjab as the region of origin, it shows a concentration of settlement in Canada too in terms of destination, with at least four out of every five persons coming from this part of 'South Asia', the Canadian Census category of geographical origin for Indians residing in urban capitals of three largest census metropolitan areas (CMAs), viz., Toronto (the capital of Ontario), Vancouver (the capital of British Columbia), and Montreal (the largest city in Quebec), as well as Calgary and Edmonton. The intensity of settlement patterns thus suggests strong transnational linkages of the diaspora with Punjab. An intensely closed religious-regional bias is visible in the composition of the Indo-Canadian diaspora community to the extent that often non-Sikh or non-Punjabi origin Indian immigrants are called 'not our own' by the local Canadian Sikhs as well as the Indo-Sikhs. While this religious-regional intensity has been accepted as normal in the social norms of behaviour practiced by the Indo-Canadian diaspora for years, hard supporting data of this flow has only been systematically generated by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) since 1998, in response to their formal demands that Canada should open a full-fledged high commission in Chandigarh, the capital of Punjab and Haryana, and process the immigration applications of the region there. The Sikhs and Punjabi composition in the Indo-Canadian diaspora thus reflects a significant political implication, with a number of Indian PIOs rising up to hold important political and bureaucratic positions including, at times, provincial premiership.

The composition of immigration to Canada also illustrates its social basis in terms of the family class migratory networks being the fundamental determinants of these movements. Though individual immigrants from all over India are increasingly entering Canada, the regional bias is still strongly steered by the existing Indo-Canadian diaspora there. Uniquely thus in the case of Indian immigration to Canada, human mobility is overwhelmingly built around the extended family, a diasporic social unit that is larger than nuclear family. In the case of family class immigration, Punjab thus continues to exercise a strong influence, accounting for 80 per cent of all applications in 1998, dropping to just over 55 per cent for all classes. These differences highlight the need to profile the formation of Indian diaspora in Canada by the typology of immigrant class: refugee, skilled worker, business or family class. It should be noted here that the usage of 'class' is not the stratified concept of social classification but as a classificatory category.

Refugee Class

The number of recorded refugee from India to Canada in the 1980s and 1990s never crossed 1,000 until 1996, when it was 1,241. These mainly comprised those fleeing the violent militancy of Khalistan and Sikh separatist movements. In the mid-1980s, when the Punjab troubles were at their height, the Indian consulate in Vancouver had estimated that about 15 to 20 per cent of all Indian immigrants to Canada were illegal. This influx, of mainly Sikh youths, into the established Sikh Canadian diaspora community caused some tension, especially because of the contradiction the militancy posed to the practice of Sikh religion.

Skilled Worker Class

The skilled worker category contains those immigrants selected through the points system of the 1967 immigration policy. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, immigration policy changes had begun to be reflected in the increased

numbers of skilled Indian immigrants. This class of immigration from India has been rising steadily in the last decade and is increasingly incorporating individuals from regions other than Punjab, especially Gujarat and Maharashtra. It is estimated that over 30 per cent of them have jobs in professional and managerial positions, both within the government and in the private sector, whereas 23 per cent work in manufacturing.

Immigrants from India are more likely than other groups to possess a university degree. Indian immigrants have a larger component of persons with mathematics, engineering and applied sciences background than other groups. In general, Indian students and those of Indian origin do well in Canadian universities, particularly in technical faculties like computer science and engineering, medicine, basic sciences, etc. Only the Chinese-Canadian community competes with Indo-Canadians in the educational field. However, the community also has more non-matriculates than other immigrant groups, which is partly explained by the family sponsorship bias of Indian immigration to Canada. At present, the Indian immigrant community in Canada is thus virtually polarized into two categories – either highly educated and professional individuals or persons with less than grade five education and unskilled workers.

Business Class

Apart from the skilled professions, the Indian diaspora engages in the proprietorship of small businesses. Canada's business category includes the self-employed, entrepreneurs and investors. Entrepreneurs are expected to have a net worth in excess of Cdn\$300,000, and investors need to invest a minimum of \$400,000 in Canada to become eligible for investor visa. Because of this high capital requirement further constrained by low convertibility regime of the Indian rupee, unlike immigrants from Southeast Asia, business immigration from India has remained minimal. As India's foreign exchange regulations became more liberal since January 2000, however, investor immigration to Canada increased. Between 1999 and 2000, the number of principal business class immigrants from India more than doubled, to 122, moving India's ranking as a source region for this class of immigrants from 12th to 7th.

Family Class

Despite an increase in skilled and professional class immigration in more recent years, family class still represents almost half of all Indian migration to Canada. Since diasporic sponsorship still plays a central role in community formation amongst Indians in Canada, India continues to represent the largest source of family class immigrants to Canada by a wide margin. Family class immigration includes spouses, fiancé (e)s, parents or grandparents, children, and adopted orphans. Within the family class category, the largest numbers of immigrants are spouses and parents.

Family-class immigration has thus been the main propeller of Indian diasporic community building in Canada, which in turn provides the nexus support of a network of extended family to the individual immigrants. The importance of family networks and the common practice of arranged marriages, as well as the traditional importance of the eldest son looking after the parents, have created a strong social field that strengthens the practice of family and friends sponsorship from Canada to India. The significance of this is that *economically* motivated mobility is actually operationalised by pre-existing

social factors created by the diaspora. Another important variable working in the same direction is the large proportion of dependants as compared to employed adults in the Indo-Canadian population.

Past Policies

The contemporary improvement in Canada's relationship with India through the present-day diaspora networks contradicts Canada's position a hundred years ago, which was based on the policy of exclusion for Indian migrants. Beginning in 1904, by 1908 a small number of 5,200 Indians had settled in British Columbia as agricultural laborers, when the Canadian government banned Indian immigration. The ban remained in force till 1947. Early twentieth century immigration from India was thus confronted by an exclusionist regime, put into operation by the infamous 'continuous passage' Order-in-Council of 1908. This discriminatory law was challenged in May 1914 by the well-known journey of the *Komagata Maru* from India to Vancouver, though the ship was forced to return without being allowed to dock and disembark the 376 passengers it carried on board, except for the 20 having the resident status.

In the post-World War II period, as immigration rules eased and permitted limited family immigration from non-European countries, slowly the Indian population in Canada grew, resulting in a community dominated by immigrants from Punjab. The majority of Indian immigrants in Canada then hailed not just from anywhere in Punjab, but primarily from one agricultural region within Punjab, known as Doaba. It was not until 1967 that immigration policy lifted discrimination based on race, religion or national origin, moving instead towards a points system based on various qualifications. However, the immigrant numbers changed only slightly throughout the 1960s, due in part to institutional impediments: there was only one immigration office for the whole of India, compared to six in the U.K. Also, the flow of Indian immigrants became highly selective, such that about three-fourths of all the post-war immigrants were highly educated and skilled. By 1971, there were 67,000 Indians in Canada. While the NRIs during this period came from different parts of India, the PIOs migrated from Hong Kong and various other British colonies — Fiji (15,000), East Africa (25,000), South Africa (2,000), Guyana (25,000) and Trinidad (25,000).

Subsequently, the year 1976 was a milestone in Canadian immigration history. With the passage of the 1976 Immigration Act, Canada institutionalized fair admission practices and also encouraged the admission of refugees, and family reunification. Not only did the restrictive immigration policies of the early twentieth century create a distinctively narrow Indian diasporic community in Canada, but they also reinforced gendered patriarchal norms of mobility by granting men the power to initiate the movement of women to Canada through marriage. This gendered power imbalance has been reinforced over time as the ongoing importance of unequal gender relations with regard to marriage and family formation not only continued in Canada but also led to frauds, malpractices and corruption through fly-by-night 'arranged' marriages with advance agreements of divorce.

Future Trends

Today, the Indian diaspora in Canada is organised more on the basis of linguistic, regional, religious and other characteristics of their 'home town' roots in India. In contrast, organisations with an overarching all-India character are neither as many in number nor as cohesive as they are in the United

States. Nevertheless, many institutions and NGOs have been set up by Indians in Canada for the promotion of Indian arts and culture, some of which have affiliations with their counterparts in India. Every area with an Indo-Canadian concentration has produced excellent Indian dance schools. Every year several concerts by Indian musicians, singers, film artists, etc., are held at prominent venues in cities like Toronto, Vancouver, Ottawa and Montreal. The Indo-Canadian community has also produced some distinguished writers, artists, dancers, filmmakers & TV personalities. Indo-Canadians celebrate their religious festivals with much fanfare. There are more than a hundred Gurudwaras and temples throughout Canada, which provide a psychological haven for Indo-Canadians.

It is true that the Indian diasporic influence has been increasing in Canada. There are members of Canadian legislatures of Indian origin and there are emerging business lobby groups, such as Canada-India Business Council, and India-Canada Chamber of Commerce. Canadian government agencies like Heritage Canada and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) fund religious, quasi-religious and cultural activities undertaken by the Indian diaspora communities as part of their official mandate of supporting multiculturalism. In addition to constituting a strong socio-cultural bond between Canada and India, the diasporic community has the potential to create stronger economic linkages between the two countries.

The strengthening of Canada-India relations is predicated on the assumption that the Canadians of Indian origin would lead to deeper and broader people-to-people contacts. The Lal Bahadur Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute has made excellent contribution to facilitating interaction between the academic communities of the two countries. A Focus India group would explore ways whereby the Indian community in Canada can play a role of cooperation between the two countries. With the expansion of the knowledge-based industry, the Indo-Canadian diaspora would likely gain importance and strength. This would also expand bilateral ties between India and Canada in the hi-tech and information technology fields. On the other hand, while PIOs and NRIs can be expected to donate to charitable causes in India, the Indo-Canadian diaspora will invest in India only when the investment climate in India is made more attractive and consistently effective. Extra effort will need to be made, both by the diaspora community and India, to maintain and strengthen their special ties and links in future.

11.3 Indian Diaspora in the United States

Hindrance to the Formation of Service Diaspora

In North America, the focus on the Indian diaspora, however, remains in the United States, the country with the largest stock as well as flow of educated and professionally qualified personnel from India today. Ironical as it may sound now, American ‘exclusionist’ Congressmen of the early twentieth century were a strong lobby to have successfully introduced, even in the face of vehement opposition and two defeated vetoes from President Woodrow Wilson, a ‘literacy test’ for immigrants so as to specifically restrict them from non-English speaking countries, in particular those of Asiatic origin like India and China. Designed not to selectively attract the literate and educated Indians *per se* but to keep all ‘Asian Indians’, as the Indian are classified in the U.S. Census, out as the ‘least desirable’ of all immigrants, this only proves that Indian immigrants to the U.S. then – those working on the Pacific Coast lumber mills, docks etc. – were largely not highly qualified

knowledge workers but illiterate labourers at the lowest rank of service workers. Educated Indians coming to the U.S.A. then were either political refugees or students. These early immigrants to the U.S.A. went mostly from the Punjab and, to a lesser extent, from Bengal, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh and they settled on the West Coast, primarily California, the state which is even now in the forefront of resistance to immigration of foreign labour by denying the illegal immigrants, to begin with, access to social security benefits, schools and health services. After 1917, when the ‘barred zone’ included India, it was the Act of 1921, which generally shifted restriction from the qualitative to the quantitative domain, i.e., from barring certain ‘undesirable kind of persons’ to enforcing a ‘national origins quota system’ formally introduced in 1924. The new system had introduced a numerical restriction based on the national origins of those comprising the population of the U.S. in 1920, but because, unlike in the case of Canada, the population of Indians in the U.S. had stopped growing at any natural rate ever since the literacy test came into force in 1917, the new Act did not have any quota for them.

Subsequently, though the system was rationalized on the basis of cultural and historical ties by the Immigration Act of 1952, and the ‘national origins’ quota system was finally done away with in the landmark 1965 Amendments to this Act, thereby bringing Indian immigrants’ right to enter the United States at par with that of the citizens of other countries. An earlier 1946 Amendment had ended almost 30 years of exclusion for Indians by setting an annual number of 100 as their quota. This was partly a sequel to the lifting of barriers against the Chinese, but a more important objective was perhaps to ameliorate the growing antagonism of Indians towards American troops that were still stationed in India after the end of World War II. Despite the quota restriction, which was kept intact in the 1952 Act, this was in fact the beginning of the end of the first phase of Indian immigration to the U.S. which incorporated mainly the ‘service workers’, culminating with the 1965 Amendments that finally opened the gates for absorbing the ‘knowledge workers’ of India. This small beginning had in fact been consolidated further by the visit of the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to the U.S. in October 1949 which hastened this transition from majority service workers to majority knowledge workers in the modern phase of Indian diaspora formation in that country.

Prelude to a Knowledge Diaspora

It was in the 1970s that the US overtook both the UK and Canada as the prime country of destination for Indian migrants. Indian immigration to the US which constituted a minuscule of less than 1 per cent of total immigration from all countries during the 1950s and 1960s, registered a rapid increase during the 1970s, reaching a peak of 3.8 per cent that tapered off in the 1980s till about 1991 but went on the upswing in 1992, touching almost 5 per cent in 1996, and further 7.4 per cent in 2004. The increase in the 1970s is generally attributed to the Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments of 1965, fully brought into force in 1968. Within the overall kinship-emphasis in family-reunification clause of the amendments, the new legislation gave priority to highly trained and educated professionals, at least for the first seven to ten years explicitly. As a result, this modern phase of Indian immigration was distinctly different from the earlier phase that had comprised mainly the unskilled workers and labourers. Urban, educated and, ironically, ‘English speaking’ masses of the Indian population became distinctly visible in the USA, carrying a large share of India’s human capital to the U.S., and

causing ‘brain drain’ for India because, as Jenson (1988, p. 280) records, ‘Almost a hundred thousand engineers, physicians, scientists, professors, teachers, and their dependents had entered the U.S. by 1975’. However, since the mid-1970s, the annual number of Indians entering the US had leveled off to an average annual figure of 20,000 till 1982 mainly because of such a per country limit of quota in the US immigration law. Thereafter, it was the number of those exempt from this limit, which added to the total—the ‘immediate relatives’ of the Indian-born naturalized U.S. citizens. Thus, migration of highly qualified Indians to the USA actually did not come down; whatever decline registered since the mid-1970s was mainly a statistical and legalistic illusion of sorts, which also proved to be temporary in retrospect. India’s brain drain to the USA had become less ‘visible’ rather than really declining after the mid-1970s. The 1965 amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act remained the principal determinant of Indian immigration into the USA for a quarter of a century between 1968 and 1992. Under these Amendments, immigrants subject to a ‘numerical limitation’ of 270,000 worldwide and 20,000 per country per year were allocated to a six-category ‘preference’ regime of the US visa system—two under the ‘occupational labour force needs’ of the US economy and four under the ‘family-reunification objective’ of the US population policy.

The H1-B Phenomenon

The 1990 Amendments, brought into effect in 1992, explicitly favoured building up of the human capital capabilities of America by fulfilling its current and future requirements of knowledge workers, finally bringing to relevance the immigration of Indians to the American labour market needs. Whatever few restrictive clauses these amendments had, like the introduction of a new definition for the highly skilled temporary workers, viz., the well-known non-immigrant H1-B visa category, with an annual cap of 65,000 visas per year worldwide, faced with a decline in key undergraduate science degrees, an acute shortage of staff in high technology industries like software development, and exhaustion of the worldwide annual quota too quickly in 1998, of which 42 per cent issued to Indians with four out of every five visas going to IT professionals, the US Senate cleared a bill for a limited expansion of these visas to 337,500 for the three-year period from 1999 to 2001. After 2001, as the American immigration scenario came to be determined more by the post-9/11 security concern in the U.S. than its labour needs on the one hand, and the emergence of a reverse flow of talent or its perception through a burgeoning business process outsourcing (BPO) to developing countries with India in the lead, the U.S. government has been under continuous pressure of different lobby groups, including the American industry and business to increase the H1-B visa limit once again.

Thus, of the three major issues of the US immigration policy viz., (a) ethnic balance in population, (b) illegal immigration and (c) labour force needs, Indian immigration has mainly catered to the last one. Whereas, unlike in Canada, explicitly the second issue has no more than a passing relationship with Indian immigrants’ mobility to the U.S., the proposition that assumes significance is that even during the primacy of the first determinant, viz., the population structure-related phase of the US immigration policy, immigration from India has been mainly meeting, though not in any obvious manner, the human capital requirements of the American labour market. In other words, there is evidence which suggests that an increasing number of highly qualified Indians continued to proceed to the USA even in the post mid-70s for long-term residency of one kind or another. These knowledge

workers entered the American geographical territory not through increases in the share of ‘occupational preference’ visas issued to ‘numerically limited’ category itself; rather there was a perceptible shift of emphasis in favour of issuing the ‘family preference’ visas to them. If one calls this ‘family preference route’ to immigration of knowledge workers Channel A, then there are two more channels for their entry into the U.S., viz., Channel B for entering as ‘immediate relatives’ of the India-born naturalized US citizens, and Channel C for entering as the ‘non-immigrant’ visitors like visitors for pleasure’ but more as ‘students’, ‘temporary workers and trainees’ like the H1-B category, etc., having no limit of a numerical quota, but with the provision of adjusting to the status of permanent residents, viz., the ‘green card’ holders subsequently.

11.4 Profile of Indian Diaspora in the United States

The strong profile of Indian immigrants, consolidated through both ‘limited’ and ‘exempted’ category of immigration in the US labour market in terms of employment, occupation, income and educational attainment, in general supports a proposition that the human capital content in the migration of Indians to the US has been the backbone of Indian diaspora formation there. India’s world ranking was 6th (4th in Asia after the Philippines, South Korea, and China) with Mexico at the top and Cuba in third position, in terms of the decennial number of immigrants admitted to the USA from 1970 to 1979. By 1993, the annual ranking placed India in the seventh position after Mexico, PRC, the Philippines, Vietnam, the former Soviet Union, and Dominican Republic, and before Poland, El Salvador, the UK, South Korea, Jamaica, Canada, Iran, and Taiwan. Amongst these, the US intakes from Mexico can, to quite a large extent, be explained by illegal cross-border migration precipitated by geographical proximity and later also the economic grouping with the US and Canada under NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement). Similarly, for mainland China, student protection after the Tiananmen Square massacre; ex-American military base connection to many a matrimonial alliance for the Philippines; war reparations for Vietnam; fall of socialism for the former Soviet Union, and political dominion in the case of Dominican Republic have been the main determinants of migration. No other diaspora preceding Indians’ rank in terms of the number of immigrants admitted to the U.S. acquired its rank predominantly because of any American demand for its labour skills, which has been the main factor for admitting the Indian knowledge workers on a large scale. By 1996, barring Mexicans and Filipinos, even the extra-labour market considerations of the other countries preceding India had faded into the background, when Indians ranked third. It is hardly surprising therefore if in terms of the place in the US economy indexed by their employment, occupation, education and income of the immigrants, the Indian diaspora continued to rank amongst the top right through the 1970s till the present. These top rankings for Indians in the US holds not within the Asian nationalities only, but also when compared against the averages of all other regional or continental nationalities of the world as well as that of the US nationals.

Employment Status

As a quantitative continuation of the trend, as reflected in the US Bureau of Census, the population of Indian ancestry in the US recorded an increase of about 125 per cent from 0.36 million in 1980 to 0.82 million in 1990. This

growth was not only the highest amongst all Asians except for the Vietnamese but also one that surpassed the projected number of 0.68 million Indians in 1990. The immigrant component in 1980-90 growth of population was 58 per cent. The projected number of 1 million Indians in the US for the year 2000 was touched much sooner, and by the 2000 census it stood at 1.7 million.

According to US 1980 Census figures, 75 per cent of Indian immigrants aged 16 and over were in the US labour force, implying that 3 out of every 4 Indian adults were either employed or looking for jobs, the share being 95 per cent employed and only 5 per cent without a job. The labour market participation figure was thus significantly higher than the average of 56 per cent for all immigrants and noticeably higher than the 62 per cent for the total US population too.

Occupation Profile

Roughly one-third of the Indian immigrants in the 1980s reported an occupation (9,258 out of a total of 27,803 immigrants in 1987), and the rest comprised non-working spouses, children, other dependents and students. This has not only been lower than the average for all (world) immigrants at 39 per cent in 1985 and 40 per cent in 1987 but also been the lowest for Indian immigrants in the three decades of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s so far. However, these lower shares have been more than compensated for by an overwhelmingly higher share of Indians with an occupation in the managerial, professional, and executive occupations – the most prestigious and highly paid job categories held by the knowledge workers in the US economy. Of immigrants from India during 1975-1980, about 36% were reported to have an occupation in these categories, and this share was highest amongst all the developing countries in Asia (i.e. excluding Japan). In 1983, the share of professional and technical immigrants alone accounted for 50% of all immigrants in occupations, implying thereby that every other employed Indian adult in the US was holding a professional or technical job that placed Indian knowledge workers at the top of the list of all Asian countries, including the indomitable Japan. There are over 300,000 PIOs working in the Information Technology sector in the US. Although this number represents only three percent of the total IT workforce in the USA, a substantial number of these are executives in mid and large-sized companies and at least 15 per cent IT start-ups have been created by them.

The occupational profile of all Indian immigrants entering the United States during the three transition years into the 21st Century was such that a substantial majority of Indian immigrants with specified occupations were concentrated in two top categories, viz., ‘professional and technical’, and ‘executive, administrative and managerial’. Their proportion increased significantly during the period - not only as a proportion of all Indian migrants, but also amongst immigrants from all countries. This enhanced the strength of the highly skilled Indian professional work force in the US labour market. Prior to this, amongst the overall 225 thousand Science & Engineering (S&E) teaching faculties, almost 7,000 were of Indian origin, constituting 3 per cent of all faculty, and 15 per cent of all diaspora faculty in S&E. The largest concentration of Indians has been in engineering, followed by mathematics and computer science, where they constituted about 7 per cent and 5 per cent respectively. A noticeably significant 32 per cent or about one-third of the Indian faculty in life sciences comprised Indian women.

Education-wise, Indian immigrants in America have been better equipped with 'human capital' to enter the higher echelons of the US job market than other immigrants. The US INS does not collect information on immigrants' education, but the 1980 Census showed that as many as 89 per cent of India-born immigrants aged 25 years-and-over had at least high school education and as many as 66 per cent a college degree. Both these figures were well above those for 'all immigrants' (53 and 16 per cent respectively in 1980, still remaining low at 41 and 23 per cent respectively in 1994) and the 'total US population' (67 and 16 per cent respectively), but the differences were extremely significant for those completing college. Similarly, the percentage of those adults over 25 years of age with less than eight years of high school education was substantially low for the India-born (6 per cent) as compared to all immigrants (36 per cent) and all Americans (18 per cent) as well as the Asian (19 per cent) population. This happened in spite of the fact that there has been a lowering of the human capital content among the pos-1975 immigrants from India (57 per cent completed college, 83 per cent completed high school, and 9 per cent had no high school education) as compared to the pre-1975 immigrants (70 per cent, 91 per cent, and 4 per cent respectively). For the limited age group of 25-34, a low percentage of those with less than eight years of schooling amongst the foreign-born, in fact, lifts the proportion of the high school pass-outs in the 'Asian Indian' population in the US as a whole above that of all other *developing-country* ethnic groups (i.e., excepting Japanese) when averaged for males and females taken together.

The US Census 2000 revealed that more than 87 per cent of Indians have completed high school and 62 per cent have some college education compared to just over 20 percent for the US population. The majority of them had acquired their higher educational qualifications in India, particularly in the engineering and IT sectors. This explicitly presents the educational achievement of Indians in the U.S. where it is the third largest community, and education wise, it stands on the top. In 1999, India-born US residents having science, social science, and engineering (S&E) degrees were counted to be 165,000. This accounted for a substantial 13 per cent of all foreign-born residents with S&E degrees, the highest share for any single diaspora group in the USA.

As a sub-group of all S&E degree holders, the 30,000 Indian professionals holding S&E doctorate degrees also accounted for a sizeable share of 16 per cent amongst all foreign-born American residents with science and engineering doctorates, this time second only to the Chinese diaspora in the US.

Many Indian immigrants to the US who fuelled the Silicon Valley were educated in the USA at the post-graduate level after they emigrated with a first engineering degree (B.Tech/B.E.) from Indian institutions of excellence like the Indian Institutes of Technology, the Regional Engineering Colleges, Banaras Hindu University and so on – all institutions of excellence. Similarly, scientists with M.Sc/M.Tech from universities like Jawaharlal Nehru University, or the University of Delhi; doctors with MBBS degree from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences; and managers with Post-Graduate Diploma in Business Management from the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) have emigrated to pursue higher studies abroad, and then enter the world labour market. According to the published brain-drain estimates from sample surveys

conducted at various times, the magnitudes of brain-drain from three Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) have been significant with a substantially large proportions of more than 20-30 per cent of IIT graduate engineers found settled abroad. For migration of health professionals, with 56 per cent or more than half the output of graduate doctors of the 1956-80 batches practicing abroad, the exodus from the premier All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi was even higher.

Clearly, the US has been the most favoured destination country for Indian students, attracting 47,000 in 2001, which accounted for 78 per cent of all Indian students enrolled in the OECD countries. They made up a substantial 4 per cent of all foreign students enrolled in tertiary education in OECD countries in 2001. In the United States, they registered a far larger share of 10 per cent amongst all foreign students. By 2004, this share of Indian students amongst all foreign students in the USA went up further to 14 per cent. According to the National Science Foundation (NSF) data on foreign-born Ph.D. students enrolled in US universities and those finishing degrees there, Indians have been dominant in both categories. In 1996, of the 1,276 Indian recipients of American S&E doctoral degrees, the vast majority had plans to stay on in the US and many already had post-doctoral offers to do so. Figures collated in the *Open Doors 2004*, the annual survey of the US Institute of International Education, reveal that in 2003-04 university enrolments in the US, Indian students accounted for 13.9 per cent of all foreign students in the US and retained the No. 1 position of India for the third year in a row, followed by China, Korea, Japan, Canada, and Taiwan. In 2004-05 too, India has retained its top position.

Income Profile

An overall index of the economic presence of Indian immigrants in the US economy has been their average income. Obviously, with the high labour market participation with a high employment ratio and the placement of a majority of them in prestigious professional and executive occupations, Indians have earned very high average incomes. The 1980 Census figures for median annual income of immigrant workers in 1979 placed Indians at the top of the rank not only for all (i.e., including part-time workers) males (\$18,000) and full-time male (\$23,000) workers but also for full-time female (\$13,000) workers. Given the fact that this position continued in the early 1980s with 60 per cent of the Indians above 15 years of age earning more than \$25,000 a year, the sex composition of 50:50 and median age of less than 30 years (29.4 male, 28.8 female) for the 1987 Indian immigrants left plenty of scope to consolidate it further in the 1990s. The radical shift to lower incomes of all immigrants by 1988 actually got reversed after 1989 when more college graduates and people with advanced degrees were reported to have been allowed entry during 1990-94. Even the 1990 Census showed 58 per cent of Indian population over age 25 in the USA to have obtained a Bachelor's or higher degree. Indian immigrants could be said to have played a major role in this reversal by virtue of there being a large number of knowledge workers amidst them. As late as 1993, for example, whereas 52 per cent of immigrants from Mexico—by far the largest immigrant group—identified themselves as labourers (i.e., service workers), excluding homemakers, retirees, and students, a mere 1 per cent did so from India. By contrast, 25 per cent of Indians identified themselves as engineers (i.e., an occupational category amongst the knowledge workers), compared to 0.3 per cent of Mexicans.⁵ Of the 1.7 million-strong Indian diaspora in the US, 200,000 families are millionaires

and the median annual income of PIO is US \$60,093, which is substantially higher than the US median income of US \$38,885. Further, 67 per cent of foreign-born Indian Americans have college degrees, three times greater than the US average, and out of these approximately 44 per cent hold managerial or professional positions.

The Indian diaspora in the US has also done extremely well in owning and running small businesses too. For example PIOs own approximately 77,000 out of the 135,000 convenience stores and these stores provide employment to more than 300,000 people. The Indian diaspora in the US owns approximately 17,000 hotels out of a total of 47,040 hotels and these hotels provide employment to more than 700,000 people in the USA. The American Asian Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA) represents this community and it estimates the cumulative market value of these hotels to be approximately US\$ 36 billion.

11.5 Indian Diaspora Associations of North America and their Political Potential in the ‘New World’

There are over 1000 US-based organizations of Indians in North America, with branches in Canada, although perhaps only a quarter of them are active. These represent various interest groups in India, ranging from region to states to languages, etc. Religion, caste and linguistic identities find significant space in these associations and networks, and cleavages occur along these lines. However, some professional groups are involved in grass-root development activities in India as well as in the welfare of their members abroad in the professions. A sample of associations can be categorized by the main characteristics of their members, and/or their functions as in Table 11.1.

Table 11.1
Indian Diaspora Associations of North America

Category	Example
1. Cultural/Religious Associations	Samband, Assam Association of North America, Telugu Association of North America, American Telugu Association (ATA), World Malayali Council, Bengali Cultural Association, Kenada Koota, Gujarati Samaj, etc.
2. Students/Alumni Association	Mayur at the Carnegie Mellon University; Sangam at MIT; Ashoka at California University; Diya at Duke University; SASA at Brown University; Boston University, India Club, Friends of India, IGSA (Houston University) and Indian Students Associations at various universities.
3. Support Association	MITHAS, Manavi, Sakhi, Asian Indian Women in America (AIWA), Maitri, Narika, IBAW (Indian Business and Professional Women), etc.
4. Professional Association	AAPI, SIPA, NetIP, TiE, EPPIC, SISAB, WIN, AIIMSONIANS, AIPNA, ASEI, IPACA, IFORI, SABHA, and IACEF, etc
5. Development Association	Association for India’s Development (AID), AIA, American India Foundation
6. General / Umbrella Network	GOPIO, NFIA, The Indian American Forum for Political Education (IAFPE), The National Association of Americans of Asian Indian Descent (NAAAID), and Federation of Indian Associations (FIA), etc.

Sources: Ministry of NRIs Affairs (www.moia.gov.in) ; website of Indian Embassy in the US; www.garmchai.com; www.nriol.com; www.google.com; www.indiandiaspora.org; www.Indiaday.org.

11.6 Conclusion

The profiles of the Indian diaspora in North America, relatively more so of the United States than of Canada, show that Indian immigrants have continued to occupy high economic positions in the North American society from 1980 onwards. Perhaps this is largely because the initial immigrant batches of the late 1960s had by then crossed the threshold stay of 13 to 15 years in the host country for Indians to get ‘economically assimilated’ into local society. In addition to becoming a great professional force through the diaspora associations, Indian diaspora have also become a strong voting force in the United States as well as Canada. To form a formidable voting force in the U.S.A., for example, to the number of U.S.-born Indian-Americans who are already U.S. citizens is added the number of India-born naturalized American citizens that comprise no less than one-thirds of the immigrants. This has led Indian-Americans to become increasingly involved in the political system of the United States. Indian-Americans have traditionally exercised the most political influence through their campaign contributions, and are actively involved in fundraising efforts for political candidates on the federal, state and local levels elections. In recent years, they have begun taking a more direct role in politics, as well as continuing to help through their financial contributions. The same is the trend in Canada, though in a smaller and obscure manner. Certainly, the proportion of naturalization amongst the immigrants in North America would increase in the twenty-first century when the dual citizenship granted by India becomes fully operational, and more and more NRIs amongst the diaspora would choose to take up citizenship of the country they live in without having to give up their Indian passports, thus acquiring increasing voting power for the Indian diaspora community as a whole in that part of the ‘New World’.

11.7 Further Reading

- U. S. Census Bureau. *United States Census 2000* (<http://www.census.gov/>).
- WaltonRoberts, Margaret. 2003. “Transnational Geographies: Indian Immigration to Canada.” *The Canadian Geographer*, Volume 47, Issue 3, pp. 235-250, September.

Indians in Australia, New Zealand and Fiji

Contents

- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Indians in Australia
- 12.3 Indians in New Zealand
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- 12.6 Further Reading

Learning Objectives

After going through this unit, you will be able to know the profiles of:

- Indian diaspora in Australia;
- Indians in New Zealand; and
- Indians in Fiji.

12.1 Introduction

The spread of the Indian diaspora is enormous, reaching into all corners of the world. The history of Indian migration to the *Antipodes* (namely, Australia, New Zealand and Fiji) is diverse as well as complicated. They are to be found even in the remote corners of the different island groups. The streams of migration from the Indian sub-continent form many strands and take different routes. Today, though the Indian diaspora is not the major ethnic minority community in the Antipodes, yet it has definitely carved out a niche for itself within the social fabric of the concerned countries. Migration histories of the Indian diaspora in the Antipodes represent most forms of known migration streams, beginning from the indentured labour system of the mid-eighteenth century to the current stream of professional migration.

12.2 Indians in Australia

Australia is the largest nation in the Antipodes, and has at times been referred to as Australasia in the larger regional context. India shares with Australia the different shores of the Indian Ocean, a bridge that has facilitated the movement of people across through time. “Although some anthropologists suggest prehistoric connections between the aborigines of Australia with the peninsular people of India, recorded instances of Indian immigration had begun only after the European settlement in Australia.”¹ The Chinese populace in Australia in the 19th century was the primary Asian diaspora group, followed by population groups from the Pacific Islands. The Indian diasporic communities occupied the third place. There are three categories of Indian immigrants in Australia. The first category constitutes those who came as indentured labour in the mid-18th century. The second category includes those who came as traders and the last is an amalgamation of many different type of immigrants. “Many Indian born persons in Australia were children of

British military and civil service families. But there were a few Gujarati, Sindhi and Bengali traders and a noticeable number of Sikhs and Muslims from the Punjab. Some of these people worked as tropical laborers in northern Queensland, some were in sugar and then bananas plantations in northern New South Wales, and others spent time hawking goods in the country towns.”² There were about 300 Indians in 1857 in Australia. Their number rose to 2000 in 1871, increasing to 3,000 in 1880 - 81 to 4,500 by the closing years of the nineteenth century.³ Around 1901, Indian diasporic population constituted just fewer than 5,000. In 1947 about 7,468 Indians were present in Australia, the number rose steadily in the 1950s and 1960s. “The Indian population was 14,167 in 1961 and 29,212 in 1971. There was a steep fall in the sex ratio among the Indians from 389.9 in 1901 to 180 in 1947 to 107.4 in 1971.”⁴

The race biased immigration policy espoused in the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 followed by Australia to maintain homogeneity amongst the white settlers restricted the entry of the Indians in the beginning of the 20th to mid-20th century. There were other kinds of entry laws imposed on the non-white population such as the European language proficiency test, dictation tests and other linked educational requirements. These created further barriers for Indian immigration to Australia. The exceptions were a minute number of people with British nationality who managed to enter Australia during this period. Forming the third category of migrants they are the Anglo-Indians from India who had migrated to Great Britain at the time of India’s independence and then found that they could not fit into the host population and later on migrated to the Antipodes which was supposed to have a more congenial social set up. It is said that on an annual average only 5 Indians came during the period from 1905 to 1923.⁵ Simultaneously, there was also entry of professionally qualified people from India into these nations, some of whom remained there and others also became twice migrants as they moved on to USA or West European nations. “Summing up, migration patterns from India to the Antipodes have become very complex and diverse ... temporary and permanent forms of migration have become increasingly interlinked”.⁶

A brief change in this situation came about with the enactment of the Migration Act of 1958 that granted permanent settlement to a considerable population of Anglo-Indians from India. Alongside, this Act also granted work access to skilled Indian individuals, laying the base for skilled immigration. The final closure of the racial exclusionary policy came in 1973 with the induction of the policy of multiculturalism and Racial Discrimination Act of 1975. Thereafter, Indian presence in Australia witnessed a galloping increase shown in the table given below.

The Indian population in Australia had a skewed gender distribution. This is an attribute of the fact that the earliest immigration of Indians was primarily male, even in the late twentieth century. The inclusion of wives and children is a recent phenomenon. The situation was redressed only after the immigration laws were loosened allowing for brides and grooms from India. This has been primarily a contribution of the Sikh population in

2 Narayan, 1998.

3 Billimoria and Ganguly - Scrase, 1988, pp 23, quoted in D. Gopal, Op. Cit.

4 Price, 1987, p. 175-180.

5 Gopal, Op. Cit.

6 Voigt - Graf, 2003.

Australia.⁷ Today, the gender situation is in a balanced state as shown in the table.

**Table 12.1
Indians Present in Australia**

Year	Number of Indians in Australia
1947	7000
1954	11,995
1981	43,700
1991	66,200
2001	190,000

Source: Gopal, D (2004) and Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Australia, 2001

**Table 12.2
Distribution of Indian Born Population in Australia, 1991**

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	30,813	50.1
Female	30,789	49.9

Source: Gopal, D (2004) and Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1991.

Yet, the condition of gender demography within the Indian diaspora in Australia is delicate, since the pattern of Indian immigration shows that skilled migration is on the rise as compared to the family based migration creating a layer of professional workers who represent a new layer within the diaspora itself as seen in the table below.

**Table 12.3
Distribution of India Born Settler Arrivals in Australia by
Eligibility Category, 1988-1993**

Eligibility Category	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Family Migration	1,989	1,775	2,044	2,180	1,326
Preferential	859	818	787	782	863
Concessional	1,039	957	1,257	1,398	463
Skilled Migration	1,119	1,178	1,969	3,361	2,155
ENS	466	208	171	111	56
Business Skill	84	57	46	47	32
Independent	569	913	2,752	3,203	2,067
Humanitarian	92	63	68	67	57
Total	3109	3061	5081	5608	3538

Source: Gopal, D (2004) and Bureau of Immigration Research (BIR), Australian Immigration Consolidated Statistics, 1989-1993.

(a) Location

The Indian diasporic community is located primarily in the developed territories and is essentially urban based. Two thirds of them reside in the metropolitan cities of Sydney, Melbourne and Perth.⁸ The more industrially developed territories /states of Australia thus contain the majority of the Indian community.

Table 12.4
Spread of India born in Australia by State/ Territory, 1991

State/ Territory	Number of India-Born People
New South Wales	20, 567
Victoria	19,621
Western Australia	11,639
Queensland	4,609
South Australia	2,979
Australian Capital Territory	1,168
Northern Territory	497
Tasmania	492
Total	61,572

Source: Gopal, D (2004) and Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1991.

(b) Occupational Profile

Most of the Indians who immigrated in the earlier phases were employed in the agricultural sector as labourers in the sugar plantations and mobile salesmen in the rural towns of Victoria and Queensland. Then in the next generation they were taxi drivers, in the traditional corner store businesses (both retail and wholesale) as well as train guards, restaurant owners and industrial workers. The new generation migrants from India are in the skilled workers category, doctors (over 600 of them had arrived from India between 1967 and 1976)⁹, engineers, accountants, other health workers, technicians, academicians and more recently Information Technology (IT) professionals. In 1999 - 2000 out of 3,335 Indian migrants entering Australia for business, about 40% were IT professionals.¹⁰ This is corroborated by the income groupings of the Indian diaspora in Australia, whereby almost half of the population has income within \$ 16,000 to \$ 40,000 that constitutes the basic category of earnings. About ten per cent of the Indian diasporic population fall in the higher income bracket in Australian society, these are the professionals in industry, manufacturing, IT, academics and medicine.¹¹

(c) Identity formation within the Indian diaspora in Australia

The Indian diaspora in Australia is representative of the multiplicity of cultural identities of the parent nation India. Yet, the diasporic history of Indians in Australia shows distinctive cultural groupings representing each wave of migration. There are four categories of immigrants within the Indian diasporic

8 Ibid, p. 324.

9 Connell and Engels, 1983, pp. 308-318.

10 Connell, 2004, pp. 190-224.

11 Gopal, 2004, Op. Cit.

community: "one, the 'old immigrants'; two, the 'new immigrants'; three, the 'geographically indirect' Indian immigrants and four, the second generation Australia-born Indians."¹² The oldest immigrants were the indentured labourers amongst whom were Hindus¹³ (they were preferred as they had no bad habits like 'addiction to opium, wine and spirits) and Dhangars from Chota Nagpur.¹⁴ These people have almost disappeared, leaving no traces behind. The group of 400 Sikhs from rural Punjab settling in Woolgoolga, the Punjabi Muslims and Afghans arrived in the gold field in the 1890s have left a mark their descendants survive. These communities constitute the first wave of immigration having developed particular dress, symbols and behaviour patterns that are distinctive. They are still engaged in the primary sector as agricultural labourers, planters and salesmen.

The new immigrants, on the other hand, are from all parts of India. They are skilled professionals belonging to the economically well off sections of society and are well entrenched within the white Australian society. This sharp contrast between the new and older immigrants creates a schism that is rarely bridged, forming two different segments of the diasporic community. The geographically indirect immigrants are those who have an Indian origin but with different nationalities, primarily the Indo-Fijians in Australia and some Indians from Burma, Singapore, and Sri Lanka. Their identity formation and projection are of an entirely different kind than that espoused by the directly immigrated Indians. There is continuous societal tension between this category and the others.

The second generation of Australian born Indians is the ones that has the most difficulty in identifying with the old notions of identity based on parent nation. The binding factor bringing all of them together is the basic reason for their immigration: to enhance their economic condition. The differentiating lines are drawn on the basis of their desire to preserve and continuation of their ethnicity based identity. The older immigrants and the geographically indirect immigrants are similar in the way that they prefer to maintain their own ethnicity-based boundaries and the new immigrants and the second generation Indians are more inclined towards mixing with the white Australian society. Between the white Australian society and the Indian diaspora communities, there is a definite resistance to expression of any kind of religious identity, obviously in the form of temples or gurudwaras not just within the city areas, but also in the outer city areas.¹⁵

The differences and tensions are such between the different waves of immigrants that it is visible in many forms such as places of residence, wider other community relations, social linkages, political behaviour leading to differential identity formations. The old immigrants are concentrated around the Cotts Harbour/Woolgoolga a predominantly agricultural region. The Indo-Fijians are concentrated in the inner city areas of large metropolitan cities. The new immigrants are diffused and dispersed in other areas of the metropolitan cities, an indication in itself of educated and affluent population.¹⁶ The socio-cultural distance that is maintained between the different communities is also attributed to the discrimination practiced against them by the dominant community that has created a withdrawn and

12 Ibid, p. 324.

13 Billimoria and Voigt Graf, 2001, pp. 426-434.

14 Chandrashekhar, 1992.

15 Hartney, 2003.

16 Connell, 2004, Op. Cit.

insular ethnic identity, whereas the new immigrants seek to merge into the mainstream Australian society. Thus, community level networking is stronger in the former and weak in the latter, so that the safety nets on a community base are more prevalent in the former creating employment spaces for many newly immigrant but unskilled labour.

