

Unit 4

Migration and Settlement of Indians Abroad

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Learning Objectives

This unit will help you to:

- understand the basic background to migration of Indians abroad;
- analyse the main socio-economic reasons and historical context of migration; and
- illustrate the different patterns of migration.

4.1 Introduction

Our last three units have discussed some conceptual issues concerning diaspora in general and Indian diaspora in particular. We have also tried to look at some of the diaspora of the world to understand the specific contexts and histories of diaspora across space and time. In this unit we look at the general pattern of migration with reference to the Indian diaspora. We will begin with the historical context of Indian diaspora and then try to understand contemporary trends and patterns.

Indians have been sojourning abroad since ancient times. There is historical evidence of Indian-influenced colonies and kingdoms in Southeast Asia, the most notable of them being the fifteenth century A.D. Sri Vijaya Empire in Indonesia (Wheatley, 1961). Besides Southeast Asia, Indian cultural influence is also known to have existed in Afghanistan, Tibet and parts of China. Indian scholars and entrepreneurs were in contact with their counterparts in Central Asia and the Hellenic world. Early Indian emigration, however, did not result in any significant permanent settlements overseas; and if it did then the migrants must have got assimilated into the populations of their host countries. Ceylon (Sri Lanka) can be considered in this regard as an exceptional case.

In contrast to ancient emigration, modern emigration from India was wholly a British creation. It began in 1834 when slavery was abolished in the British Empire. Labour was needed to work on the sugar plantations in the various British colonies. Without dependable supplies of labour, the survival of plantations would have been extremely difficult. Consequently, the British colonists followed the practice of Latin American and Cuban colonists who were importing Chinese indentured labour from the Portuguese settlement of Macao (Campbell, 1969). Indian labourers had already been found useful in various colonies. As slaves and convicted prisoners they were employed in public works—roads, harbours, offices and jails (Sandhu, 1969:132- 140, Tinker, 1974: 44-46).

In India, as Kingsley Davis (1968:99) has pointed out, "Pressure to emigrate has always been great enough to provide a stream of emigrants much larger than the actual given opportunities". Large-scale Indian emigration, however, did not take place until the establishment of British imperialism in India as well as many other parts of the world. Burma, for example, is a case in point where Indian emigration was numerically insignificant, and only seasonal in nature until the annexation of the Irrawaddy Delta and northern territory by the British East India Company in 1852 (Andrew, 1933). Pearn (1946:5) noted that in 1838 there were only 19 Indians in Rangoon. Similarly, Indian labour