Yet, these lines do merge in the food habits, and cultural and religious festivals, leading to restaurants and places of worship that create common bonds. The enhanced economic power of the community is visible in the proliferation of eating joints, music shops, clothing shops selling ethnic dresses and places of worship. It is also true that it is a partial story of the complexities of the Indian diaspora as the different regions, castes, and languages spoken by them play a role in identity formation. The above-mentioned factors all create different circles of inclusion and exclusion even within the same community wherein they cease to act as one whole and the wholeness is just a façade for the outsiders. There is a proliferation of region and language based identities such as the Gujarati, Punjabi, Kannada, Sikh, Bengali and Marathi associations. There are radio programmes by the Australian radio, and satellite TV channels beam programmes in most of these languages. Though there are magazines such as *India Link*, *Desi Style*, *India Times* and *India Post* that are published in English, the regional languages and the cultures survive. Hindi as a language is also a bond shared between the different generations of immigrants. Specialised restaurants selling particular regional cuisines as well as 'Indian' cuisines have come up in not only in the larger metropolitan cities such as Melbourne and Sydney but also in small towns in Victoria and Queensland. Caste as an identity marker remains strong within the older immigrants but within the new immigrants who are based more on professional qualifications and occupational proficiency as the status definer, the importance of caste is on the decline.¹⁷

The Indo-Fijians form another segment that maintains its own cultural norms and identity boundaries, at times identifying with the Indian culture and at times differing violently. Thus, alongside the Federation Indian Australian Associations formed in 2000, a Fiji Indian Social and Cultural Association of Australia also exists. There is also international Congress for Fiji Indians and a Fijian soccer team. They do not also identify with the regional languages spoken by the Indian new immigrants as they have lost the language skills and are also of different religion (they have tended to revitalize religious attachments, notably to the Assemblies of God).¹⁸ Religious places tend to bind people and those Indo-Fijians who are Hindus congregate to the different temples that now are established, bringing together people at "an institutional level rather than an individual level."¹⁹ The caste system also created discriminations against the Indo-Fijians (forefathers of whom were originally from the lower castes). Moreover, for the Indo-Fijians, their homeland is Fiji rather than India and they prefer to mingle with other Indo-Fijians who may be Muslims or Christians.²⁰ Bollywood is the sole thread that links all the different waves of immigrants. Efforts are being made to bring the two communities closer to each other such as the Uttar Pradesh Government's Discover Your Indian Roots programme in conjunction with the Indian Tourist Office and Hamara TV. Even cricket is now becoming a bond between the two communities. The issue of social integration is a difficult

17 Connel, 2004, Op. Cit.

18 Lal and Jupp, 2001, pp. 438-9.

19 Connel, 2004, Op. Cit. p. 207.

20 Billimoria and Voigt-Graf, 2001, Op. Cit. p. 432.

one to describe. No host society opens its doors wholeheartedly to the immigrants and especially when there are historical roots of differentiation. Given these considerations, the Indian diasporic community in the Australia is quite well assimilated within the social fabric. There are very few riots and attacks on Indians. This was especially the case for the Indo- Fijians who perceived lack of security in Fiji as a prime force to immigrate.

The Indian diasporic community with its various complexities and togetherness is an integral part of Australian society. The hope is for further growth drawing in more Indians.

Reflection and Action 12.1

Describe the nature of identity formation within the Indian diaspora in Australia.

12.3 Indians in New Zealand

New Zealand has two main islands named North Island and South Island plus numerous small islands in surrounding oceans. New Zealand first noted the Indian presence in 1810²¹. Thereafter, non-Polynesian visitors arrived in Cook Islands in 1814 aboard the ‘Cumberland’, among them two Indian *lascars* (sailors from Goa).

New Zealand has also had three streams of Indian immigration similar to Australia. They are: one, the Indentured labour phase (from 1810-1900), two, the interim period, in the first half of the 20th century, and three, the latter half of the 20th century till date. The first recorded indentured labour migration to the Antipodes was in 1840 in New Zealand, followed by the indentured labour in its plantations from the 1840s, amounting to only 46 in 1896 who were hawkers, peddlers and domestic workers.²² New Zealand introduced restrictions on non-British (can also be read as non-white) immigrants as early as 1880. This was formulated as official immigration policy in the 1899 Immigration Restriction Act that had the provision of non-British and non-white immigrants to “write and sign the application form in an European language”.²³ Interestingly, the immigration policy allowing non-white settlers into New Zealand changed only in 1986, after almost 87 years of racially based immigration. In the 1986 policy initiative the country of origin was overlooked and greater stress given to the skills and professions of the incoming migrants. This created a somewhat larger space for the Indian community to settle in New Zealand.

Table 12.5: Indian Population in New Zealand

Year	Total Number of Indians in New Zealand
1971	7807*
1991	30,609+
1996	42,408+

Source: *Roy, (1978), p. 18 and +New Zealand Official Yearbook on the web, 1999, accessed at www.stats.gov.nz

21 Leckie, 1995.

22 Roy, 1978, pp. 16-20.

23 Statistics of New Zealand, 1999, p. 144.

There are also a large number of twice migrants within the Indian diasporic community, particularly the Indo-Fijians who migrated to New Zealand due to the constant political turmoil in Fiji between the various ethnic groups.

Table 12.6
Origin of Indian Immigrants in New Zealand in 1996

Place of Origin	Number of Immigrants
Born in India	Just under 13, 000
Born in Fiji	15, 000
Other Countries	2,000
Second Generation New Zealand-born Indians	12, 000
Total	42, 408

Source: New Zealand Official Yearbook on the web, 1999, accessed at www.stats.gov.nz

The second wave of Indian immigration in the first half of the 20th century sowed the seeds to the final picture shown in the table above. This was the result of group migration of several sub-groups of Indo-Fijians with different religious and linguistic identities who took shelter in New Zealand under temporary work permits. An example can be cited of the Indo-Fijian Muslims who worked as halal slaughter men in the meat packing industry (primarily sheep and lamb). The export destination of this industry was primarily to be the nations of the Middle East.²⁴

With the opening of the country to skilled professionals, small numbers of Indian professionals trickled into New Zealand. They represent the new immigrants in the country.

(a) Who are the Indians in New Zealand

The Indians were at first the small traders and the plantation workers who later on became banana farmers, spice shop owners and taxi drivers. There are also a notable number of Indian domestic workers in both Australia and New Zealand. Many of the Indo-Fijians are in the construction industry and as other casual wage earners. The skilled professionals are the doctors, engineers, geologists, businessmen, IT professionals and academics. There is a considerable amount of illegal immigration to these nations and they are absorbed within the informal sector of these economies.

(b) Location

The Indian diaspora is primarily centred upon the urban centres in New Zealand. They are clustered in the inner city areas of Auckland, Wellington, to name a few areas. The percentage of Indian populations in these cities is more than 45% accounting for a clustering effect. There are also the student communities from India who form a consistent part of this statistic. In the rural areas, Indians manage the small retail trade and provide the manual labour in the countryside.

²⁴ Levick, W. and Bedford, R. (1987) : Fiji Labour Migration to New Zealand in the 1980, in New Zealand.

(c) Demographics

The Indian population in New Zealand is young, with similar trends in the whole of the Antipodes. The following table shows that most of the Indian population is in the age group of 15 -39 years and the smallest percentage of population is in the old age segment. The established population in the age group of 40 - 64 years is also a big proportion. This indicates that though this community took time to establish itself, it is a young population that is going to grow. The projected decadal growth rates for this is 7.5 % according to the New Zealand Government Statistics Division.

Table 12.7
Indian Population Demographics for New Zealand (by age cohort)

Ethnic Group	Below 15	15-39	40-64	65+
Indian	23	48	26	4

Source: Census of New Zealand, 2001

(d) Education

Indian presence in the A and O levels is well documented in the schooling system of the Antipodean nations. The attendance percentages are high though the gender differentials exist as more boys than girls finally complete their education. In the higher education segment also, male dominance continues as more boys than girls complete their graduation. Many of the students opt for professional courses and thereafter move on to other universities in the USA or Europe. There is also a tradition wherein they come back to India to attend premier institutes of technical, medical and management education, which is a cheaper option than the USA or Western Europe.

(e) Work participation

Work participation rates are medium in New Zealand. This rate is about 46 - 48%.²⁵ The unemployment rate is also quite high at about 29 -31 %. This also reflects the fact that the people in the informal sector are not included within the purview of government statistics and they constitute a considerable part of the underclass within the Indian community. The Indian community is lauded for its growth in industry and IT sectors, but the actual numbers are very few.

(f) Region of origin and religion

In the earlier years of Indian immigration (before the 1970s), an overwhelming 90 % of the people were Gujarati Hindus from regions in and around Surat.²⁶ Then came the Punjabis and later on the Indo-Fijians most of whom were also Hindus. About 80% of the Indian diasporic populations in New Zealand are Hindus. The Muslim population is about 2%, with the rest being divided among other religions. The construction of various religious places such as temples and gurudwaras are manifold in the region. A long struggle precedes each such construction and many sects within Hinduism are represented.

The dominance of a single or a few regions of origin changed with the coming of the new immigrants whose regions of origin are spread all over

25 Census of New Zealand, 2001

26 Roy, 1978, Op. Cit, p. 18-19.

India. Today, almost all the linguistic and cultural groups of India are represented in the diasporic community in New Zealand.

(g) Health issues of the Indian diaspora in New Zealand

Indian diasporic women have a more neglected health aspect than the males. They had the lowest rate of physical activity and highest rates of obesity²⁷. Both men and women have higher rates of diabetes than the other immigrant populations and also a higher rate of treated high cholesterol as well as a higher prevalence of asthma. It is also found that they are in considerable stress and have poor housing conditions. The living standard of the Indians in the Antipodes are on the lower scales of well being for the majority, though there are also exceptions.

(h) Identity formation within the Indian diaspora in New Zealand

The first wave of immigration brought Indians as indentured labourers and house workers within the New Zealand society. The intense discrimination and exploitation faced by them not only from the white men but also from the other migrant communities such as the Chinese made them insular and inward looking. So much so that the rituals and norms of the Indian society were maintained, though it was not really possible at all times. Caste as an institution was rigorously maintained and this was later transferred into the inmigration of the bride or groom from the native place in India. This was represented in the family visas sought by many immigrants. This was particularly true of the Gujarati and the Punjabi communities. Out-of-caste or community marriage or even intermarriage with the host community or with other migrant communities were almost non-existent. This also created an immense social networking system that allowed for the employment and sustenance of many unemployed and underemployed people from the same community.

The new immigrants do not adhere to caste as a binding mechanism within the diaspora. They are more in the professional sector and there the region of origin and language forms a greater bond, cutting across caste and religious groupings. This is not to say that they do not participate in the respective religious festivals and cultural events held within their city or province. It is just that the overwhelming dominance of caste as a common thread has declined. Moreover, these immigrants have earnings similar to the white middle and upper middle class and can melt within the dominant host society. This is also the nature of skilled professional immigration, wherein the distinctiveness of the community is maintained not by exclusion but by merging with the mainstream, yet adhering to personal cultural and religious norms.

The second generation of New Zealand-born children of the original immigrants face double trouble, as they either cannot identify with the exclusion dynamics of societal identity formation practiced by the parents, nor are they used to the discrimination practised by the mainstream society. They are part of the mainstream society and yet they are distinctive and do have culturally formed identities, showcased in the dress and food preferences. There is also some tension between the Indians who have directly migrated from India and Indo-Fijians from Fiji. The Indo-Fijians also take enormous advantage of the free movement between Australia and New Zealand across the Tasman Sea. The Hindi film industry forms a common bond joining the two.

The Indian diasporic community is slowly gaining in importance and economic strength in New Zealand as evidenced in the gradual increase in its splendour of common religious festivals such as Diwali in 2003, which was attended even by important politicians of the country. Though societal tension does exist between the different communities, there is still calm co-existence without much disturbance. This coupled with excellent growth opportunities has already laid the base for dynamic diaspora development.

Reflection and Action 12.2

Discuss the profile of Indian diaspora in New Zealand.

12.4 Indians in Fiji

Fiji's interaction with Indians began when Indian sailors went aboard the European ships that sailed the South Seas. It was in 1811 that the first Indian sailor named Achowla set foot on Fiji by deserting the ship 'Hunter' and residing there for about two years before moving on to Solomon Islands where he spent the rest of his life.²⁸ There are many descendants of Achowla in the islands of the South Seas. This is perhaps the beginning of the settlement process of the Indian diaspora in Fiji and other South Sea islands. Though the sketches of such interaction are scant in recorded history, yet their intangible impacts have been felt in many different spheres.

Fiji witnessed the arrival of indentured labour for the first time in 1879 "to work on the cotton and sugar plantations as 'coolie laborers'. They worked for the Australian giant the Colonial Sugar Refining Company. In all from 1879 to 1916 some 60,537 Indians came to Fiji as indentured laborers".²⁹ The experience of these labourers is a tale of intense exploitation, violence, death and suicide. The terms of the contract laid out a period of five years and then if they chose to remain in Fiji, included a free passage to India after completion of ten years in Fiji. Of those who survived about 60 % chose to stay back.³⁰ The domination of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company in sugar production right from the planting of sugarcane to the refining stage also controlled the indentured labourers. The labourers who had elected to stay back were encouraged to lease land from the native Fijians and produce sugarcane. The Company preferred this system as then it lessened the dependence for supply of raw materials from a few large producers to many smallholder producers. This also laid the base for the sustained divisive tensions between the Indian indentured labourers and the native Fijians. Businessmen and other workers reached these areas as independent workers known as "free migrants"³¹ and settled there (1920-36). The sailors deserting their ships in the Fijian and other South Sea Islands shores settled as small traders. With the progress of the indentured labour system, there was also a rise in the number of Indians who immigrated willingly as evidenced by their agreement to pay their own fares. These were the businessmen. Also, those of the indentured labourers who decided to stay on but did not want to work on land became small business proprietors. Together they "accounted for 140 shopkeeping licenses and 192 hawking licenses by 1898 and 1,508 and

28 Crocombe, 2004.

29 Narayan, K Laxmi (1998), Opp. Cit.

30 Crocombe, (2004), Opp. Cit.

31 Gillion, K.L. (1962) Fiji Indian Migrants: A History to the End of Indenture in 1920, Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

974 respectively by 1916 - as well as 80 jewellers".³² Gujaratis were the largest community of traders in Fiji, numbering about 2,500 in 1936.³³ The major trades controlled by them were clothing, cotton goods and other cloth products from India. The Punjabi community was involved in "transport, moneylending, security and other services".³⁴ Due to uncertainty in the agricultural sector and certain community domination in the trading segments, educational achievement became a major source of upliftment for the other Indian communities in Fiji. This was also accentuated by the services provided by organizations such as the Arya Samaj, Christian churches and the Muslim League. A large number of people thus took up various professions and became government workers and skilled technicians. During the period from 1920 to the early 1960s, the Indian diaspora in Fiji saw a spurt in the growth rate of population so much so that they constituted more than 50 % of Fiji's population. By this time also, the Indo-Fijians faced intense discriminatory practices within Fiji that caused them to look out for more secure habitations.

(a) Social integration in Fiji after 1970

After Fiji gained independence in 1970, almost all the Indo-Fijians took the nationality of Fiji. Their condition deteriorated, as they were not granted any rights over the land they cultivated, rather, their leases were renewed for another 30 years. "Long-term security, a sense of belonging, has been absent — that is why education of children became such an obsession with Indo-Fijians. And their success in education, against all kinds of odds, has been Fiji's most overwhelming achievement".³⁵ The political condition in Fiji was such that slowly the Indian diasporic community came to be seen as the 'enemy'. The main apprehension was land; in that it was projected as Indian 'girmityas' (girmit meaning agreement, this term means the agreement people, a synonym for indentured labourer), controlled and owned most of the agricultural land as well as the various processes. The case of land ownership has been disproved since and has been shown as a constructed fear to cover up the other cultural tensions between the two communities. In fact in Fiji today, most of the ownership rights in land is held by native Fijians (about 87 %);³⁶ "Indians own less than 2 % of the land".³⁷ Leaseholder Indo-Fijians have drastically decreased in number. When the leases granted in the 1970s expired they were not renewed in most of the cases, the native Fijians liked to let the land stand unproductive rather than let the Indo-Fijians work. Increase in education had also placed the Indo-Fijian community in a better employment position than the native Fijians. Labour for reconstruction of the Pacific islands was primarily provided by Indo-Fijians who thus had a dominant service provider image in the South Pacific islands.

The benchmark for the division and flight of the Indo-Fijian community is 1987 when Dr. Timoci Bavadra's democratically elected multiracial government was overthrown by a vicious, bloody and cold blooded military coup led by Colonel Stiveni Rabuka on 14th May and once again a coup was staged on 25th September of the same year. This coup was in defense of the ethnic Fijians' rights over land (in accordance to a movement called Taukei movement

32 Crocombe, (2004), Opp. Cit, p. 20.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid, p. 21.

35 Nandan, Satendra. P. (2004) : India - Australasia An Indo Fijian Perspective, in N.N. Vohra (ed) : India and Australasia, History, Culture and Society, I.I.C, and Shipra Publishers, New Delhi, p. 56.

36 Ibid.

37 Lal, 2004, p. 19.

meaning ‘our land’) as well as safeguarding their perpetuation. This resulted in the constitution of 1990 which “ensured political supremacy of ethnic Fijians and reserved senior positions, including the post of the Prime Minister, for that community; it allocated nearly 54 % of the seats in the House of Representatives to ethnic Fijians”.³⁸

Together, all this resulted in the immigration of a large number of Indo-Fijians into Australia and New Zealand from the 1970s onwards to the 1990s, becoming twice migrants. About 77,000 Indo-Fijians left the country for other destinations, primarily Australia and New Zealand, in the period between 1987-1990. This racial political overture led to Fiji being put out of the Commonwealth. Slowly, the conditions changed with time and the constitution was reworked; Colonel Rabuka agreed to a constitutional review. The racially biased clauses were deleted and a new government again on democratic principles was elected into office in 1999 headed by Mahendra Choudhary. This government was once again overthrown by another brutal coup led by George Speight in May 2000 and the government deposed. The New government is almost on the lines of the old constitution of Colonel Rabuka, with little or no space for the Indo-Fijians. Despite all this, today the Indo-Fijians account for almost 42 % of the Island nation’s population. This was the land where the indentured labourers had settled and thereafter lived on. After almost five generations, they are told that they have no right to be in that nation then the heart-rending condition of the populace can only be guessed. Through generations, the Fijian Indian diaspora knew no other nationality than Fijian. Today, they are a dispossessed group in their own homeland.

The conditions that are at the base of such a situation are many and varied, spanning all aspects of life. The Fijian and the Indian communities inhabit two different cultural and social worlds, living within the same geographical space without any bridges between the two. This has been best exemplified by Nandan when he says, “The tragedy of Fiji has been that the Fijians and the Indians live in separate cultural worlds – it began with colonization, migration, plantation, and it continued with communal representations and institutions: different schools, places of worship, lifestyles, villages and *koros*; different rites, rituals and ceremonies; different languages and sense of reality”.³⁹ Existence and persistence of such a communal divide in most situations spell disaster for the concerned nation and Fiji is no exception. The religious divide is great; most of the Fijians are Christians and cannot understand or tolerate other religions. This is one cause of the ready acceptance and merger of the immigrant Filipinos with the native Fijians. The intermixing of Indo-Fijians and Fijians in terms of intermarriage has been minimal as contrasted with the intermarriage of the other migrant groups such as Chinese and Filipinos. Language has been another barrier in the interaction as both the groups only spoke their own language and later on the colonial tongue and did not try to learn each other’s language. There is also a lack of respect for and domination of one society by the other leads to resentments that are then passed on to future generations. When the new generations of both the groups interrelate there is some amount of historical resentment that is carried over and spills into the current phase. The fears and negative feelings are as much a by-product of several imaginings of such nature by both the communities as current tensions created in present situations. The dress and food habits of Indo-Fijians also differ, as

38 Lal, 2004, Op. Cit. p. 20.

39 Nandan, 2004, Op. Cit. p. 54.

do their ceremonies, from the native Fijians. These clubbed with housing enclaves reinforce the divide. The native Fijian society gives much more importance to race and the concept of blood as the main line of inheritance and identity, whereas for the migrant Indo-Fijian community it is the place of origin. These differences have given rise to a false sense of insecurity in the minds of the native Fijians creating discrimination and unequal race relations in Fiji.

The Indo-Fijians who continue to live in Fiji are those who recognise that Fiji is their homeland. Although many of them have migrated, their spiritual homeland remains Fiji. They do not adhere to India as the parent nation from where they were dispossessed. Their dilemma is painful. Yet, the part of the diaspora that lives on in the island of Fiji is contributing enormously to the growth of Fiji as a nation. It is to be hoped that their growth potential is fully recognised enabling them to reach the success that they had scaled before.

Reflection and Action 12.3

Discuss the situation of Indian diaspora in Fiji.

12.5 Conclusion

The Indian diaspora in the Antipodes (namely, Australia, New Zealand and Fiji) is found in various parts of the different island groups stretching even to the remote corners. There are different streams, routes and strands of migration from the Indian sub-continent into the Antipodes. The Indian emigrants have carved out a place for themselves within the social fabric of the host countries, although they do not constitute a major ethnic minority community in these countries. The Indian diasporas in these countries have various strands ranging from the indentured labour system of the mid-eighteenth century to the contemporary stream of professional emigration.

12.6 Further Reading

Chandrashekhar, S. 1992 *From India to Australia - a Brief History of Immigration: The Dismantling of the White Australia Policy, Problems and Prospects of Assimilation*. California: Population Review Books.

Gillion, K.L. 1962. *Fiji Indian Migrants: A History to the End of Indenture in 1920*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

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Indian Diaspora in West Asia

Contents

- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Historical Background
- 13.3 Indians in the Gulf Region
- 13.4 Indian Diaspora in Israel
- 13.5 Conclusion
- 13.6 Further Reading

Learning Objectives

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- trace the historical background of the Indian diaspora in West Asia;
- know the profiles of Indians in the Gulf region; and
- familiarise yourself with the Indian diaspora in Israel.

13.1 Introduction

The Indian diaspora in West Asia is mainly concentrated in two regions: the Persian Gulf countries and Israel. In spite of India's historical relations with many countries of West Asia, the Indian diaspora remained very small in size until very recently. The main focus of this section therefore would be on the migration, settlement and consequent emergence of the Indian diaspora in the region in recent decades.

13.2 Historical Background

Trade and cultural contacts between India and West Asia go back to antiquity (Ahmad 1969). These contacts were widespread extending up to the eastern Mediterranean and also covering large parts of Central Asia. Archaeological and literary evidence suggests that India and West Asia had trade relations since at least the days of the Indus Valley Civilization.

Three major trade routes have connected India with West Asia. Perhaps the oldest among these was the Persian Gulf route running from the mouth of the Indus to the Euphrates. The second was the overland route from the Indian passes to Balkh, down the Oxus to Caspian Gates, passing through and culminating at Antioch. Finally, there was the sea route down the Persian/Arabian coasts of Aden and up to the Red Sea. Until at least the beginning of the Christian era, Indo-West Asian trade was indirect, that is part of the Indo-Roman or Indo-Greek trade (Rawlinson, 1926).

Maurya Emperor Ashoka the Great not only exchanged ambassadors with Syria, Egypt and Macedonia, but also took up the cause of spreading Buddhism to parts of Central and West Asia. Arab scholar Alberuni found traces of Buddhism in Khorasan, Persia, Iraq and Syria. The cultural traditions of Central Asian countries were similarly influenced by the spread of Buddhism during the Kushan period, especially in its later phase. Trade relations were further strengthened by the great Silk Route trade between China and the West in which Indians acted as intermediaries. During the medieval period the friendly

visits of the Khwarezmian scholars al-Beruni and Abulazzak Samarkand form a glorious chapter in the history of contacts between India and Central Asia" (Kaushik, 1997, p.64). These contacts were multifaceted involving not only trade and political/diplomatic relations but also literature, philosophy, religion, medical knowledge, musical instruments, etc.

13.3 Indians in the Gulf Region

In so far as the Gulf coast was concerned, a considerable number of Indians appear to have migrated there in the pre-Islamic era "either to establish businesses, seek employment with Arab traders, or just to escape instability at home. Among the seven Indian groups that migrated to Arabia and settled down in Bahrain, Oman and Obulla (Basra) in this period were the *Zuth* (known in India as Jats), the *Bayasira*, and the *Siabja*. Thus at the time of the advent of Islam, there were many Indian settlers in Arabia who were involved in various activities" (Ahmad, 1971). Apparently all these groups got completely assimilated into the respective societies of their migration.

The seventh to 10th century period is said to be the "golden age" of Indo-Arab trade. This period began with the rise and spread of Islam and the founding of Baghdad in 762 A.D. as the capital of the Arab World. So close were the relations between India and the Arab world that the ancient port of Obulla was called 'the marches of India' which later developed into Basra" (Ahmad, 1971). It is very likely that a significant number of merchants and a variety of artisans and professionals must have migrated and settled down in this region. Mention may be made of the *vizier* to the Caliphs of Baghdad: "A fact less known to historians, however is that the illustrious family of the Barmakids who acted as *viziers* to the Caliphs of Baghdad for a couple of centuries during the Abbasid period were originally Pramukhs [chiefs] (hence Arabic: Barmark) and were the priests of the Buddhist monasteries in Balkh in central Asia whence they had migrated to Damascus after the establishment of the Umayyad government there. This family in all probability came from India originally" (Ahmad, 1971).

Indian Merchants in the Gulf

Medieval Arab sources provide the earliest evidence of the presence of colonies of Indian merchants in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea areas. "They reveal that Hindu merchants were present in the port of Shiraz on the Persian shore of the Gulf at least in the ninth century and that they also frequented the coasts of Oman, Socotra and Aden" (Gopal, 1998; Marcovits, 2000, p. 10). Sindhi and Gujarati merchants, both Hindu and Muslim played a dominant role in maritime trade and finance across the Indian Ocean (Marcovits, 2000). During the later medieval period there was a considerable amount of exchange of Arab and Indian scholars and religious leaders. According to Maqbool Ahmad (1971, p. 38), the establishment of Muslim kingdoms in the South and the introduction of the Arab educational system and the *Sharia* brought in its trail a large number of Arab theologians, jurists and men of learning to India throughout the later medieval period. As will be noticed some Indian Muslim scholars also visited the Arab countries and acquired eminent positions in their respective fields of knowledge there.

Vasco da Gama noted the presence of Indians on the shores of East Africa in 1498 and subsequently in the ports of the Red Sea and in the interior of the Arabian peninsula (Gopal, 1992, p. 220). Port towns of Mocha and Aden and inland cities of Taif and Sanna were also inhabited by the Indians of

Ormuz (Gopal, 1998). The ruins of a Hindu temple were found at Kalhat, the principal Omani port of the fifteenth century, which further suggests a settlement of Indians in Oman (Miles, 1966, p. 526).

In Iran, besides Omuz, Indians in small numbers had settled down in Yezd, Shiraz, Isfahan, Tehran, Resht, Gilan, Khorasan and Mashad. Following the establishment of a new port of Gombroon or Bandar Abbas in the late 17th century Ormuz declined to insignificance and the Indians shifted to the new city. In 1760 when Bandar Abbas was abandoned by the Persians, the Indians shifted to Abu Shehr, Bushahr, and to the Iraqi port of Basra. Towards the end of the 18th century Gujarati Baniyas were replaced by a new group of immigrants known as Shikarpuris who hailed from Sindh (Gopal, 1997).

In the 17th and 18th centuries Indians traveled via Iran to Central Asia, the Caucasus region and Tzarist Russia. They were active as merchants as well as moneylenders in Bukhara, Samarkand, Taslkent, Baku, Semakha, Derbent, Kokand, etc. Scholars have also noted the existence of a Hindu temple in Iran and another at Baku "where a perpetual flame burnt and priest was always in attendance" (Gopal, 1998, p. 121). Outside India, Nepal and Tibet, the temple at Baku was a major centre of Hindu pilgrimage.

In contrast to the 17th and 18th centuries in which India's impact on the Persian Gulf region was sporadic and confined mostly to trade, it was quite comprehensive in the later 19th and the first half of the twentieth century. Indo-Gulf relations during this period were "varied and multi-faceted." For about a century or so India was not only a major partner in the Indo-Gulf trade and commerce, its impact on the Gulf countries in terms of initial modernization and cultural renaissance, reform movement and many other aspects of socio-cultural life such as cuisines, musical instruments, interior designing and architecture was also substantial (Elmadani, 2003). It was also during this period that a number of Indian merchant communities were more firmly established throughout the Gulf/Red Sea region. It hardly needs to be emphasized here that the Gulf region was virtually an extension of British India and that the Indians in the Gulf enjoyed privileges as British subject.

The British administration in the Gulf helped settle a number of Indian communities across the region. Among these the 19th century Muscat hosted three distinct Indian communities: Thattai Sindhi Bhatias, Kutchhi Bhatias and Khojahs or *Luwatiyyas*. Some of the prominent entrepreneurs from these communities continue to flourish even today (Allen, Jr., 1981, pp 39-51). Besides Oman, Indian merchant communities also existed in Iran, Aden and the Trucial States (United Arab Emirates) (Al-Sayegh, 1998; Jain, 2004b).

Besides trading in a wide variety of goods, Indians were also involved in the pearl-fishing industry in some of the Gulf countries, namely Bahrain, Oman and United Arab Emirates. Pearl fishing was the mainstay of the Gulf economies in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Some idea of the nature and magnitude of this industry can be had from the fact that 18% of the total Bahraini population was involved in this industry in the early 20th century. Corresponding figures for Kuwait, Trucial Coast emirates and Qatar were 25%, 31% and 48% respectively (Zahlan, 1979, p. 22).

In the Red Sea region Yemen is one of the countries where Indians have been settled for a long time. Although Indo-Yemeni trade and cultural relations go back to antiquity, the evidence of the Indians' presence in Yemen is

available since only the early seventeenth century. The Indians were found to reside in almost all the major towns of Yemen, including Mocha, Sana'a, Hodeida and Beital-Faqi. The Indians began to settle in the port town of Aden after its occupation by the British in 1839. By the time the British left Aden in 1967 their population had risen to more than 20,000. Besides Aden, there must have been thousands of Indians in other towns of Yemen, but their history is sketchy. Today Yemen hosts the largest permanently settled Indian diaspora in West Asia (Jain, 2003c).

With the decline of pearl industry in the 1920s and 1930s Indian merchants began to concentrate their attention on general trade, importing goods not only from India but also from Europe, America and Japan. These trends were further strengthened after the Second World War.

Indian Labour Diaspora

The migration of Indian labour to the Gulf countries appears to be a recent (i.e., post-oil boom of 1973) phenomenon, but in fact it was not so. The Indian manpower presence in the region dates back to the early oil exploration days when a few Indians had been employed by the D'Arcy Exploration Company in 1902 (Seccombe and Lawless, 1986). Anglo-Persian Oil Company incorporated in 1909 employed more than 368 in December 1910, 158 Indians in January 1910 and in subsequent years this figure was to grow into several hundred and to a peak of 4,890 in 1925. The pattern was repeated in other oil companies in the 1930s and 1940s. Thus, in spite of a restrictive nationality clause, the Gulf countries have relied on foreign manpower to perform various skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled tasks (Seccombe and Lawless, 1986, pp. 548-74).

As already mentioned, the migration of Indian labour to the Gulf countries is not a new phenomenon; it can be traced back to the early 20th century in the wake of the oil discovery in the region. Subsequently a few thousand Indians worked in various Gulf oil companies. This situation more or less continued until the mid-1970s when, following the hike in the oil prices during 1973-74, there was a substantial increase in the oil revenues of the oil producing and exporting Gulf countries.

As a result, development programmes, which included creation of amenities like schools, hospitals, houses, improvement of transport and communication, etc., were taken up. This resulted in a spurt in demand for not only highly skilled technical experts but also for semi-skilled and unskilled workers. Therefore, the major outflow of Indian migrant workers in the last three decades has been to the Gulf countries where a few million workers are estimated to be employed. The largest number of Indian workers is in Saudi Arabia. Other major employers of Indian workers are the UAE, Oman, Kuwait and Bahrain. The number of workers who were given emigration clearance for contractual employment abroad in the past few years and data on distribution of labour outflow is presented in tables 1, 2, 3 and 4 of this unit.

It must be pointed out here that India is not only the second most populous country in the world with surplus labour, it also has a vast reservoir of well trained and educated manpower. Therefore, as soon as the opportunities to earn better wages arose, Indians were the first among groups of immigrants to flock to the Gulf countries. Moreover, as already pointed out, there has been a tradition of outmigration from India to various countries, including the Gulf region, at least since the nineteenth century.

Table 13.1

Annual Labour Outflows from India to West Asia, 1976-2005

Year	Number of Workers	Year	Number of Workers
1976	4,200	1991	197,889
1977	22,900	1992	416,784
1978	69,000	1993	438,338
1979	171,800	1994	425,385
1980	268,200	1995	415,334
1981	272,000	1996	414,214
1982	224,257	1997	416,424
1983	217,971	1998	355,164
1984	198,520	1999	199,552
1985	160,520	2000	243,182
1986	109,234	2001	278,664
1987	121,812	2002	367,663
1988	165,924	2003	466,456
1989	125,786	2004	474,960
1990	143,565	2005	549,000

Source: Annual Reports, Ministry of Labour, Government of India.

Note: The figure given in the above tables do not include the persons who are running businesses in partnership with foreign nationals; those who emigrated on visit visa and stayed on to get a job and those skilled workers and professionals (like doctors, engineers, chartered accountants computer specialist etc.) in whose case emigration clearance is not necessary.

Each year a large number of workers go to West Asia, and particularly to the six G.C.C countries. In all, over six million contract workers have migrated to these countries during the past four decades or so. Besides these, during the same period at least six million Indians belonging to the following categories have gone to the Gulf countries: (i) workers in whose case emigration clearance is not required such as supervisors, skilled workers, semi-skilled workers, drivers, cooks and clerical workers; (ii) businessmen, entrepreneurs, etc; (iii) illegal migrants (those who overstayed visit visa and got employment).

Migration of Indian contract workers abroad has not been uniform. The trend declined during 1992-98 but peaked in 1999-2004. Fluctuation in migration figures can be explained in terms of a number of political economy factors: fluctuation in oil prices, law of labour demand and supply, Arabisation labour policy and the changing profile of labour demand itself. Thus in 1999 there was a sharp decline in the number of persons migrating for employment to Saudi Arabia. This was primarily due to the determined efforts to enforce Saudisation. The situation has improved since then, particularly in 2002, although not to the level of the mid-1990s.

The majority of such workers are recruited in the four South Indian states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Together these four states send about 70% of migrants to the Gulf countries (Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2005). In this context, it would not be out of place to mention that the channel of recruitment or migration plays an important role

in the relative success of workers. A survey of 800 South Asian males employed in skilled or unskilled jobs in Kuwait showed that about 34 per cent moved through the network of friends and relatives and about 50 per cent through recruiting agents, and that those who went through friends/ relatives earned a higher salary, found the job to fit their expectations, and were happier than those who went through agents (Shah, 2000).

Table 13.2
The Distribution of Annual Labour Outflows from India to West Asia by Country of Destination, 1982-1990

Country	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Bahrain	17,069	18,894	15,514	11,246	5,784	6,578	8,219	8,520	6,782
Iraq	35,268	13,001	11,398	5,855	5,040	2,330	4,284	5,085	1,650
Kuwait	9,764	11,490	5,466	5,512	4,235	7,354	9,653	5,679	1,077
Libya	10,433	5,900	5,179	2,449	2,552	2,272	593	632	305
Oman	39,792	49,120	43,228	37,806	22,417	16,362	18,696	16,574	34,267
Qatar	14,357	7,772	4,362	5,214	4,029	4,751	4,654	7,991	3,704
Saudi Arabia	78,297	83,235	88,079	68,938	41,854	57,234	85,289	49,710	79,473
U.A.E	19,297	25,559	24,286	21,286	23,323	24,931	34,029	26,189	11,962
Others	15,288	7,024	8,410	4,729	4,415	3,544	4,471	5,406	4,345
Total	239,5452	24,9952	05,922	163,035	113,649	125,356	169,888	125,786	143,565

Source: As in Table 2.

Table 13.3
The Distribution of Annual Labour Outflows from India by Destination, 1991-1996

Country	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Bahrain	8,630	16,458	15,622	13,806	11,235	16,647
Kuwait	7,044	19,782	26,981	24,324	14,439	14,580
Oman	22,333	40,900	29,056	25,142	22,338	30,113
Saudi Arabia	130,928	265,180	269,639	265,875	256,782	214,068
U.A.E	15,446	60,493	77,066	75,762	79,674	112,644
Others	7,121	19,974	20,476	20,476	28,866	26,162
Total	197,889	438,338	425,385	425,385	415,334	414,214

Table 13.4
The Distribution of Annual Labour Outflows from India by Destination, 1997-2004

Country	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Bahrain	17,944	16,997	14,905	15,909	16,382	20,807	24,778	22,980
Kuwait	13,170	22,462	19,149	31,082	39,751	48,549	54,434	52,064
Oman	29,994	20,774	16,101	15,155	30,985	41,209	36,816	33,275
S.Arabia	214,420	105,239	27,160	58,722	78,048	99,453	121,431	123,522
U.A.E	110,945	134,740	79,269	55,099	53,673	95,034	143,804	175,262
Qatar	—	—	—	—	13,829	12,596	14,251	16,325
Others	29,951	54,952	42,968	67,215	45,996	50,015	70,942	51,532
Total	416,424	355,164	199,552	243,182	278,664	367,663	466,456	474,960

Source: Ministry of Labour, Government of India, Annual Reports, 2003 & 2005.

Table 13.5

Estimated Population of Overseas Indians in West Asia, 2001 and 2005

Country	PIOs	NRIs	Total	Total (2005)
Saudi Arabia	—	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,600,000
United Arab Emirates	50,000	900,000	950,000	1,300,000
Oman	1,000	311,000	312,000	450,000
Kuwait	1,000	254,000	295,000	400,000
Bahrain	Nil	130,000	130,000	170,000
Qatar	1,000	130,000	131,000	180,000
Others				
Yemen	100,000	900	100,900	120,000
Israel	45,000	300	45,300	60,000
Egypt	40	1,350	1,390	1,500
Lebanon	25	11,000	11,025	12,000
Libya	400	12,000	12,400	15,000
Syria	1,800	-	1,800	2,000
Total	200,265	3,250,550	3,450,815	4,310,500

Source: High Level Committee (2001). Figures for the year 2005 are author's own estimates.

Economic Profile

The Indian diaspora in the Persian Gulf region is in constant flux for two important reasons – continuous 'circulation' of migrants, and the upgradation of the skill composition of the workforce. The unique nature of the diaspora and the fact that there is hardly any social scientific study on the subject makes it difficult to comment authoritatively. In the absence of systematic studies, it is only natural that newspaper reports should come in handy. These sources clearly suggest that the vast majority of Indians in the Gulf countries have been earning their livelihood honestly and in a legal manner, while a very small minority of them is involved in illegal economic activities such as smuggling, extortion and even begging. Interestingly, latter reports are more numerous and precisely documented than earlier reports.

Indian immigrants in the Gulf region have two major class segments (a) skilled, semi skilled and unskilled workers, and (b) professionals and entrepreneurs. The proportion of each class segment in the Gulf countries varies from country to country. Nevertheless it is widely believed that labour constitutes about 60-70 per cent of the total migration outflow from India to the Middle East. This situation is sociologically akin to the earlier ones in South Africa, Fiji, Malaysia and Burma where indentured and/or *kangani* labour and petty bourgeoisie consisting of a variety of skilled personnel and traders migrated simultaneously and yet remained apart from one another (Jain, 1990; 1999).

The available data on the occupational status of Indian workers in the Gulf countries suggest that until the 1980s about 40 per cent of them were employed in the construction and transport industries. Utility and maintenance constituted another important category of employment followed by office and paramedical services.

Since the late 1980s there has been a gradual shift in the socio-economic profile of the Indian migrants to the Gulf. The preponderance of workers in the construction industry and other skilled and semi-skilled sectors has been slowly reversed. A recent demographic study done in the U.A.E. indicated that there has been an upward flow in white-collar jobs. Indians have a stranglehold on textile, gold, electronics and construction industries. A sizable number also operate hotels and restaurants. According to the figures provided by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, skilled and unskilled workers accounted for about 70 per cent of the Indian migrants, white collar workers for about 20 per cent and professionals had a 10 per cent share in 1998. The study referred to above had also found that in the early 1990s approximately 57 per cent of the Indian population in the UAE earned less than 5,000 Dhirams a month (3.6 Dhiram to a dollar) whilst those earning above 25,000 Dhirams a month were about 10 per cent. The rest figured in between these income brackets. In effect, more than three-fourths of the Indians in the U.A.E. earned less than 10,000 Dhirams a month.

A good number of Indian immigrants in the Gulf countries, particularly in the UAE, Oman and Kuwait, are involved in a variety of business activities (Jain, 2004a; 2005b). Some of the business houses such as the Jashanmal in the UAE, Malhotras in Kuwait and Khimji Ramdas in Oman have since long been there. Many others are of more recent origin. Major Indian business houses have their operations all over the Gulf countries. Apart from individual entrepreneurs, a considerable number of Indian companies are also involved in joint venture enterprises in the Gulf countries.

Another class segment of the Indian petty bourgeoisie in the region consists of professionals such as engineers, doctors, management executives, chartered accountants, bankers, architects, lawyers, teachers, etc., who constitute about 10 per cent of the Indian immigrant workforce. The professional migrants are drawn from all over the country.

The NRI remittances and investments have played an extremely important role in India's economic development. India's foreign exchange receipts from remittances have increased several-fold during the past three decades or so. According to one estimate whereas India's forex receipts totalled less than \$300 million in 1974-75, by 1984-85 this figure had increased to \$2,500 million. The West Asian share in the country's total receipts was 12 per cent in 1974-75 and 58 per cent in 1984-85. According to estimates made by Gulati and Mody, Kerala accounted for 42 per cent of the country's remittance receipts from West Asia in 1981-82.

NRI deposits have immensely helped India in averting its balance of payment crisis. A time series data compiled by the Department of Economic Analysis and Policy of the Reserve Bank of India on India's balance of payment trends since 1948-49 show that Non-Resident Indian Deposits (NRDs) have risen continuously since the mid-1970s. The data further suggest that the dependence on NRs was negligible up to 1974-75. After touching \$40 million in 1974-75, these deposits rose steadily to \$1.04 billion in 1979-80. The dependence on NRDs grew substantially in the 1980s from \$1.8 billion in 1980-81 to \$10.4 billion in 1989-90 and \$10.6 billion in 1990-91, before falling for the first time in 1991-92 to \$7.8 billion. The reversal in the rising trend of NRDs was clearly linked to large-scale withdrawal of such deposits by Non-Resident Indians following the outbreak of the Gulf War in late 1990. Since then the NRDs have picked up again and India's forex reserves, excluding

gold and SDRs, were estimated to be \$10.2 billion by January 1994, \$34.0 billion by 1999, and over \$150.0 billion by 2005.

It goes without saying that Indian workers who generally migrate without their families for a number of reasons, save most of their earnings as they get free food, accommodation and transport during their stay in the Gulf countries. The remitted money is mostly spent on the upkeep and maintenance of the households, paying outstanding debts, purchasing land and building houses, and buying consumer durables. Lavish expenditures on marriage and other festive occasions have also been reported from the Gulf migration areas in Kerala and elsewhere. It appears that very little amount of remittances is used for economically productive purposes.

As Nair (1989, pp. 344) put it: The available evidence suggests that migration and the resultant receipt of remittances do not seem to have made any significant impact on the economic growth rate of the state economies. Nor did they have a substantial effect on employment rates, labour market conditions, agricultural development and industrialisation. It would appear that the major part of the remittances which flowed into Kerala seeped into other regions of India through the mechanism of trade in consumption goods and construction materials caused by the changes in consumption patterns and the boom in the house construction sector.

Although most of the Gulf workers send their remittances through official channels, a considerable number of them also send their money through *hawala* and other illegal channels. These channels usually offer some commission for every dollar. Moreover, *hawalas* are also fast and reliable channels of remitting money. Attempts to curb such transactions have not been successful in the past.

Regarding NRI investment in India it can be effectively argued that the desire on the part of the Gulf and other NRIs to invest in India and to retain their Indian citizenship should be seen not so much as an expression of their patriotism but as pure and simple economic calculation. If India provides a competitive advantage in business operations for the NRIs they would be more than willing to invest in India; if not, they might go elsewhere. This was seen during the 1990-1991 Kuwaiti Crisis when the Indian economy began to show the balance of payment crisis. The NRI investment in India had begun to decline and a considerable number of NRIs did not renew their FCNR deposits on maturity; instead they preferred to invest the money abroad. The successful subscription of the Resurgent India Bonds by the NRIs in 1998, which fetched \$4.16 billion, was mainly due to the scheme's favourable price to the NRIs. It is significant to note that the contribution of the NRIs in the Middle East accounted for about 40-50 per cent of the total receipts. Presently the Gulf remittances to India are estimated around ten billion US dollars.

A small number of Indian immigrants in the Gulf countries particularly in the UAE are involved in such criminal activities as smuggling, trade in narcotics and arms, extortions, and other subversive activities. Dubai has long been associated with smuggling of gold, silver, precious metals, and electronic goods. A number of Indian and Pakistani smugglers live and work in Dubai. Until recently about 150 tons of gold and 1,300 tons of silver used to be smuggled into India every year.

The Emirate policy in regard to smuggling appears to be one of turning a blind eye to such activities, of course so long as there is no breach of the peace. Otherwise the local authorities are known to come down with a heavy hand on troublemakers. Thus, about three thousand Pakistani and five hundred Indian Muslim immigrants (mostly illegal) had to face deportation for their involvement in a demonstration against the demolition of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya in December 1992.

One recent irritant in Indo-UAE relations involving some NRIs was the March 1993 bomb blasts in Bombay in which 257 persons were killed, over 700 injured and property worth Rs. 27 crore destroyed. Whether this was a reaction to the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in December 1992 is not known, but the fact remains that the Government of India had carried out a massive crackdown on Dawood Ibrahim's cartel. Dawood Ibrahim, who has extensive business interests through his D-Company in the UAE and who is presently suspected to be living in Pakistan, has been declared a "terrorist" associated with the Al-Qaeda by the Interpol.

Smuggling and use of South Asian children for camel races in the Gulf countries, elderly Arabs marrying poor, young Muslim girls and the clandestine flesh trade are some other dimensions of undesirable Indo-Gulf trade which are carried out by a few Indian migrants. In recent years extortion has emerged as another "industry" for some Gulf-based Indian "entrepreneurs". This enterprise is thriving in some metropolitan cities of India, especially Mumbai. Its conspicuous presence has been particularly noted in Bollywood (the Mumbai film industry), which annually produces about 800 films. It is well-known that the Abu Salem faction of the Dawood Ibrahim gang has been behind extortion threats to film personalities for the past five years. Film producers admit that extortion threats are common and that most of them pay up quietly after a bit of haggling over the sum. Between January 1995 and January 2000, ten well-known film personalities were gunned down or shot at by extortionists.

Apart from extortion, some Dubai-based gangsters have also infiltrated the Mumbai film industry. Globalisation of the entertainment industry, competition from cable television, piracy through the influx of DVDs and VCDs in the market, and unlawful private screening of films have all given a blow to the Indian film industry. It is against this backdrop that the infiltration of underworld black money has occurred in the industry.

The Mafia is not only interested in producing films but also in grabbing distribution rights of films in the blossoming overseas market. The overseas market, which until recently was a "mere pocket money" option for Hindi film-makers, is now emerging as the big factor. Not surprisingly, "the overseas territory started becoming a favorite demand of extortionists". It gives "the gangsters an added advantage. Using a dummy distributor as a front, he can launder the money under the guise of bringing in forex. This white money is used to finance his benami but legitimate businesses in the construction, transport and hotel industries".

If Dubai provides a safe haven for a variety of criminals, the pilgrimage cities of Mecca and Madina have emerged as child beggars' paradise. Estimatedly, about 1,000 to 1,500 Indian children (both boys and girls) are annually involved in this begging racket, especially during the Haj time. About 400 of them are sent from Murshidabad district of West Bengal alone. Estimates suggest

that the mafia running this racket earn about Rs 5 lakh per child annually (after deducting the expenditure). Depending on the number of children involved in the racket, the economics of begging in Saudi Arabia by Indian children runs into multi-crore-rupee business.

Social Organisation

The layman notion of social organisation among overseas Indian communities is represented in Rabindranath Tagore's analogy of the Banyan tree. Tagore held the view that Indian settlements abroad are akin to the spread of a grand old Banyan tree. Implicit in this analogy is the assumption that Indian culture as well as social organisational patterns can be transplanted overseas. This view obviously does not correspond with the reality. The nature and patterns of social organisation among overseas Indian communities have varyingly been affected by numerous local factors. Perhaps the most generic among them was the nature and conditions of employment. The kind of initial employment (e.g. indentured or wage labour, trade or profession, etc), and the socio-political conditions in the colonial/metropolitan societies under which such employment was taken up constitute the broad parameters of the evolution of varying social organisations and community life among overseas Indians. Changes in such social organisational elements as caste, kinship and family, religion, etc., have occurred due to these conditions in different places. Hypothetically, it would seem that the degree of freedom of immigrant Indians in various colonial societies was a major factor in transforming the indigenous patterns of social organisation among the overseas Indians. Thus overseas Indian communities in the West Indies, Mauritius and Fiji, which were primarily formed due to the slavery-like indentured labour migration, exhibit more radical transformation in their social organisational aspects than the less coercive *Kangani/Maistry*-recruited overseas Indian communities in Burma, Malaysia, Singapore and Sri Lanka. To countries where Indians migrated more freely under "passage" or "free" migration system (e.g., Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania), social organisation among them shows least transformation. Similar arguments can be advanced in relation to the more recent 'brain drain' emigrants and their communities in Britain, Canada and the USA. This remains an empirical issue whether the above-mentioned hypothesis is also applicable to the Indians in West Asia. The purpose of this brief discussion is to show that compared to the "Banyan Tree" view of the overseas Indians, it is far more fruitful to study the emerging patterns of social organisation among them from the political economy perspective.

The Banyan Tree view presumes that transplantation of socio-cultural patterns abroad is an unhindered exercise. This however, has never been the case. The migration process itself sets the limits on this presumption in terms of selectivity of migrants, their motivation and destination of migration, etc. The working and living conditions of Indians in the Persian Gulf region amply demonstrate this. To begin with Indian migration to West Asia is male-dominated. A great majority of Indian migrants to the Gulf either cannot afford or do not want to take along with them their wives, with the result that there is an extreme sex imbalance in the diaspora, particular among the workers. This seriously hampers the formation of an Indian "community" in the Gulf countries. The middle class comprising professionals and entrepreneurs are an exception but even here all family members are not there for a variety of reasons. Grown up children seldom live with their parents as most of the time they are in India or abroad for their higher education, which is expensive or lacking in most Gulf countries.

Short-term stay and inevitability of returning home is the hallmark of the Indian migration to the Persian Gulf region. A recent study in Bihar found that about two-thirds of the working class migrants to the Gulf stayed between 2 to 6 years, and 85 per cent between 2 to 8 years. The same study also found a high degree of circularity among the migrants: 25 per cent were once migrants, 42 per cent twice migrants, 21 per cent thrice migrants and 12 per cent had migrated four times or more (Rahman, 2003). We do not have comparable data about the middle classes. Thus short-term stay and circularity both these factors keep the “community” in a flux.

The attitude of the host society is another factor in any consideration of a community life among the immigrants. The Gulf countries are absolutely clear on this count.

As Weiner (1982) put it, “migrants are incorporated into the economic structure, but are excluded from the social structure. Separation, not integration or assimilation, is the goal Social contacts between Arabs and expatriates are minimized An increasing number of migrants stay for extended periods, and some may remain legally ‘temporary’ resident, with little notice they can be asked by the government to leave.”

The above quotation underlines a number of pertinent issues regarding the attitude of the host countries of the Middle East. Legally, there is no question of permanent resident status, naturalisation and citizenship for the Indian migrants. Politically, the Gulf regimes are authoritarian – no political or trade union rights. Economically, market forces and a bit of anarchy (split labour market in wage structure, coercion in domestic service sector etc) is the norm. Socially, the Gulf societies are patriarchal in ethos and practise. There is a certain social duality in terms of Arab vs non-Arab in the Gulf countries. Fortunately, there is no racism in the Gulf region but ethnic articulations such as *watni* vs. *non-watni* (native vs non-native), and Muslim vs non-Muslim are rather strong. Finally, Islam is the state religion in all the Gulf countries and any criticism - direct or indirect - is absolutely prohibited and can be severely punished.

The above discussion suggests that for the vast majority of Indian immigrants, particularly the working class, there is no organised community life in the Persian Gulf countries. Some degree of community life can be said to exist among the middle classes. To what extent this community life is based on traditional Indian social structure and institutions such as the caste system, family and kinship, village and caste panchayats (agencies of social control), religion and festivals, regional-linguistic ties, etc, is difficult to tell for lack of any study on the subject. In fact we do not know even the social origins of the contemporary professionals, traders and other entrepreneurial groups working and living in the Persian Gulf region. However, newspaper reports and knowledgeable people about the region suggest that regional-linguistic ties are particularly strong among the immigrants in the Gulf. These ties probably supersede religious ties. Thus community life appears to be organized in the form of regional/linguistic associations. It would not be out of place to suggest that the reproduction of the “community” among the Gulf Indians is perhaps done more through fresh immigration and less through procreation.

Except for those few who have been there for a very long time (mostly descendants of earlier generation of traders) and have identified themselves completely with the culture of the host societies, the vast majority of

Indian immigrants in the Gulf countries continue to hold the more or less same identities and patterns of cultural consumption as in India. Perhaps it would not be an exaggeration to say that for all practical purposes the Gulf countries are an extension of India. Most migrants to the Gulf return to India within two to six years and the non-labour migrants who visit India for attending marriages of relatives and for doing business, pilgrimage and sightseeing do so more often than any other groups of NRIs. There is also an impression that most Gulf NRIs seek spouses in India itself, which further extend and strengthen the bonds of family and kinship across the Arabian Sea.

The social life of Indians in most of the Gulf countries is highly segmented. They are required in most cases to live away from the areas of native Arabs at campsites where the workers have to live a regimented life. There is therefore little scope for building a "community" among the working class Indian immigrants in the Gulf countries. However, many middle class Indian migrants who expect to remain in the Gulf for many years live with their families and have begun to evolve a network of socio-cultural associations, which cater to their needs. These include schools, sports clubs, art centres, ladies associations, etc.

In this connection Weiner (1982) wrote in the early 1980s: "The process has only recently started, and it is done with a minimum of conspicuousness. Indian sports clubs in Kuwait, Bahrain, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Oman – places, in which the middle class can meet, eat, engage in sports, and conduct their social life – now have long waiting lists for membership."

In Oman land was given by the Sultan in 1974 to enable the Indians to build a social center. "There are now several schools for Indian children, a Roman Catholic Church, a few Protestant churches, and several temples, including a Gurudwara for the Sikh community" (Weiner, 1982). Similarly, Bahrain and Dubai also have one temple each, the Bahrainian temple being over 100 years old. Elsewhere "Hindus must observe their festivals in less conspicuous locations, or in private." Non-Muslim Indian immigrants in Saudi Arabia are not allowed to take along with them any religious books or idols. Any negative reference to Islam – even if mild or indirect – is considered blasphemy. Thus in 1992, a Sharjah court had awarded a six-year jail-term to eleven Indian theatre activists (all from Kerala) for staging a play "The Ants That Feast on Corpses"

Thanks to globalisation, the Indian entertainment industry which includes films, musical concerts, fashion shows, theatres, etc, has expanded tremendously in the 1990s. The Middle East connection through the underworld and/or otherwise is well known. Regular shows of films, music concerts and plays are organized in major cities of the region to packed houses. The audience includes not only the non-resident Indians but also the Arab masses. Perhaps this has something to do with cultural and civilizational affinity between India and the Middle East.

Sports and particularly cricket is another Indian industry which has been expanded and extended to the Gulf region. Although the favourite sport of Arabs is football, cricket matches are particularly popular in the region, particularly in the UAE. The World Cup has acquired considerable prestige and popularity. Similarly, Indian food, fashion and jewellery are some items which are gaining ground in the Middle East in a big way. As Professor Jain

put it in a wider context, “the diasporic Indians display a dogged attachment to religious, linguistic, culinary and performative aspects of Indianness.” Additionally, in the Arab/Islamic context the Indian expressive and performing arts serve as complementary items to art forms, which cannot develop due to religious sanctions.

13.4 Indian Diaspora in Israel

The Indian Jewry which has been living in India for about 2000 years consisted of three distinct communities: Bene Israel, Cochini and Baghdadis. Whereas the origins of Bene Israel, and Cochini Jews who lived for centuries in the Konkan region and the Malabar Coast of India respectively are lost in antiquity, the Baghdadis immigrated into India from Iraq, Iran, Syria, Turkey, Yemen etc. in the 18th and 19th centuries and were mostly settled in Bombay and Calcutta (Weil, 2002).

At the time of the creation of Israel in 1948 the total population of Jews in India was less than 30,000. In 1951 their estimated population was as follows: Bene Israel 20,000, Cochini 2,500 and Baghdadis 5,000 (Israel, 1998, pp. 8-10). Since then emigration mainly to Israel and other countries has reduced their population in India to about 2,000 at present. According to one estimate, 25,214 Indian Jews had migrated to Israel between 1948 and 1987 (Abraham, 1995, p. 110). These emigrant Indian Jews and their descendants particularly the Bene Israel and Cochini, are now very well settled in their new homeland. Today, about 60,000 Jews of Indian origin constitutes a separate diaspora in Israel.

The settlement and “absorption” of Indian Jews in Israel has not been an easy task. Thanks to the Israeli state-controlled “Absorption of immigrants” policy the Indian Jews who in India were mainly city-based and specialized in a variety of occupations were made to settle in agriculture-based *moshavim* or development towns (Abraham, 1995, p. 115; Kushner, 1973). This “from ship to village” settlement policy in the case of the Indian and other Oriental Jews initially resulted in their economic marginalisation in the Israeli society. The marginalisation process was further compounded by the educational, cultural and welfare policies and programmes of the government.

The State Education Law of 1953 and the “Jewish Consciousness Programme” of the late 1950s advocated “single curriculum” for all Jewish children, which was heavily loaded with Ashkenazi history and literature. Extensive courses in European subjects kept the children of Oriental Jews at a disadvantage. In the 1960s the Bene Israel were socially discriminated against on the ground that they were not “full Jews”. Their marriages were subject to verification. A socio-religious issue soon turned into a major political controversy. In 1963 a bill declaring the Bene Israel as “full Jews” was defeated by the Mapai and National Religious Party. Finally in 1964 the relevant directive against the Bene Israel was removed by the Chief Rabbinate following a resolution passed by the Knesset in a specially convened session on the issue (Stritzower, 1966). Though the controversy was resolved, it left the community stigmatised.

Since then the Indian Jews in Israel have made significant progress in all walks of life. There is considerable educational and occupational mobility among them. Initially they had to work extremely hard in order to get adjusted in the new economic and socio-cultural environment in Israel. In spite of discrimination and challenges the Indian Jews have been successful in adapting themselves to the Israeli society. The formation of associations

13.5 Conclusion

India's trade ties and cultural relations with the Persian Gulf region date back to antiquity, but the evidence of Indian settlement in the region dates back only to the sixteenth century. Small communities of Indian traders called *baniyans* existed in present day Iraq, Iran, Oman, Yemen and Saudi Arabia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. When the region came under British influence in the 19th century, Indian merchant communities flourished in a number of towns in the Gulf countries. The Indians served as bankers, importers and exporters, customs, farmers, and agents for local merchants, government contractors, financiers, etc.

The emergence of the Gulf countries as oil producing and exporting economies and the consequent demand for labour changed the size and complexion of the Indian and other expatriate communities in the region. With the increase in oil prices in the mid-seventies Indians began to migrate in large numbers to the Gulf countries for a variety of jobs, and this trend has been continuing since then. Currently, there are about 3.5 million Indian expatriates in the six GCC countries and Yemen. Indians constitute about one-third of the total expatriate population and ten percent of the total GCC population. The largest number of Indians live in Saudi Arabia (1.6 million) followed by the UAE (1.3 million), Oman (450,000) and Kuwait (400,000). Thanks to the colonial legacy, the Indian diaspora suffers from a number of disabilities in the Gulf societies/states which are essentially rentier and patriarchal in nature.

Outside the Persian Gulf region Israel hosts the second largest permanently settled Indian community in West Asia and North Africa. Following the creation of Israel in 1948 over 25,000 Indian Jews had migrated to Israel until 1987. In spite of facing many difficulties in Israel, Indians are now very well settled there. At present they number around 60,000. The Indian diaspora in West Asia is one of the least researched areas of contemporary transnational human movement and settlement.

13.6 Further Reading

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Unit 14

Immigration and Emigration Policies and their Implications

Contents

- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 Evolution of Restrictive Immigration Policies
- 14.3 Lifting of Restrictions in the New World and Antipodes
- 14.4 Immigration of Third-Country Nationals (TCNs) in the European Union
- 14.5 Typology of Issue-based Emigration Policies in Origin Countries
- 14.6 Policy Negotiations Affecting South Asian Migration: Multilateral, Regional, Bilateral, and Unilateral Initiatives
- 14.7 Policy Changes in India and the World: Lessons to be Learnt
- 14.8 Conclusions
- 14.9 Further Reading

Learning Objectives

This unit will help you understand:

- The evolution of restrictive and liberal immigration regimes and their implications;
- The typologies of issue based emigration policies in the origin countries and the policy negotiations involving both home and host countries; and
- The emerging policy challenges concerning India and the world.

14.1 Introduction

This is the first unit of our book 2 on Diaspora and Transnational Communities. In our previous book we tried to introduce you to some conceptual and theoretical aspects of studying diasporas and in particular with reference to Indian diaspora. We also introduced you to the different Indian diasporas which are settled in different parts of the globe. In this book we will try and deal with some of the substantive issues that concern diaspora, in terms of policies of emigration and immigration which affect diasporas and the various linkages that are established between diasporas, the images and perceptions about and of Indian diaspora and finally issues that have come up in the context of globalisation and diaspora.

This unit will essentially deal with various emigration and immigration policies the world over and their implications for migrations and diaspora in general. The unit will discuss the policies of immigration and the politics of it in Western world, namely UK, Americas and the antipodes of New Zealand and Australia. The unit discuss both the general idea behind some of the policies of emigration and immigration and also specific policies. We also discuss policy changes in India and the world and their implications and what can be learned from these.

14.2 Evolution of Restrictive Immigration Policies

The Second World War marks a crucial watershed in the history of the formation of Indian diaspora, particularly in the developed world. It was the beginning of the transformation of the Indian presence from one that was minuscule, transitory and peripheral, to one that became more substantial, permanent and central. The largest number of Indian migrants in this period went to the UK, as the combined experiences of war, partition and independence provided the initial motivation for the postwar exodus. This was subsequently strengthened by the nexus of kinship and friendship that enabled others to tap the economic opportunities that were becoming available more and more in the labour markets abroad.

In spite of its 'liberal' pretence, however, Britain was still far from being a multi-racial society at the end of the Second World War. When Canada in 1946, and India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) in 1947, introduced their own citizenship laws, Britain defined, for the first time, its own policy by the British Nationality Act of 1948. When all British subjects of the Empire and the Commonwealth were still free to enter the UK during the first post-war decade of 1945 to 1955, in reality immigration of Indians and other nationals of the sub-continent (as also the Caribbean and the African nationals too) was restricted by this legislation until the very end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s. As immigration began to crystallize, the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962 was adopted and put into practice in 1965, providing official legitimacy to the cherished British restrictions on the settlement of 'coloured' people of the colonies, particularly the South Asians, including Indians. It limited immigration to those 'primary immigrants' who were issued job vouchers in one of the three 'priority categories' - those having a job offer in Britain to come to, those possessing special skills that were scarce in Britain, or those eligible for an undifferentiated numerical quota based on the 'labour needs' of the British economy. Subsequently, the government endorsed a White Paper that became the basis of a restrictive bipartisan approach to immigration based on skills. It curbed the entry of semiskilled and unskilled Indians, although there was the loophole of family-reunification clause that favoured the immigration of Indian Sikhs over other South Asian communities like the Mirpuris and Kashmiris from West Pakistan, or the Sylhetis from East Pakistan. The priority job-voucher category of immigrants entering Britain for the first time from 1965 onwards, and the new south Asian families accompanying them were mostly professionals - the doctors, dentists, research scientists and so on - drawn from the whole of India rather than just the few traditional areas in the Punjab and Gujarat.

In addition, highly skilled and professional Indians displaced from East Africa in the late 1960s and early 1970s, often called the 'twice banished', added to the profile of the highly qualified Indian diaspora in the UK. When nationalization and Africanisation intensified in the newly independent countries of East-Africa, — Tanganyika in 1961, Uganda in 1962, and Kenya in 1963 — these Indians faced the choice of either local or British citizenship. When the number of East African Asians entering the UK swelled in 1968, it caused the British government to think crisis, and enact the second Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1968. Being rushed through the Parliament in only three days, it subjected all holders of the British passports to immigration controls unless they themselves, a parent or a grandparent had been born, adopted or naturalized in the UK. This Act of the British is

considered as the 'most dishonourable conduct in the history of dishonourable conduct in immigration policy'. It was a straightforward tool for denying the civil rights to, amongst others, East African Indians, without disenfranchising the numerous 'white' people of British origin settled outside Britain in the 'old' dominions and in Southern Rhodesia, Kenya and Argentina.

The British policy on East African Asian immigration was as indefensible as it proved to be irrational from a practical, British self-interest point of view. Collectively, the East African Indians were a well-educated, materially successful diaspora group, comprising extremely high proportion of entrepreneurs and professionally qualified people. In signalling plainly that they were unwelcome in Britain, apart from getting into dispute with India, the British government managed to expose its international naivety by diverting to Canada many of those who were capable of making a choice, namely the richest and the best educated. On the domestic front too, the 1968 Act, which was meant to strengthen the bipartisan British approach to immigration based on immigrant skills was rather criticised by Enoch Powell's 'rivers of blood' speech as being too generous to the coloured immigrants including the Indians. As the Ugandan Asian Crisis unfolded in 1972, the exodus of Indians from Uganda followed the same broad pattern as movement from Kenya and Tanganyika in the decade following independence. When the expulsion was first announced in August 1972, it affected Ugandan residents of Asian descent who were either citizens of the UK or one of the countries of the Indian sub-continent. The Edward Heath government's rallying with other prosperous countries resulted in about 23,000 Ugandan Asians, majority of them Indians, comprising the best qualified, migrating to other countries, particularly to Canada. Only about 29,000 Ugandan Asians arrived in the UK. Over time, the British voucher scheme became tighter, and the numbers of vouchers actually issued were gradually reduced by new rules and acts of nationality and immigration that came into force. This was the time when the lifting of discriminatory restrictions and relaxation of numerical quotas in other developed countries of the North, for migrants coming from the developing countries of the South, had begun like a trend, thus undermining the British policy of whitewashing Britain and with it the West.

14.3 Lifting of Restrictions in the New World and Antipodes

Prior to the Second World War, anti-Asian sentiment was the characteristic of immigration policy in North America too. In Canada, an Order of 1947 allowed landing for non-immigrants who had served in the Armed Forces, and who were honourably discharged, provided they were not persons of Asiatic origin. However, the changing composition of the Commonwealth exerted its influence on the Canadian government. After the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru visited Canada, Indo-Canadians were granted the right to vote. The explicitly racist provisions in the Immigration Act were changed, lest Canada's image abroad as a humane and peace-loving country got tarnished. In 1962, new regulations to the Act were introduced, prohibiting the use of race, colour, and national origin as criteria for the selection of immigrants, and the points system that followed facilitated increasing immigration of the skilled, educated and qualified Indians. Australia too gave up its 'white Australian policy' in the 1960s, and followed the path of Canada in attracting talent of the non-white Indians, New Zealand going even further on liberalization of immigration.

In the United States, until the second world war, Indian immigration was mainly characterized by the presence of illiterate labourers - those working on the Pacific coast lumber mills, docks etc. But there were also a few educated Indians, who were political refugees or students. For example, amongst the students who were organizing Indians against the British rule in India were the son of the Maharaja of Baroda at Harvard and the son of Rabindranath Tagore at Illinois. In fact, Tagore had himself visited the U.S. and praised America for its international leadership. But he later denounced the Asian exclusions and refused to return to the US because of 'utter lack of freedom' there. After the war, things changed. Roosevelt himself, as President of the US, wrote to the chairman of the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, supporting the withdrawal of barriers before a bill was moved in the House, saying, 'Statutory discrimination against Indians now serve no useful purpose and [is] incongruous and inconsistent with the dignity of both our peoples'. The bill resulted in the 1946 amendments to the US Immigration Act, which ended almost 30 years of exclusion of Indians by setting an annual number of 100 as their national quota. All this was partly a sequel to the lifting of barriers against the Chinese immigrants in 1943, but a more immediate objective was perhaps to ameliorate the growing antagonism of Indians towards American troops that were still stationed in India after the War had ended. The small beginning was consolidated further by the visit of the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to the US in October 1949, hastening change from the earlier phase of Indian immigration to the US, which comprised mainly the unskilled workers, culminating with the 1965 amendments to the Act which finally opened the gates for absorbing the highly skilled and the professional Indians. In the three decades that followed, Indians acquired the status of being amongst the highest-educated, highly-professional and highest-earning model minority ethnic groups in the US. The umbilical cord of colonial legacy that Indians had long nurtured with Britain was thus eventually snapped, first when Canada and subsequently the United States of America in the 'New World' became the final destination of the migrating Indian professional masses through the 1960s and 1970s, there being a scramble for them amongst the other developed countries in the West and the East alike at the turn of century, ironically including the Great Britain too. The largely unskilled and semiskilled migrants too found a new destination in the newly developing oil-rich countries of the gulf in West Asia, and a large number of Indians went there as temporary construction workers, followed by some professionals as well.

Reflection and Action 14.1

1. What are some of the restrictive immigration policies that UK adopted to limit the entry of South Asians?
2. What were the reasons for massive migration of Indians to USA, Australia and New Zealand during 1960s and 1970s?

14.4. Immigration of Third-Country Nationals (TCNs) in the European Union

In Europe, the principle of free movement within the EU was extended to the almost ten million third-country nationals (TCNs, i.e. workers from outside the Union) in possession of a specific residence status in a Member State. A March 1996 Council Resolution allows permanently resident TCNs in one Member State to get either a ten-year or an unlimited residence permit in another Member State. In February 1999, the European Commission, the Union's executive body, tabled two new proposals for a Directive

governing the movement of TCNs employed in services sectors within the Union territory. The first proposal provides for creating an “EC service provision card” for EU-based enterprises in services sectors, permitting the service providers to transfer their non-EU national employees from one Member State to another simply by a declaration to authorities within the destination country. The second proposal would provide the self-employed third-country nationals with the freedom to provide services throughout the Union territory, provided they are legally established as self-employed persons in a particular Member State. The EC service provision card would also allow for the temporary movement of self-employed third-country nationals.

Beginning with the coming into force in May 1999, the Amsterdam Treaty also promised to promote the free-movement and employment rights of third-country nationals. In particular, the centralized European institutions, like the European Commission and the Council of Ministers, were given clear mandate to enact policies directly affecting the migration of non-EU nationals, thus paving the way for eventually abandoning the practice of leaving the entry, stay, movement, and employment of third-country nationals to a diverse, and sometimes inconsistent range of national policies within the EU. Further, the Amsterdam Treaty extended the TEC anti-discrimination clause to encompass all forms of discrimination on account of racial or ethnic origin, religion, age, sex, disability, or sexual orientation, thereby in principle covering the third-country nationals in its fold. However, despite such treaties, harmonization and homogenization of immigration policies affecting the entry and stay of TCNs across countries of the EU are yet to take place, although many countries like Germany, France, Denmark, and the Netherlands etc. are already in the fray to attract Indian talent.

14.5 Typology of Issue-based Emigration Policies in Origin Countries

Sending countries like India have from time to time adopted policies designed to counter the exploitation of their citizens abroad and/or the draining of their valuable human resources that takes place through growing emigration. These can be grouped into four broad issue based policy types: restrictive, compensatory, restorative and developmental. India has experimented with almost all of them at various points in time, as mentioned below.

Restrictive policies

India generally does not have a restrictive policy for emigration of highly educated, trained and experienced personnel. From time to time various restrictive measures to contain the problem of brain drain have been conceived, but there has never been a consensus except in the case of the medical sector – where India had certain restrictions. There is a history of three decades of restrictive policies for medical education abroad. It started initially with the objective of controlling foreign exchange outflow and optimum use of facilities in India. Later the rationale was to regulate the out-migration of doctors and derive the benefits of highly subsidised medical education provided to them for the country's poor.

Here too, these policies had originated more as India's *quid pro quo* response to the highly restrictive US regulations for entry of medical personnel into the US geo-economic sphere. India's restrictive emigration policy had been basically aimed to protect the uneducated and unskilled emigrants, and for this a Protectorate of Emigrants has been regulating the flow of worker emigration, and looking after the interests of this section of the Indian diaspora abroad.

Compensatory policies

One can mention the well-known Bhagwati-proposal of 1976, which proposed to tax the brain drain for creating a development fund that would benefit the developing countries losing their skilled labour to the developed world (Bhagawati and Partington, 1976). However, it could not be tested due to problems of multilateral jurisdiction across countries. In India, there is no formal compensatory mechanism to compensate for the losses that the country incurs because of migration. There is a policy in terms of incentives being offered to the NRIs for sending funds to India through the official channels – remittances, investments in bank deposits, occasionally floated development bonds like Millennium Development Bond, securities of Indian companies, joint ventures and so on. Most of the incentives are in the form of higher rates of interest and lower rates of taxes for the NRIs as compared to their counterpart residents in India. In fact, the term ‘non-resident’ was coined for the purpose of extending tax concessions to temporary visitors abroad, so that they were not subjected to double taxation – once in the host country and again in India. Most of these schemes have attracted financial transfers to India, but at a huge social cost. In fact, very recently India lowered these differentials in interest rates to stop the rampant use of arbitrage and money laundering by some members of the diaspora.

Restorative policies

Restorative policies are aimed at encouraging return migration to the home country, either permanently or temporarily on specific assignments. The best known international scheme under this category has been the TOKTEN, launched by the UNDP in many countries. In India, however, the scheme has been quite ineffective – due to poor operationalisation. Private industrial establishments were encouraged to offer placements to the returning/visiting NRIs in their R&D units under the scheme, but private firms were frustrated and disillusioned with the functioning of the TOKTEN-INRIST (Transfer of Knowledge and Technology through Expatriate Nationals - Interface for Non-Resident Indian Scientists & Technologists) programme in India. So was the fate of the “Pool Officers Scheme”, also launched by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) of the Government of India, and meant for permanent returnees to India. The University Grants Commission had started a ‘Research Scientist’ scheme to attract Indian scientists from abroad with offers of placement in Indian universities at levels parallel to lecturer, reader and professor in the early 1980s, with substantial research grants in addition to their salaries. The scheme took-off well, but ran into trouble because of the dilution of standards by accommodating unemployed scholars from within India and that too across all disciplines. It also led to dichotomies in the universities. The UGC too had a budget constraint, and the scheme was finally withdrawn some time in the mid-nineties.

Developmental policies

Developmental policies are not specifically aimed at brain drain or labour exodus *per se*, but supposedly at the causes of mass emigration in terms of bridging the development gap between the developing home country and the developed destination country. However, these policies have remained as attention-drawing promises made by political parties in their election manifestos, with no follow up whatsoever, if the party came to power. Of late, however, the Indian judiciary has begun taking the government to task for non-performance on promises made, e.g. in the case of the universal primary education until the age of 14. Examples are the proposals for the setting up of ‘science parks’ where wages will be comparable to international

standards and working conditions will not be repressive, Export Processing Zones (EPZs) where tariff barriers will not exist for undertaking certain production activities, and so on.

14.6 Policy Negotiations Affecting South Asian Migration: Multilateral, Regional, Bilateral, and Unilateral Initiatives

Multilateral Initiatives

When it comes to operational policy making and implementation affecting South Asian and the Indian diaspora, the stakeholders in the field of international migration are mainly two: countries or the region of emigration, and the countries or regions of immigration. It is in this context that the policy negotiations by the stakeholders are driven by the key trends and issues amongst the diasporas. The policy negotiations could be seen to have been taking place at the various levels: multilateral amongst most countries of the world, regional among the countries of the South Asian region, bilateral between any two countries of the region, and unilateral by any single country in the region.

At the multilateral level, the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) under the framework of World Trade Organization (WTO) is the most prominent current forum that involves policy negotiations directly affecting international migration. (There are other multilateral fora, like the ILO under the UN system, or the IOM outside the UN system, which directly deal with various aspects of international migration) Of the four modes of trade in services, the First Mode, which is called 'Consumption Abroad', involves the diasporic students migrating abroad for education, a predominant form that now comes under trade in educational services. I have pointed out elsewhere that the rising competition for foreign students, due not only to economic reasons but also because of the aging structure of the population in the developed countries, has been accompanied by initiatives in the marketing of higher education institutions. Such initiatives, sponsored by destination-country governments, universities, or private firms, include dissemination of information on the institutions recruiting students. For example, the so-called 'education fairs' are one of the most common mechanisms used by governments and institutions of the destination countries, either directly or through education marketing agencies, to attract the South Asian students. Similarly, the Fourth Mode, 'Presence of Natural Persons', refers to the 'freedom' for workers in countries of origin to move to other countries to provide services through temporary stay, not well defined but roughly for six to ten years period. The two modes of trade in services are thus supposed to cover international migration of people described as 'natural persons' (as opposed to 'juridical persons', which are the trading firms and companies). The scope here is limited to movement to and presence on foreign soil, of the 'natural persons', primarily for (a) the purpose of consuming or providing a service rather than goods, and (b) temporary stay rather than permanent residency.

For negotiating international migration of students and workers at the multilateral level, South Asian countries like India are better off in following a holistic approach rather than a piecemeal approach. Under such an approach of trade in 'human services', international migration could be described as 'Movement of Embodied Human Capital', comprising Modes I and IV in the GATS jargon, and thus incorporating the international migration of students, teachers and professionals from a developing country rich in

these endowments, like those on the Indian subcontinent, to the developed continents like the north America, Europe, and Australia under a single umbrella. The counterpart, what I would call the 'Movement of Disembodied Human Capital', primarily covers Modes II and III, respectively by way of large-scale 'Cross-border Supply' of the online courses and material through the Internet, and face-to-face supply of education by way of offshore 'Commercial Presence' of foreign universities and campuses of the developed countries in countries of South Asia.

The short-term implication of proliferation of foreign universities and their curriculum in developing countries of South Asia could be a simple gainful trade in a service. But the long-term implications could be indeterminate. In the long run, it may lead to at least two revelations: First could be a rise in the brain drain as the educational ethos and values of the students and their parents get guided by an *ex ante* choice in favour of pursuing that education, content-wise, which is likely to get internationalized in the labour markets of the developed countries. Such an impact has, in fact, been visible at least in India lately, for example, through a shift in the choice of the 'majors', by students entering the senior secondary schooling (after class X) and colleges in favour of subjects like commerce and marketable languages, and away from the sciences or social sciences over the last decade. In the post-graduate courses too, there has been a definite shift towards the business studies and away from the general university education. Secondly, there hinges the large-scale infrastructure sustenance of the universities, the polytechnics, and other institutions of higher education in a developed negotiating country at the cost of those in the developing countries through a period of domestic recession in the former.

The paradox here is between the short-run and the long-run implications. In the short-run, it seems the global physical presence of diaspora students, teachers, and professionals abroad would be gainful for the home countries in terms of employment, income, remittances and so on, but the long-run implications could be manifold. One could be the erosion, qualitative if not quantitative, of these countries' capability to produce the kind of professionals, the doctors or even the teachers who train the very professionals or doctors that the world would like to import in future. Another could be a simple domestic shortage of the professionals possessing generic skills applicable in all types of knowledge generating and research activities. A third could be the infrastructural challenge of hedging against the vulnerabilities of the supply and demand mismatches when there are frequent changes in the immigration policies of the developed receiving countries.

One also must understand that the universities, the teachers, and the students that together make the educational service, are the inputs in the production of another intermediate input - the commodity producers or service providers; they are not similar to the final products that other services like banking, shipping, insurance, or telecommunications produce. Given this dichotomy, the paradox between factor-endowment and factor-use inherent in student and teacher mobility as a form of trade in education services must be recognized and taken care of in the new knowledge paradigm that may emerge by the joint efforts of the destination countries and the South Asian countries of origin at the GATS negotiations.

Secondly, along with mobility of embodied human capital, what needs to be looked into even more carefully are the policies that determine the *content* and the *curriculum* of disembodied human capital the foreign universities

supply through cross-border supply and commercial presence in developing countries of South Asia. It is crucial to make sure that these are geared towards the current needs and future requirements of capacity building in these developing countries rather than concentration of future global knowledge in the developed countries.

Regional, Bilateral, and Sub-regional Initiatives

There are regional and bilateral efforts of cooperation amongst the South Asian countries but none of these have explicitly covered the area of international migration, whether intra-regionally or with other regions, and countries of the world. There have been important issues touching upon the elements of international migration in the region, e.g., the issue of developing a network of fairly developed transport infrastructure amongst the member countries to facilitate better mobility of goods and people; or of biotechnology, which is a frontier area of choice for a career. However, perhaps the slow pace of trade liberalization itself under the SAARC regional framework has kept any direct reference to the issue of international migration from being taken up for policy. Going beyond a South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) after 2010, the SAARC has set before itself a bold vision for all member countries to form a South Asian Customs Union by 2015, and South Asian Economic Union by 2020. There are also the prospects of a Monetary Union with a common currency, which will have a bearing on intra-regional mobility of the people of South Asia. The actual progress on these fronts has however been far from steady.

In the area of trade and investment liberalization, the South Asian region has been seen to be more intensive in bilateral linkages than regional, and this is being interpreted as a response of the member states to a rather slow progress under the SAARC framework (IRS 2004, p.52). The bilateral Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) between India-Bhutan, India-Nepal, and India-Sri Lanka are in place; while India-Bangladesh, and Pakistan-Sri Lanka are in the process; and Bangladesh-Pakistan, and Maldives-Sri Lanka are at the contemplating stage. India and Pakistan have also got into a trade and investment cooperation agreement, but it is the bilateral negotiations on political boundary matters and cross-border terrorism that have overshadowed such issues.

Two sub-regional initiatives involving South Asian countries have also complemented the regional and bilateral initiatives. These are Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal Growth Quadrilateral Initiative (BBINGQ), and Bangladesh-India-Myanmar-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), the latter involving two member countries of ASEAN, and thus forming a bridge between SAARC and ASEAN.

The most recent sub-regional initiative of EU-India Strategic partnership portends the larger role that India aspires to play in world affairs (Editorial, ET 11 Nov. 2004). India is the sixth country to conclude a strategic partnership with the EU - the others being USA, Canada, China, Russia and Japan. Pre-WTO Summit consultations are planned. It would substantially widen India's international platform. Meanwhile, even the 25-member EU might use India's advantage with the economic integration in South, and South-East Asia. Ireland and India are two of the biggest software exporters, and intellectual property right (IPR) consultations are planned. The EU will need to cooperate to realise India's competitive advantage in a variety of high-value services when these are opened up for trade. India may ask Brussels to truly level the playing fields for all. For Indian IT majors, the India-EU business roundtable is yet another platform to deliberate issues that make the

movement of IT professionals difficult (ET, Nov. 11, 2004). The EU has, despite a few relaxations, tough immigration laws. Industry experts in India are of the opinion that stringent immigration norms for Indian professionals are to blame for Indian ITs not contributing to its potential in the EU. The mobility of IT professionals within the EU member-countries is hampered by the current work permit procedures. Residence permits, which in some parts of the EU are prerequisite for work permits, are often difficult to obtain. Often applicants have to produce birth and marriage certificates, which can be difficult. The industry would like a waiver of these requirements for IT professionals, who are on short-term assignments. Not only are the procedures tedious and tough ; they also differ from country to country. Indian IT industry would paddle for uniform processes that may apply throughout the EU. Given the demand for IT workers, there is also talk of getting IT skills listed as a 'shortage' profession. This would bypass the need by EU employers to certify that the positions cannot be filled locally before foreign skilled workers are employed. Other immigration issues to be pursued from the business round-table include the need to do away with the pre-employment requirements for obtaining work visas. The stringent norms for entry and exit for software professionals, as well as wage parity are also likely to be taken up. On the taxation front, the social security policies would come up for negotiations. The industry would like a waiver of the social security taxes for the short-term IT professionals. The percentage taxed as social security is high in the EU, whereas most Indian IT professionals would not enjoy the benefits of these taxes.

Unilateral Initiatives

In Bangladesh, the governments have been more proactive in negotiating with foreign governments and major employers for their share of the labour market for expatriate labour. The Bangladesh government set up Bangladesh Overseas Employment Services Ltd. Similarly, Pakistan had established its Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment in 1971 which worked through labour attaches in the Middle East and a network of about 500 private licensed agents processing state to state labour contracts. In India, private recruitment agents operate within the structure of the Protectorate of Emigrants mentioned earlier. India has only recently institutionalised state capacity to respond to the crises, which lead to the repatriation of its citizens. These more proactive policies towards migration were developed following the repatriation of several thousand returnees from UAE to Kerala during the Gulf War. At the provincial government level, the Kerala state government set up a separate department to look at the problems of non-resident Keralites, their welfare and investment facilities in 1996. At the national level, the Report of High-level Committee on Indian Diaspora led to Indian government's conscious efforts in building cultural, political and economic links with the PIOs (Persons of Indian Origin) and the NRIs (Non Resident Indians). As a follow-up, the government also declared the annual celebration of a 'Bharatiya Pravasi Divas' (The Indian Expatriates Day) on 9th January from 2003 onwards. About the same time as the report was submitted, the recognition of the importance of Indian IT professionals and their migration had led to the creation of the Ministry of Information Technology, which along with NASSCOM deals with the issues concerning the Indian IT professionals' migration to other countries. Subsequently, the national government has constituted a separate ministry, the Ministry of Overseas Indians Affairs, with a full cabinet minister to look after the issues relating to the Indian expatriates abroad. The ministry has programmes and projects at the multilateral, regional, bilateral, and unilateral level.

Irrespective of the various levels where policies related to migration are adopted by the South Asian countries, what is important for both the countries of origin and destination in this context is to be able to distinguish and identify the ‘painful’ from the ‘gainful’ aspects of international migration in migration management. Being aware of these tasks and the responsibility involved, the countries of origin need to make use of these in their ‘give and take’ strategy. They need to gear up to press for international norms in the multilateral negotiations of the GATS around the issue of movement of natural persons as service providers under trade, which is just another description for promoting the temporary entry of migrants. The vulnerability of the migrants as well as the trends is the key aspect that need be taken out of international migration, whether as part of trade in services or otherwise, whether of the illiterate labourer or the highly skilled professional.

Reflection and Action 14.2

1. What are the implications if foreign universities were to be set up in India?
2. Explain what you understand by unilateral initiatives? Elucidate your answer with examples of some unilateral initiatives that affect migration of people.
3. What are some of the policy negotiations initiated under GATS by WTO which has implications for international migration?

14.7 Policy Changes in India and the World: Lessons to Be Learnt

Although there exists a 1983 law regulating emigration of the unskilled from India, the country has been no well-defined *immigration* rule or law per se, either for the skilled or the unskilled. Provisions regarding entry, regulation and prevention of ‘foreigners’ into India and Indian citizenship are found in the Constitution, the Citizenship Act 1955, the Foreigners Act 1946, the Passport Act 1967, the Criminal Procedure Code and other regulations. However, the Overseas Indian Citizenship (OIC) - the dual citizenship promised to the Indian diaspora by the Indian government in 2005 and conferred in 2006 is an important landmark in redefining the contours of *immigration policy* in the new millennium - not merely for India but for an ‘interconnected’ world as well. For the Indian diaspora in the Gulf - those who send large remittances back home but can never hope to become naturalized citizens of those countries because of restrictive regimes there, the Indian government announced at the fourth Pravasi Bhartiya Divas which took place in 2006 that their demand for voting rights to be exercised from abroad was under serious consideration.

The policy of dual citizenship and the promise of a consideration to grant overseas voting rights by India to the Indian diaspora gain added importance in the wake of the Report of the Global Commission on International Migration, submitted to the UN Secretary-General in October 2005, and titled as “*Migration in an Interconnected World: New Directions for Action*”. In laying down a new roadmap for action, the Report recognizes that “International migration has risen to the top of the global policy agenda.” But the Report also concludes that “*the international community has failed to capitalize on the opportunities and meet the challenges associated with it, and therefore new approaches are required to correct the situation*” (emphasis added). The Commission concludes that “if the benefits of international migration are to be maximized and its adverse consequences minimized, then migration policies should be based on shared objectives

and a common vision." A first-ever emphasis that the report has made is to state that "*the traditional distinction between skilled and unskilled workers is in certain respects an unhelpful one, as it fails to do justice to the complexity of international migration....* While they may have different levels of educational achievement, all of them could be legitimately described as *essential workers*" (emphasis added).

The vulnerability of migrants is not limited to unskilled people. The system ensures that all migrants are kept exposed to vulnerability of one kind or the other, as it provides continuity and flexibility to the labour market in terms of a 'safety valve'. Therefore, attention to policy protection cannot be limited to the correction of specific situations. It must question the system that continues to produce situations of exploitation. For one reason or the other, the policy discourse in migration stops at the legislation of recommendations; when it comes to prescription of the laws and procedures, the entire focus is on how to stop the exploitation of the migrants, mostly irregular and illegal migrants, in the hands of the vested interest groups operating in the migration space. Enough has been said about such exploitation, and about the loopholes in the policies for effectively combating such exploitation - be it because of 'feminization, privatization, or regionalization', the three contemporary features of labour migration the ILO identifies as not being adequately provided for in the ILO Labour Conventions or national immigration laws - challenging traditional efforts to regulate migration. The systemic vulnerability that is generated in the developing home countries of legal migrants begins one step earlier, in the practical implementation stage of policy: Literally at the doorsteps of the foreign consulates that issue the visas or the entry permits for the migrants' entry into their countries. The humiliating experience that the so-called 'off-white' people (the ladies, the elderly, and the gentlemen alike) of the so-called 'third-world' (erstwhile) are more often than not subjected to in their own lands by the 'whites' and their 'brown sahibs' manning the consulates takes place only because that had never been a "white man's disease". The indignation of queuing up in a hostile environment - natural as well as man-made - outside the gate of the consulates in South Asia is degrading enough for many of these migrants to become vulnerable to any kind of misbehaviour, insult, threat, and exploitation that could be in store in the new land or on the way to it. The migrant could be utterly alone and vulnerable to the uncharted contours of a journey, which is made further uncertain by the frequently changing policies, legislation, quotas, and the practices of the so-called "migration management" in the destination countries. Stability of policy, and dignity in the practice of that policy are perhaps two key elements which would go a long way in making migration policy 'user-friendly' not only in a developing country like India but equally in all other spaces too.

14.8 Conclusions

In this unit we tried to present you the complexities involved in what seemingly seems like a simple thing as migration of people, looking for better life. The policies that are adopted by countries, between countries and regions, as well as by bodies such as UN or WTO have wider implications for migration and immigration. We also tried to critically evaluate the specific policies by giving you examples and substantiating these policies we have discussed. When examining some of these policies from political and economic point of view, we find that the worst affected from policies of emigration and immigration are the semi- and unskilled workers who do not have the same bargaining power as the skilled white

collar workers. The other aspect which comes to fore is that the basic power politics between the advanced north-the Western countries- and the underprivileged south-the third world countries. However, in this new globalised world and where telecommunication and its many aspects are coming to fore there is new shifts in international labour markets. In our next unit we will discuss very specifically the India's initiatives regarding its diaspora, we will discuss various polices and state initiatives.

14.9 Further Reading

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Unit 15

Indian State and Diaspora

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- 15.1 Introduction
- 15.2 Pre-Independence Era: Legacy of Mahatma Gandhi
- 15.3 Evolution of Nehru's Policy
- 15.4 Testing the Pro-Diaspora Policies of 1970s and 80s
- 15.5 Pro-Active Interest of the Indian State Towards the Diaspora
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- 15.7 Further Reading

Learning Objectives

After reading this unit you will be able to:

- Get a comprehensive view of the policies and views of the Indian state
- Trace the evolution of these policies
- Critically evaluate the changing nature of India's stand on its diaspora.

15.1 Introduction

There are more than 20 million People of Indian Origin (PIO) spread in 136 countries. They immigrated into different bursts and different capacities. The bulk of Indian migration took place during colonial period. The previous small-scale movement of Indian people turned into mass migration. They went broadly under three different capacities - (i) the indentured worker in sugar colonies of Caribbean, Oceania and Africa (Tinker, 1969), (ii) Under Kangani / maistry system to Malaysia, Burma or Myanmar and Ceylon or Sri Lanka (Sadhu, 1964), (iii) and free or passenger Indians primarily in East Africa (Ghai, 1971). The free Indians (called Passenger Indian) went in small number to many other places as well. During second half of 20th century, Indian emigrated as skilled and semi-skilled workers to (i) Europe, North America and Oceania and (ii) the Middle East.

There are several basis on which Indian Diaspora is classified. The Old Diaspora is referred to all those who went before independence of India and New Diaspora to those who went after independence. The People of Indian Origin (PIO) are referred to those who have undertaken local citizenship whether from the New or Old Diaspora and those Indian overseas who still have Indian passport are called Non-Resident Indians (NRI). The entire population of Indian origin in the West Asian countries is of NRI category. There are PIOs in different countries like in the Caribbean, Africa, Fiji etc who have re-migrated after a few generations to Europe, North America or to Australia and they are called Twice Migrants.

This unit would study the changes and continuity in the evolution of Indian policy towards Indian Diaspora. It will examine the imperatives, experiences, experiments and exercises of Government of India to engage Indian Diaspora since time of India's freedom struggle to the new hyperactive Indian policy which unfolded in 1990s and continues till now.

15.2 Pre-Independence Era: Legacy of Mahatma Gandhi

The initial response of India on Indian Diaspora was directed towards PIOs. South African Indians, for whom Mahatma Gandhi struggled in South Africa, whose cause India took to the UN even before becoming independent and sacrificed its substantial trade relations, South Africa was a very special issue for India. Discriminatory treatment in racially structured society of South Africa had drawn Mahatma Gandhi into active politics when he had gone to South Africa in late 19th century. Later, Indian nationalists of all shades had demanded improvement in working and living conditions of Indians settled abroad. Indian settlers protest began to be articulated in East Africa also. East African Indian National Congress, based on the model of the Indian National Congress was founded in 1914. A.M. Jeevanjee had started voicing the grievances of Indian settlers in East Africa. He had gone to the extent of advocating “the annexation of African territory” (Tangynika) to the Indian Empire” arguing that it had been an Asiatic kingdom in ancient times” (Jeevanji, 1912). Indians in Africa formed middle section in three-tier society, the whites at top and the blacks at the bottom. However, their presence was more apparent to Africans as they came directly in contact with them through their retail shops and business. At the same time, they were aggressive in commercial sector. Similarly in Mauritius and Fiji, Mahatma Gandhi had sent Manilal Doctor while coming back from South Africa to mobilise them for education and advising them to give very high importance to educate their children (Tinker, 1974). But more importantly he advised them to actively participate in local politics and demand legitimate share in the governance and economy of their new home. Indians also used nationalism to mobilise the Indian Diaspora around the world to get Indian independence. They were exhorted to identify with the Indian cause as ‘only a free India could hope to protect and safeguard their interest’. Since most of them were taken under a coercive colonial rule they were visualised by Gandhi as a segment of emerging Indian independence where they will share the socio cultural space within India. Therefore, it was a policy of identification and association but it was by and large Gandhi’s own view. Nehru who since 1930 became official in-charge of foreign policy of India within Indian National Congress had different views.

15.3 Evolution of Nehru’s Policy

Nehru, who became the first Prime Minister of India, had long ago visualised the clash of interests of Indians overseas and local inhabitants. Nehru took up the cause of Indian diaspora, he was not the only one though: Sapru, Shastri, Kunzru, Maharaj Singh, among others, were actively involved for the cause of the Indian diaspora. Though Nehru was more involved with Indians who had migrated to Burma, Malaya and Srilanka, it was he who was responsible for evolving Indian’s policy towards the Indians settled abroad including those in the Caribbean and Africa. In 1927 when he was appointed the secretary of All India Congress Committee (AICC), a body of the Indian National Congress (INC), - he prepared a paper ‘A Foreign Policy of India’ for AICC. In this paper, for the first time, he categorically outlined the policy of INC regarding Indian settlers in other colonial countries, the role India wanted them to play in their country of adoption and the kind of support they could expect from India. He asked in the paper, “what is the position of Indians of foreign countries to-day?”. He said that Indian overseas went as “a hireling of exploiter” i.e. British government and he wanted this position to be changed. He suggested at other place that “an Indian who goes to other countries must co-operate with people of that country and win for himself a position by friendship and service... The Indians should

co-operate with Africans and help them, as far as possible and not claim a special position for themselves" (Selected Works of Jawahar Lal Nehru, 1972: 353, 368).

However, this was not a consensus view of INC. Another stream of the Congress comprising of C.F. Andrew, Srinivas Shastri and H.N. Kunzru, M.M. Malaviya, B.G. Gokhale were mainly concerned with discrimination of Indians in Africa and other places and wanted for them a parity with White settlers. Many of them visited workers recruitment centres and talked to them about problems.

The agitation of Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa was also confined to the betterment of Indian settlers cause. In succeeding years, the issue of discrimination of Indians in South Africa became a sentimental issue for Indian nationalists, as Mahatma Gandhi was very closely associated with it. Nehru represented left wing of Congress. He differed with the conservative wing whose demand was confined only for betterment of Indian overseas. Nehru believed in co-operation between Indians and Africans, however until late 1940, his sympathy and worry were also confined, only for Indians in South Africa. This contrasted with his general policy of Indian support to combined struggle of Indian settlers and Africans in which African cause was paramount. Nehru's special support to Indian settlers in South Africa was very obvious. In a message to INC of South Africa, Nehru wrote in 1939, "India is weak today and can not do much for her children abroad but she does not forget them and every insult to them is a humiliation and sorrow for her. And a day will come when her long arm will shelter and protect them and *her strength will compel justice for them* (Ibid:618). " It is this duality between Nehru's policy and the presence of two wings (conservative and left) in Congress, which help us to understand the change and continuities in Indian support to Indian settlers in Africa. However, by early 1950's it was Nehru policy towards East African Indians that ultimately prevailed even in South Africa and other countries.

Congress had set up an overseas department in 1929 and a slender contact was established with local Congress organisations in South and East Africa. Nehru took over foreign relations when an interim nationalist government was formed under him on 2 September 1946. He took the issue of Indians' discrimination in South Africa beyond Commonwealth to United Nations. After independence, Nehru expressed his views on the position of Indians in Africa and other places. Speaking in the Constituent Assembly on 8th March 1948 he said, "Now these Indians abroad what are they? Are they Indian citizen - are they going to be citizen of India or not? If they are not, then our interest in them becomes cultural, humanitarian and not political... Either they get the franchise of the nationals of the other country or treat them as Indian minus franchise and ask for them the most favourable treatment given to an alien". He advised Indian immigrants, "If you can not be, and if you are not friendly to the people of that country, come back to India and do not spoil the fair name of India (Ibid:618)."

Nehru made it clear in 1950, "In many parts of Africa-East, West, South-there are considerable number of Indians, mostly business people. Our definite instructions to them and to our agent in Africa are that they must always put the interest of indigenous populations first. We want to have no vested interests at the expense of the population of those countries" (Chhabra, 1978:15). He emphasised the same view repeatedly. He said about Indians abroad, "if they adopt the nationality of that country we have no concern with them. Sentimental concern there is, but politically

they cease to be Indian national (India's Foreign Policy-1946-61, 1957:130). Nehru asserted in 1953, "About Africa and Indians there, I may tell you, the policy we have pursued for many years.... We have told them very definitely and precisely that we as government do not encourage or support them in anything they might want and which goes against the interests of the Africans. We have made that perfectly clear (Chhabra, 1978:15)". Nehru was very clear that any overt move by the Indian government for PIOs would do more harm than good to them. He was not against people to people contacts or non-governmental association. Nevertheless, Nehru also talked about double loyalty of Indians overseas. "During Indo-Chinese war India welcomed contributions from Asians of East Africa to help boost its defence efforts. When questioned on this Nehru told to a foreign journalist that "Indians overseas have dual loyalty, one to their country of adoption and other to their country of origin" (Gupta, 1974:134). Further India deplored it as an act of disloyalty when it found that Asians were selling and promoting Chinese made goods at the cost of Indian goods.

Though Nehru stood for primacy of Africans if their interest was to clash with Indian settlers, however, when Asian Relation Conference was organised, two South African Indian leaders – Y.M. Dadoo and GM Naicker were invited but there was no black participants from South Africa. Even during Nehru's prime ministership when question of racism in South Africa was taken up in U.N., it was only the case of Indians discrimination in South Africa that was India's concern, though soon India had to change its policy to include black Africans also. This caused great misgiving in Africans (see Dubey, 1968). Between 1960-66 the gulf between India and Indian settlers abroad widened as India came to believe that Indians were more of an obstacle than an assets in its diplomatic relations with Africa. After the Chinese attack, it seemed a matter of smaller consequences if PIOs were to face some degree of discrimination.

When Nehru formulated India's position on Indians overseas, most of the countries in the Third World were under colonial rule. Before independence the Indian concern about the treatment of Indian settlers abroad was with the intention of making British rulers of our country responsible for the welfare of overseas Indians and securing for them fair treatment and justice in relation to White settlers. The assumption that such responsibility continued was occasionally expressed in parliament and press. Immediately after India's independence, Government of India was not in a position to assist for full justice to Indian settlers. Moreover, the leaders of white settlers in Kenya and South Africa had seen Indian independence as a threat to British rule in Africa. They called Nehru as a Hindu communist who wanted to replace European rule by Indians. Their propaganda about Indian sinister design on African colonies where Indians were in substantial number, and the image of Indian settlers in Africa as an exclusive community whose only interest in Africa was economic exploitation, made Indian leaders very sensitive on the question of Indians overseas. The condition of Indian migrants in neighbouring countries like Burma, Malaysia, Uganda were ignored. Since Ceylon was very close to India, some protests and noise were made during Nehru's time also. India protested against Citizenship Act of Ceylon, which was disqualifying the PIOs. It was long and protracted involvement, though somewhat in subtle ways that PIO issue was kept in bilateral relation between two countries. In fact the problems of PIOs in different countries were so diverse, the positioning and status so different and the reach of India so varied that a nascent Indian state did not find itself equipped and strong enough to address the diaspora issues head on, besides this, Nehru had other priorities like mobilisation of Afro Asian

countries to keep them away from cold war rivalries. For such mobilisation, the issue of PIO was not to be emphasised in Africa.

Nehru's policy of exhorting Indians to identify themselves with locals in Asia and Africa was not based only on his ideological commitment. In Kenya, the presence of Indian settlers was larger than European community and the Kenyan Europeans wanted to keep Kenya as Whiteman's country. A strong anti-Indian campaign was being pursued by Whites in Africa and several riots broke out in Kenya, Uganda, and South Africa involving Indians and Africans during 1944-49. If African's struggle was to be weakened and divided there was every likelihood that White Kenyan settlers could have extended South African model in East Africa. Therefore, it was necessary that Indian settlers joined hand with blacks in opposing white settlers even sacrificing their short-term gains. The Caribbean Indian were so far off that knowingly their problems and their marginalisation by black diaspora community as well as by colonial rulers were ignored. Unlike the problems of Indians in Ceylon or in Burma or even in Africa, it created little pressure from Indian leaders and masses at home. Therefore, it was the distance, the absence of connectivity with India that led to the maximum neglect of the Indian Diaspora in the Caribbean by Nehru and other Indian leaders.

Nehru said in constituent Assembly on 9th August 1948, "The Indian Commissioner will not be entitled to discharge consular function in respect of Indians who may not be considered to be (Indian) national, that is permanent resident in those territories or to act as spokesman of such Indians". When Mau Mau rebellion (1952-53) broke out in Kenya very few Indian settlers in Kenya sided with the British; they were accused of being with rebels. "There were few Europeans in Kenya who do not insist that New Delhi through its official and non-official representatives in Africa has encouraged and added the rebellion of Mau-Mau "(Blundell, 1953). The Indian ambassador to Kenya, Aba B. Pant was charged in British Parliament for fomenting Mau-Mau trouble. Unlike what it did in South Africa, India took a softer stand and recalled Pant under pressure.

During late 1950s, Indians were considered as hurdles in consolidating Indo-African relations. 'But after Indo-Chinese war of 1962 when Indian isolation was exposed. Mrs. Indira Gandhi in her capacity as official delegate toured African countries in 1964. She continued to emphasize that Indian settled in Africa must identify themselves completely with the African people and make their fullest contribution to the societies in which they lived. However, as seen by her tour programme in Africa, besides her official engagements, she made it a point not to miss Indian settlers, leaders and members of the community though in certain small location their number even did not exceed even fifty (see Gopal, 1984:15). She also called Indian settlers as "Ambassador of India" in Africa. Similarly while touring Fiji , Mrs Gandhi said that "I feel like a mother concerned about the welfare of a married daughter who has set up home far away"(Thakur, 1958:356). It shows a subtle departure from Nehru policy, as Indian settlers became now a useful instrument for generating goodwill for India. Their position as 'ambassador of India' implied that they were no more excluded from policy considerations of India. These shifts became more noticeable in many areas when Mrs. Gandhi became the Prime Minister of India. By second half of 1960s there was increasing realisation that Indians in Africa, whatever passport they may hold, should not be put outside India's Africa policy. This also suited the Indian move of economic diplomacy in Africa and other developing countries as Indian settlers in East Africa had requisite capital and will to share it with Indian economic initiatives in African countries.

Reflection and Action 15.1

What was the position of Indians in South Africa in mid 20th Century?

What is the main thrust of Nehru's Policy towards Indian Diaspora?

What was the shift in Indira Gandhi's policy towards Indian Diaspora as compared to Nehru?

15.4 Testing the Pro- Diaspora policies of 1970s and 80s

In 1967, the Government of Kenya started the Kenyanisation of its economy when all non-citizens, largely Indians, were asked to take work and residence permit. It allowed them to trade only in restricted areas and items. Though it was purely an internal policy measure of the Kenyan government, India advised them to surrender British passport and get local citizenship. Indian diplomats too mobilised PIOs in favour of this move but not many responded to it. For PIOs accepting the advice to mix with Africans meant giving their daughters in marriage to local Africans. PIOs were not willing to migrate to England because of social insecurity, apprehension regarding cultural degeneration of their children in Western culture. Going back to India and being trapped in vicious trap of poverty, filth and unemployment was out of question. Partly, Indian policies also did not allow them to forget their old links as it appealed to them, thrice in two years, for financial help for defence fund to contain China and Pakistan. A large number of visitors from India, religious leaders, fund collectors for charity and politicians kept coming and made contact with PIOs. All these were strengthening the feelings of mutual dependence. When they were in crisis this time India did not react in the same way as it used to do. The Indian parliament discussed the issue at length. Mrs. Indira Gandhi made intervention during debate to assure the members that government was monitoring the situation.

Indian Minister of State for External Affairs BR Bhagat was sent to Nairobi carrying personal message of Mrs. Indira Gandhi to Kenyatta. Bhagat when returned to India accepted in parliament that there was rampant rumour in Kenya that India was going to interfere in internal affairs of Kenya because "he was going there to ask them to slow down their policy" (Indian Lok Sabha Debate series-4, 1968:101, 114). Bhagat had a prior appointment with President Kenyatta but the later cancelled the appointment when Bhagat reached Nairobi. Bhagat met vice-president and other officials but came without delivering Mrs. Gandhi's letter to Kenyatta. Indian parliament felt that cancellation of Bhagat's appointment was to snub India. India suspected British hand as Britain was propagating that India wanted to interfere in Kenya's internal affairs. Public opinion was raged in India as well as in Nairobi. *The Times of India* wrote: "But if the implication is that president Kenyatta fell into a trap laid for him by a third party, it does little credit to his political acumen" (*Times of India*, 1963). Justifying the cancellations of appointment *The Daily Nation* (Nairobi) criticised the decision of Bhagat not to hand over the message for Kenyatta to somebody else and called his conduct as bad tempered. The then Indian High Commissioner, Prem Bhatia narrated the incident in his book later. "My opposition made no difference. I was informed that move was based on political decision and that it had already been announced as a government commitment. In the event I had no alternative but to prepare myself to make the best of a bad job" (Bhatia, 1973:130). Nevertheless, government of Kenya extended the permit to non-citizen for a longer period varying from one to two years with the prospect of renewal.

Indian government had started economic initiatives at bilateral level to bring Indian settlers in Kenya within the policy framework of India. It proposed to establish Africa-India Development Corporation with Kenyan PIOs and Indian capital, its aim was to seek integration of the Indian community in the economic life of Kenya, thus fortifying the foundation of a multi-racial society (AICC, 1966). Though finally it could not materialise, due to reasons other than disinterest of India, but it did show the shift, which was coming in Indian policy for PIOs in Africa. Uganda was another country in East Africa where India's policy on Indian settlers demonstrated the shift. When Idi Amin came to power in January 1971 in Uganda, he wanted to put the entire Ugandan economy in the hands of Ugandans of African origin. He said that 80,000 Asians in Uganda were sabotaging the economy and encouraging corruption and therefore there were no rooms for them in Uganda. All PIOs who were Kenyan citizen, British and Indian passport holder had to leave in 90 days before November 8, 1972. Amin called the expulsion of PIO "as part of the war of liberation". Indian Deputy Minister of external affair said in parliament, "We are in touch with the Ugandan authorities and I can assure the house that we shall do everything we can to protect the interest of Indians there". The Indian president while in Lusaka denounced the expulsion and stated "The happenings in Uganda have a heavy clouds of doubt and uncertainty over the minds of many people of Indian origin in several countries of Africa.... The pernicious doctrine of racialism may permeate even free Africa" (quoted in Gupta, 1974:232).

Though public opinion was aroused in India it refuted strongly and ridiculed Amin's allegation that India was planning to invade Uganda along with Tanzania and Zambia. However, India made it clear that it was going to support any international move, which would persuade Amin for extending the expulsion deadline. India did not take the tougher line because Indian move against a purely racial issue would have been interpreted as Indian interference and design in Africa. Indian support for Afro-Asian solidarity was another constraint. But the main consideration of India in not taking a tougher line on the issue seemed like since "there is nothing to be gained by using strong words, if they can not be backed by meaningful action in Uganda, any show of strong sentiment may trigger off an anti-Asian wave" (*Times of India*, 6 October, 1972). Years later India faced the same constraints when Bavadra government was dismissed in Fiji and anti-PIO move started there.

Ugandan crisis made India realise that the leadership and political system of African states vary considerably from country to country and Indian support to Afro-Asian solidarity had to be qualified by longer national interests. These expulsions brought home another point to India. Despite Indians consistent support to African decolonisation and Afro-Asian solidarity none of the African countries howsoever friendly to India and opposed to Idi Amin's action, offered to accommodate expelled Indians even in small number as a gesture to sympathise with India. As far as India was concerned, it was never its policy to debar entry of PIO if they wanted to resettle in India with their saving and assets. Government of India made special provisions and gave inducement for Asian to resettle in India with their savings and assets. Despite such offer, almost all of them opted not to return to India. The restraint approach of India, however, succeeded in getting Amin to pay compensation for business and properties of Indian passport holders, which was not given to Indians of other nationalities.

Fiji: Subsequent to East African experience was the experience of Fiji. The changing attitude of Government of India got reflected in 1987 military

coup in Fiji. The changing Indian attitude was visible in the press. The issue of overthrow of pro-Indian Fijian government was aggressively reflected in the press and in other media. India did not have capacity to forcibly change the situation. It decided to mobilise the regional powers like Australia to side with India in its effort to change the situation in Fiji. The NAM Summit, the Commonwealth group, the UN and other forums were utilised by India to highlight the discrimination and injustice to Indian Diaspora. This was in clear contrast to what India was doing so far on PIO discrimination issues.

South Africa: Indian settlers in South Africa had been a separate case for India. Long before Mahatma Gandhi used his tactics of non-co-operation, civil disobedience, *satyagraha* and peaceful protests in Indian freedom struggles in 1920, he made maiden use of many of these methods in South Africa in late nineteenth century. The personal insult heaped on him in South Africa and his strong feeling against racial discrimination of Indians in South Africa became a sentimental issue for the followers of Gandhi in the Indian freedom struggles. The racial discrimination of Indians in South Africa received constant condemnation from Indian leaders and the cause of Indians in South Africa always remained high in India's foreign policy consideration.

The Asiatic Land Tenure Act also known as Ghetto Act became law in June 1946. It was directed against Indians confining them to specified areas alone: When on 3 September United Nations General Assembly session started, the Indian representative Chhagla articulated Indian concerns in United Nations Sub-Committee. He condemned South Africa's "discriminatory treatment of Asians in general" as a denial of human rights and the Ghetto Act, both of which impaired friendly relations between India and Africa. The Franco-Mexican resolution - supported by India - calling for treatment of Indians in South Africa to be in conformity with international obligations and charter of United Nations- was passed. Indian approach of special support to Indian settlers in South Africa lasted until late 1950s. Till then, resolution of the Indian National Congress used to articulate and strongly support Indian settlers' cause in South Africa, though it used to express support to South African non-Indian sufferers too but in general terms.

Once India raised the issue of South African Indian settlers exclusively within the U.N., based on human rights clause; it soon realised that it was not possible to keep the issue confined to Indian settlers alone. Because of the provisions of non-racial treatment, India had to extend support to all groups and communities subjected to racial discrimination in South Africa. Further, the policy of exclusively supporting Indian settlers was in contrast to Nehru's policy of advising Indian settlers in other parts of Africa, where he counselled paramountcy of African cause and advised Indian settlers to integrate themselves with African cause and aspiration and not to seek special position or privilege. Meanwhile the Group Areas Act of 1950 had formally institutionalised the Apartheid policy affecting Indians as well as Black Africans.

Above considerations started a shift in Indian approach to South African issue, India started associating discrimination of Black and Indians together.

India's President Dr. Rajendra Prasad in his address explained the shift to parliament in 1952. He said, "The question is no longer merely one of Indians of South Africa; it had already assumed a greater and wider significance. It is question of racial domination and racial intolerance. It is question of Africans more than that of Indians in South Africa". India

in South Africa resulting from apartheid policy and succeeded in appointment of a U.N. commission to study the racial situation in South Africa. From then onward, the issue of Indians in South Africa was merged with larger issue of apartheid policy in South Africa, which involved both Indians as well as Black Africans. Indian policy then worked for establishment of majority rule in South Africa and merging of Indian settlers cause with that of Black Africans.

During the interim Prime Ministership in March 1946, Nehru recommended termination of trade agreements and breaking up of diplomatic ties with South Africa. Lord Wavell, the Indian viceroy did it immediately. This strong step was taken when India was free in foreign relations but not free internally. The stakes involved were high. India at the time of independence needed economic support from all quarters but this decision deprived India 5% of its trade.

For India PIO remained the main concern until late 1950s. The defeat of India in Indo-Chinese war of 1962 and its isolation in Africa changed Indian priorities. Diplomatic support vis-à-vis China and Pakistan became the most important consideration. By the time India overgrew its inferiority complex by becoming self sufficient in food, creating Bangladesh, detonating atomic bomb and launching satellites, it also emerged as the country having third largest skilled and trained manpower. Its economic consideration became paramount in third world countries like Africa where its technology and skills can be sold at very competitive prices. The South-South umbrella suits India to sell its manufactured and value added goods in Africa. The issue of PIOs has receded to background since it does not fit in or helps in contemporary concern of India. The current euphoria of India on the end of apartheid is not just because Indian settlers and Blacks have become free from racism. It is also largely because India wants to convert its goodwill for South Africa, this time, into economic favour by having a favourable access to its large and strong economy. Whether this expectation will be reciprocated or not is a different question but this time India does not expect as return of its contribution to struggle against apartheid, a favourable treatment of South African Indian settlers.

Both domestic and international changes have altered the priority and agenda of India's policy towards PIOs. The major concern of India during colonial rule in Africa was to see to it that the colonial government gave equal privileges to PIOs compared to European settlers. It advised PIOs to join Black Africans in freedom struggle and to become one of them without seeking special privilege or status. With abolition of colonialism, both internal and external, such imperatives did not exist. Second, in post colonial phase of Africa India by its experience realised that expectation of 'dual loyalty' and inclusion of PIO in policy framework neither wins them over for Indian investment or other economic needs nor does it please African governments who have to deal strongly with PIOs according to domestic imperatives and pressures. Even the PIOs after their experience in Zanzibar, Uganda, Zambia and other countries have realised that Indian support for their protection is going to be limited because India's own capacity to intervene for this is limited. Even during their crisis the PIOs themselves did not respond to Indian offer to come and invest in India and get Indian citizenship. Thirdly, PIOs have historically and politically become a part of African states and the issue of PIOs has receded as major concern. Therefore, it is not surprising that in aggressive diplomatic and economic initiatives of Indian government during 1970s and 80s the issue of PIOs hardly got an important place. Perhaps India learnt through its East African experience that it is unrealistic.

and counter productive to expect extra care for South African Indian settlers from South African government as a reciprocal gesture for Indian contribution to struggle against apartheid. The real test of this policy will come when Indian settlers may have to share the burden of economic and social restructuring programme in South Africa. Such pressures and demands from black groups have already started surfacing openly. However, because of the long isolation of South Africa from India they will not have, unlike East African Indian, a ‘dependency’ attitude towards India. Therefore, India does not have to respond to a non-existent expectation of PIOs. But it does not mean that PIOs have no place in Indian policy.

Indian Diaspora in the Gulf region: The oil boom of 1970s enabled a large number of Indians rushing to the Gulf region. A sizeable number of them remained employed for a long period though they have no chance of getting settled or acquiring local citizenship. As a result they have to repatriate all their earning and savings to India under this compulsion. This benefited India foreign exchange reserve, which was a very scarce resource in the early 1990s. The government of India moved strongly on this. Created better banking and other facilities for repatriation of foreign exchange. It raised the interest rate on foreign exchange deposits. It took up the issue of welfare of its migrant workers in west Asian countries. It came out with policy and enactment for compulsory registration of recruiting agents of labours to avoid exploitation and deportation of the work force. Recently Indian Government under its changed Diaspora policies, which has been discussed below , announced special insurance scheme of Indian Diaspora in the Gulf region.

Reflection and Action 15.2

In what way has the perception of Indian government about the diaspora change with people migrating to the Gulf region?

What are some of the concrete steps that Government of India took to attract remittances from abroad ?

15.5 Pro-Active Interest of the Indian State Towards the Diaspora

Since the early 1990s there is a proactive interest of the Indian government in Indian overseas. This started with appreciation of foreign remittance from NRIs in Gulf region and from North Africa. This provided meaningful addition to India's foreign reserve requirements. Further when liberalisation started in early 1990s, government of India tried to rope in first NRIs and then Indian settlers abroad to attract foreign direct investment. It organised meetings for NRIs and promised many incentives to attract their investment. PIOs were an equally relevant overseas segment to rope them in India's new drive for globalisation. But the Congress government of India was cautious and slow towards this segment. Because of its historical position it was over cautious in including PIOs under overt policy framework. When Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) came to power Indian policy changed very fast for this segment. Historically Rastriya Swayam Sewak Sangh (RSS), a support base for BJP, had maintained very close people-to-people contact through its branches among overseas Hindu settlers. In contrast to Nehru's policy of active dissociation of PIOs from Indian foreign policy objectives, BJP stood for active and overt association of PIOs for foreign policy objectives of India. It helped to organise the first ever conference of Parliamentarians of Indian Origin in New Delhi. Indian Government established a broad based, what is called, a high powered committee to suggest the Government of

India to come out with policy recommendations on Indian Diaspora. The Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas on 9th of January every year, the Bharat Samman to distinguished PIOs and NRIs were part of the Committee recommendations. On the basis of this report Government of India issued PIO card which provided very substantial advantages to PIOs compared to other foreign nationals. In 2006 January India gave Overseas Indian Citizenship (OIC) under dual citizenship scheme. On the side of PIOs also things changed which enabled them to look towards India from different footing. By mid 1990s, except in South Africa, PIOs got long enough time to prove their loyalty to the country of their adoption. They emerged from isolation at home and emerged as a confident identity group. They also emerged as one of the most prosperous and organised ethnic groups in their countries. By 1990s they saw no contradiction, after proving their loyalty to their countries, between their citizenship and getting a favourable commercial deal from their countries of origin. Many countries have successfully used the presence of different diasporic community to mobilise economic and diplomatic support for the country. In fact by 1990s diasporas - Black, Jewish, European, Chinese or Indian are not centrifugal, sectarian force which need to be contained or crushed, rather they have emerged as secular, acceptable identity force at international level. In such changed scenario the proactive interest of India in 1990s does not have any element of imperialist design or racist preference as was likely to be construed during the Nehru period.

15.6 Conclusions

We tried to present to you a broad overview of the various policies that Government of India undertook towards its diaspora. We trace the evolution of these policies and stances by the state, by tracing it to Gandhi and subsequently, discussing in detail, the policies of Nehru. There have been some shifts in the way India perceived its diaspora during Indira Gandhi's time but a major shift occurred when remittances from the gulf region made their impact on forex reserves. In the recent past the government has been actively cultivating the Indian diaspora, especially the NRIs from the Western countries. The politics of the discrimination between PIOs and NRIs has also been discussed in this unit.

15.7 Further Reading

Dubey, Ajay, 1990. *Indo- African Relations in the Post Nehru Era*, Kalinga Publication: Delhi

Mangat, J.S. 1969 *A History of Asian in East Africa* Oxford:London

Unit 16

Socio-Cultural Linkages Between Indian Diaspora

Contents

- 16.1 Introduction
- 16.2 Transnational Linkages
- 16.3 Preservation and Promotion of Socio-Cultural Linkages
- 16.4 Organisational Linkages Between the Indian Diaspora
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- 16.6 Conclusion
- 16.7 Further Reading

Learning Objectives

After reading this unit you will be able to :

- Capture the growing linkages between Indian diaspora
- Discuss the various avenues and spaces of linkages among the Indian diaspora
- Analyse how these linkages forge a sense of identity among the various Indian diasporas.

16.1 Introduction

The Indian diaspora constitutes an important, and in some respects a unique, force in world culture. The origins of the Indian diaspora lie mainly in the subjugation of India by the British and its incorporation into the British Empire. Indians were taken overseas as indentured labour to far-flung parts of the empire in the nineteenth-century, a circumstance to which the modern Indian population of Fiji, Mauritius, Guyana, Trinidad, Surinam, Malaysia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, and other places attest in their own peculiar ways.

The world economic and political order has changed since colonial period more so with the advancement of recent communication revolution which has generated large movements of people in almost every region. The global movements of people and spread of electronic media (and its cultural products) are distinctive features of the current historical moment. The unprecedented scale and scope of this global movement and spread - important aspects of what many people commonly call globalization - has had profound consequences for the cognitive and social processes that are at the root of the formation of cultural identities.

The continued existence of diaspora cultures, the cultures of communities living outside of their "home lands" (real or perceived), is a key element of cultural diversity across the globe today. Indian diaspora has added new dimension to the cultural diversity of the different host countries across the globe. As much as they have added new elements and to their countries of origin, with globalization many diasporas, including the earlier diaspora of indentured labour, are renewing and continuing their connections with homeland. These connections are at different levels-political, economic,

familial and cultural. The Indian diaspora which is spread across the globe is now able to keep in touch with each other across space as well. In this unit we will bring out some of the main features of these transnational connections between diasporas.

16.2 Transnational Linkages

Broadly, transnationalism refers to sustained ties of persons, networks, and organizations across nation-state borders, arising out of international migration patterns and refugee flows. The recent global transformations in economic relations, ethnic conflicts, and communication technology have led to the creation of new transnational kinship groups, transnational social circuits, and transnational communities. By expanding borders across nations and creating new social ties, the concepts pertaining to cultural spheres, acculturation, cultural retention, and citizenship have started to change drastically.

People and their ideas are moving more freely back and forth across global borders than ever before. This ebb and flow, through easy travel and growing communications technology, may be reshaping the traditional concept of a nation. In fact, some people with homes in two countries are showing an amazing capacity to maintain dual identities - with strong cultural ties and contributions to both places or across many places.

Socio-Cultural Linkages

While much attention has been paid to the relationship between India and the Indian diaspora, relatively little consideration is given to the relations between the Indian diaspora communities.

Diaspora communities represent and maintain a culture different from those of the countries within which they are located, often retaining strong ties with their country and culture of origin (real or perceived) and with the communities from other countries having similar social history in order to preserve that culture. The marriage and kinship alliances between people of Indian origin from Guyana and Trinidad have been possible as they share many things in common. Some families of Indian origin who migrated after independence to USA and Europe have spread over few other countries have transnational family linkages. To these historically established Indian diasporas more recent or temporary diasporas can be added i.e expatriates on a professional or long-term basis who may envisage, even theoretically, returning to their country. These are highly mobile and have familial and professional network across the globe.

The socio-cultural linkages between the Indian diaspora have several trajectories. Today Indian diaspora has a global presence and the global networks and interactions have spawned a new cultural landscape of hybridities, confluences and influences. The socio-cultural linkages between Indian Diaspora are one of the important features of the modern transnational Diaspora.

Diversity of Inter Diaspora Socio-cultural Linkages

India is unique for the magnitude of her diversities in terms of languages and regions, religions and sects, castes and subcastes, rural and urban, food and style of dress, which are also reflected by her diasporic communities. Hence, it is not surprising to find extensive networks based on language and region, religion and caste among the Indian diaspora. Hindu Diaspora and Sikh Diaspora are instances of such extensive

networks, global in coverage. Similarly, there are diasporic communities formed on the basis of linguistic or regional identities such as Punjabis, (See Sood, 1995 and Tatla, 1999) Gujaratis, Sindhis, Tamilians, Malayalees and Telugus. These communities promote their own diaspora network across the globe. Global organizations have emerged to preserve and promote these identities and cultures, uniting India and the Indian diaspora in a transnational context. In our unit 23, we discuss some of these ethnic diasporas in detail.

The similar historical experience, socio-cultural and political situation of the country and the distance can determine the linkages between Indian diaspora. The Guyanese and Trinidadian people of Indian origin have more commonality than their counterpart in other part of the world. There has been marriage and kinship network between the two.

Ugandan Asians in United States of America and elsewhere settled as refugees have contact with their families and country. Quite a good number of Indians from Fiji migrated to other parts of world. They have contact with their relatives in Fiji and other parts of the world such as New Zealand, Australia, United Kingdom etc.

People from the same family migrated to different countries, maintain their contacts and regroup. Generally, these families are financially sound and have global network. For example many corporate and business families of Indian origin have spread across globe, many professionals in the field of Information Technology and Engineering background are internationally mobile and have relatives in different parts of the world. They maintain their contact both virtual and real.

In some cases the transition of diaspora communities to second, third and fourth generation appears to dilute the notion of a "diaspora culture". Inter-marriage between cultures, successful integration into the prevailing society, and the dissolution of sentiments of eventual return provoke an erosion of the diaspora sentiment. The basis of "diaspora" attachment ceases to be relevant in many such cases. Indian diaspora have such experiences in some countries. People of Indian origin have assimilated with the host population in some parts of African and European countries through marriage.

Old Indian Diaspora

The relationship between the old Indian diaspora is different from the new Indian diaspora. The socio-economic conditions, access to technology and political participation differs from old to new Indian diaspora. The old Indian diaspora has been facing more challenges in their host countries than the new diaspora. There are large number of twice migrants from the old diasporas (both free and forced migrants) to the Europe and USA. The socio-cultural life and their linkages vary to some extent.

A substantial number of Indian diaspora from Trinidad and Tobago are settled in Manhattan and maintain their socio-cultural network. The Guyanese Asian Indian community has grown at a greater rate than other Caribbean groups, especially since the 1980s, when conflict in the homeland created thousands of political refugees. Because of its size, particularly in Metropolitan Toronto, this group has been able to form a viable community with distinctive social and cultural organizations. For example, a weekly paper published in Toronto, *Indo-Caribbean World*, provides news about Guyana and Trinidad as well as Canadian issues. The activities of social and cultural groups are promoted,

and Asian Indian restaurants, grocery stores, and travel, insurance, and other businesses are widely advertised. Other Caribbean publications in Toronto that cater to the needs of the Guyanese in Canada are *Caribbean Camera*, the *Guyana Times*, the *Metro World*, and *Share*. The *Guyana Times* attempts to reach Guyanese across Canada and of all racial backgrounds. It devotes a larger part of its weekly edition to news about Guyana and the activities of Guyanese organizations in Toronto and elsewhere in Canada. Asian Indian cultural song and dance groups are widely featured, as are religious celebrations. The community in Canada, particularly in Metropolitan Toronto, has utilized all branches of the media - radio, television, and the press - to promote its social and cultural activities, with great success.

During the Fiji crisis, the Indian diaspora across the globe had shown solidarity for the cause of restoring democracy. GOPIO and several Indian Diaspora organizations protested against the anti-democratic rule in Fiji. Similar responses were noticed in the past while Indians were victim in South Africa, Malaysia and Uganda. The solidarity that People of Indian origin shows with their fellow Indian diaspora shows the symbolic relations they have between themselves.

Festivals

Festivals are the cultural symbols of India, which are celebrated among Indians all over the world. It provides Indians the platform to bind them together in a tight-knit community. The major festivals of Indians, which is celebrated with much fanfare across the globe are ;Holi, Diwali, Dasahara, Id, Rakhee, Baisakhi, Bhuddha Jayanti etc. Besides these festivals, it is observed that Indians also celebrate the 'Ganesh Visarjana' festival with the help of local associations. During these festivities Indians invite their kith and kin settled in different parts of the world to celebrate on a grand manner.

Trinidad's carnival is a beautiful example of how carnival can unite the world. In this small nation, the beliefs and traditions of many cultures have come together; and for a brief five days each year, the whole country forgets their differences to celebrate life! Today, carnival in Trinidad is like a mirror that reflects the faces the many immigrants who have come to this island nation from Europe, Africa, India, and China. African, Asian, and American Indian influences have been particularly strong. Indian Diaspora from other parts close to Trinidad also takes part and enjoys this. The artists from India and Indian origin from other countries are invited to perform in the festivals. This festival is a bright example of the inter-diaspora relationship.

Apart from Festival celebrations which become a community event attracting different communities and bringing them together; important events in history such as independence day -August 15 is celebrated in a big way. The Indian community gathers in large numbers, especially in US, for parade showcasing the Indian identity.

Religious Networks

Religion has served as the major symbolic resources in building community and professing ethnic identity. Indians in many parts of the world have retained their religious identity what they carried with them during the time of their immigration. Religious groups like Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Muslims and Buddhist etc., have made success in transplanting their religious traditions and customs in other countries. Often maintenance of religious identity in the host society refers to as ethnicity. Ethnicity is the cultural

characteristics that connect a particular group or groups of people to each other. Hindus for instance, have made tremendous effort to construct and reconstruct their ethnic identity through building temples in their host countries (see Vertovec, 2000). There are hundreds of Hindu temples can be found in USA, U.K., Canada, Australia and other parts of the world.

Religious Centres/Mandirs or temples are such as Swaminarayan, Sathya Sai Baba, Mata Amritanandamayi, Sachidananda Swami, Meher Baba, Swami Murugananda Saraswati, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Maheshyogi, Swami Prabhupada (ISKON), Swami Chinmayananada (Chinmaya Mission), Swami Ranganamananda (Ramakrishna Mission), Leaders of Arya Samaj and VHP, and OSHO (Rajneesh). They have made it possible further to maintain transnational networks among Indians across the world through the arrangement of seminars, discourses, symposia, workshops and charitable works.

Though followers from certain Hindu community found more in particular temple, yet there is no restriction on welcoming anyone based on caste, creed, religion etc. These temples work as a platform, where people of Indian origin cutting across their background interact. Thus, these centres promote the inter-diasporic network.

There are associations and network of religious communities such as Indian Christians United (ICU), Indian Muslim Association etc. that has transnational linkages with their own religious community.

Reflection and Action 16.1

In what way do festival bring communities together? Substantiate your answer with examples from the Indian diaspora.

What are the new ways in which the older diasporas are able to keep contacts with different Indian diasporas?

16.3 Preservation and Promotion of Socio-Cultural Linkages

The strength of any diaspora community lies in the preservation and promotion of their own culture. Two important factors can be emphasized in the context of promotion of inter-diasporic socio-cultural linkage. Firstly, the technological avenues for assisting and developing further the socio-cultural links between diaspora communities with regard to the protection and promotion of diaspora cultures; and secondly, the role of governmental and non-governmental organizations, ethnic associations, literature and media in the protection and promotion of socio-cultural linkages between Indian diaspora communities.

Technology

Technology has made far reaching impact on the diaspora cultures and their ties with their kith and kin across the globe. The multiplication of relations between different components of a diaspora network, and between different diaspora communities themselves, has provoked a more extensive multi-polar structure of diaspora networks. This subsequently consolidates diaspora cultures through increased and more diverse interaction.

The increased capacity of diaspora communities to communicate and interact between themselves at all levels, transfer funds, transport goods and raw materials, and transmit ideas between the various components of a diaspora

network is considered to be a broadly positive step in the consolidation of diaspora. The increase in affordable travel, notably international air and rail travel- demonstrate the endless possibilities that technology presents for such continued development.

The development of computers has specifically enabled the greater interaction of between diasporas, between themselves and between their communities and the prevailing societies of the country of origin and the country of settlement. The installation of “national languages” on computer hardware facilitates correspondence and communication. The development of the Internet facilitates instant communication between individuals, families and communities, and promotes the sentiments and the needs of diaspora cultures. See unit 18 for the use of internet in creating a community among the India and diaspora, in particular the Hindu diaspora.

Ethnic Media and Film

The development of various forms of media within diaspora networks also harnesses many benefits for all concerned and should be examined and exploited to the highest possible degree. Media serves as a method of diaspora publicity, a catalyst for group solidarity, and a potential mould for diaspora political and cultural agenda within the society of which it plays a part. The continued transnationalisation of media in recent years, with the establishment of satellite and cable television, the internet, and the wider distribution of written media, has provoked an escalation of social and cultural awareness of diaspora cultures. New media enables continued advances in diaspora studies and education. New media also enables the fostering and the establishment of new links between communities (See Karim, H.K., 2003).

The High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora made a list of ethnic media that promote Indian culture abroad. Apart from some regional T.V. Channels that caters the sub-regional identity such as Lashkara Channel for Punjabi people; Gurjari Channel for Gujarati people; Anjuman Channel an Urdu Channel for Urdu speaking people; Bengla Channel for Bengalis, there are channels that provide cultural identity to broad community. For example Asia Channel for all Asians in Australia; CCITV Channel for Tamil people; RAAG Channel especially for South Asians.

Chutney music, which is hybrid music indigenous to the southern Caribbean, is not only acceptable general music lovers, more so with the Indian diaspora settled in different parts across the world. The chutney artist writes lyrics in either Hindi, Bhojpuri or English and then lays it on top of beats that come from soca and Hindi film songs. This music is entertaining to the Indian diaspora like any other Indian music. Chutney music is mostly popular among the East Indian community in Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Suriname, and also the East Indian diaspora community in Toronto, Canada and in the New York metropolitan area.

Diasporic Writers

Writers of Indian origin settling abroad and engaging themselves in creating writing in the countries of their domicile. The writings bring the memory and sentiment lively. (See our unit 20 on diasporic writing). Although there are certain common resonances in the literary representations of the experience of the writers of the ‘indenture’ and the ‘new’ Indian diaspora, the responses and the narratives of the individual writers vary greatly. Writers like A.K. Ramanujan, Agha Shahid Ali, Bharati Mukherjee, David

Dabydeen, M.G. Vassanji, Meena Alexander, Rohinton Mistry, Salman Rushdie, Satendra Nandan, V.S. Naipaul, to mention a few, differ from each other not only in their socio-cultural backgrounds and literary ancestries but also in their thematic preoccupations and literary styles. Further, the responses of the diasporic writers to India are also varied and not always adulatory; they range from sentimentality and nostalgia to a cynical celebration of their coming of age. However, their diasporic condition, their sense of exile and alienation and their efforts to seek replenishment by making symbolic returns to their origins bind all this writing into a unity. Their writings not only help to preserve the Indian and Indian diaspora culture but also it enriches the Indian culture immensely.

Reflection and Action 16.1

How is the old diaspora different from the new diaspora ?

How does media connect people across the globe and help in forging a sense of identity?

Have you read any writings by a diasporic writer ? In what way does the writing capture the social space of Indian diaspora. Base your answer on the literature that you have read.

16.4 Organizational Linkages Between the Indian Diaspora

New technologies and media, non-governmental organisations, diplomatic networks and the activities of transnational organisations such as the GOPIO, SPICMACAY, Hindu, Muslim, and Christian religious organizations such as Sathya Sai, Swaminarayan, Ramakrishna Mission, Indian Christians United (ICU), Islamic organization of Indian origin, all play a part in the promoting the diaspora culture. Besides, Indian Government organizations such as ICCR and embassies also play indirect roles in promoting inter-diasporic linkages. The activities of some of the organization are given below.

Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO)

GOPIO was founded at the First Global Convention of People of Indian Origin in New York in 1989. The initial thrust of GOPIO was fighting human rights. Though its primary objective is to secure human rights for people of Indian Origin, it has diversified in to many other activities that concern the PIOs. Global Organization of People of Indian origin (GOPIO) is a nonpartisan, non-sectarian global organization engaged in prompting wellbeing of non resident Indians and people of Indian origin enhancing cooperation and communication between groups of Indians living in different countries and in furthering their cooperation with India.

Box 16.1: Objectives of GOPIO

- a) To promote legitimate interests of the Indian community as a whole and of specific groups resident in particular countries.
- b) To help the Indian communities in different countries to promote legitimate secular and developmental interests of the countries in which they are resident.
- c) To organize interaction between communities of Indians abroad on a global level to deliberate and decide on common issues and problems facing them, including education and technology.
- d) To provide a forum at periodical intervals to discuss, debate and decide on common problems and issues facing groups of Indians abroad and initiate measures to redress their grievances.

- e) To disseminate information regularly on global, regional and national developments affecting Indian community abroad as a whole or substantial parts thereof.
- f) To develop channels of communication between groups of Indians resident in different countries and between them and India.
- g) To raise funds through contributions and other means on regular basis and at special occasions for promoting social and cultural activities at a global level as well for the relief and rehabilitation of groups of Indians affected by natural and other calamities.

Society for the Promotion Indian Classical Music and Culture Amongst Youth (SPICMACAY)

Society for Promotion of Indian Classical Music and Culture Amongst Youth (SPICMACAY) aims at introducing traditional Indian culture to the youth of the country. It seeks to conserve and promote an awareness of the rich and heterogeneous cultural tapestry amongst the youth of India, through focus on the classical arts, with their attendant legends, rituals, mythology and philosophy and to facilitate an awareness of their deeper and subtler values. The movement caught the imagination of the young and began to grow geographically.

The idea of promoting Indian classical music and culture among youth, in fact took off not in India but in United States. Writing about the genesis in their website the organization has this to say: "The "big bang" of SPIC MACAY came in 1972 at a concert of Ustad Nasir Aminuddin Dagar and Ustad Zia Fariduddin Dagar at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York. After a few sporadic concerts (notable amongst them was that of Ustad Ali Akbar Khan) at Columbia University, New York, under the aegis of the India Club of Columbia University during the period 1972-76, the idea took a more defined direction in 1977 in India" (<http://www.spicmacay.com>). SPICMACAY has presence in several countries i.e USA, Canada, Germany etc., and this is instrumental in promoting inter-diaspora cultural linkages by introducing artists from India as well as from the Indian diaspora to the youths of Indian diaspora in several universities and colleges globally.

Indian council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)

Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), which is the cultural body of Indian government, though it does not promotes Inter-diaspora linkages directly it has an indirect role. ICSSR is about a communion of cultures, a creative dialogue with other nations. To facilitate this interaction with world cultures, the Council has strived to articulate and demonstrate the diversity and richness of the cultures of India, both in and with other countries of the world. The Council publishes books and journals relating to Indian Culture, Philosophy and Mythology, Music, Dance, Theatre and includes translations of Sanskrit classics in a number of languages including French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian and English. The council has branches in several countries. The Indian diaspora community of several ethnic backgrounds and get a platform to access the culture of India directly and consequently it also promote the inter diaspora linkages.

16.5 Regional Diasporas: Global Networks

The assumption that people will live their lives in one place, according to one set of national and cultural norms, in countries with impermeable national borders, no longer holds. Rather, in the 21st century, more and more people will belong to two or more societies at the same time. This

is what many researchers refer to as transnational migration. Some will put down roots in a host country, maintain strong homeland ties, and belong to religious and political movements that span the globe. These allegiances are not antithetical to one another.

Some of the visible regional organizations having transnational networks are Bengalis, Gujaratis, Punjabis, Tamils, Telugus, Kannada, Malayalis, Marathi etc. These communities have inter diaspora socio-cultural linkages across continents. Some of the organizations are mentioned below:

Telugu

Telugus have migrated to many parts of the world as coolies in the colonial times to software engineers and doctors in recent times. They have a very strong inter diaspora network across the globe.

Telugus have formed a global network called World Telugu Federation (WTF), which was inaugurated in 1993 with the chief objective of promoting and perpetuating not only the language, culture, art, heritage, traditions but also business of the Telugu people. WTF has branches in several countries across the globe. A very hoary past with tremendous values enrich the present generation and it is the Federation's aim to educate and preserve this legacy and inculcate them in the younger generations. The organization promotes Language, Performing arts and handicrafts. The World Telugu Federation networks with various Telugu Federations and Associations formed in various parts of the country and around the world. It fosters friendship and goodwill among various Telugu communities in India and abroad.

Gujarati

Gujaratis have spread to many parts of the world. Several associations have transnational linkages and they not only engage in conducting charitable works and religious activities but also promote fine arts, music, dance, etc; conducting programs of entertainment value such as drama, movies, etc; conducting educational programs (language classes, etc.).

Punjabi

The Punjabi social network especially the Sikhs are well spread in several continents. The Sikhs now work within a global diaspora. The social network facilitates the transnational mobility of Sikhs. An educated and professionally qualified young Sikhs can move many parts of the globe for his professional growth without much problem. For example, a young educated Sikh who have grown disillusioned by the lack of opportunities in racist and industrially declining Britain may have little interest, at least at present, in going back to Punjab or in joining their relatives who have settled in Southeast Asia and East Africa, the opportunities available in Canada and the United States, where well established Sikh communities are also to be found, are much more attractive. In consequence a great deal of re-emigration across the Atlantic is currently taking place.

Punjabis have been maintaining strong global networks - socio-cultural, economic, religious and political - with their kith and kin. There are several transnational TV and Radio channels such as *Zee Alpha TV*, *Punjabi Radio*, *Netguruindia*, *TV India*, *AM1320 Vancouver*, *Multicultural Radio Punjabi Saturday*, *Montreal Canada*, *Radio Sikh-info Daily Kukamnama* etc., that reach Punjabis across the globe.

Punjabi Bhangra and other cultural forms travel across the globe along with their migration. The artists are drawn not only from India but from Punjabis settled in other parts of the Globe.

Tamil

Indian Tamils are well spread across the globe. Tamils went as indenture labour to many European colonies. Today Tamils constitute a substantial portion of Academician, IT professionals and Engineer outside India. Tamils are very particular about the preservation of their language and culture.

The ethnic Indian Tamil media has presence in countries with substantial populations of Tamils of Indian origin. Tamil Radio stations and T.V. channels are now found in Singapore and other parts of the world that reaches the Tamil people.

Caste based Transnational Diasporic Networks

The diversity of India is also reflected in its diaspora. The caste based transnational diasporic network such as Dalit Diaspora, Telugu Association of North America (TANA) and ATA in United adds new dimension to the Indian diaspora.

Telugu Association of North America (TANA) is an organization of people of Telugu origin residing in North America founded by Kamma Caste and American Telugu Association (ATA) by the Reddy caste having origin in Andhra Pradesh in India. These organizations promotes network among Telugus (Kammas and Reddys respectively) across the globe.

Though not very prominent till date, the Dalits of different countries have been networking and supporting the fellow Dalits diasporas and the dalits in the country of origin. The transnational Dalit diaspora of Indian and Nepalese origin have taken the advantage of information and communication technology (ICT) to further their cause. They organise international conventions to sensitize the Dalit issues. The first ever meeting of Nepali Dalit diaspora and friends of Dalits (fellow Dalits from India) was held at Elkrige (Maryland) in the Washington DC suburb on June 18, 2005 and discussed the moral obligation to involve towards the development of fellow Dalits in the country of origin.

Box 16.2 The Dalit Diaspora

The Dalit diaspora has all of a sudden become visible. Yet another Dalit international conference was successfully concluded earlier this month in Vancouver, Canada, with the help of the Dalit diaspora in different parts of the world. This is the fourth such conference organised since 1998. The first one was organised in Malaysia, by the Dalit International Organisation in October 1998. It was followed by a two-day international conference on Dalit human rights in London in September 2000 by the Voice of Dalit International (VODI). VODI organised another International Dalit conference in India in February 2003. Besides, Dalits also participated in the World Conference Against Racism in Durban.

Three factors have contributed to the new visibility of the Dalit diaspora. One, increased communication facilities because of the information revolution.(Log on to www.ambedkar.org, webmaster@gururavidassabha.org etc. and you can find out all about them). Two, the strengthening of civil society, with NGOs, both at the international and national level, taking keen interest in issues related to Dalits and other marginalised sections. And lastly, the intervention of the United Nations Human Rights Commission, World Bank, and other international and national institutions for maintenance of human rights of Dalit and other deprived sections (Vivek Kumar, *Indian Express*, 24, May 2003)

16.6 Conclusion

The socio-cultural linkage between Indian Diaspora is a complex one. There are different patterns of relationship between twice-migrants, indentured labour and the migrants who settled in Europe and USA after 1950s. With the advancement of Technology especially Information and Communication Technology had far reaching impact on the distance relationship among the people of same group. There is much more interesting pattern yet to be discovered in the relationship between intra-diasporic, inter-diasporic, diaspora-host, and diaspora- homeland as there has been rapid social change during this era. The diversity of their relationship has to be explored further.

16.7 Further Reading

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Unit 17

Indian Diaspora-Homeland Linkages

Contents

- 17.1 Introduction**
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- 17.6 Diaspora Finance**
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- 17.8 New Policies for Mobilising Diaspora-Homeland Relations**
- 17.9 Conclusions**
- 17.10 Further Reading**

Learning Objectives

Reading this unit will help you in:

- Have an understanding of the changing nature of Indian diaspora-homeland relations
- Have an appreciation of the varied forms of Indian diaspora-homeland linkages and their growing importance
- Be able to understand and assess the different ways in which diasporas can impact their homelands

17.1 Introduction

In this unit we will discuss the growing linkages between the Indian communities abroad and their homeland. With globalization, the interconnections between home and abroad have accelerated, due to speedier travel, simultaneous consumption of media, use of telecommunications , to name a few. This growing connections have implications for the Indian diaspor as well as the country of their origin, that is India. We discuss various aspects and layers of these inter-linkages in this unit. One of the consequences of the Indian community connection with India is increase in financial flows be it remittances or foreign investment. Along with this, the Indian diaspora has been involved in other activities -political, and philanthropic. We discuss these aspects too in detail with examples and a case study. The unit concludes with detailing greater potentials for harnessing the diaspora and homeland connections.

17.2 Mapping the Indian Diaspora

Indian emigration has been taking place for centuries but never before did the Indian subcontinent witness such a massive movement of people to other parts of the world than in the 19th and 20th centuries. As a result of these movements, Indians now constitute the third largest Diaspora, next only to the British and the Chinese. The people of Indian origin (PIOs) are estimated to number around 20 million and they are settled in around 75 countries (*Singhvi Report, 2001*). They now constitute sizable minorities in

many countries of settlement and exercise enormous economic and political power in many of them. In our previous units we have read the different phases of the Indian migration abroad.

The current geographical spread of the ‘old’ as well as the ‘new’ Indian diaspora is presented in Figure 17.1 below. As we can see an overwhelming majority of the Indian diaspora comprises of “old diaspora” and is located in areas of the world which may be regarded as third world or developing regions. We can also see that the South-east Asian and the Gulf regions are home to over half of the Indian diaspora and within a few hours flying distance from India. This has implications for the type of linkages this diaspora maintains with its motherland and its potential for playing an important role in the future. Typically we would expect to see the “old diaspora”, given its longer vintage, as the most disconnected from its homeland and the “new diaspora” as the most connected, given the different context of migration, its more recent vintage and its greater relative wealth. However there is a danger of simplification and with the globalization of the Indian brand, especially via Bollywood, even the “old” diaspora now feels that its cultural connections with mother India have been rekindled.

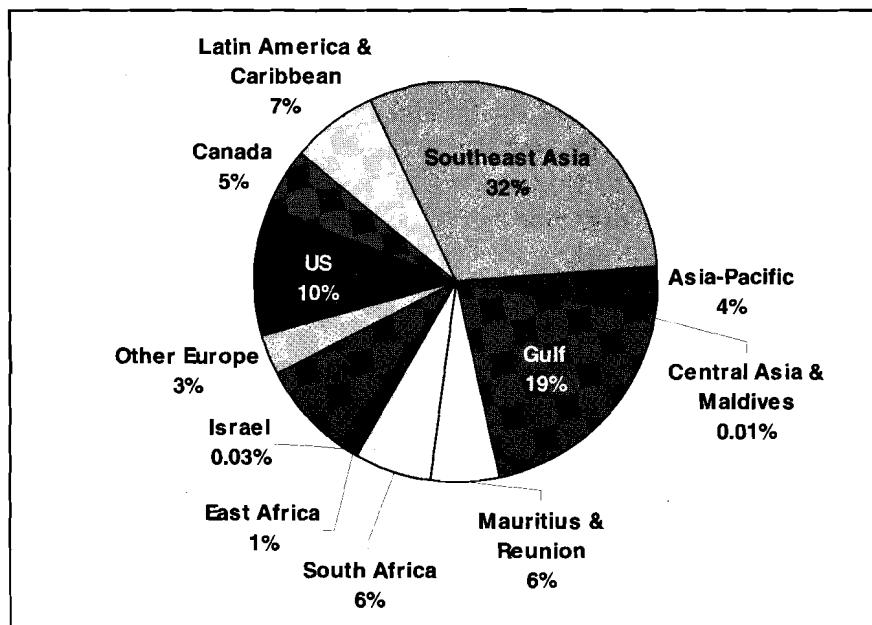


Figure 17.1: Distribution of NRI and PIOs by Regions (in %)

Source: Government of India, Singhvi Report, 2001

17.3 Changing Diaspora-Homeland Relations

The growing awareness and interest in diaspora and diaspora related issues are the outcome of the spread and diffusion of globalisation technologies that have led to the widening, deepening and transformation of diaspora-homeland relations over the past two to three decades. In the early days of migration, especially during the period prior to the current phase of globalisation, the main ways in which overseas Indian communities kept in touch with their homelands and their cultures were through maintaining their language, cooking Indian food at home, regular letters and the occasional letter or visit to their countries of origin. In any case, most overseas Indian families were too busy re-building their homes in a new, at times, a very hostile environment than think too much about their homeward orientation. Now, cheaper travel and more relaxed immigration rules enable more frequent trips to India and for more friends and family to reciprocate

the visits. Trade liberalization and export promotion mean that more goods from the Indian subcontinent are available in the areas of India settlement. Overseas Indians can have their breakfast while reading online newspapers from India or watching a 24 hour Indian news channel such as NDTV or even listening to many Asian-owned local and national radio stations which give constant news updates on happenings in India. In the evening, several Indian satellite channels allow them to catch up on their favourite programmes, be it drama, films or current affairs. The cost of making phone calls back home are a fraction of the cost they used to be only a couple of years ago, leading to a massive increase in telephone traffic at peak times and a boom for companies supplying air-time and prepaid phone cards. More importantly, many of these services, unlike earlier times, are no longer just limited to the well-to-do Indians abroad as falling costs have enabled all sections of the diaspora to engage in such activities.

Moreover, the deregulation of international financial capital movements coupled with new technologies has made the task of sending money back home much cheaper and easier than ever before and has enabled India to become the largest recipient of remittances in the world today, exceeding the funds received through official development assistance or foreign portfolio investment. In 2003 alone, overseas Indians officially sent home more than US\$20 billion. For many families, remittances sent by family members based abroad makes the crucial difference between relative poverty and total destitution. Indian states with large migrants overseas, such as Kerala, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Punjab, have seen large inflows of remittance income, vastly improving the welfare of the migrant households. But the impact of remittances goes well beyond supporting family or relatives' livelihoods or helping to rebuild local schools or hospitals. One important impact is on trade of overseas Indians with their home country and this engagement in international trade can have a significant economic impact as well.

Another important area of impact is on entrepreneurship. Many successful entrepreneurs of Indian origin who live in the United States, Canada, Europe, or the Gulf states also have the potential to become important investors in their home countries. They bring back not just money but an infusion of entrepreneurial spirit and skills that may be sorely lacking in their own country. A recent survey by AnnLee Saxenian (2002) published by the Public Policy Institute of California found that foreign-born (particularly Chinese and Indian) highly skilled immigrants in Silicon Valley have "successfully adopted both the technological capability and the venture-financed, high-growth business model that distinguishes many U.S. firms in the high-technology sector." Half of the respondents to this survey had set up subsidiaries, joint ventures, subcontracting arrangements, or other business operations in their homeland countries. Most of those who hadn't yet done so were considering establishing businesses in their home countries. This recent trend challenges the traditional idea of the "brain drain." Whereas the talented engineers, scientists, or managers who migrated abroad used to maintain only a few ties to their home countries, more recently a new pattern has been established: a "brain gain" that provides new opportunities for trade and foreign investment as well as a powerful infusion of entrepreneurial energy. AnnLee Saxenian's study also noted that the brain drain (in the case of the Chinese and Indian professionals it surveyed) was replaced by "brain circulation," meaning a variety of two-way flows of highly skilled workers between the technologically advanced countries where they reside and the less-developed countries such as India where they were born.

But we need to be cautious about making generalizations about diasporas and their homeland relations given the tremendous variation in historical experience, relations with governments in the home country, levels of prosperity and education, religious background and ethnicity both within and among diaspora communities. The experience of living outside the homeland may forge new common Indian identity among disparate members or it may exacerbate the differences within a group, fracturing it along regional, class, language, religion or caste lines. The latter appears to be the more dominant pattern, especially among new Indian diaspora communities in Europe and North America. Nevertheless, no matter how heterogeneous or homogeneous, diaspora communities do form a living link between their countries of origin and their countries of settlement.

17.4 Multi-Layered Home Connections

An important characteristic of modern diasporas is that as a group they retain a meaningful link with their homeland. These linkages develop over time and become multi-layered. They emerge as important means for the identification of a historical memory with the homeland and for maintaining some form of connectedness with it. Linkages can range from being exclusive maintenance of family ties, membership of village/community welfare associations, and different forms of economic, political, social, religious and cultural exchanges. All of these different forms of linkages are presently thriving in India. Because of the technological and communications revolution, overseas Indians increasingly find themselves incorporated as transnational agents with various forms of familial, cultural, social, community and at times, political relationships. See Figure 17.2 below.

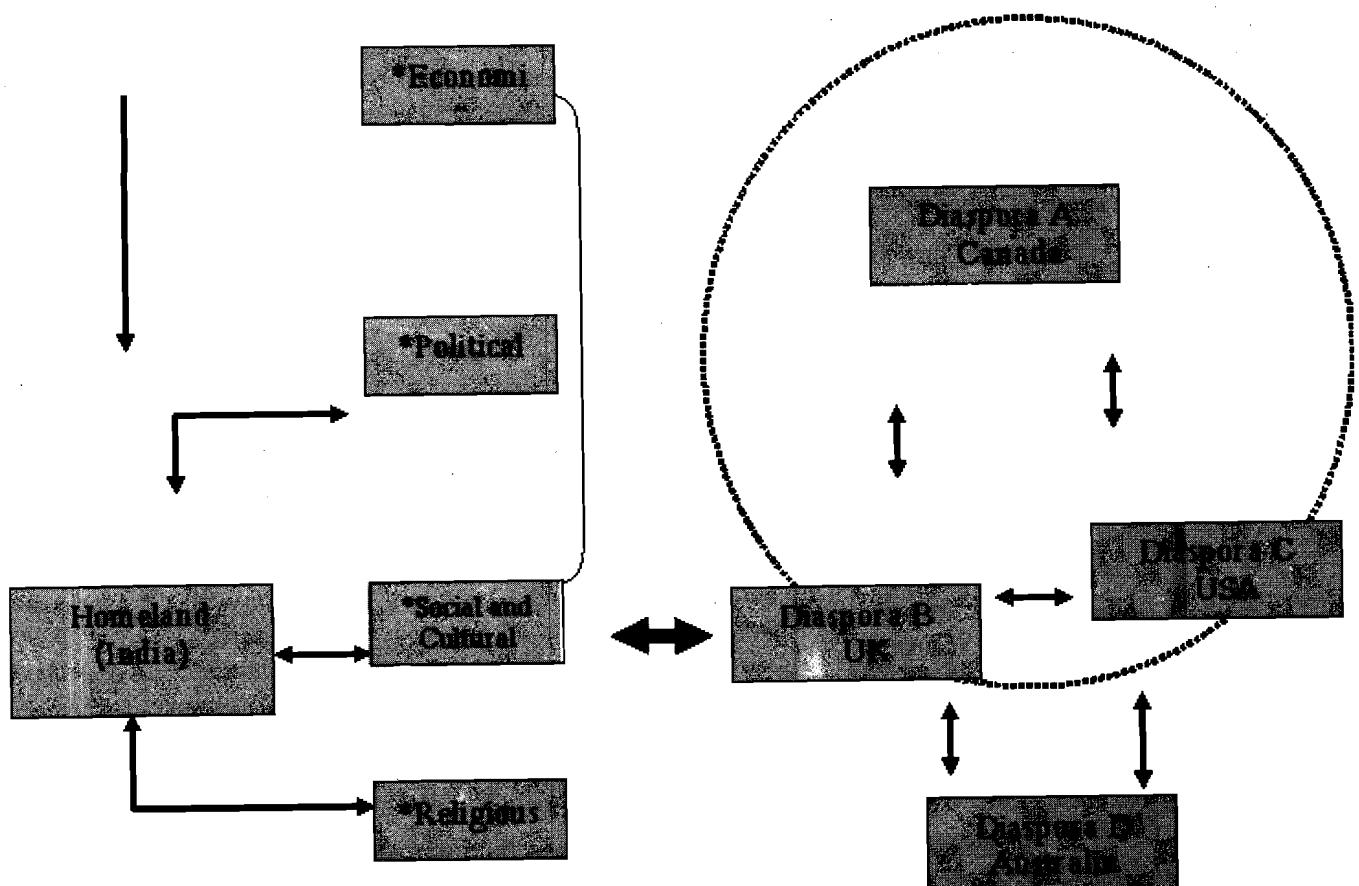


Figure 17.2: Circulation within the Indian Diaspora Transnational Space

In some situations, such as familial, cultural and community connections, the forces of integration are becoming stronger, further binding family, kinship and community ties. An important point to recognize is that with globalisation these linkages have been reformed and reshaped in two fundamental ways: they have transformed from being *unidirectional* to become *multi-directional* and they are increasingly influenced by *intra-diaspora* exchanges within a transnational space. For example, Punjabis, Gujaratis and Tamils in Australia connect with those in UK, USA and Canada and so on and their link with Punjab, Gujarat or Tamil Nadu is just one aspect of their transnational exchanges. This has important implications for the way homeland governments and community and philanthropic organisations approach their diasporas. Certainly, since the Indian diaspora has become truly transnational, so must Indian government mobilization strategies. Figure 2 below provides a schematic representation of circulation within the Indian diaspora transnational space and Table 17.1 provides a summary of the major types of linkages which currently exists between India and its diasporas.

Table 17.1: Examples of linkages within the Indian transnational community

Economic	Social/Cultural	Religious	Political
1) <i>Family and Personal Networks</i>	- cultural tourism - sports exchanges - musical exchanges - educational exchanges - wedding and bridal services - video/audio/CD exchanges - print media - film/Bollywood - arts/theatre/exhibitions	- visiting religious leaders - visiting Sants/Sadhus/ Swamis/Maulvis - visiting Kirtan/Dhadi <i>jathas</i> - video/audio cassettes /CDs - joint celebration of religious festivals - live media broadcasts from holy places such Amritsar/ Anandpur Sahib on important religious festivals	- overseas branches of main Indian political parties and other political organisations - links with factional groups eg Hindutva or pro-Khalistan groups - Human Rights Organisations - Development of 'Advocacy Networks' with other NGO's
Tangible Remittances - Income - Gifts - Services			
Social Remittances (Intangibles) - ideas and values - attitudes and behaviour patterns - identities - social capital			
2) <i>Government/Institutional/Regulatory</i>			
Facilities for NRIs - trading opportunities e.g ethnic foods - promotion of tourism - trade fairs - financial services - property transactions/services - educational services	- philanthropic projects and charitable donations - emergency/humanitarian aid e.g. Bhuj or Orissa - hospitals - educational establishments - village infrastructure - village sports tournaments - Charitable Organisations such as Pingalwara, Amritsar or Amar Dass Mission	- Websites on Indian Religions - separate for each major tradition	
3) Indian e - business	- Municipal/Village Websites		

17.5 Growing importance of Diasporas

Given that diaspora-homeland relations have strengthened during the current accelerated phase of globalization it is becoming increasingly recognized that a country's active diaspora can have a significant political and economic impact on the region of origin. This impact can be positive and/or negative, for example positive in the economic domain (e.g. through remittances,

foreign direct investment and philanthropy) but negative in the political domain (e.g. through support for separatism, communalism or religious extremism). India experiences both types of these effects and that even the “old” almost passive diaspora, has begun to show activity. Since both effects are simultaneous, at certain times the negative effects may appear to dominate the positive ones causing tension and anxiety in government’s role in influencing diaspora-homeland relations.

The diaspora’s potential to influence its homeland is a function of both its own characteristics and those of the country or region of origin. The potential for a diaspora to act as an agent or at least a catalyst for change, depends on a number of factors: its size, its education, its skills, length of migration etc and the political and economic profile of this diaspora e.g. its socio-economic make-up and the range and extent of its economic and political activities in the adopted countries. Given the close relationship between the level of education, level of income and size, we would expect to see a higher potential for a very positive contribution by diasporas. It is in part due to the growing recognition of the positive roles that diasporas can play we see the academic discourse on impacts of international migration and diasporas shifting from one being about the negative “brain drain” effects towards one of positive “brain gain” or “brain circulation” effects. The Indian government has belatedly woken up to this fact too and now recognizes that healthy relations with its diaspora, especially in the financial domain, are an important resource which they can potentially leverage in their quest for economic development (Kapur, 2004).

A growing literature identifies a range of mechanisms and channels through which diasporas impact upon the macroeconomic environment and economic development. The broadest model, developed by Orozco with Caribbean and Central American experience in mind, emphasizes the Five Ts usually associated with diasporas: tourism, transportation, telecommunications, trade and transmission of monetary remittances. Figure 17.3 below captures the essence of this role and each one of the Ts has substantial direct benefits and these effects are clearly visible in India today. Regular diaspora tourism, for instance, has emerged a major foreign exchange earner and generates extra domestic demand and boosts profits in a number of sub-sectors in the economy. Transportation, especially airlines and domestic travel companies such as airport taxis, buses and trains etc. all benefit greatly from regular visits by diaspora communities. There has been an explosion in international phone call traffic, leading to massive investment in communications infrastructure and profits for phone companies. Diaspora communities’ insatiable appetite for authentic foodstuff, artifacts, clothes, jewelry, musical instruments, dvds, cds etc. have led to dramatic development of trade in cultural goods. We must also remember that all of these channels are multi-directional as can be seen in many examples of successful cross-overs of goods (eg. Kingfisher or Cobra beer) between diaspora and homeland locations.

Some writers also differentiate between a diaspora’s direct (as in the 5 T’s model) and indirect effects where the latter result in diasporas playing an intermediary role between the sending and host countries in a range of mutually advantageous activities. Many of these effects are also visible in India where diasporas can facilitate a dialogue between the home state or country and the host government and their agencies. The involvement of UK’s Department for International Development (DfID) and the Canadian International Development Agency in parts of India are a good case in point where diaspora-based lobby groups have demonstrated tangible influence.

Increasingly more and more writers have tended to emphasise transnational social networks as the most potent diaspora mechanism. The social networks can operate under different headings, be it remittances, business investment, financial investments with banks, in the stock market or purchase of government bonds, and in knowledge transfer. Some of these financial connections are explored in more detail in the next section.

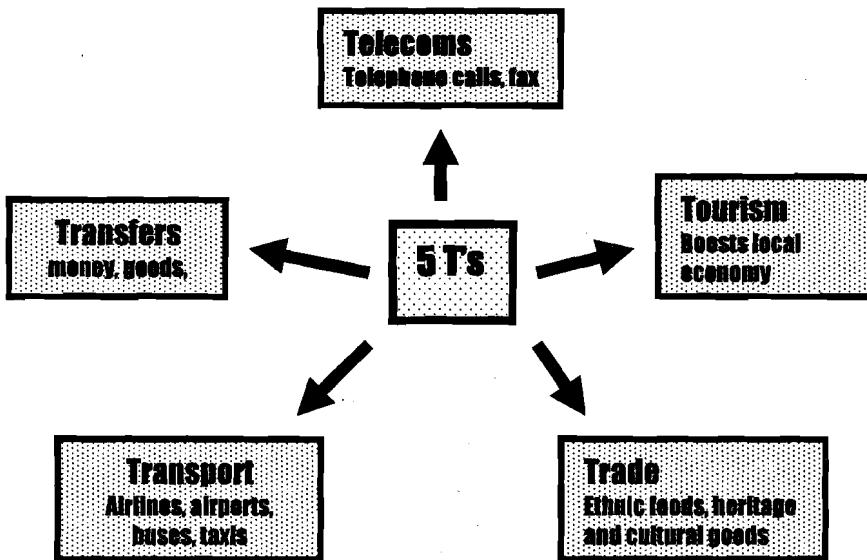


Figure 17.3: Diaspora-Homeland Connections: The 5 T's Model

Source: Orozco (2003)

Reflection and Action 17.1

Trace the growing importance of Indian diaspora to homeland.

Discuss the different aspects of connections between Indian diaspora and home

17.6 Diaspora Finance

The interactions between diaspora, diaspora finance and development are quite complex and have only recently begun to receive serious attention by scholars working in the field of diaspora and development. In the case of India, even now, hardly any serious research has been undertaken on measuring the current significance and potential role different types of diaspora finance plays in the country.

Box 17.1 World Bank (2000) on Diaspora Finance

"Diasporas serve as information channels for the flow of information, market intelligence, capital and skills. They may supplement formal channels that rely on market institutions, providing a way for migrants to conduct transactions in an atmosphere of trust. In this way they act to offset information asymmetries and other market failures. Modern diasporas... expedite business transactions by resolving monitoring problems, reducing opportunism, and building reputation and ethnic trust based on networking. As migration continues, diasporas will expand, tying together regions and continents. Even if governments attempt to slow down the process, communications, technology and human relationships will maintain this trend. The South Asian diaspora, with a network reaching from southeast Asia to the Middle East, the United Kingdom, and North America, has a net worth of between \$150 billion and \$300 billion. Its potential remains to be tapped in the early 21st century."

Along with its general policy towards the Indian diaspora, in the area of diaspora finance too, the Indian government has moved from a position of somewhat disapproving indifference to one of actively seeking their involvement in India's development. It has so far focused primarily on attracting direct investment (the first priority, but ironically the most disappointing), portfolio investment, and humanitarian or other philanthropic assistance. Relatively little is said about remittances.

Remittances

Diaspora finance, particularly its most popularly known form, remittance money sent home by migrants, represents one of the largest and most visible economic impacts of migration on migrant sending economies in many third world regions. According to the latest available statistics,² the flow of official remittances to the developing world reached \$167 billion in 2005, of which \$32 billion (19%) went to South Asia with India's share being \$22 billion - rising rapidly from the \$13 billion recorded in 2001. Yet we know that these documented amounts vastly underestimate the actual inflow of remittances because large amounts come through informal channels such as through family, friends and kinship networks.

Official remittances are by far the largest and most stable component of diaspora finance. Often their role has been judged in terms of whether they help in maintaining sustainable livelihoods or perhaps just assist in generating further rural inequalities or dependencies. At other times the debate centres on the 'productive' and 'unproductive' use of remittances at the household level. But these still remain very simplistic approaches in understanding the total impact of remittances and diaspora finance as a whole on migrant sending economies. To get a more comprehensive picture of the impact we need to go beyond the focus on financial inflows alone. Social remittances for example - transfer of ideas, values, attitudes, social capital, organizational and managerial skills and practices - have the potential to play an equally significant role but since these are difficult to quantify, they don't receive the same attention they deserve. Overwhelming evidence suggests that family and community remittances play a complex but vital role at the household, community and regional levels (Levitt, 2001). They are important in understanding how migration impacts upon family and gender roles, especially of those left behind, on class, ethnicity and on political and religious participation. The overall evidence on total impact of remittances clearly shows that they have an enormous potential to transform and raise rural livelihoods by improving standards of living, by providing access to health care and education and by empowering communities whose economic welfare is threatened by the indifference and bureaucratic politics of the local state. This is particularly the case in most Indian states with their continuing fiscal crisis and consequent squeeze on budgets for rural development programmes. Thus for many of these Indian states, given their strong, wealthy and vibrant diasporas, we would expect diaspora finance to provide an important potential source of alternative income.

Portfolio Investment

Portfolio investment flows come into India in a number of ways: as NRI bank deposits to take advantage of special terms and interest rates (these reached a record US\$3.6 billion in 2003-2004), as investment in the stock markets, either directly or via mutual funds and through the issue of special bonds by the Indian government. Net outflows and inflows vary depending on interest rates, expectations on returns and risk assessment. However, since the 1992 reforms, sizable amounts have come in, contributing significantly

to the development of healthy foreign exchange reserves. Take the example of issue of two government bonds aimed specifically at attracting NRI inflows.

In 1998, soon after India was subjected to international sanctions for carrying out nuclear tests, the government, fearing a foreign exchange crunch, launched a huge sale of 5-year bonds, called Resurgent India Bonds, guaranteed by the State Bank of India and available only to NRIs. Although “patriotic fervour” may have been a key theme underlying the sale, the government was aware that it could not count on patriotism alone, and therefore added significant benefits to make the bonds attractive: a 2 per cent higher interest rate in dollar terms than the US bond market, the option of redemption in US dollars and exemption from Indian income and wealth taxes. A massive marketing campaign was launched for the bonds in countries of the new and rich Indian diaspora. The sale turned out to be a runaway success as it was over-subscribed: NRIs worldwide purchased bonds worth £2.3 billion in just over two weeks, more than 50 per cent of which came from the Middle East and South East Asia and 20 per cent from Europe and North America. This successful experience was repeated again in 2000 with the issue of another bond, the India Millennium Deposits, which raised over £3 billion.

Foreign Direct Investment

Foreign Direct Investment flows to India have continued to increase steadily during the post-reform period, although actual inflows have not matched the expectations or the rhetoric of the politicians, both in terms of overall FDI inflows and particularly NRI FDI inflows. It has become common practice to compare the successful mobilization by China to woo its diaspora to undertake FDI in China compared with India's dismal failure. Less than 5 per cent of the cumulative FDI inflows to India in the post-reform era have come from NRIs, compared with around 50 per cent in the case of China. How can we explain this? There are significant differences between the compositions of the two diasporas and in any case Indian diaspora's financial contribution is in a different form than FDI as we have described above. However, recent years have seen some change in the equation, especially given the Indian diaspora involvement in the software development sector.

Box 17.2 Difference Between China and India With regards to FDI

Kapur (2001) explains the differential experience as follows:

“The Indian diaspora was largely professional while the Chinese diaspora was more entrepreneurial. Hence although the former was well off in the aggregate (for instance it is one of the wealthiest ethnic groups in the U.S.), it did not have substantial numbers of high net worth individuals who would serve as potential investors. Second, India was hostile to foreign investment until the early 1990s while China opened up a decade earlier. Third, China, unlike India, did not have a strong capitalist class when it opened up - and hence faced little domestic opposition to incentives granted to diasporic (sic) investors. Finally, local governments have played a much more proactive role in China relative to India, although this is changing in the latter.”

We must also add the following to the above factors highlighted by Kapur. Overseas Chinese are larger in number (eg around 55m compared with India's 20m), tend to be more entrepreneurial given their socio-economic backgrounds, enjoy strong family connections (*guanxi*) and business networks in south-east Asia and China and enjoy very cordial relations with the Chinese political leadership. In contrast overseas Indians (NRIs/PIOs) are

smaller in number, more differentiated, do not have strong family business or social networks and have, until recently, been largely ignored by Indian governments (Smart and Jinh-Yuh Hsu, 2004). Although the overseas Chinese contribution to diaspora finance may have been exaggerated (due to measurement differences) when compared with India's diaspora, nevertheless a significant difference still remains.

Another interesting dimension to highlight is the regional distribution of FDI by NRIs and the relationship between the size of the diaspora and homeward orientation measured in terms of FDI inflows. As we can see in Table 17.2 below, the best performing state is Karnataka, with its successful IT sector and well established business networks and then comes Gujarat with its strong tradition of trading and merchant classes. It is interesting to observe that states such as Punjab, although having a large diaspora, do not figure at all in FDI terms, reinforcing the point about the importance of having an entrepreneurial culture and a large entrepreneurial class with close business networks.

Table 17.2: Top States Receiving NRI-FDI in India

States	Number of NRI Projects	Value of NRI Investment (Rs. Crore)	Total FDI (Rs.)	Non-Resident FDI/Total FDI (%)
Andhra Pradesh	190	1,905.8		
Maharashtra	273	1,890.7	50,333	3.7
Karnataka	163	1,333.0	23,970	5.6
Delhi	140	959.5	34,636	2.8
Gujarat	88	765.5	18,795	4.0
Tamil Nadu	192	683.5	24,763	2.8

Source: *Times of India*, 4th February, 2004

Business Networks

Indian diaspora communities have a long track record in establishing successful businesses in their countries of settlement, whether in the old or new diaspora locations. In the vast majority of these locations there is a thriving Indian businessmen sector and many communities play an important brokerage and other influential role in their adopted homes. It is quite common to see the formation of strong business networks amongst the diaspora communities. Since they usually represent a minority community in their host country, such networks provide a range of networking opportunities among their co-ethnics, enabling them to utilize their social and cultural capital. In the case of the Indian diaspora many business networks are well established, especially in the UK and US where influential Indian business and professional groups have strong networking arrangements. However over the past decade, newer and truly transnational networks have begun to emerge helped by organizations such as Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO). Many of these use ICT to create and maintain ongoing ties with a view to identifying business opportunities and potential areas of partnership. One good example of this is TIE (The IndUS Entrepreneur), which has grown from its core in North America and India to 25 chapters, including Singapore, Switzerland and the UK. It matches experienced entrepreneurs and start-up managers in a mentoring relationship, and backs up promising enterprises (in the United States and India) with venture capital from a core membership of investors. As Devesh Kapur (2001) points out that the benefits of the network go beyond profitable investment and start-up finance:

"It has boosted India's confidence as well as the confidence of overseas investors about India's potential despite India's numerous problems. Companies like Yahoo, Hewlett Packard and General Electric have opened R&D centers in India largely because of the confidence engendered by the presence of many Indians working in their US operations. This points to the cognitive effects arising from the projection of a coherent, appealing, and progressive identity on the part of the diaspora which signals an image of prosperity and progress to potential investors and consumers."

Another example is the Silicon Valley Indian Professional Association (SIPA), of Santa Clara, CA, which has over 1800 members. Its mission is to "provide a forum for individuals interested in meeting with visiting Indian businessmen and women, professionals, and bureaucrats, and to facilitate information dissemination and networking within the professional community" (sipa.org) through a speaker series and seminars on issues such as outsourcing, property rights, and service providers in India. There are several business associations currently functioning in the UK, including the Indian Development Group (UK) Ltd, the Indian forum for Business, and the India Group based at the London Business School and at the local level there are many Asian business directories which facilitate local networking.

Diasporan Philanthropy: Case Study of Punjab

The role of diasporan philanthropy - private giving for public good - has a relatively long history in India as there are examples of this activity taking place since the early decades of the last century. However its magnitude, quality and creativity have become more significant in the last couple of decades or so (Geithner et al., 2004). As is the case with other diaspora communities, it is always difficult to identify the driving force behind these forms of financial flows. Arguments such as civic duty, loyalty to village kith and kin, gratitude, sense of identity etc. are often used by migrants themselves to justify donations. Some professional groups, such as doctors and scientists, donating individually or through their professional organizations, may be seen as "paying back" something to their homelands, a sort of acknowledgement or gratitude for the public subsidy received towards their education and training in India. However, here may also be deeper cultural factors, which play a role for some communities, such as, for example the Sikhs. Sikh philosophy and *Rahit Maryada* places an important emphasis on philanthropy and altruism- cultural values emphasize the importance of *daswandh and daan* (sharing of fruits of labour), *seva* (selfless service) and *sarbat da bhalla* (welfare of all mankind). These norms are especially emphasized when raising funding for faith-based philanthropy i.e. construction of *gurdwaras and mandirs* and other religious institutions, in extending help towards their *parivar* or *quom*, in village infrastructure improvement and community facilities and in extending help towards other deprived and underprivileged communities.

Taking the case of Punjab, although there have always been relatively wealthy individuals and social entrepreneurs who initiate philanthropic projects on their own and in their own way, most of the community remittances currently being mobilised in Punjab are through the development of village welfare associations. In fact over the past ten years or so there has been a rapid growth in the development of village associations, which are now performing a number of functions - from encouraging sports and cultural exchanges, to buying political influence and to pursuit of low-scale development goals in their village communities. A counterpart association will often be set up in the village in the homeland to facilitate exchange. These associations, both in the diaspora and in the homeland are increasingly

motivated to take advantage of the upsurge in family remittances and by the desire to offer economic aid to their homelands. Many donors have been persuaded to become involved as a result of the demonstration effects of the flows of family remittances - if remittances have the capacity to greatly improve living standards of migrant households, then surely they can do the same for the village as a whole? Emphasis towards the latter aim is gaining momentum. There are now numerous villages in Punjab where varying levels of diaspora funded rural development projects are being undertaken. The three excellent examples that are worth noting are: (i) Guru Nanak Mission Medical and Educational Trust (nr. Banga, dist Nawanshahr; (ii) National Rural Development Society, Palahi, (near Phagwara, dist. Kupurthala and (iii) Village Life Improvement Board (VLIB), Kharaudi (nr. Mahilpur, dist. Hoshiarpur). The table below identifies the main types of activities currently being undertaken by village associations in Punjab.

Table 17.3: Range of Philanthropic Activities by Migrants in Punjabi Villages

Category	Kind of Activity
Charity	Gurdwara donations, clothes, computers
Infrastructure	Hospitals, Nursing College, Parks, sports complexes, street paving and lighting, mortuaries, sewerage and water treatment, vehicles
Human development and Recreational	Scholarships, sports facilities and sports tournaments, libraries, IT equipment, health equipment
Investment	Income generating programmes for the community
Other	General fund-raising

Source: Thandi (2002)

In summarizing this section, it is difficult to say with any certainty how much of the increased FDI and other financial flows into India is the result of the government's new approach - which is still very new and evolving - and how much springs from other factors. For example, the employment of Indian information-technology professionals in the US computer industry and the resulting build-up of links between US and Indian high-tech firms, especially around San Jose and Bangalore, had little to do with Indian government's diaspora policy, and more with its support of outstanding institutions of higher education (i.e. IITs) and general macro-economic reforms. But the government has recognized the potential of the diaspora to contribute more to India's development efforts, and has moved to clear away some of the obstacles towards greater engagement.

17.7 Political Connections

Diaspora based political organizations maintain many types of connections with political organizations in their homelands, whether they are political parties or advocacy groups or other forms of community organizations with political agendas. These connections developed quite early on (for example the establishment of Overseas Congress Party, the Ghadar Party) and thus have a long history but it is only in the current phase of globalization their activities have strengthened and they have become more influential in decision-making. Most of these links are quite legitimate and result in a strong, positive and democratic dialogue between India and its diaspora communities but there have also been occasions when such connections have been very tense, leading to general mistrust.

One of the most talked about negative aspects of diaspora-homeland connections is the financial (for purchase of weapons), political, ideological and strategic support which disaffected diaspora groups provide to sub-

nationalist movements in their homeland. Support for self-determination in Kashmir, Punjab and for Tamils in Sri Lanka comes immediately to mind. Diaspora groups, cushioned from the day to day consequences of violence which their support can potentially unleash, are often more uncompromising than their counterparts who remain in countries of origin. Good examples of this today are the activities of the so-called Khalistanis in the UK and USA. This “long distance nationalism”, with its romanticized notions can obscure reality about the nature of homeland conflict and the long-term negative impact on a region they are purporting to protect.

Another negative form of diaspora support can be its funding of communalism. An example of this is India's Gujarati diaspora which is alleged to have been involved in funding and supporting the rise of Hindu nationalist violence against Christians and Muslims in Gujarat, an activity which an article in *The Hindu* newspaper referred to as “foreign direct investment in hatred” (Wilson, 2003). Based on a report by Awaaz, a London based organization, this article investigated the ideological and material links between the Gujarati Diaspora in the UK and some of the Hindu nationalist (“Hindutva”) groups (collectively called the Sangh Parivar), implicated in the anti-Muslim pogroms in Gujarat in early 2002, and found that the “major long-term source of funding” for Sewa International and other Sangh Parivar groups was Britain's Gujarati community. This article asserted that such groups had (i) co-opted the human and resource channels that had existed for years between Gujarati communities in the UK and their families and communities in India for use in funding pro-Hindu nationalist parties in India; (ii) channeled Gujaratis' experiences of racism and alienation in the UK into “virulent Hindu chauvinism” and (iii) succeeded in raising money from the British government by portraying themselves as “faith communities,” and therefore becoming legitimate beneficiaries of the government's new social inclusion policy approach for supporting ethnic minorities (Wilson, 2003). Another study by Sabrang, an organization based in the USA, found similar links between the US-based India Development and Relief Fund (IDRF) and violent Hindu nationalism. It is fair to say, however, that this report was denounced by IDRF supporters in a rebuttal, which claimed that Hindutva organizations were merely providing a framework for maintaining and celebrating Hindu identity in countries where Hindus represented small minorities.

Reflection and Action 17.2

What are the reasons for increase in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in India?

In what way do political connections forged by the diaspora have negative impact on the country of their origin , substantiate your answer with suitable examples.

17.8 New Policies for Mobilising Diaspora-Homeland Relations

Although we know that diaspora-homeland linkages are both transnational and multi-layered and have become stronger, how can we mobilize and harness these for the economic development in India? At the cultural and social levels the Indian consular activities abroad have always tried, with some relative degree of success, to instill Indian-ness and a sense of belonging amongst diverse Indian communities abroad. However, the Indian government's success in mobilizing diaspora finance has a disappointing history. This largely reflects the historically indifferent attitude the Indian government adopted towards its diaspora. For a long time after independence

Indians living abroad or leaving for abroad were treated with suspicion or seen as liabilities who made all sorts of demands on the Indian government without contributing anything in return. In fact, following Nehru's official attitude towards the diaspora - that Indian emigrants should assimilate and adopt the life style of their chosen country of residence - India never imagined that its diaspora could be a strategic asset which it should try to harness (Marie-Lall, 2001). Official policies aimed at attracting diaspora finance were non-existent as India pursued its inward looking policy of self-sufficiency within a highly centralised and bureaucratic development model. All forms of obstacles were introduced to discourage foreign trade and foreign investment. Within this setup states had limited autonomy in encouraging diaspora-homeland links.

However a radical departure in economic policy was initiated after India's foreign exchange crisis forced it to adopt the IMF-World Bank structural adjustment rescue package in 1991. It is ironic that a major cause of the foreign exchange crisis should be the dramatic fall in remittances from Indian workers in the Gulf States who were forced to flee the region during the first Gulf war! With the implementation of globalisation and liberalization policies, India not only began to welcome multinational investment but also belatedly acknowledged the fact that its diaspora communities were relatively wealthy and had potential finance to help with foreign exchange problems. However despite the rhetoric, it is only in the post 2000 period that we see a significant shift in policy, with a plethora of new initiatives, even conceding the demands for a dual nationality. What was the major catalyst for change in pro-NRI policies? Perhaps the single most significant event was the setting up in September 2000, under the Chair of L.M. Singhvi, of a High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora to analyze the location, situation and potential development role of the estimated 20 million non-resident Indians (NRIs) and Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs). The final report of this High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora (referred to hereafter as the Singhvi Report) was released by the government in January 2002 and it recommended a totally "new policy framework for creating a more conducive environment in India to leverage these invaluable human resources." (Singhvi Report, 2001).

Besides providing long but interesting narratives on the settlement and evolution of overseas Indian communities, much of the analysis in the Report focused on economic relations, especially on the question of why FDI and other types of diaspora financial flows have been low relative to, in particular, the Chinese diaspora. It suggested that although the 20 million overseas Indians generated an annual income equal to 35% of India's GDP, they only generated less than 10 per cent of India's rather modest £2.2 billion of FDI. Compare this to the overseas Chinese, who have contributed half of China's £26 billion worth of FDI. The report acknowledged that the Indian government ignored or even failed the diaspora, and that the government itself was to blame for the relatively low involvement of overseas Indians in India by not offering an investor-friendly regulatory environment. There is a consensus amongst government spokesmen, Indian media commentators and NRI businessmen that a major obstacle is the mountains of bureaucratic red tape and corruption that NRIs and PIOs must deal with should they want to invest directly in India. Subha Singh (2002) expressed this sentiment as follows:

"Several overseas investors have burnt their fingers in investing in projects in India as they wound their way through the plethora of laws and regulations that govern industrial enterprises...Many Indians living abroad want to fund

small projects in their home villages...but the procedural delays and corruption in India have made it difficult to implement their programmes. In other cases, the community felt that the procedures for transferring funds for philanthropic activities was too cumbersome, without much assurance that funds would be used appropriately. Others complain of little protection in case of fraud or cheating in financial or land matters."

The Singhvi Report acknowledges such problems and it stated in the executive summary that: "[The Diaspora's] receptiveness to Indian concerns will depend greatly on the quality of their interaction with the country of their origin and the sensitivity to their concerns displayed in India. It is essential for India to create the necessary structures to facilitate this interaction." (Singhvi Report, 2001, p. xxi). The report urged the Indian government to strengthen the diaspora's "pride and faith in its heritage" as this would "revitalize [the Diaspora's] interest in development. (Singhi Report, 2001, p. xxvii). Towards this endeavour the Singhvi Report had recommended that 9 January - the day Gandhi returned to India from South Africa - be celebrated each year as a day (Pravasi Bhartiya Divas (PBD)) to recognize the contributions of eminent PIOs and NRIs. The BJP party which led the government at that time took up this challenge and the first celebration was held in 2003 in conjunction with the first major Indian Diaspora conference, which attracted more than 2000 NRIs and PIOs from 63 countries. The Conference was inaugurated by the Indian government led by Prime Minister Vajpayee and was co-sponsored by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce. The Congress party which came into power after the BJP has continued with the PBD and has held two more since then, PBD 3 in Mumbai in 2005 and PBD 4 in Hyderabad in 2006.

In addition to the annual PBD, a series of reforms and new legislation have also been announced, largely in response to many of the issues raised in the Singhvi Report, including, for instance, streamlining measures to ease overseas investment to India, with the India Investment Centre acting as the nodal agency, the creation of a government Ministry (for Overseas Indians) with the sole focus of acting as a liaison between India and its diaspora, and introduction of legislation to grant dual citizenship to NRI in certain countries and perhaps even offering voting rights in the future.

All of the above are moves in the right direction and have been welcomed by all NRIs and PIOs as long-awaited developments. There are, however, some lessons that India could still learn from the mobilization policies of other countries. Evidence from other countries such as China and Taiwan and even from other states of India suggest that promotion of investment in specific sectors or by identifying economic clusters may be a more effective strategy to harness the talent of overseas-based business and professional migrants. Furthermore, as Chinese experience strongly suggests, commercial investment and philanthropic giving tend to reinforce each other. In India the Karnataka story of nurturing business start-ups among Silicon Valley NRI returnees and in developing the technology cluster in Bangalore is an interesting case in point.

The second element for successful mobilisation is that of developing an infrastructure that would facilitate communications between the diaspora communities and their homeland. The Web offers an enormous potential for leaders in the homeland and diaspora communities to exchange and share information relatively instantly and cheaply. Such information can pertain to business and investment opportunities, skill shortages, databases on diaspora-based and homeland experts, progress reports on on-going or new philanthropic projects, organizations offering opportunities for social and cultural exchanges. Although many Indian states have taken some token initiatives to provide this facilitation they remain largely undeveloped,

under-resourced and politicised. As regards the latter, for instance, whenever BJP or Congress politicians have visited abroad, their appeal remains limited exclusively within their own political party networks.

The third and final element in leveraging the diaspora is to introduce financial incentives and innovative mechanisms for luring migrant money. These would include not only liberalisation of key sectors not currently open to NRIs but also liberalisation of financial flows. Current incentives such as offering matching state grants are also part of these strategies but these need to be fully embraced through larger budgetary allocations to develop credibility and trust. Further, too often the incentives are geared towards ensuring inflows but neglect the fact that incentives are also required for reversal of flows if the migrants deem it necessary. Appealing to the Indian migrant's sense of cultural identity or patriotic loyalty will not be sufficient if the migrant's perception is that the incentives on offer are not transparent or are discretionary and unfair. In certain cases there may also be a role for offering non-financial incentives, for instance high-profile awards which acknowledge the migrant's contribution to the economic well-being of the region. The recent honouring of high profile individuals at *Pravasi Bhartyia Divas* functions has acknowledged this need but this needs to be promoted in a non-politicised way to ensure credibility. The state level NRI Sabhas were a potential vehicle for this activity but their politicisation has rendered them relatively toothless.

17.9 Conclusions

In this unit we have argued that the Indian diaspora maintains multi-layered connections with its homeland of India. There connections vary from being cultural, social, religious, political and economic and many of them have both transformed and strengthened over the last two decades. Some of these connections can generate negative outcomes but Even the so called "old" diaspora with its long history of overseas settlement has began to re-connect with its area of origin. Meanwhile, the "new" diaspora communities, especially of Europe, North America and the Gulf States, have developed very strong economic and financial linkages with India and perhaps been the major beneficiaries of Indian government initiatives to build a more constructive dialogue with its diasporas.

Some of the connections mentioned above can generate negative outcomes but this unit has emphasized the financial connections to demonstrate both their positive nature and their potential in terms of helping Indian economic development - a potential which is being successfully exploited by countries such as China - and their weakness, especially in the area of foreign direct investment. The unit also raises important issues about the nature and socio-economic composition of the Indian diaspora and policies for its successful mobilization as a strategic asset.

17.10 Further Reading

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Unit 18

Indian Diaspora in Cyberspace

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- 18.1 Introduction**
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Learning Objectives

After completing this unit you will be able to :

- Define virtual community
- Have an overview of the history of Indian diaspora and its relation to cyberspace
- Have an understanding of socio-cultural and economic issues at the intersection of the virtual and real in relation to diaspora online
- Begin to understand the implications of Indian diaspora online

18.1 Introduction

In this unit we will examine yet another aspect of interlinkages between diasporas, and this time we discuss connections between diaspora that happen in cyberspace. As we have mentioned earlier too the globalised world has made it increasingly amenable for the use of telecommunication and digital devices which make communications possible and communication that cut across time and space. In that sense the digital communications are different from face to face communications which happen in the same physical space. In this unit we will try and understand what we mean by cyberspace and virtual community and whether such communities are possible. We will then examine the specific case of Indian diaspora in relation to the online and cyber world and what space they occupy and how they articulate their sense of community through what actions. In analysing these concepts and phenomena we will be examining the relevant literature in this area as well.

18.2 Defining Cyberspace

David Whittle traces the origins of the concept to Alvin Toffler's *Future Shock*. Whittle writes that although the author of the science fiction work *Neuromancer* William Gibson is most often cited as the writer who coined the term cyberspace, "Gibson himself reportedly credits the concept to John Brunner, author of *Shockwave Rider*," who in turn credits Alvin Toffler as the author who introduced the concept of cyberspace (Whittle, 1996).

Box 18.1: What is Cyberspace?

In the second edition of *The World Wide Web Unleashed*, John December and Neil Randall offer the following definition of cyberspace:

Cyberspace refers to the mental construct a person generates from experiencing computer communication and information retrieval. The science fiction author William Gibson developed this term to describe the visual environments in his novels. Gibson described worlds in which computer users navigate a highly imagistic global network of information resources and services.

The term cyberspace is used today to refer to the collection of computer-mediated experiences for visualization, communication, interaction, and information retrieval (1995: 328).

Much of the confusion and uncertainty surrounding the notion of whether or not there really is community online – whether or not “virtual communities” occur – has to do with the “cyberspace” fantasy and the false dichotomy between “real life” (what cybernauts refer to as “RL”) and “virtual life”. The cyberspace metaphor leads us to believe that our interactions online are separate from our everyday lives. Technically, all we are doing online is transmitting messages with the aid of a modem and the telephone connection. And yet we do not think of a telephone conversation as not being real. Perhaps the reason we think of cyberspace as not only separate from our everyday lives and interaction with with-body, but also as “unreal” has to do with the fact that cyberspace as a concept is rooted in science fiction. In futuristic literature, cyberspace is physically inhabitable space. It is an “electronically generated alternate reality, entered by means of direct links to the brain.” There is a body/soul split.

Following the literary notion of cyberspace, we think of our transmission of messages via the internet in spatial terms. Yet there is something about communicating online that gives us a sense of multi-dimensional space. There seems to be something about words and images that pop on and off computer screen - as when we send and receive messages and view websites - that leads to the illusion that there is some kind of life on the other side of the screen. Almost as if there is a “land” on the other side of the glass, from which something or somebody “talks back”. As William Gibson, the science fiction author attributed with the coining of the term “cyberspace” writes, people who use computers and play computer games “ develop a belief that there's some kind of actual space behind the screen, some place that you can't see but you know is there.”

This illusion of space beyond the computer screen is perhaps the best and only “evidence available of the actual existence of cyberspace itself” (Whittle, 1996:6). Sandy Stone points out that “cyberspace” as described in literary fantasies does not as yet exist. In science fiction, cyberspace is a physically inhabitable, electronically generated alternate reality, entered by means of direct links to the brain - that is, it is inhabited by refigured human “persons” separated from their physical bodies, which are parked in “normal” space. The physical laws of “normal” space need not apply in cyberspace, although some experiential rules carry over from normal space - for example, the geometry of cyberspace is, in most depictions, Cartesian. The “original” body is the authenticating source for the refigured person on cyberspace: no “persons” exist whose presence is not warranted by a physical body back in “normal” space. But death in either normal space or cyberspace is real, in the sense that if the “person” in cyberspace dies, the body in normal space dies, and vice versa (Stone, 1991) .However, cyberspace

as we know it today is a social environment “enabled by and constituted through communication technologies”(Stone, 1991).

18.3 Understanding Virtual Community

At what point in our use of interactive computer systems do we come to believe in “virtual communities”? Do all people who interact on e-mail lists use internet relay chat systems and web-based multi-user systems consider themselves part of some sort of community that exists “in cyberspace”? It is suspected that it is when there is some strong affective and/or material “real life” leak, spill-over and connection that the people who use systems of interaction online begin to feel the existence of some sort of “community”.

What then is a “community” on cyberspace? In whose imagination does this community exist? How is it different from Real Life community? How is an online “culture” different from a Real Life culture?

Box18.2 Some Definitions of Virtual Community

Howard Rheingold is credited with publicizing the notion of *Virtual Community*. This was a concept carrying much hype - yet also much discussed and argued about in the early 1990s when the Internet became more available for commerce as the “world-wide web” with increased access and use around the world. Simply put, we can say that the term virtual community refers to individuals with some common goals and interests networked through various online technologies. A commonly cited proponent of virtual communities, he defines virtual communities as : “social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on... public discussion long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace” (Rheingold,1993:5). Another scholar defines virtual communities as: incontrovertibly social spaces in which people still meet face-to-face, but under new definitions of both ‘meet’ and ‘face’.... [V]irtual communities [are] passage points for collections of common beliefs and practices that unite people who were physically separated” (Stone,1991). Therefore, “space” in cyberspace is “predicated on knowledge and information, on the common beliefs and practices of a society abstracted from physical space” (Jones, 1995).

While Rheingold’s definition suggests something like a group of people gathered around a village well, Stone’s definition suggests separated soul-mates “meeting” beyond the human body , overcoming limitations or physicality, in these cyberspatial “passage points”.

Despite the fact that these definitions above appear to implicitly romanticize virtual interaction, they are not totally wrong in their descriptions of a community online. Creating and feeling a sense of community online does depend on the continuation of “public discussion long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace”; on “collections of common beliefs and practices”; and “new definitions of both ‘meet’ and ‘face’”. Virtual communities are indeed “social aggregations that emerge from the Net” and “passage points for collections of common beliefs and practices of a society”. However, while the nature personal relationships is no doubt different online than face-to-face, I would not say that they are completely abstracted from material reality.

In his article *Why We Argue About Virtual Community*, Nessim Watson finds fault with the use of the phrase “virtual community.” He argues that using the label “virtual” community for groups of people interacting with each other online makes it seem as if the community “is not actually community.”

The distinction between “virtual” community and “real” community is unwarranted. The term “virtual” means something akin to “unreal” and so the entailments of calling online communities “virtual” include spreading and reinforcing a belief that what happens online is like a community but isn’t really a community. My experience has been that people in the offline world tend to see online communities as virtual, but that participants in the online communities see them as quite real (Watson, 1997:129).

Watson admits that communities online are different from communities offline, but he argues that they are communities nonetheless. Watson also examines the uses of applying or denying the metaphor of community for groups of people interacting online. He discusses Neil Postman’s critique of the notion of virtual community which is centered around the notion that online groups enable the separation of the “real” from the “virtual”. Postman objects to the use of the term community within online contexts because online groups “do not contain the stake that exists in ‘real’ communities.....they lack the essential feature of a common obligation. More accurately, online communities lack the consequences of not meeting or participating in the common obligation of most communities” (Watson, 1997:122).

The statement that online networks do not have a stake in RL communities is contestable. As I indicated earlier in this chapter, communities are made up of group practices, discourses, structures, hierarchies virtual communities (online networks) are imbedded within these very power structures and ideologies. While characterizing Postman’s notion of community as noble, Watson dismisses the criticism of virtual community as “nostalgic”. He suggests that a closer look at the way online interaction forms and transforms community structures might help internet scholars “make an important contribution to the improvement of democratic representation”(Ibid).

Watson’s discussion on virtual community is a necessary intervention into the ongoing debate about the existence of community online. His study of the online group Phish.net sheds light on many issues relating to the formation and structuring of online community. However, Watson’s optimism with regard to virtual communities and possibilities for restructuring power relations and the revitalization of democracy is problematic, as is. Postman’s view regarding community and obligation is nostalgic. Personal, political, social and economic obligations are a very important part of community life. Neil Postman’s objection to the use of community while describing online groups might suggest that the discursive formations online cannot significantly change our material reality, since the online collectivities lack a sense of obligation to real community. Watson points out that even today’s “real” communities lack the sense of common obligation that Postman is referring to. According to Watson, Postman’s work compares what we call community today to the community which humans had during the nineteenth century era of cottage industry and small village life (Ibid:123).

Therefore, Watson goes on to argue that the term, as Postman uses it, is nostalgic, since “so little of the present-day world fits the metaphor” (Ibid). However, as those of us who have lived online connected to various digital diasporic communities can attest, the term “community” in relation to online groups of diasporics is applicable since we see that they do indeed have a common obligation to the “real” community that they are part of, whether or not they admit to this obligation or connection. While mainstream ideology behind the whole “global information highway” encourages the formation of niche virtual communities ,where the participants try to distance

themselves from the problems of “their lagging and disadvantaged countrymen, regions, states,” (Schiller,1995) it is also a fact that social relations and interpersonal exchanges within virtual communities cannot escape their connection with “RL” political, economic, social and cultural material practices. Thus we see that Watson’s and Postman’s views on virtual community highlight an existing binarizing of “virtual” and “real” that is based in utopic and dystopic views of being online. Written in early years of emergence on virtual community - these discussions reveal to us the assumptions that lie behind how community is viewed and how the newness of the use of any kind of technology leads to debates that yet keep drawing us back into technological determinism. More than a decade after the internet became globally available (at least in theory), now, we can see these arguments constantly surfacing in all arenas of discourse - in business, in academia, in activism, in non-governmental organizations and so on. However, in practice, many of us do not subscribe to the binary.

Those of us located in a certain socio-economic class with access to language, education, skills and material necessary to be connected, in addition to being in work-environments that give us no choice regarding whether we use internet connectivity and access online available information and social spaces or not, have begun to take the community formations online for granted. As easily as the radio, television, telephone and mobile/cell phone has been a necessity for our daily functionality, being online has also become a part of our everyday practice. For instance, where my father’s generation living in diaspora (in my childhood) we would as a family connect to All India Radio via radio as they sipped their early morning coffee, today we connect with Indian news via online environments through wireless networking - each to their own laptop, or through satellite TV in front of a commonly shared screen. In all these instances - our offline/unconnected social practices result in further discussion in face-to-face environments and continuing community formations in physical spaces.

The celebration of freedom and the lack of boundaries on cyberspace assumes that cyberspace is a possible Utopia for the privileged classes which is separate from the reality of everyday suffering and deprivation that the less privileged of the world have to endure. Increasingly, cyberspace is marketed as a wonderland where gender, race and all such markers of otherness will be erased and melted down as we transform ourselves into texts and images online . Thus the binary that positions virtual community as not real (implicit in both utopic and dystopic views) and as distant from the reality of the offline everyday also misrepresents. Further, what is implicit in the rhetoric is the assumption that community formation starts with the individual and is rooted in the individualist rhetoric that pervades the technological imaginary. What the Utopian and Dystopic visions of cyberspace and online technologies overlooks is the fact that the individual is embedded within the practices, structures of power and discourses that make up the community. Nancy Baym writes, “Although in many ways research has become more sophisticated, the continuing debates over the nature and worth of the virtual community belie an ongoing presupposition that there are two types of communities, one authentic and the other virtual” (Baym,1995).

Whenever we speak of online activity, the split between the “real” and the virtual is always implied. To overcome the virtual life vs real life binary, Don Slater suggests that, “What is really required, therefore, is a move from asking about “the nature of online relationships and identities,” to asking the entirely different question: “What do people

do online?" (Slater, 2000:539). Slater also calls for "more rich and integrated accounts of the social relations" occurring in online venues arising from "deep ethnographic studies of particular social groups with real histories"(Ibid). Differences do exist between a purely textual e-mail interaction and sharing physical and temporal space talking to someone in a coffee shop - just as differences exist between speaking on the telephone and speaking face-to-face. But we never suggest that speaking on the telephone is "not real."

Instead of asking whether online interaction is "real" it is about time we shifted our focus, then, to questions regarding group norms and standards, structures and traditions that create a sense of inclusion and/or exclusion and to see how these are enacted in virtual environments. Given the supposed separation between online and offline, what about online social interaction that moves offline? What impact does ongoing, regular offline contact have on virtual interaction between the same people? Baym's research, along with a number of others dating all the way back to Rheingold, referenced close relationships formed via virtual channels which moved into other mediated channels (telephone conversations) or face-to-face meetings for at least a portion of computer mediated communication users.

Virtual communities of diasporic communities thus are material and discursive, with very real material consequences. Further, they represent not only a social and digital space of cultural representation but also a contact zone of cultural contestation. Such a notion stems from what Mary Louise Pratt codification. In her influential book *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Pratt defines her contact zone as "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" (Pratt,1992 :4). To be more specific, contact zone refers to "the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (Ibid: 6). The notion of contact zone is originally predicated on the unequal power geometry of colonial encounter that usually involves white Westerners and non-Western cultures in the officially bygone era of colonization. Moreover judging from Pratt's vigorous analysis of travel writings produced by Euro-American travelers to South America and Africa in the age of Western colonial expansion, there was much space for the Others' voices in the contact zone.

18.1 Reflection and Action

What do you understand by cyberspace?

Do you think cyberspace can be real?

In what way is the space of an online communication world different from real physical space?

18.4 Indian Digital Diasporas

Diasporic communities the world over, of course, seized upon the opportunity to connect globally to form various virtual communities. The question then is, what is the implication of being able to form such connections and of being able to sustain them via online networks. What sorts of cultural practices are reproduced and sustained. What sorts of histories and memories captured and stored. How are digital diasporas re-envisioning cultural, social

and religious pasts and futures. What might be the implications for future generations of the nations that such digital diasporic communities claim a "homes." In addition - how do the technological interfaces available via internet based digital media shape the reproduction of such identities and community practices. Benedict Anderson wrote of *Imagined Communities* (1991) shaped through print capitalism. What we see now in digital diasporas is an extension and transformation of such a logic - multiple and nuanced-the logic of post-capitalism, as suggestion by Frederic Jameson. Further, Alvin Toffler has also predicted the formation of niche communities, which are in essence what we see online in digital diasporas; databases, categorizing and labeling within existing and evolving grids.

Amit Rai (1995) argues that those communities online which are created by immigrants and other diasporic populations reproduce the same tensions and ideologies that are visible within diasporic communities not on-line (that is the communities in real life). He does not see them as "oppositional" formations in the sense suggested by writers who talk about the "radical democratizing potential" of cyberspace. In his article, he suggests that the physico-logical structure of hypertext is visible on these online communities. While one strongly doubts the "radical democratizing" potential of hypertext or of the electronic medium in general, one does believe that the form of hypertext might make possible different types of textual interaction at least for the privileged few who have access to the medium.

Amit Rai (1995) is critical about the possibility that these spaces can "inaugurate liberatory practices of the self", contrary to what some celebratory rhetoric may suggest about the possibilities offered by internet communication. In his article, he discusses how these spaces, while they may have potential (and they may not) for democratization, can equally be used to propagate "reactionary politics". Whether or not the discourses are exact replays of real life interactions, it is true that the limit of this discursive community lies within the actual with-body people who inhabit real life diasporic spaces and who have access to internet. The discussions and narrative threads are wholly the product of the kind of people who are able to get on-line. The nature of an online community depends on the participants and the discourses allowed by the participants of the community. The nature of the discussions online , to a very large extent , is a re-production of politics of interaction within real life communities.

It is important to remember that virtual communities are disembodied, but nonetheless they are discursive reproductions of real life societies and imagined communities. In spite of the illusion that there is only pure text and no human form from which the text emanates, we have not all dispersed into pure cyberspace. We are not disembodied beings, and even when we are interacting within virtual communities, we are still very much within discursive economies and hierarchies - co-created by us and still within hegemonic structures of social, economic and political interaction. We are talking about "discursive subjects" who are identifiable by the nature and content of their texts.

However, it is not suggested here that there is absolutely no difference in the way people interact within virtual and real communities. The fact that we interact in pure text and not face-to-face confuses and complicates the interactions in interesting ways . The discursive content of the discussions on these EBBs (Electronic Bulletin Boards) and email lists may not always be very different from discussions off-line groups (except perhaps that they use compu-slang every now and then), but the complexities of the

interactions and subject positions can be suppressed due to the unavailability of nonverbal cues and the possibilities of making a disapproving or resistant silence “heard” online.

Virtual communities appear disembodied, but nonetheless they are discursive reproductions of real life societies. In the case of virtual communities formed around a certain national, ethnic or regional identity the imagining of these communities spills beyond cyberspace into RL in ways that are slightly different from the RL overflow from other kinds of virtual communities

18.5 A Critical Overview of Literature on Indian Digital Diasporas

In this section we will do a quick overview of literature that exists and suggest future directions for the study of the phenomenon and issue of Indian Digital Diasporas.

While there is a large body of mainstream literature on topics related to Indians and ‘IT’ (Information Technology), Indians in cyberspace and ‘the digital divide’ mostly from development related perspectives - these articles do not engage the implications of digital diaspora as a socio-cultural phenomena. However such writing is useful in trying to understand the extent to which the Indian diaspora is spread out in digital environments. Much of this literature relates to business applications, software design and production for businesses worldwide. Some concerns relate to programming labor for businesses, access to IT related jobs for the Indian populations, and issues of access from India to the global commercial centers of the world. Thus the discursive socio-cultural spaces that internet spaces enable, or how the design of information technologies and cultural spaces enabled through such interfaces shape the possibilities and impossibilities for the emergence of marginalized subjectivities are not adequately examined in such writing. Bodies of literature related to India and the IT phenomena that draw connections between Indian (and South Asian) diasporas and cyberculture do however exist. These examine socio-cultural aspects of online activity (see Rai, 1995), and discursive formations online in relation to subjectivities that emerge in digital diasporas and in relation to issues such as ‘voice and voicelessness’, ‘marginalized populations’ and ‘subaltern counterspheres’ addressed by cultural studies, postcolonial theory and feminist scholars. Thus, South Asian nationalist identity formations online as well as processes of economic and cultural globalization through the spread of MNCs (multinational corporations) are important factors shaping Indian digital diasporas.

When examinations of the Indian digital diaspora is limited to examining IT in relation to a privileged minority that has material and cultural access to IT and is thus invested in the maintenance of current manifestations of cultural and economic structures connected with processes of globalization, we lose sight of its implications for globalization and interdependence of development and elevation of poverty in rural and urban India. For instance, in the case of India, only 25 percent of workers are engaged in service occupations - and it is these 25 percent that directly benefit from IT related progress or work. Rural livelihoods such as agriculture handloom weaving - still forming a large portion of the workforce and skills in India are not adequately supported through online information and design - if at all. Examining just the range of workers involved in servicing the global IT industry allows researchers and practitioners to be celebratory about Indian IT successes and boast of ‘progress’ by pointing to facts and numbers that

indicate that countries such as India have a larger number or the same number of information workers as the developed nations of the world. They justify their concern with only those 'millions of information workers' who are 'mostly urban and educated, living lifestyles similar to information workers in Silicon Valley, Tokyo or London' (Singhal And Rogers, 2001).

As Vinay Lal points out, such a perspective works for 'Internet elites', whose 'mobility in cyberspace furnishes them with opportunities to work within the world of international finance and business; like the elites of the First World, they are beginning to live in time, and space poses no barriers for them ...The time-space compression that cyberspace typifies only works to the advantage of these elites'(Lal, 1996b). Thus from a perspective unquestioning of a westernized patriarchal and urbanized transnationalism that works for the very few culturally and materially privileged populations of the world, it is possible to see IT and South Asia (especially India) as an unproblematic success story.

On the other hand much of the available literature studying Indian digital diasporas is limited to studying Indians/South Asians in digital diaspora as discursive formations online, describing the socio-cultural aspects of online formations of various South Asians both located geographically in South Asia and living in diaspora outside of South Asia. Much of this latter body of literature focuses on the various religious diasporic formations online, discussing such topics as Hindu Diaspora online, Sikh Diaspora, Eelam online, Muslim diaspora and so on. This literature is important - just as the literature that examines Indians and the IT industry. Both bodies of literature shed light on how the Indian digital diaspora is manifested.

However, while such literature does acknowledge the role of gender in national formations online, is mainly concerned with analysis of existing diasporas online. The focus of much of this literature is on textual analyses with little attention paid to the applied problem of designing e-spaces. Most of these are based on analyzing online spaces as 'texts'.

Thus existing studies of Indian digital diasporas are more concerned with the consumption of electronic spaces. The production end - issues related to designing and building of e-spaces - is thus left to the 'techies' (engineers and programmers) and to professionals engaged in marketing and other e-business related activities. Implicitly, a divide is created between 'culture' and 'economics'; between 'applied technology' and 'discourse.' Further (and perhaps as a result of the textual analysis approach), even where gender or geography is engaged, women and rural populations are hardly ever portrayed in ways that suggest that they could be active producers of online spaces and IT design. In order to understand this, there is need of more research from the offline user end (perhaps focusing on ethnographic and auto-ethnographic investigations of processes of design and negotiation of such spaces).

18.6 ICTs, Nationalism, Religious Diasporas

Information communication technologies, nationalisms, and religious diasporas are inextricably linked within processes of globalization. The world becoming "smaller" is enabled through a variety of technologies, and the clashing of various cultural, religious, and political discourses and extremisms has material consequences. The processes of production and cultural activities surrounding these processes are both products of an economic globalization and transnationalization that rests on the need for self-contained identity

formations (consumer demographics) and a performance of multicultural difference. "Jihad" and other religious fundamentalisms and nationalisms (including modern day "crusades") are examples of "concepts of belonging" and ways of imagining community that are "currently being mobilized in the service of the larger political and economic demands associated with globalization" (Spivak, 1999)

As is the case with the processes of rebordering and the recent surge of ethnonationalisms in Eastern Europe and elsewhere, different fundamentalisms based in ethnic and religious identity formations are linked to emerging "global reconfigurations" that help the imagining of ethnic and religious communities transnationally while providing selective class-based access to global capital. Thus new hierarchies emerge that feed into "the logic of uneven global development." Sadowski-Smith further states, "It is essential to realize that . . . concepts of belonging are currently being mobilized in the service of larger political and economic demands associated with globalization."

What might be the role of virtual communities in fostering such nationalisms? Virtual communities are passage points for collections of common beliefs and practices that unite people who were physically separated. In the case of a diasporic individual for whom home is no longer a concrete geographical place, cyberspace presents itself as an ideal site for the recovery of community and connection with other diasporics with similar backgrounds. For men and women in diaspora, home already exists within the two-dimensionality of memory and nostalgia, therefore, it has been suggested that cyberspace may provide a way for these disembodied minds to make contact with apparently similar beings. This production of digital diasporic identity at the interface of internet technologies as online and offline interest, is determined in various ways by access to computer technologies, the design of these technologies and the medium through which the identity will be shaped. The collective imaginations of the people involved will also be restricted by is perceived as their material, social, cultural, ethnic, religious, geographical location.

An examination of the literature dealing with the socio-cultural, political and discursive aspects of cyberspatial South Asian formations reveals an interweaving focus on examining such online formations through theoretical frames provided by concepts such as 'imagined community' (i.e. how is imagining of community online taking place?) and diasporic counterpublics. Within such a framing, some attention is also paid to the structural and technical aspects influencing the socio-cultural shaping of online spaces. It is important for us to examine these discussions for assumptions implicit.

There has been much discussion of the imagining of community in the available literature that examines virtual community formations. Imagining, as these explanations imply, happens on an individual level, where there is an attempt to connect the individual (often personal) experience with macrosociological features, often by translating one directly into the other. This is related to the imagining of any kind of community online, based in common interests, hobbies, collaboration on projects, professional interests and so on. For instance on any listserv, we imagine our readers/audience when posting within an online community based on what the listserv FAQs and information sheets describe - we imagine co-members of the community. We imagine a kind of affective/intellectual communion. This imagining does not necessarily connect directly to our various real life communities, or to other imagined ones online.

The other sense in which the term imagine is used in relation to community is related to Benedict Anderson's definition of imagined communities. This type of imagining applies in the case of creation of virtual communities framed around national, ethnic, religious, diasporic identity/subject formations. To quote Ananda Mitra: "The imagination that binds the members of the electronic group is the common memory of the same putative place of origin from which most of the posters c[o]me. The sense of community is based on an original home where everyone belonged, as well as a sense of a new space where the question of belonging is always problematized. Since the original home is now inaccessible, the Internet space is co-opted to find the same companionship that was available in that original place of residence"(Mitra , 1997).

Thus, drawing from the work of Benedict Anderson, some researchers examine the socio-cultural manifestations of diasporas online and write of imagined communities of diasporic postcolonials in cyberspace. Jon Anderson writes: Much as Benedict Anderson's creoles of early modernity were crucial to the imagined communities of ethnolinguistic nations that are modernity's signature, so, too, may be the virtual communities for the emerging Information Age.

Mitra in turn makes a connection between imagining and imaging indicating ways in which an electronic community can textually produce itself, thus imagine itself as well as present itself to the outside world, and thus produce an image. He further suggests that there exist opportunities for various peoples in diaspora to form communities via the Internet, across place-based geographic boundaries, which are based on the constructs of commonality and fellowship while connecting to the conditions of existence of diasporic individuals.

While Jon Anderson and Ananda Mitra write of Arab and Indian diasporas online not specifically focusing on the religious diasporas that have emerged in relation to various fundamentalist nationalisms that have arisen most visibly in the last decade (even while implicitly doing so), Amit Rai and Vinay Lal extend discussions of online imagined communities to an examination of religious diasporas, specifically the Hindu diaspora and the discourses surrounding events in Ayodhya, India, in 1992. Amit Rai attempts to interrogate the diasporic publics and counterpublics in the context of Hindu religious fundamentalist activities. He too uses Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined community while arguing that cyberspatial nets provide a space for South Asian Hindus to construct and contest identities that are doubly marked by the nightmare of all the dead generations what we diasporics remember as India and by the always deferred promises of this new land of opportunity what is imagined as America.

Rai,s use of the notion of Imagined community leads him to examine the style in which diasporic communities are imagined and the regulatory fictions produced by officers of the British Empire. It is thus through the totalizing classificatory grid[s] produced in British colonial times that South Asian identities in the form communal and religious diasporas - are performed online. The performance of diasporic identities in these online communities is thus regulated through historic, political religious discourses associated with colonial and post-colonial geographic territories and nationalisms.

Researchers such as Mitra use the concept of imagined community implicitly in an effort to examine possibilities in varying degrees for the emergence of diasporic formations and seem not to question whether the internet has

the potential to enable a variety of liberatory and counter-hegemonic coalitions. Vinay Lal, however writes explicitly against the celebration of the notion of Imagined Communities online. Further, he also begins to address the linkages between economic globalization, e-commerce and these socio-cultural diasporic cyberspaces by pointing to how the agenda of the internet elites is linked with currently manifested hierarchies of globalization. Such a global economic climate, thus, suggests that, contrary to being a panacea to the world's problems cyberspace represents a more ominous phase of Western colonialism, the homogenization of knowledge and, in tandem, the elimination of local knowledge systems.

During the British rule, for instance, traditional modes of production in India were forcefully replaced by industrial mass production which was more beneficial to the British economy than to the people in the Indian sub-continent. In the new industrial mass production era the traditional products lost markets and the traditional producers their confidence. The resulting outmoding of traditional forms of community and production under the ideological cover of western Enlightenment, led to a loss of self amongst local producers. People with expert knowledge of local modes of production were declared ignorant. In the presence of Enlightenment from the West, the Southern modes of thought and life were implicitly and explicitly constructed as backward traditional and ignorant. Now with economic globalization associated with ICTs and access to the material capital and even academic and cultural voice in the westernized world, a certain hegemonic cultural system is associated with economic upward mobility. Access and even mere survival is thus enabled only through sanctioned ignorances by subaltern Others as they aspire towards voice and material success or even just a basic means of livelihood. The use of information technologies in digital diaspora thus, is situated in a larger socio-cultural ethos which in itself denies the possibility of access and voice to certain populations of the world.

18.7 South Asian Digital Diasporas - Mobile (Gadget) Generations

So what about the generation of women and men in diaspora who grew up taking computers and the internet as a given in their lives? Some refer to these as the gaming generation – however we would like to call them the mobile (gadget) generation, since they move through the world in their own mobile digital aura.

There are several transnational venues in digital diaspora, that are inhabited by the ipod carrying, gameboy playing young men and women with their casual dress code and urban manners. Some of these spaces are less U.S. centric than the previous internet based SA generations - such as livejournal, online journal communities (masked in semi-anonymity) that blur notions of transnational South Asian sexuality as they hide behind Bollywood icons. There is a continuing play on gender and identity as the bollywood icons produced in such communities are subjected to a gaze that blurs the boundary between heteronormative idolization of bollywood stars and queer pleasure, while also producing uncertainty about geographic location as they appear to multitask between work, fun and offline/online formations of friends. For this lot, being online is no more unique than being on the phone. In fact, for this generation even the telephone is digital connectivity as they incessantly text-message each other, download and exchange ringtones, pix, flix. This elite group of young South Asian in digital diaspora are multiply literate and socio-culturally flexible and mobile as they “hang out”

in online communities of open-source developers, bollywood and tollywood fan groups and so on. Thus Indian digital diasporas continue to be elite - with the haves facing the possibility of "having it all" with a great gap between the haves and have-nots. It is possible to see that the everyday practices that mobile generations in digital diasporas are engaged in a different kind of problem solving space than those living in the materially underprivileged areas of the world. Thus while the categories of "virtual" and "real" cannot be applied - we can certainly see the socio-economic and cultural gaps between the mobile and immobile widening.

Reflection and Action 18.2

Do a google search for Indian Diaspora - select five websites based on your interest. Describe what drove your choice of these websites. Examine the websites carefully to see what is being represented and how. What audience does each website seem to be targeting - why do you suppose. Is the content and form of the website accessible to the the audience they claim to be targeting -why or why not. Analyse the images in relation to the gender, caste and class representations. Discuss all this in a 1000 word essay. Print out the website and images and attach as appendices.

18.8 Conclusions

In a globalised digital technologies and telecommunication technologies are playing an important role in connecting people together so much so that one wonders whether there are virtual communities out there in the cyberspace. To understand such and other elated questions we felt it would be useful to have detailed discussions on concepts such as cyberspace, and virtual community. We also tried to give you an overview of the literature available on this topic so you may have a better grasp of the topic. Our interest is also in detailing how diasporas connect over the internet and what these interconnections mean. In this unit we have analysed the coming together of Indian diaspora , where the diaspora felt they were part of larger tradition of Hinduism and were therefore mobilizing people and taking political action. We also discuss how the internet communication offers avenues for anonymity to the users that they can play their fantasies as well hide behind pseudo-identities and what it means the new generation. Cyberspace and digital communication is not without the politics of hierarchy, difference and inequality. Interent has been confined largely to the elite and as a part of larger globalisation process, which has tendency of homogenising the world, internet tends to homogenise knowledge.

18.9 Further Reading

Marc A. Smith, Peter Kollock, 1998. *Communities in Cyberspace* , Routledge:UK

Barbara, M. Kennedy and David Bell, 2000. *Cybercultures Reader*, Routledge:UK

Jones, Steven G. (Ed.), 1997. *Virtual Culture: Identity and Communication in Cybersociety*, London: Sage

Unit 19

Films

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- 19.1 Introduction
- 19.2 Bollywood and Diaspora – Consumption and Representations
- 19.3 Diasporic Filmmakers and their Communities
- 19.4 Conclusion
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Learning Objectives

This Unit will help you to:

- Understand the patterns of consumption and representation of Bollywood and diaspora; and
- Know the representation of diasporic filmmakers and their communities.

19.1 Introduction

Meera joota hai Japani

Yé Patloon Inglisani

Sar pé lal topi Rusi –

Phir bhi dil hai Hindustani.

(*Shree 420*)

The chorus from this song in Raj Kapoor's legendary film is a fitting starting point, especially when considering how it has subsequently cropped up in many movies and novels by diasporic writers of South Asian origin. For instance, in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* fictional Hindi movie superstar Gibreel Farishta, a blend of Amitabh Bachchan and M. T. Rama Rao, sings the song when tumbling down to earth after his AI flight 420 is blown up in the middle of the English Channel and in Mira Nair's film *Mississippi Masala* the song is played on a tape recorder when a Ugandan Asian family is violently ejected from their home and forced to migrate via England to the US. Indeed Raj Kumar Saxena, the main character in *Shree 420*, is a masquerader par excellence, a man who can absorb difference - racial and cultural, dress, makeup and behaviour. He can inhabit an identity that valorises fragmentation and seek wholeness and incorporate several transnational identities in himself (see Chakravarty, 1993:203). In this respect it could be argued that the song is an anthem for migrancy, dislocation and re-rooting on our routes. In the song, the chaplinesque clown wears a motley of international attire, yet despite these markers his 'heart remains Indian for all that'. Is he the prototype of the diasporic migrant? Within processes of identity negotiations film, film music and cinematic representation have always played a significant role. Bollywood² cinema in this realm occupies an in-between place, on the one hand providing a link with the home country for the diasporic migrant, on the other presenting the diaspora back to the homeland. Indeed, Sumita S. Chakravarty argues that Indian commercial cinema has come to symbolise an order of psychic investment for immigrants of Indian origin all over the world, evoking the problematic scenario of originary desire, a desire for origins, often

accompanied by discomfort, guilt and pain, that is central to the attempt at identity formations on the part of displaced peoples. Bombay cinema and film songs become thus the common ground of social intercourse in the Indian diaspora. (Chakravarty, 1993:3) She further argues that for Indians living in the diaspora Hindi movies become the metonymic substitution for 'India' and this substitution is an attempt at closure, a means of constructing rigid mental boundaries between the past and the present, the culture at home and the new adopted culture, home and exile, nationality and naturalisation. More often than not, this imaginary 'India' is frozen in time, a past to which it is impossible to return, but 'which comes to represent the self valorized in another place, at another time.' (Chakravarty, 1993:4) In this respect, the Bombay film becomes the displaced site of national exploration. Yet to read the Bombay film and its relationship to the diaspora as mere nostalgia would not expose the full picture. Increasingly, Indian popular cinema has impacted on markets outside India. Until recently these used to be markets with large Indian immigrant communities, but ever since the late 1990s Indian cinema's reach has widened even further.

This unit will look at how Bollywood cinema represents the diaspora and will also look at the consumption of Bombay cinema in the diaspora. Furthermore, it will look at a cinema located beyond Bollywood, the South Asian diasporic films, which at first were markedly different from Bollywood cinema, but have increasingly been influenced by Bollywood. Although Indian popular cinema has had a global following for decades, the diaspora has not emerged as a central theme until the mid- to late 1990s. Therefore this unit will focus on the post-1990s period with a special emphasis on the genre of the Romantic Film. Of course, Hindi cinema has tackled other issues in those years besides family and romance, but 'the assertion and endorsement of Indian "family values" in an uncertain globalising world has become a conspicuous and insistent theme in popular culture in the 1990s.' (Uberoi, 1998:311) This seems to be reaffirmed in films such as *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* (hereafter K3G) and *Kal Ho Naa Ho*. Interestingly Indian diasporic filmmakers have also addressed this issue in their films and it seems grounds for commonality can be located here. Indian diasporic filmmakers have tackled issues of home, belonging and alienation in their cinematic productions, but have often adhered to realism and eschewed Bollywood's blending of different genres, but negotiations of 'family values' too have increasingly dominated. When considering India and its diaspora on film, several questions emerge. Firstly what function does Bollywood cinema have in negotiating the migrant's relationship with home and the new host nation? Secondly, how do diasporic filmmakers represent their own communities on screen? How do they position themselves to renegotiate the shifting ground beneath their feet? Thus this unit seeks to explore how film is a useful medium in mapping an emerging cultural landscape of hybridities, confluences and influences. This unit can only give an indicative account of the debates that have dominated the fast proliferating analysis of Indian popular cinema in relation to the South Asian diaspora in a variety of fields, such as postcolonial studies, social anthropology, film studies and cultural studies, but what will hopefully emerge here is how South Asian diasporic cinema and, more problematically, Bollywood do not only occupy a position between locality, nationality and internationality (Kaur and Sinha, 2005:16-23), but also occupy a position at the interstice of culture.

19.2 Bollywood and Diaspora – Consumption and Representations

In *Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire*, Vijay Mishra asserts that any study of Indian popular cinema must nowadays address the role it plays in the lives of the peoples of the Indian diaspora (see Mishra, 2002:235). He distinguishes between two instances of diaspora formation. Firstly, the movement of indentured labourers to the colonies, secondly, the post-1960s phenomenon of economic migration to the metropolitan centres of Great Britain, Canada, the United States and Australia. The migrants of this second phase have been usually referred to as NRIs and, according to Mishra, have ‘radically reconfigured Indian readings of the diaspora and redefined [...] cultural forms that see this diaspora as one of their important recipients.’ (Ibid: 236) It is this diaspora of late capitalism which has been increasingly targeted by the film industry as a lucrative market for their products and which has also become the subject of its films. In these films ‘the space of the West’ becomes ‘the desired space of wealth and luxury that gets endorsed, in a displaced form, by Indian cinema itself.’ (Ibid) Mishra argues that a diasporic imaginary grows out of a sense of being marginalised, of being rejected outright by nation-states, because of their difference (see Mishra (Ibid:237)). Thus Bollywood for the diaspora fulfils the function of bringing the homeland to the diaspora while also ‘creating a culture of imaginary solidarity across the heterogeneous linguistic and national groups that make up the South Asian diaspora’ (Ibid). Mishra sees Indian popular cinema as a crucial determinant in globalising and deterritorialising the link between the imagination and social life (Ibid). Where such a reading of Bollywood becomes problematic is in its levelling of South Asia into a homogenised monoculture in which an orientalised version of India becomes a stand-in (see Desai, 2004:6). In this respect, Bombay cinema informs a narrow ethnicity that finds its imaginative realism through a particular kind of cinema that ‘brings the global into the local, presenting people in Main Street Vancouver, as well as Southall, London, with shared “structures of feeling” that in turn produce a transnational sense of communal solidarity.’ (Mishra, 2002:238) Thus, according to Mishra, the consumption of Bombay cinema actively constructs an Indian diaspora of shared cultural idioms, the Indian diasporas as imagined communities, in which Bollywood cinema functions as a self-contained, cultural specific phenomenon (Ibid).

Vijay Mishra raises here quintessential questions about home, belonging and rootedness, and the function of Bollywood in these identity negotiations. Marie Gillespie’s study is also revealing in this regard as she investigates what it means to be ‘British’ and ‘Indian’ as well as ethnographic questions about the perception of Britain and India in relation to the viewing habits of Hindi films among young British Asians. She maintains that for young people in Southall, London, Indian films are influencing their perceptions of the subcontinent, especially for those who have no direct experience of India. Furthermore, for those who have been to India these movies are an important counterpoint to their lived experience (Gillespie, 1995:81). The binaries of tradition / modernity, village-rural / city-urban, poverty / wealth, community / individualism, morality / vice are important markers within a social, political and moral discourse within these films that have a particular influence on young diasporic South Asians’ perception of these films (Ibid:82). Gillespie points towards striking gender differences in the perceptions of Indian cinema, where young girls looked towards the social and moral values inherent in the films through a retelling of the narratives, while boys seemed to be much more concerned with issues of representation

of India and Indian communities and on that basis often rejected these portrayals in the movies (*Ibid*). Gillespie associates this partly with the experience of racism in Britain which 'undoubtedly influenced the range of meanings projected on to Hindi films, as they underpin responses to constructions of Indian society in all media' (*Ibid*).

Hindi films are a heterogeneous blend of a number of genre, often structured around composite narrative themes. Rosie Thomas identifies three basic narrative themes – 'Dostana', where the bond of male friendship overcomes the desire for a woman; 'lost and found', where parents and children are separated and reunited, usually involving a plot of mistaken identities; and 'revenge' where villains are justly thrashed by wronged heroes (see Thomas, 1985:125). Crucially, viewers are drawn into these movies and become emotionally involved. This involvement forms an integral part of the viewing pleasure as '[a]ffective engagement is ensured not only by cinematic techniques which encourage identification, but also through the songs which heighten the emotional impact of the film' (Gillespie, 1995:84-85). Music is a powerful element of Hindi films and like an interior monologue can express repressed desires, emotions and aspirations and thus are often picturised as fantasies and dreams, moments of escape from reality. Music can also function as an emotional memory trigger that allows for escape from the harsh realities of everyday life in a society that is often hostile towards its immigrant communities. Thus, music provides a form of escape and respite for a younger generation of South Asians who stand somewhere between East, West - the pressures of traditional values at home and the pressures the West puts on them. Furthermore, Gillespie also shows how Hindi films are a powerful tool used by the older generation of diasporic Indians to educate their children and grandchildren 'in the values and beliefs that are seen to be rooted in Indian culture and traditions' (*Ibid*). Gillespie argues that films allow both the young and their elders to form opinions on 'salient themes, especially issues of kinship, duty, courtship and marriage'. She further concludes that Hindi films seem to be used 'to legitimate a particular world-view, but also to open up its contradictions. So, while young people use Indian films to deconstruct "traditional culture", many parents use them to foster cultural and religious traditions' (*Ibid*: 87).

Box 19.1: Bollywood as a tool

Bollywood serves as a tool within the diaspora to reformulate and translate cultural traditions in the South Asian diaspora, but also as a tool with which to deconstruct these. This is mirrored in the patterns of consumption of Hindi films. Rachel Dwyer notes that while during the 1960s and 70s Hindi films were screened in the UK in cinemas during off-peak times and Sunday mornings, these were discontinued in the 1980s as the VCR took over, a market that in turn was superseded by the advent of cable and satellite television channels that cater for the Asian diasporic community, such as Zee TV and B4U.⁴ Multiplex cinemas revived Hindi movie shows in the 1990s as the practice of video holdback (films being released on VCR up to six months after their cinema release) made these showings commercially viable again.

Yash Chopra was one of the first to recognise the potential of the diaspora market as a major source of revenue, quickly setting up offices in London and New York in 1997 and 1998. For Yash Chopra, film audiences in Bombay, London and New York and the South Asian diaspora of the UK, US and Canada became his film's imaginary realm (Dwyer, 2002:160). Increasingly there is also a non-South Asian audience interested in the films of the Yash Chopra brand. It is therefore not surprising that ever since the late 1990s

Hindi films have regularly featured in the list of top 20 grossing movies in the UK and the US, Mani Ratnam's 1998 movie *Dil Se* being the first. From a marketing point of view, the overseas market is very lucrative for Indian film producers, considering that revenue from ticket prices can be almost ten times higher than in India. There is in this new market a new generation of cinema-goers that has emerged from the Asian diaspora, a generation educated in English, that grew up in a western cultural environment in education and in its patterns of media consumption (*Ibid*:161). Few of these are Hindi speakers - the British Asian community is largely Punjabi, Gujarati or Bangladeshi. Thus there are very few mother-tongue Hindi speakers in this diaspora (*Ibid*). According to Rachel Dwyer, This younger generation acquires its knowledge of Hindi largely from watching Hindi movies. Hindi cinema's supplementary material, like soundtrack albums, fanzines like *Filmfare* and *Stardust* as well as television specials on the latest releases are readily available through shops and satellite television as well as the growing number of websites and discussion forums on the internet, allowing for a much wider and faster consumption of Bollywood. As an industry Bollywood has become truly globalised, albeit in a specifically diasporic sense.

The heightened awareness of Bollywood cinema and of the South Asian diaspora suggests that Bollywood's aesthetic is invested with some kind of cultural capital that goes beyond the commercial. Thus to discuss Hindi cinema as merely escapist entertainment would also be too simplistic. Rajinder Dudrah argues convincingly that what we mean by escapist entertainment needs to be thought through in more complex terms. He suggests that Bollywood cinema needs to be studied as 'part and parcel of cultural and social processes and elaborated on, though not exclusively, through an engagement with actual social subjects.' (Dudrah, 2006:29) In this respect, Dudrah argues, there is a need to think imaginatively about cinema as a global industry, films as popular cultural texts, and the relationships that are possible between cinema and its audiences. A closer look at patterns of consumption and production of Bollywood allow us to open such a debate. Importantly, for the diaspora Bollywood cinema has had this cultural capital all along. However a definition of that cultural capital is problematic especially when it produces readings of Bollywood solely in terms of latent nostalgia for its diaspora or as the eroticised commodification of a minority culture. The question is how can this be avoided? The Bollywood craze in the UK in 2001/2002 may be an illustrative example. While the department store Selfridges in London transformed its basement into a Bollywood set, the Victoria and Albert Museum curated 'Cinema India: The Art of Bollywood', under the banner *Imagine Asia* the British film institute toured with a selection of films through the regions, and the big-budget musical *Bombay Dreams* produced by Andrew Lloyd Webber with music by A. R. Rahman opened in London. *Bombay Dreams* in particular drew from the musical and visual language of Bollywood and accentuated spectacle while packaging it within the conventions of the musical theatre genre. It initially brought in mainly a South Asian audience and then by word of mouth the audience became increasingly mixed. The question of audience and representation is of importance here. The lure of A. R. Rahman's score is undisputed, but what image of India is the show, scripted by Meera Syal, presenting? Is it a Bollywood pastiche or exuberant exotica? To be a convincing pastiche the show relied too much on Bollywood conventions to actually work. The question is how we read these shows and events. Despite the recent celebrations of Bollywood cinema within Western mainstream culture, it is important to note that this celebration coincided with a backlash against South Asian diasporic communities in the wake of

the September 11 attacks. This further complicates the relationship between a 'majority' culture and its minorities. It brings up questions about where we place films by diasporic filmmakers which, unlike Bombay cinema, are not necessarily 'commercial' films. Furthermore where is the place of Bombay cinema within this discourse? Considering Bollywood's output, which has always exceeded Hollywood's and considering Bollywood's audience reach, can we really speak of a niche cinema? The increased critical attention this cinema is receiving suggests that the balance is slowly but surely being redressed and that Indian popular cinema is increasingly read as not only a national cinema, but also as a global cinema. But can it really challenge the dominance of Hollywood? Kaur and Sinha go as far as to suggest that the integration of the Bombay film into film studies allows for a wider engagement with the nature of globalisation and how it operates in popular culture.

The application of methodologies applied to the reading of Hollywood films to the Bombay film too is problematic, considering that on this basis the Bombay film has been too often dismissed by scholars, because it is so difficult to categorise (see Thomas, 1985:116-117). Thus, there is an argument to be made for the production of new methodologies to read Bollywood cinema on its own terms. Arguably, within processes of globalisation, Bollywood could be seen to work as a centrifugal force against the cultural homogenisation exercised by Hollywood. Thus 'the circulation of India's commercial cinema through the globe has led to the proliferation and fragmentation of its fantasy space, as its narrative and spectacle beget diverse fantasies for diasporic communities and others.' (Kaur & Sinha, 2005:15) For film studies in particular, attaching value to the popular remains a bone of contention. Indeed, the heightened interest and engagement with Indian popular cinema and mass entertainment seems to redress the balance in the debates about Third World filmmaking and can make an important contribution insofar as it forces us to engage with a different mode of filmmaking that is not avant-garde or structured according to the tenets of received Western modes of filmmaking. In a discussion of Bollywood we have to engage with populist modes of cultural production that reach people of disparate backgrounds and experiences uniting them in front of the silver screen.

These debates are linked to questions about the relationship between global, national, popular and mass culture (see Chakravarty, 1993:10) Thus the idea of nation and the relationship between diaspora and the nation becomes a site of constant contestation that needs to be navigated. Perhaps the negotiation of identity for the diaspora through the medium of film can be best understood, to bring together Chakravarty and Virdi's terms from their studies of Indian popular cinema, as the tension between 'ImpersoNation' and 'Cinematic ImaginNation', which is also reflected in the song from *Shree 420*. In both these metaphors we can locate 'notions of changeability and metamorphosis, tension and contradiction, recognition and alienation, surface and depth: dualities that have long plagued the Indian psyche and constitute the self-questionings of Indian nationhood.' (Ibid:4) Indian popular cinema is caught up in the cross-currents of these debates and negotiations and through its contributions made the drama of impersonation its distinctive signature (Ibid). According to Chakravarty it serves more than just reinforcing 'the truism that films impersonate life; characters impersonate real men and women; the film-viewing experience impersonates dreams.' (Ibid) Thus impersonation 'subsumes a process of externalization, the play of/on surfaces, the disavowal of fixed notions of identity.' (Ibid) Within the global, then, Bollywood is still posited within India. India still is its imaginary

realm, but it needs to acknowledge through its global distribution that as a cinema it has become the conveyor of what it means to be Indian to an array of audiences. Thus the Bombay film has become a means by which diasporic communities negotiate Indianess and its transformation (see Kaur & Sinha, 2005:16). Kaur and Sinha propose an analytical framework that posits itself outside prevalent discussions of Bollywood cinema in terms of its difference, largely based on its unique formulae or in terms of nationalist ideologies. Yet Kaur and Sinha stress the interdynamic relationships between the local and the global, the national and the international and the national and intra-national, arguing that Bollywood cinema through multiple sites of productive economies has the power to link broader networks of transnational societies and diasporic communities, demonstrating how Bollywood cinema's consumption by its diasporas across the globe inflects the imaginings of nationhood (Ibid:23). Thus what has become evident especially during the 1990s and after is that the construction of a 'national fantasy' has become unstable. Sudhanva Deshpande illustrates that in her discussion of the family romances of the 1990s, Bollywood's relationship with its diaspora challenges us as 'readers' and viewers 'to think imaginatively about cinema as a global industry, films as popular cultural texts, and the relationships that are possible between cinema and its audiences.' (Dudrah, 2006:29) In this respect, while India remains Bollywood's target market, increasingly, one needs to consider that Bollywood equally and simultaneously appeals to a wider audience, especially in South Asia and its diasporas (Ibid:31).

Reflection and Action 19.1

Explain the patterns of consumption and representation of Bollywood vis-à-vis its diaspora.

During the 1990s, the Bollywood 'masala' formula has undergone a number of changes, which often makes it difficult to categorise Hindi movies into the five generic strands that Edward Johnson identified: Muslim social film, Devotional films or mythologicals, Masala Films, historical films, social films (see Dudrah, 2006:33). As Dudrah convincingly argues in his reading of Subhash Ghai's 1997 film *Pardes*, these thematic differentiations are increasingly challenged through the emergence of the diaspora as a lucrative market during the 1990s. Thus filmmakers are actively rethinking and retuning the established conventions and genres, creating a new masala formula (Ibid:65-96). Mishra pertinently points out that in recent years in particular, Bombay cinema has actively sought to picturise its own version of the diaspora and to tell the diaspora what it desires. Thus, as much as the diaspora might construct its view of the homeland through Bombay cinema, Bombay cinema attempts to 'display the diaspora better than it displays itself.' (Mishra, 2002:245). While this might not be an entirely new phenomenon - Mishra points to Manoj Kumar's *Purab Aur Pachhim* (1970) as a filmic example that uses the East/West binary to dramatise the tradition/modernity dichotomy - the diaspora has become more and more an integral part of Bollywood cinema (*Salaam/Namaste*, being a more recent example). Mishra sees the reasons for that in a massive process of deterritorialisation between 1970 and the early 1990s (Ibid). This further accelerated with market liberalisation in India. The possibility of travel brought the homeland and the diaspora closer together. For Mishra, film forms an active part in the culture of travel which also brings star concerts and film production units abroad, especially to the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, Australia, The Gulf states and Switzerland. For example, Farhat Hussain has presented Bollywood entertainment shows ever since 1986, *Sensation 2005* being the latest one where actors and actresses like Shahrukh Khan, Rani Mukerji, Preity Zinta and Saif Ali Khan perform hit songs from their

movies. The overseas locations, especially Switzerland, also have become a staple part of Hindi movies. These concerts, according to Mishra, mediate between diasporic culture and Indian culture, as well as between diasporic culture and Western culture (*Ibid*). Mishra identifies in these concerts a cross-current of cultural representation, where Bollywood movie stars represent Western popular culture back to a diaspora audience ‘in response to the diaspora’s own unease about claiming Western culture as its own.’ (*Ibid*) How convincing this is as an argument is debatable, especially in the light of more recent developments where cultural “cross-overs” have occurred more regularly and more easily in film, theatre, and music and many of these have been facilitated by the South Asian community.

The success of 1994 movie *Hum apke hain kaun...!* (hereafter *HAHK*) made the family-orientated film a viable commercial option once again, paving the way for the success of *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (hereafter *DDLJ*). *DDLJ* has been regarded as the film that has brought the diaspora back to the *desh*. Dwyer sees *DDLJ* directly borrowing the visual vocabulary of the romantic dramas of Yash Chopra. The film features a gripping story, visual beauty, great locations and unforgettable songs and bears all the hallmarks of a Yash Chopra romance. However, the film differs in the more conservative deployment of the family in the young lovers’ romance (Dwyer, 2005:76). Aditya Chopra explores his own thematic vision in the way in which the lovers do not directly challenge society’s prohibitions and taboos as their passion unfolds, but instead seek to persuade the harsh, if well-meaning, patriarchy (*Ibid*:141). Another notable difference is the portrayal of foreign locations not as mere spectacle. Though the Swiss Alps are presented as an idyllic place where romance flourishes, London is presented as a cold and anonymous city, home to the dislocated transnational Indian middle-class nuclear family. The Punjab is presented in this respect as the idyllic yearned-for homeland where traditional values remain intact, ‘a place for family and love’ (*Ibid*). London is presented as an inappropriate location for romance, the Swiss Alps allow romance to flourish, but full passion is unleashed in the Punjab (Dwyer, 2005:76). The film’s driving force is the hero Raj’s (Shahrukh Khan) love for his heroine Simran (Kajol), which transforms him from spoilt brat into a responsible adult. His rite of passage highlights the structuring of family friendships and emotions (*Ibid*:78). Dwyer convincingly argues that the film tackles family friendships and emotions and reinforces the belief that Indianness is not so much a question of citizenship as of sharing family values. Thus the film’s emotional richness lies at the centre of the narrative, rather than the story of return from the foreign land back to the *desh* (*Ibid*). This emotional richness is largely enshrined in the on-screen chemistry of Kajol and Shahrukh.

A closer look at Aditya Chopra’s 1995 smash hit with its Western-look-Eastern-message might illustrate what Mishra means when he argues that *DDLJ* together with *HAHK* redefined Bollywood cinema in the 1990s. *DDLJ* links the institutions of family and courtship and marriage to the articulation of an Indian identity within the context of the diaspora (Uberoi, 1998:331) Mishra terms it a seminal text about diasporic representation and consumption of Indian popular culture, as the film’s success with the diaspora community is directly linked to the manner in which the film reprojects the diasporic subject. However, it is, according to Mishra, a reprojection of a diaspora manufactured in the dream factory of Bombay in terms of its own conventions and ‘at odds with the struggle for self-legitimacy and justice that underpins diasporic lives generally.’ (Mishra, 2002:250). What happens in the film according to Mishra is the reworking of a number of diasporic fantasies, which are reconfigured by the homeland ‘as the “real” of diasporic lives’¹²

and in the process become "truths" to which the diaspora aspires. These fantasies are sublimated in what Patricia Uberoi in her discussion of *HAHK* terms the 'arranged love marriage'. The film does not challenge traditional Indian family structures. For Baldev Singh, Mishra argues, in England, difference needs to be maintained as otherwise one's own identity would be lost. Is this merely a casting of the patriarchal family father as the villain or obstacle that both lovers Simran and Raj need to overcome, or is this as Mishra pertinently asks a display 'of ethnic absolutism? No engagement with the nation state? No gesture towards hybridity? And home? Where is it? What one has left behind rather than where one is at? But are they also indications of a new sense of diasporic self-assuredness after years of excessive pandering to the West on matters of the popular? Or, finally, is this Aditya Chopra's own reading of Indian culture onto the diaspora to emphasize the culture's eternal verities to the home audience?' (Ibid: 252) These are hard hitting questions that we as audience need to negotiate and be aware of. For the daughter Simran in particular, the homeland is set up as a possible threat to her emotional independence, and the European tour seems a form of escape from familial pressures. Thus the film sets up Raj's and Simran's European pastoral in the Swiss Alps as backdrop in contrast to the pastoral place of origin in the Punjab for Simran's father. Along with *HAHK*, *DDLJ* set a trend and there have been similar reworkings of the plot, *Pardes* being one example. Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam* too uses the model of a narrative of return. According to Mishra, Bollywood cinema through these films elaborates a fantasy text of the homeland and the diaspora that strikes a cord with the implied diasporic spectator, now living in a threatening foreign nation state. In this respect Mishra identifies two trends. A heavy dependence on overseas locations largely unfamiliar to the home audience but familiar in the diaspora. Secondly, a Punjab ethos displacing the old Northern Indian ethos of Bombay cinema, because of the large Punjabi community living in the Indian diaspora.

Since this unit is concerned with the diaspora itself this discussion leaves out the way in which the diaspora and the presumed narratives about them can function as an ideal for the Indian spectator as well. This also needs to be considered in a discussion of the representation of the diaspora in Bollywood cinema. The question is in how far are these representations accurate; do we need to look for authenticity? On the one hand we need to read these representations on Bollywood's own terms, but on the other we also need to consider the cinema that lies beyond Bollywood, films produced by diasporic filmmakers from the South Asian community abroad. Thus what Bombay cinema presents on screen is its own reading, some would say misreading (see Mishra and Kaur) of the diaspora. According to Mishra, this is partly due to the centre-periphery understanding of the homeland-diaspora nexus in which the diaspora becomes a site of permissible transgressions while the homeland is the crucible of timeless dharmik virtues (Ibid:267). Bombay cinema has also created its diaspora stereotype. Mishra concedes that Bombay cinema comes to the subject of the diaspora with its own ideology. Thus, apart from a narrative diegesis that locates films such as *DDLJ* and *Pardes* in the idea of global migration he sees the texts not as a distinct representation of the diaspora experience. This is tackled more incisively by diasporic filmmakers from the South Asian community abroad, exploring social tensions within the diaspora community and in relation to an alien host culture. Bollywood cinema engages in a double construction. On the one hand it constructs an image of the affluent NRI abroad and on the other it constructs an imaginary homeland for the diaspora itself (Ibid:269). Kaur further develops this points. She sees in the fetishisation of the figure of the NRI the creation of a new hegemony, albeit

from a particular perspective, where capital and distributive networks determine what it means to be a 'proper Indian' (Kaur and Sinha, 2005: 314). She also argues against too simplistic a reading of Bollywood cinema where box-office successes and TV ratings are too often uncritically translated into a discourse about NRI nostalgia. A closer examination of diasporic film-making underpins this argument. Part of the issue seems to be location, as many second or third generation South Asians do not necessarily 'see India as their centre of psycho-political imaginaries' (*Ibid*:316). In this respect, Kaur argues, Bollywood is essentially taking up an ultra-conservative Eurocentric argument that migrants from elsewhere 'do not quite fit' in the west and presents them without context in an environment 'where the specificities of diasporic histories and the cultural politics of that are elided' (*Ibid*). What emerges from Kaur's study and interviews during fieldwork is that the aspiration of Bollywood filmmakers to "represent" the diaspora has lead to a striking disidentification from South Asians living in the diaspora, showing that these films are 'negotiated on a shifting terrain of love and disdain' (*Ibid*:322). Part of the problem is a lack of differentiation. The NRIs presented in the films are affluent upper-middle class north Indian families. Thus these films overlook 'the diversity of class and ethnic positions of the diasporic Indians.' (*Ibid*:323) Kaur sees this blanket generalisation implicit in the term Non Resident Indian - someone whose main orientation is Indian, even if he or she was not born there, to which some of the participants in Kaur's fieldwork took exception. Within these debates about Indianness and debates about Indianness as a measure of authenticity lies a much more politicised debate about home and the positioning of India as the authentic homeland that stands in opposition to the inauthentic 'home' in the west. This is often accompanied by a representation of the homeland 'with intoxicating imagery of peasants dancing in lush fields' (*Ibid*:323). Within these parameters, we need to ask the question where and how to position the films of the South Asian diasporic filmmaker, screen-play writer and director, such as *My Beautiful Laundrette*, *The Buddha of Suburbia*, *My Son the Fanatic*, *Bhaji on the Beach*, *Mississippi Masala*, *East is East*, *Bend It Like Beckham*, *Anita and Me*, *Bollywood Hollywood*, *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee*, to name but a few. The next section will look at some of these films in more detail.

19.3 Diasporic Filmmakers and their Communities

British cultural critic Stuart Hall has pertinently observed with regards to an emerging new cinema of the Caribbean that identity needs to be understood as a 'production', never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside representation (See Hall, 1994:392). Thus, cultural identity is always in flux, to be negotiated and renegotiated, to be produced from different positions of enunciation. The question it raises is if it is possible, considering the inevitable fragmentation and experience of dispersal inherent in diaspora, to impose any form of coherence and if such a coherence must not ultimately be imaginary (*Ibid*:394). Salman Rushdie remarks in his essay 'Imaginary Homelands' that the emigrant's physical alienation from 'India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind.' (Rushdie, 1992:10) The diasporic migrant needs to negotiate his relationship with a new alien culture and carve out a space and place for himself. Thus negotiating identity becomes a two-fold process, in Hall's terms 'a matter of "becoming" as well as "being".' (Hall, 1994:394) While cultural identities of the Indian diaspora are formed and

shaped by the history of colonialism, Empire and its aftermath, they are nevertheless subject to an infinite number of rearrangements. Thus ‘identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.’ (Ibid) Cultural identities, as Hall sees it, are thus the points of identification within the discourses of history and culture and these are characterised by difference and rupture. Thus the diaspora experience is defined by heterogeneity and diversity, ‘by a conception of “identity” which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by *hybridity*’. (Ibid:402) Hall proposes a conceptualisation of diaspora as a form of cultural identity that moves away from a fixation with a return to the roots and origins to a diasporic cultural identity that is born through difference. This construction of identity through difference and by hybridity has become increasingly important in cinematic representations of the South Asian community by South Asian diaspora filmmakers in Britain, Canada and the US, who will be the main focus in this section.

According to Jigna Desai, South Asian diasporic identificatory processes are centrally configured and contested through the cinematic apparatus. South Asian diasporic cinema is a developing cinema that negotiates the dominant discourses, politics and economies of multiple locations (Desai, 2004:35). In this respect, South Asian diasporic cinema is posited somewhere between Bollywood, Hollywood, Britain’s, Canada’s and the US’s national cinemas and ‘art-house’ cinema. This again becomes a difficult territory to navigate. As Desai convincingly contends, part of the phenomenon of the art-house and its reception in the west is to view ‘foreign’ films, especially from developing countries, as ethnographic documents of “other” cultures in which diasporic filmmakers serve as native informants, e.g. Merchant Ivory’s 1983 docu-drama *The Courtesans of Bombay*, Mira Nair’s debut film *Salaam Bombay!*. The films of Satyajit Ray’s were read in a similar way in the West. These directors are perceived as significant enough to occupy a place among the pantheon of European art house film directors such as Jean Luc Goddard or Federico Fellini, while Bollywood films were never included. The animosity this can cause is illustrated by Nargis’s following remarks:

NARGIS: Why do you think films like *Pather Panchali* become popular abroad?... Because people there want to see India in an abject condition. That is the image that they have of our country and a film that confirms that image seems to them authentic.

INTERVIEWER: But why should a renowned director like Ray do such a thing?

NARGIS: To win awards. His films are not commercially successful. They only win awards. ...What I want is that if Mr Ray projects Indian poverty abroad, he should also show ‘Modern India’.

INTERVIEWER: What is ‘Modern India’?

NARGIS: Dams...

(Rushdie, 1992, p. 108-109)

Desai points to South Asian diasporic cinema’s position as outsider, actively engaging in a contesting relationship with national cinemas. It reveals South Asian diasporic cinema, especially within the British context, as actively engaged in debates about ‘Englishness’ and challenging Eurocentric views (see Shohat and Stam, 1994). Within the British context, many of the films and scripts had their origin in workshops and groups formed in the 1980s in London as a response to growing racial tensions and exclusionist definitions of ‘Englishness’ by a right-wing conservative elite. While Black British cinema

works inside parameters of mainstream filmmaking – in this respect it seems more accurate to talk about independent film-making - the topics these films tackled were deemed ‘radical’, both within their own community as well as the British public. The response to Hanif Kureishi’s films illustrates this well. For instance, Norman Stone condemned *My Beautiful Laundrette* in the London *Sunday Times* as a film that represents ‘sick scenes from English life’ (Nasta, 2002:184), while the British Asian community were outraged by the iconoclastic portrayal of their community. Indeed, it illustrates the in-between space a second generation Asian like Kureishi has to negotiate. For him, then, it becomes more of a problem of how to negotiate his Britishness. Hanif Kureishi’s films were some of the first films to reach a wider audience, partly because of the funding they received - these workshops had been funded with public money, thus these films gained access to a much wider network of distribution and had some commercial success as well (see Desai, 2004:46). Another reason for the films’ success is the great economy with which Kureishi tells his stories: ‘one objective of film writing is to make it as quick and light as possible’ (Kureishi, 2002:vii). Kureishi handles complicated issues of race, gender, individuality, home and tradition with a lightness of touch yet still presenting their complexity. Kureishi comments that because of his screenplays’ subject matter ‘it didn’t occur to any of us involved in *My Son the Fanatic*, for instance, that it would be either lucrative or of much interest to the general public’ (*Ibid*).

Kureishi’s 1985 movie *My Beautiful Laundrette* is the story of Omar, a restless young Asian man who takes care of his alcoholic father in South London during the mid-1980s. His uncle, a keen supporter of the entrepreneurial zeal of the then prime minister Margaret Thatcher, offers Omar a business opportunity to revamp and manage a dilapidated laundrette, an opportunity at which Omar jumps, enlisting the help of his old school-friend Johnny, who has since fallen in with a gang of neo-Nazis. Both men form an alliance that turns the laundrette into a successful business as both men also become intimate with each other. The film explodes a variety of racial, sexual and class stereotypes. What is revealing about this film is its negotiation of a British and Asian identity from both sides. It reveals that ‘belonging’ must not necessarily be an exclusionary zone but that you can be both British *and* Asian. Thus the film engages in a process of learning to live outside already defined and known parameters of home (Nasta, 2002:192). In this respect, Kureishi in his attempt to present the local histories of individuals from the South Asian community opens up new spaces and creates new parameters for the representation of the heterogeneity of the diaspora within Britain, while at the same time engaging with and often exploding essentialising dichotomies of home and abroad, native or immigrant by presenting differently conceived possibilities situated within the contested terrain of ‘Englishness’ itself. Thus any conceptualisation of home can ‘no longer be a *single* place, but represents a series of *locations*, an imaginative ground fertile for new improvisations.’ (Nasta, *Ibid*:211) These films, then, carve out a new discursive space for the articulation of the diversity of British Asian lives.

Filmmakers and screenplay writers such as Gurinder Chadha, Hanif Kureishi and Meera Syal topicalise identity, home, belonging, race and ethnicity in relation to questions of justice, self-empowerment, representation and equal opportunities. These three in particular have ‘explored the uncomfortable terrain of a *hybridity* which is “Englishness” for a new generation of Asians born and raised in Britain’ (Nasta, 2002:173). Thus what has to be negotiated is what it means to be British Asian, Canadian

Indian, etc. Furthermore, these films, many of them scripted by authors who have also written highly acclaimed and successful novels on similar themes, point to the fact that living in a society with contradictory attitudes to class, race, gender and sexuality that define the hybrid spaces of the black and Asian diasporas in Britain remains a difficult territory to navigate. As a recent movie like *Bend it like Beckham* shows, the issues are in many ways unresolved (Ibid:190). In this respect, diasporic self-representation becomes an important marker in identity negotiations in relation to a consideration of home and the homeland. In an interview with *Filmfare* in September 2000, Shabana Azmi observed: 'The term 'British needn't mean white Anglo-Saxon. [...] Asians [also] are now so much part of the British fabric.' (see Mishra, 2002:241) In how far the South Asian diaspora has become part of the fabric is explored in the alternative identity constructions by diasporic South Asian filmmakers. Films like *My Beautiful Laundrette*, *My Son the Fanatic*, *Bhaji on the Beach*, *Anita and Me* or *Bend it Like Beckham* do not only reveal the problems of identity negotiations for second generation Asians but also reveal a more profound identity crisis that Britain faced in the mid-1980s and is still facing. The black cinema that developed after the race riots of the early 1980s sought to be challenging, transgressive, imaginative and illuminating as well as pleasurable to watch as a direct challenge to the stereotypical image of minority ethnic communities that were constructed as 'problem-ridden, undesirable and most of all invisible.' (Alexander, 2000:109) Thus the emergence of the British Asian and Black communities as a subject for British cinema worked as a direct challenge to received ideas of cultural identity and demonstrated that cultural identity could not only be deconstructed and reconstructed as well as rewritten. Thus a film like *My Beautiful Laundrette* 'mapped out a possibility of Britishness that could contain and engage with diversities of race, gender, sexuality and class in a meaningful and often poetic way.' (Ibid:110) Kureishi's screenplay shows a version of British culture that is both familiar as well as alien and negotiates that territory from an insider/outsider point of view (Ibid).

Gurinder Chadha's interest in filmmaking grew out of seeing *My Beautiful Laundrette* and her first film *Bhaji on the Beach*, scripted by Meera Syal, was very much in the same vein. The film depicts three generations of Indian women on a day trip to the seaside resort of Blackpool in the North West of England and engages with similar topics as Kureishi's films however from the point of view of its female protagonists. It was one of the most successful South Asian diasporic films and while initially it did not recover its costs at the box office, it did so through video sales. *Bhaji on the Beach* set the trend for the 'more commercial [South Asian diasporic film] that becomes the primary focus of Asian filmmaking discourses in the last half of the 1990s' (Desai, 2004:64). There seems to be a shift in these films from drama towards comedy; the 1999 film *East is East* also confirms that trend. With *Bend it Like Beckham*, the runaway success of 2002, Chadha attempted to communicate similar issues and sensibilities about the Asian community in Southall, while using a more populist approach. Because these films were 'conventional' in their style of film-making and because of the rise of discourses of multiculturalism in the UK, Canada and the US, which many of these filmmakers took on board, it allowed 'them to gain wider access to production and distribution' (Desai, 2004:45). In this respect, Black British filmmaking moved away from being a minor independent strand of film-making: 'it becomes progressively demarginalised, and in the process its oppositional perspectives reveal that transitional structures of cultural value and national identity are themselves becoming increasingly fractured' (Mercer, 1994:74). As this cinema pushes into the mainstream and it becomes

institutionalised can it be seen as a part of a new national public sphere? Films like *My Beautiful Laundrette* and *Sammy and Rosie get Laid* have exploded dominant conceptualisations by presenting a plurality of identities on screen and through representation rejected essentialist notions of 'Englishness'. In that respect these films also stand as a direct challenge to the construction of an English nationalism with its resurgent Raj nostalgia of the early 1980s (see for instance films like *Gandhi* or *A Passage to India* and the TV mini series *The Jewel in the Crown*). The first wave of South Asian diasporic films in Britain, Canada and the United States were the first films in English representing the South Asian diasporic community that also had a level of commercial success. How do we need to understand the complex locations of diasporic cinema and it occupying an in-between space? On the one hand it is a minority cultural production within a national framework, on the other it is also a cultural production that belongs to a transnational framework. Topically, there are many meeting points in terms of content between the films - an emphasis on race, racism, multiculturalism, conceptualisations of home, gender and sexual politics (Desai, 2004:48). Importantly, in these early films, the protagonists tend to imagine and 'seek home in mobilized "routes" in the diaspora rather than national and cultural "roots" in the homeland; thus they refuse to evoke "natural" and "organic" roots in the homeland through nostalgia and memory.' (Ibid) In this respect these films disavow any essentialising discourse of 'home' and 'abroad', but recognise diaspora identities as 'hybrid', not being 'either' 'or', but 'as well as'.

During the mid-1990s, largely due to the liberalisation of the Indian economy, some filmmakers from the South Asian diaspora like Mira Nair and Deepa Mehta re-directed their lens back to the homeland. Nair directed *Kama Sutra* (1996), an erotic historical romance centred around the life of courtesans and queens, ultimately giving an eroticised and some argued stereotypically orientalised account of sixteenth century India, and *Monsoon Wedding* (2002). Canadian filmmaker Deepa Mehta returned to India to make a film trilogy (*Fire, Earth, Water*) concerned with the position of women in South Asia. *Fire*, although controversial in India, sparking a number of protests by ultra-nationalists who objected to the depiction of two women falling in love, was a critical and commercial success. The second film in the trilogy, *Earth*, based on Bapsi Sidhwa's 1988 novel *Ice-Candy Man*, brought together Bollywood talent and Mehta's Canadian team - the music was composed by A. R. Rahman and starred Aamir Khan and Nandita Das. After a wave of protests by the same nationalists who objected to *Fire*, Mehta had to abandon her plans to make *Water*. Subsequently, Mehta returned to Canada to make *Bollywood.Hollywood*, discussed below. It took almost five years to put the production of *Water* back together and it was finally shot in Sri Lanka under an assumed name and strict code of secrecy and released in 2005. Desai pertinently points to the difficult position of Nair's and Mehta's films that focus on South Asia, as their films occupy precariously balanced positions in regard to Bollywood and other Indian cinemas, demonstrating how South Asian diasporic films can be involved in complicated struggles over representation.

In recent years, South Asian diasporic film increasingly renegotiated its relationship with Bollywood cinema, as Bollywood sought to position itself as a global cinema (see Desai, 2004:40). Bollywood's global push has also affected the production and circulation of South Asian diasporic cinema, not only thematically, but also in terms of audience reach. As British Asians pushed Bollywood successfully into the mainstream, British Asian diasporic filmmakers also took these sensibilities on board, in order to increase their

audience. However, diasporic film makers have often referenced Bollywood before, e.g. *Bhaji on the Beach* uses a Bollywood-style musical dream sequence, in *East is East* the family goes to a cinema hall to watch a Bollywood movie, both *Mississippi Masala* and *Fire* use Bollywood music as their background soundtrack (Ibid:42) But South Asian diaspora filmmakers have also looked to Bollywood's romantic film genre. Weddings as a common cultural denominator play an increasingly large role in fusion projects, as it travels very well between East and West, and between the diaspora and the homeland (Ibid:212-216). *Monsoon Wedding* is one example, *Bend it Like Beckham* another, while Deepa Mehta plays with this ingredient in *Bollywood Hollywood* and Gurinder Chada's adaptation of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* titled *Bride and Prejudice* in the UK makes this point even more obvious. Jigna Desai explores this further, arguing that Mira Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* relies on a complex interplay between nostalgia, pleasure, and feminine politics in its depiction of a large bourgeois family wedding, recognising that weddings function in many ways for different audiences, as they are evoked as markers of the idealised relationship between diaspora and the homeland but also as the object of the transnational and cross-cultural gaze. (Desai, 2004:217) *Monsoon Wedding* exposes the disturbing issues brewing underneath the silence that is imposed on the self-proclaimed happy family reminiscent of Bollywood films, while developing a narrative of nostalgia and fantasy regarding familial relations and cultural practices amidst global processes of late capitalism, transnationality and modernity. (Ibid:219).

The main focus in *Monsoon Wedding* does not lie on the ceremony itself, but cultural practices. For example, the female sangeet is very much presented as a feminist space of expression and agency. The arranged marriage functions in the film as an ambiguous sign, considering the emphasis the director puts on India's modernity and serves to build up the tension between the modern and tradition and is marked as giving stability within a world in flux through globalisation and modernisation. The arranged marriage becomes acceptable as the bride Aditi allows herself to fall in love with her future husband, hence the match evolves into an 'arranged love-marriage' through the agency of the protagonist herself. She clearly chooses him over her lover Vikram as she identifies Hemant as the better of two options. She confesses her trespasses to him and by doing so allows her sexual agency to be channelled into acceptable forms.

Reflection and Action 19.2

Discuss the representation of Diasporic filmmakers and their communities with suitable illustrations.

Deepa Mehta's film *Bollywood Hollywood* also challenges conventions about marriage within parameters of tradition and modernity, but in the space of the diaspora. The film is about an affluent NRI, Rahul, in Toronto who hires an escort to pose as his fiancée for his sister's wedding as he tries to evade the pressures of his pushy mother and grandmother to finally get married. Deepa Mehta makes interesting use of the wedding-film genre as she mixes Bollywood's recent reliance on them as common cultural denominator with that of the Hollywood romantic comedy which needs it for its Happy End. It is the successful conflation of the two that produces an engaging fusion without ever losing sight of the fact that the entire film would not be possible without Bollywood. Rahul explains the NRI as being in a 'Bollywood/Hollywood state of mind' - living in the West, but with the Indian cultural values as they are emphasised by Bollywood cinema as a lifeline. Mehta explains that she took the very schematic Hollywood plot and imposed

Bollywood on it: 'To me they're very similar. Both have commercial plot lines. Boy meets girl, they get separated, they come back together.' (Mehta, 2002, p. 44). Underneath this simple plot lies an exploration of identity where the boundaries are completely blurred. For instance, Rahul's chauffeur spends his evenings working as drag queen Rockini, Rahul's geeky brother Govind, a teenager with a serious lack of confidence, always has his camera with him and lives in the cinematic world of Bollywood, commenting constantly on family matters by comparing them to Bollywood plotlines, the mother lives up to the whole back-catalogue of the stereotypical Bollywood mother, crying and fainting on demand, and the grandmother's resoluteness is matched by her advice and commentary usually given in the form of Shakespeare quotes. Rahul has to take the role as head of the family after his father's death and struggles with the pressures to fulfil his duty to his family. So he hires Sue, a girl partial to multiple identities. She is the stereotypical 'benevolent prostitute', which Western audiences would know from films like *Pretty Woman* and South Asian audiences would recognise from the courtesan movies like *Mughal-E-Azam*, *Pakeezah* or *Devdas*. While Rahul's sister Twinky is in a hurry to marry because she is pregnant, Sue, who is revealed to be Sunita, daughter of a Sikh from the Punjab, entered her line of work as an escort as a last resort to escape the pressures from her father who wanted her to marry the wrestler Killer Khalsa. She proves her 'cultural' worth at Twinky's Sangeet, as she keeps up appearances. However, as her secrets are revealed, it is Rahul who has to make up his mind, to accept Sue on her own terms, prostitute or not. Her rebellion against cultural norms imposed onto her by her father is something Rahul has to accept, which he does after his grandmother talks some sense into him. In that respect, the film echoes Shakespearean comedy, which is perhaps alluded to by Mehta having the grandmother quoting from his plays all the time. This connection might be revealing, as weddings/marriage function in Shakespeare as a way of channelling female sexuality. As the film negotiates issues such as sacrifice, marriage and filial duty, identities are increasingly blurred, exposing the patriarchal pressure to marry that weighs heavily on Rahul, his sister and Sunita.

This echoes in Bollywood films like *DDLJ* or *K3G*, where patriarchal resistance, objecting either to the proposed groom or bride respectively, is the obstacle that needs to be overcome. So while the romantic melodrama of the late 1990s casts the patriarch as the villain, in *Bollywood Hollywood*, cultural conventions of the South Asian diaspora that Rahul sums up as 'living in a time warp', exemplified by Rahul's mother or Sunita's father, are portrayed as the obstacle that needs to be overcome. The film is a nuanced overlaying of Bollywood and Hollywood conventions, easily recognisable as a romantic comedy, yet the tongue-in-cheek references to Bollywood cinema, its use of stock narrative devices and characters, the spoofing of heavy handed metaphor-laden dialogue ('remember, you hold the baseball bat of destiny') are direct references to Indian popular cinema immediately recognisable to South Asian cinemagoers. What Mehta does successfully and where a film like *The Guru* failed is that her own knowledge of the genre allows her to weave Bollywood into her film, not as exotic imitation that ends up perpetuating clichéd stereotypes, but as a way of exploring the migrant condition, highlighting the importance of Bollywood cinema for the diaspora and, in the process, by showing what effect it has on her set of characters, to use it to comedic effect. She deploys Hindi cinema strategically in her film, having sequences from films like *Rangeela* and *Mast* play on televisions in the background that serve as points of reference or she uses little taglines before a scene starts that directly reference Bollywood. The Western cinemagoer is not excluded from her ironic jokes, as she questions the

appeal of Indian cinema for a Western cinemagoer. Rahul comments to Sunita: 'everyone is a sucker for exotica, trust me.' Mehta not only displays an understanding for both genres that allows her to lovingly send up Indian popular cinema and its place in the Indian diaspora without forgetting that her own film would not be possible without Bollywood as well as Hollywood. What Deepa Mehta's irreverential look at Bollywood makes abundantly clear is that there is a playful and parodic relationship with the genre in the diaspora. In this respect it is too simplistic to read Hindi films as merely a vehicle for nostalgia and provider of an emotional and material link to the homeland (see Kaur and Sinha, 2005, p. 313).

19.4 Conclusion

Within processes of identity negotiations film, film music and cinematic representation have always played a significant role. Bollywood⁵ cinema in this realm occupies an in-between place, on the one hand providing a link with the home country for the diasporic migrant, on the other presenting the diaspora back to the homeland. Although Indian popular cinema has had a global following for decades, the diaspora has not emerged as a central theme until the mid- to late 1990s. It appears that Indians living in the diaspora Hindi movies become the metonymic substitution for 'India' and this substitution is an attempt at closure, a means of constructing rigid mental boundaries between the past and the present, the culture at home and the new adopted culture, home and exile, nationality and naturalisation. More often than not, this imaginary 'India' is frozen in time, a past to which it is impossible to return, but 'which comes to represent the self valorized in another place, at another time.' In this regard, one could perceive that the Bombay film becomes the displaced site of national exploration. Yet to read the Bombay film and its relationship to the diaspora as mere nostalgia would not expose the full picture. Increasingly, Indian popular cinema has impacted on markets outside India. Until recently these used to be markets with large Indian immigrant communities, but ever since the late 1990s Indian cinema's reach has widened even further. Besides, as we consider Indian film and its diaspora, several questions require to be tackled, such as the role and function of Bollywood cinema and representation of diasporic filmmakers on screen.

19.5 Further Reading

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Unit 20

Indian Diasporic Writing

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Learning Objectives

After going through this unit, you will be able to understand:

- The meaning and usage of the term diaspora literature;
- The characteristics of diaspora literature and related terms;
- The circumstances for the formation of diasporic communities;
- Indian diasporic community in Canada;
- The diasporic writing as cultural identity marker; and
- Indian Diasporic Novel writing in Canada.

20.1 Introduction

By now it is well known that diaspora is a term that was applied originally to denote groups of people of Jewish origin who were ousted from and scattered beyond the bounds of their homeland. It thus came to be associated with relocation through force. However, after going through various mutations, it now stands for relocation of groups of people or members of communities from one nation to another and not necessarily through the application of force. The other three more common terms that are used to denote a similar situation are ‘expatriate’, ‘immigration’ and ‘exile’. It may be of interest to mention here that some scholars have begun to use a term ‘internal diaspora’ to denote similar relocation within the geographical bounds of a nation. However, the concept of diaspora is still associated with transnational relocation. In this unit we will discuss the imagery of the Indian diaspora in literature.

20.2 Diasporic Communities—Circumstances and Reasons for their Formation

While Jews were allegedly forced to relocate or were subjected to a ‘push’, modern sociologists consider either ‘pull’ or ‘push’ factors or both to be responsible for the creation of diasporic situations, that is to say, circumstances under which people relocate themselves. These ‘pull’ factors are generally economic in nature that is prospects of better paid jobs or

more lucrative businesses, etc., lure people to relocate themselves. However, groups of people and chunks of communities also move from one national location to another because of better living conditions including better socio-cultural life or more tolerant political systems. Canada, for instance, has been considered one such destination for people from outside. The 'push' factors include adverse economic circumstances, that is, lack of appropriate job opportunities or absence of favourable conditions for carrying out business activities. 'Push' factors also included hostile or unstable socio-political conditions in general or for specific groups of people or members of particular communities that may also mean violation of their human rights or even threats to their persons and property. Groups of people in significant numbers from African and Asian countries ruled by dictators and military juntas have moved or have been forced to move to either Europe or North America for such reasons.

Reference to the Jewish community's dispersal also shows the antiquity of the phenomenon of diaspora, that is, people travelling away from home and settling among people with widely different cultural profiles. In our own parts, the existence of the ancient Silk Route is one such evidence. In fact, Buddhism traveled from India to the Far East and South East Asia because of diasporic situations. However, the biggest diasporic situation in modern times—perhaps of all times—as also the most shameful situation was created when very large sections of population from different parts of Africa were removed forcibly to develop the Americas for their European colonial masters.

20.3 Diasporic Communities—Cultural Identity Versus Cultural Assimilation

Identity formation, we know, is a very complex phenomenon. Some identity markers are given biologically, that is these are racial and ethnic in character: pigmentation, colour of eyes, texture of hair and shapes of noses. Thus fair skins, blue eyes, curly hair and small flat noses are connected with various races and ethnic groups. Running into individual members of ethnic groups through the operation of complex genetic processes, these are the most stable of identity markers and consequently most difficult to shed or change individually or communally, especially in diasporic situations. Also, these come to be stereotyped negatively. For instance, women with natural blonde hair have been associated with dumbness—most unfairly, of course. However, the most unjustified stereotyping with tragic consequences has been the case of associating dark pigmentation with 'natural' inferiority of mind and human values.

Some other identity markers are gifts of the environment to members of particular communities. Innuits, for instance, unlike their other fellow Canadians, can reportedly divide the phenomenon of snowing into at least six distinct categories primarily because snow is what they have all around them—all the time. Members of the Marwari community, originating in the desert of Rajasthan where adverse environmental conditions and lack of means of transportation made them more than optimal users of limited resources are known the world over—and they form diasporic communities in many parts of the world—for their penchant for building huge business empires out of very small beginnings.

It was these environmentally bestowed identity markers that, for instance, made the Canadian Government to encourage Hungarian farming community

to migrate to the mid-west when they were developing the Prairies into their granaries. Again, while developing the rail-road projects and the lumber industry on the Pacific coast in the west, the Canadian government encouraged migration from Punjab whose people were not only strongly built but were also known from their physical prowess to work hard under adverse conditions.

Most numerous—and most significant, perhaps—are the identity markers that are cultural in character. These involve language and religious beliefs, customs and rituals, forms of address and modes of inter-personal behaviour, dress codes and food habits, form and content of education, songs and stories, symbols and icons, myths and legends, practices for preserving history and tradition and many similar phenomena. Add to these, modes of production, economic, political and societal organization, professional and philosophical preferences and we have the complete cultural identity map of communities and individuals. However, this category of identity markers is relatively unstable and it is the members from this category that come under various degrees and kinds of pressure for change in changing situations. As societies change and evolve, cultural tokens also change. However, such changes take place at different paces among various sections of a society and when such difference is perceptible in a significant way we also term it as 'generation gap'.

This fluidity in cultural situation is more significantly pronounced in diasporic situations where not just two phases of evolution of the same culture but two different cultures—if not more—are in contestation. The cultural space that emerges out of such a contest is a hybrid space wherein new patterns of socio-cultural behaviour emerge that are, at different times, pastiche, marginally assimilated or significantly integrated, to name only a few. We shall speak about this space in more details in a later section of this Unit.

20.4 Indian Diasporic Communities—History and Evolution

Many Indian myths and legends warn people against crossing the seas to travel abroad. Going beyond the 'Kala Pani'—black waters—was considered sinful for the soul. And yet, Indians have been traveling and settling abroad in groups for long. However, in modern times, most of such settling abroad happened during the nineteenth century when the British colonial administration sent groups of Indians to work in other British colonies as indentured labour. This is how Indian diasporas came to be formed, for instance, in Mauritius, East Africa, South Africa, Malaysia and Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean region, Fiji in the Pacific Ocean region and Trinidad, Guyana, Jamaica and Surinam in the Caribbean Sea region.

For various reasons ranging from economic to political, the British colonial administration did not want to employ local population either on the plantations or on development projects. Indian labour was one of the alternatives that the British employed. This could be construed as the 'pull' factor. Also, the British colonial rule in India had created what R.K.Jain calls, 'severe economic and social disturbances'. This was the 'push' factor. Thus, development of the economies of the colonies created employment opportunities abroad for groups of people belonging to either a community or a region. This is how people from Panjab, Eastern Uttar Pradesh, Western Bihar, Gujrat, Sindh and Tamil Nadu came to form diasporic communities in some of the countries named above.

Such emigration, however, was organized in various ways. Two main types are distinctly visible. One was the indentured labour system under which Emigration Agents, subagents and recruiters at different levels identified workers who under an agreement volunteered to work for a particular employer for, initially, a period of five years after which he could, if he so desired, switch to another employment. It was only after ten years of work in that particular colony that the person was eligible for partial return passage expenses. Those who went to East Africa, South Africa, Mauritius, Trinidad, Guyana and Surinam were recruited under this system. Most of such people did not choose to return after the completion of their indenture contract and settled down in those colonies, finding alternate employment on their own initiative or setting up small business enterprises.

Groups of labourers who went to work on the tea and rubber plantations in Malaysia or Sri Lanka were recruited under a different system that came to be known as the '*Kangani*' system. Under this system, migrants were recruited by headmen who were known as '*Kangani*'. Each *Kangani*, R.K.Jain tells us, recruited 'a score or more of men belonging mainly to his own caste and kin group. Sometimes, many such groups of recruited persons combined under a leader who was designated 'head *Kangani*'. It was *Kangani* who negotiated the deals, lent money for passage and other expenses to the recruited labourers and managed them. Since the workers under this system went to neighbouring Sri Lanka and Malaysia, they continued to be in touch with their families by returning home every couple of years. As a result, most of them could never be absorbed fully into the recipient societies.

Yet another form of group migration was through what may be termed as 'free emigration', also known as 'passenger Indians'. These were generally skilled labourers or petty entrepreneurs who came to explore the possibilities thrown open by development of these colonies. A number of Gujarati 'dukawallas' in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania in East Africa, some groups of people in South Africa towards the end of Nineteenth century and more recent migrations since the beginning of the Twentieth century to Canada, United States of America, the United Kingdom and still more recently migration to the Middle East came under this form of migration. It may be significant to observe here that in the beginning invariably and in most cases even later, the workers were not allowed to either bring their families with them or send for them later.

Again, since most of the migrations under one form or another were never well-thought out and planned and were necessitated by either socio-economic disintegration back home or were prompted by lure of the lucre, the groups of people did not try to make the necessary adjustments in their socio-cultural world view. As it is, most of them treated these locations abroad as purely temporary and time-bound. As a result, their continued practice of the cultural patterns and values brought by them from the donor society back home and reluctance to imbibe new ones from the recipient society, created conflictual situations alienating them further from the host people. Most diasporic formations of Indians therefore became janusfaced from the very beginning, stranded as it were on a no-man's land between the two nation states, two societies.

Identity markers or cultural tokens, particularly those bestowed at birth and those acquired as culturally are the sites on which battles for new identity are fought in diasporic situations. Ethnic identity markers of immigrants cannot be got rid of and host societies accept them although

with a lot of reservations and at times these are derided, ridiculed and even subjected to hostile behaviour, particularly verbals. The term 'Paki' in England for persons of not just Pakistan but of South Asian origin has its roots in such behaviour. Similarly, the expression 'Calcutta Coolies' for persons of Indian origin in British Columbia, Canada at the turn of the last century was also an example of such hostility towards ethnic identity tokens, although, interestingly, the immigrants were not from Calcutta. And they were no coolies either. The host or recipient societies however put pressure on diasporic communities to shed as many as possible if not all cultural tokens of their past identities and acquire as quickly as possible the new tokens of cultural identity. Thus, there is pressure on groups of immigrants as also on individual members to shed their languages, customs and rituals, religious beliefs, health and hygiene, dress codes, food habits and forms of inter-personal behaviour. Some of these, the diasporic people give up voluntarily and easily—in visible public behaviour at least—in order to show their willingness to assimilate with the recipient society. For instance, immigrants are ready to learn not only the language of the hosts but also their peculiar accent. Indians trying to imitate American accent—what with a nasal twang—after relocating themselves there or the Indians in Australia trying to pronounce their diphthongs appropriately are instances of such voluntary attempts at linguistic assimilation. Similarly, Indian immigrant women give up wearing sarees or Salwar-Kameez, and taking to western dresses and other forms of formal wear are attempts in the same direction of acquiring tokens of their newly acquired identities. Gujarati 'dukawallas' in East Africa welcoming their customers with 'Jambo' and 'Karibu Sana' are only flaunting their newly acquired cultural currency.

However, there are some tokens that the immigrants want to hold on to as long as possible and are unwilling to shed easily. The Sikhs not willing to give up wearing turbans, or the Hindus not willing to shed their inhibition of eating beef or the Jews their kosher are examples of such reluctance to assimilate fully. Again, immigrants from the sub-continent not permitting their girls to go on dates or to have physical relationships with their boy friends before marriage are forms of behaviour that they are unwilling to adopt primarily because these are not part of the socio-cultural code that they have brought with them from back home.

A situation, therefore, emerges in almost all diasporas—particularly in those with more pronounced cultural distance—wherein a serious contestation takes place on the sites of cultural identity and assimilation. And this situation of riding two cultures simultaneously leads to schism and bipolarity of behaviour on the part of not only individuals but also groups and communities in the host society that in its extreme form, at times, causes societal instability and disorders.

Diasporic writing, we shall elaborate in another section below, draws its sustenance from this situation of cultural contestation and the process of assimilation.

20.5 Diasporic Writing as a Marker of Cultural Identity

The diasporic cultural space that we spoke about in an earlier section is the cultural space that immigrants occupy almost perpetually since assimilation is an ongoing process and no full assimilation ever takes place. Again, as stated above, it is a space where a contestation is constantly taking place—a contestation between the donor culture and the recipient culture. This

contest takes place first in the minds of immigrant individuals and communities and later in their actions. While the former, namely, the donor culture tries to pull the members to their moorings as far as possible and as long as possible, the latter, that is, the recipient culture tries to oust and replace the former as much as possible and as quickly as possible. As a result, while trying to make necessary adjustments in this state of contestation between the two contending cultures, diasporic communities or individuals become janus-faced—now looking back, now the gaze fixed straight ahead. In situations of severe contestation, extreme states of conflict emerge, turning individuals as well as communities into cultural schizophrenics, victims of maladjustment, haunted by, as it were, Hamlet's dilemma—to be or not to be.

Writing is rooted in a culture. That is, writers are products of a specific culture, drawing sustenance from it and enriching it in turn. However, the world of diasporic writing belongs to the in-between space we spoke about above, the cultural no-man's land, the site at which cultural armies from a community's past and present clash by day and by night to vanquish each other. Since, it is believed, that creativity lies in states of fluidity, contest, conflict and instability, diasporic writers seek this space, locating most of their writings here where immigrants are trying to ride two horses simultaneously who more often than not are also pulling them in two different if not opposite directions. The discomfiture and the adventure that results therefrom is what diasporic or immigrant writers relish. From Naipaul to Rushdie, Mistry to Vassanji, immigrant writers across various locations and times have woven their tapestries from these two-tone yarns and textures.

Reflection and Action 20.1

What is cultural assimilation? How does it affect identity markers of individuals in diasporic situations?

In this space lies buried a double treasure trove—of myths and legends, of orality and the written word, of rites and rituals, of songs and dances, of faith and belief, of philosophy and pragmatism, of memory and amnesia, of success and failures, of tears and smiles. In short, the lived experience—of not one but two communities.

20.6 Indian Diasporic Writing

As stated above, most of those who went out to form the first diaspora were members of the working class or the farming community. Most of them were illiterate. Thus all the legends, myths and folk narratives they carried with them to their new lands were primary oral in nature. And it is to this repertoire that they added when they composed songs and poems, tales and stories, skits and plays while reflecting their new socio-cultural reality and sharing with one another. Some—very few though—could read and write and these acted as communicators between the members of the community and their families back home. In the letters they wrote on their own or their colleagues' behalf in which 'narrated' the details of their new lives—the living and working conditions, the weather and climatic conditions, the flora and the fauna, the food and the drink, the dress and the dress code, the law and governance, the hosts and hostility, the other 'others' and the solidarity and a myriad other things. And while narrating all these, the 'writer' took care of the sentiments of the one on whose behalf he was communicating. May be the person did not want him to alarm his people back home by telling the truth about the working and service conditions

which were generally harsh and adverse. May be, he did not also want to talk about extreme climatic conditions that only added to their misery. May be they did not want to say anything about the discrimination and injustices meted out to them by their employers and the society at large. So he asked his 'amanuensis' to make necessary adjustments. Again, may be he wanted the 'writer' to embellish some of the description, particularly those involving his performance, etc. So, the communications sent home were essentially 'facts'—with something added here and something subtracted there. But then this is precisely what literature is all about—facts with a few plusses and minuses here and there. Thus, in this communication sent to their families by the diasporic persons laid the seeds of literature. Similarly, in the songs and poems they composed and sang, the stories they narrated of their various experiences, they exaggerated or underplayed 'facts'. This was literature in its nascent form. These were the beginnings of Indian diasporic writings in its infancy. This was so in East Africa, this was so in Mauritius, this was so Fiji, this was so in Trinidad, Guyana and Jamaica and this was so in Malaysia and Sri Lanka. The precise conditions and circumstances could vary, the linguistic and cultural expressions could vary but the manner in which Indian diasporic writings from various locations came to be was more or less the same.

Later, when subsequent groups of Indian immigrants arrived on these or other locations, particularly those with professional skills, they built on this tradition. Since they were literate and many of them highly educated, they wrote rather than narrating orally. They not only composed but also published. While some did it along with the pursuit of their professions, others made this—writing—their profession. In course of time, fairly stable body of such writings began to cross the global literary stage from various locations and some of these writers began to be noticed, read, evaluated and awarded. Soon, some of them became household names: Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, Rohinton Mistry, M.G. Vassanji, Bharati Mukherji, Farida Karodia, Anita Desai, K.S. Maniam and Jhumpa Lahiri to name some.

Indian diasporic writings in Canada began much in the same way as they began elsewhere. To understand its origin and evolution, therefore, we should first get some idea about the Indian immigrant community in Canada—when and how did it begin, who were its founding members, with what hopes and dreams did they arrive there and how did evolve to what they are today.

The Indian immigrants began to arrive on the Pacific coast of Canada towards the beginning of the twentieth century when Canada needed large scale human inputs for their lumber industry, railroad projects and jungle clearing operations as a part of their expansion to the west. Having disallowed—through various laws—the Chinese immigrants who were working on these projects earlier, the Canadian companies encouraged Indians—particularly strong, burly Sikhs from Panjab—to migrate and work in parts of British Columbia. Sensing this as an economic opportunity, Indian immigrants started arriving, from 1905 onwards, in batches—big and small—travelling first from Panjab to Calcutta by train, then from Calcutta to Hong Kong by small ships and finally from Hong Kong to Vancouver by CPR ships. Most of them found employment in saw mills, road building, woodcutting and land clearing. By 2006, their number had swelled to over 2000. It is at this point that they began to attract the attention of the local Canadians in the same manner in which the Chinese immigrants had begun to attract attention earlier. The Indian immigrants were now perceived to be taking

away jobs from the Canadians and they were perceived to be 'polluting' their culture and society with their 'filthy' habits and practices. Thus the sense of alienation that any group of people feel on moving away from home became manifold more because of harsher climatic conditions and hostile behaviour of the local people. They were intrigued by all this because they considered themselves to 'loyal royal subjects' and expected to be treated well in all British territories. Their sense of intrigue turned to hostility when the Canadian government, under pressure from the Canadian people, created laws and regulations that discouraged Indians from migrating to Canada for employment. For instance, a condition of personal possession of two hundred dollars was imposed on each arriving passenger and, more importantly, the passenger had to undertake a 'continuous passage' from the port of embarkation to the port of final destination without any break en route. This was virtually impossible since there were no direct ships plying between India and Canada.

When the Komagata Maru incident happened in May 1914, when a ship with that name, carrying over 300 passengers fulfilling all conditions including that of 'continuous passage' was not allowed to dock and the passengers were not allowed to disembark—they were not allowed even food and water—despite the fact that there were women and children on board—the loyalty of the Indian immigrants 'slipped away with the slipping away of the ship from Canadian waters'. The immigrants realized that their maltreatment would end only if India were free. So, they began to support the National Freedom Struggle through the Ghadr Movement that was already very active across the border in the United States of America. They collected funds, organized meetings and above all brought out a number of publications to support the movement. *The Free Hindustan* started coming out in 1908 from Vancouver, edited by Tarak Nath. In 1909, *The Hindustan Association* was formed. In 1910, *Swadesh Sewak* began to published in Gurumukhi. In 1911, the publication of *The Aryan* started. Movements were launched against the banning of Indian immigration and for allowing the families of the immigrants to be allowed to join them. This only aggravated the racial hostility against Indians who were dubbed as 'polygamous Hindus' and 'Calcutta Coolies'. The Komagata Maru incident ended in a tragedy with the death of a child passenger, the others returning, the killing of Inspector Hopkins by Mewa Singh who was subsequently captured and hanged. As the first World War loomed large over the horizon, the Canadian government came down heavily on the supporters of the Ghadr Movement who were now scattered to various parts of North America. However, the struggle by the Indian immigrants continued after the first World War and right through the second World War. Particular focus was on the restoration of the franchise to vote that had been taken away from them in 1907. It was restored only in 1948 when Prime Minister Nehru intervened after India had become free.

Reflection and Action 20.2

In what way is diasporic writing an identity marker for a community?

After the war, many regulations that were considered discriminatory were repealed in deference to the UN Charter. Also, Canada needed huge inputs of human resources for its economic development that was put so succinctly by John Diefenbaker, the then Prime Minister in 1957—'Populate or Perish'. So under various criteria of 'employability', 'dependent relatives', etc., more Indian immigrants were allowed. Thus the number of Indian diasporic people in Canada rose from 6,774 in 1961 to 68,000 in 1971 and 1,18,000 in 1976. Also, during this time people of Indian origin came to Canada not only from India directly but also from East and South Africa, the Caribbean

Islands, Fiji in the Pacific and from South and East Asia. Thus in the 1991 census in Canada, as many as 500,000 persons traced their origins to India. A large number of these were independent professional whose profiles were very different from those founding fathers of the Indian diaspora in Canada, most of whom were illiterate and who came to work as unskilled labourers. It is around these latter group of Indian immigrants that the seeds of Indian Canadian writing were sown. Here below, we study briefly the development of Indian diasporic novel in Canada as a case study.

20.7 Indian Diasporic Novel in Canada—a Case Study

As stated above, Indian immigration to Canada took place over a long period of time beginning with the first decade of twentieth century and these groups of immigrants came from various strata of the Indian society. While early immigrants were uneducated, those who migrated between 1947 and 1970 and even later were not only well educated, they were also professional. Again, While many of them migrated directly from India directly to Canada, many others came from East and South Africa where they or their families had settled earlier migrating from different parts of India. Similarly, others came via the Caribbean Islands—Trinidad, Jamaica or Guyana where their parents or grandparents had been taken as indentured labour for developing the British colonies.

All these factors made the assimilation of Indian immigrant community into the Canadian mainstream a very complex affair. And if this were not enough, many of these victims had been victims of political vendetta elsewhere—the Kenyans, the Tanzanians, the Ugandans, the Trinidadians the Jamaicans and the Guyanese, for instance—and hence their motivations for immigration were quite different from others most of whom came in search of better economic prospects. Again, most of those named above as the victims of political upheavals had been displaced twice—once having migrated of their own volition and a second time having been forced out. As such, their mindsets and approach towards assimilation were quite different from those who had not been subjected to political prejudice as yet.

And then there was the question of their cultural baggage that have been described by M.G. Vassanji with that most appropriate metaphor—the gunny sack. Each group of migrants brought in his gunny sack a whole set of cultural artifacts that ranged from religious and community beliefs, customs and rituals, myths and legends, songs and dances, fables and folk tales, intra-family and inter-personal behaviour, food and dress codes. But above all these, the most unique feature of caste hierarchies.

All these complexities with their concomitant tensions—psychological, physical, financial—of adjustment and assimilation in an alien cultural environment that had racial discrimination writ large all over it, is captured very significantly by writers of the Indian diaspora in their poems and plays—and more importantly because of the discursive nature of the genre—in their stories and novels. Moyez Vassanji, Rohinton Mistry, Reshard Gul, Cyril Dabydeen, Farida Karodiya, Lakshmi Gill, Uma Parameswaran, and many more have all focused on—directly or indirectly—the new culture of adoption by the immigrants together with their fear of losing the cultural identity that they had brought with them. Thus they all were—in their stories and novels—writing through their race. Thus, they invoked in their writings, their ethnicity, the myths and legends, customs and rituals, the interpersonal behaviour and idiosyncrasies of the country of their origin together with that of the nation of their first immigration.

With this kind of focus of their writings these first generation writers of the Indian-Canadian diaspora were exposing themselves to the charge of exclusionist ghettoisation and letting their work be pushed to the margins. However, through this, they were also redressing the imbalance of Canadian writing being primarily European and white in its content, form and worldview. By bringing in their own cultural identity, they were in a way questioning the underlying philosophy behind the official policy of multiculturalism which was in itself an attempt to compartmentalize the society. Thus it may not be outrageous to observe that Indian immigrant writing in Canada was, irrespective of the content and form, a political activity in the same way as women, aborigines, gays and lesbians around the globe and in our own case by Dalits and tribals have been making political statements by their very acts of writing.

Indian immigrant writing in Canada did not actually make a beginning until 1950 and it was only in the 70s of the last century that it was identifiable although it was recognized as a part of a portmanteau category—South Asian literature in Canada. The label itself was politically motivated by lumping together writings by authors belonging to not only half a dozen nations of South Asia but also by extension of another dozen nations of Africa and the Caribbean islands wherefrom some of these writers of South Asian origin had migrated to Canada.

Between 1962 and 1982 as many as 102 writers from this category had published 196 books. But most of these were one book writers. 1982 was a watershed year for Canadian writers tracing their origin to India. In that year, M.G.Vassanji started a journal—*Toronto South Asian Review*, TSAR in short—to publish the writings by authors of South Asian origin who were facing publication discrimination by so-called mainstream journals and magazines. It is interesting to note here that most of the better known Indian immigrant writers of Canada, including Vassanji and Mistry were first published in TSAR. Since then, not only has the number of publications more than trebled, the quality of writings has improved, forcing better recognition.

Rohinton Mistry is perhaps most visible among the Indian immigrant novelists of Canada. With books like *Such a Long Journey*, *A Fine Balance*, *Family Matters* and *Tales from Ferozsha Baag*, Mistry focusses his authorial gaze primarily on his own community, namely, the Parsis. Mistry has made Indian socio-political reality the basis of most of his books. His books also bring out the tragic dilemma of the Parsis, namely a very small community whose demographic profile is in a negative growth mode, acting extremely conservative when it comes to recognizing marriages made outside their religious confines. This Mistry shows to be in sharp contrast with their otherwise very modernist outlook.

M.G.Vassanji, is one of the most publicly acknowledged Canadian writer who belongs to the Indian immigrant community. With two Giller awards, he is amongs the most highly recognized writers of Canada. In fact, almost all his books—*The Gunny Sack*, *No New Land*, *Uhuru Street*, *The Book of Secrets*, *AMRiiKA* and *The In Between World of Vikram Lall*—have won one or another award.

Like Mistry—or any other diasporic writer—Vassanji also focuses on his own community—Ismailis who are portrayed as Shamsis in his books—that traces its origin to Gujarat on the Western Coast of India and a large section of which migrated to the East Coast of Africa in nineteenth century to form

a substantial Indian diasporic community in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania from where they moved on to Europe and North America including Canada in the latter half of the twentieth century. Vassanji himself came to Canada from Tanzania via the United States of America in the seventies.

Another significant novelist—his numerical contribution however is confined to just two books, one a novel and another a collection of short stories—is S.S.Dhami who in his novel, *Maluka*, has very vividly and significantly portrayed the formation of the Indian diasporic community in British Columbia in the beginning of the twentieth century. *Maluka* is perhaps the only novel that focuses in such great details on the travails and triumphs, the failures and the successes of the early immigrants—those burly Sikhs from Panjab—who with their tenacity and perseverance overcame stark racial prejudice and appalling working and service conditions.

Cyril Dabydeen came to Canada from Guyana in the Caribbean Islands where his ancestors had been moved as indentured labour by the British in nineteenth century from parts of Eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. It is this experience of the Indians in Guyana that Dabydeen makes the subject of his novels and short story collections, which include *The Wizard Swami*, *Dark Swirl*, *Jogging in Havana* and *Elephants Make Good Stepladders*.

Reflection and Action 20.3

Write an essay on the Indian diasporic novel in Canada.

Other Indian immigrant novelists include Ashis Gupta, Rewat Deonandanand, Neil Bissoondath, Arnold Harichand Itwaru, Saros Kawosjee and B. Rajan.

Immigrant women novelists of Indian origin were late arrivers but have since contributed significantly to the Indian immigrant novel in Canada. Prominent among those are Anita Rao Badami, Lakshmi Gill, Uma Parmeswaran, Hiro Boga Ramabai Espinet and Nalini Warrior. Besides them, those who have focused on short story are Himani Banerji, Arun Prabha Mukherjee and Surjeet Kalsey.

Despite the myriad variations of religion, caste, language, region, educational and economic profiles as also the routes taken by members of Canadian Indian diasporic community, the writings about them by members of their own immigrant community portray them in the context of problematics of nation, home, homelessness, home beyond home, self, identity, integration and assimilation. In this too, the members of various groups show the same kind of variation as is visible in their socio-cultural profiles. It is this difference in their mindsets and responses that demarcate—at times—one novelist's worldview from another. Again, while nostalgia, memory, amnesia and lived experience are the sites on which some of these contestations are carried out, various writers show varied approaches here too.

20.8 Conclusion

Diasporic experience is basically about ‘home’ and ‘world’ where home stands for the culture of one’s origin and world refers to the culture of adoption. Sometimes the concept of home is equated with that of the nation one is born into and world as the nations one immigrates into or exiles one into. Because of this sense of ‘exile’, an alternative term used for diasporic experience is ‘homelessness’, a term that was popularized by Said but that is also a favourite of a writer like V.S.Naipaul. Homi Bhabha would explain this experience in terms of what he calls ‘gathering’—

"gathering of exiles and émigrés and refugees, gathering on the edge of 'foreign' cultures, gathering at frontiers; gathering in the ghettos or cafes of city centres" as would he put it. Rushdie, on the other hand, would turn home into 'imaginary homelands' and liken them to broken mirrors some pieces of which are lost irretrievably. However, the picture that emerges out of the broken mirror—that is to say, the diasporic experience—may be different from the one reflected by a mirror that is whole but it is no less significant. It contains images of not only the donor culture but of the host society as well. M.G. Vassanji would find a parallel for the diasporic experience in a jigsaw puzzle some of whose pieces are again lost like the pieces of Rushdie's mirror. For Vassanji, the creativity of a diasporic writer lies in supplying those missing pieces with the help of his imagination and the resultant history would be what he calls 'imagined history'. Abdul Jan Mohammed describes immigrant's experience to be that of a 'border intellectual'—either 'specular' or 'syncretic'—the first refers to an experience wherein an immigrant is not able to adjust both to 'home' and 'world' simultaneously whereas syncretic refers to an experience wherein an expatriate is able to reach out to both cultures—the donor and the recipient—simultaneously.

20.9 Further Reading

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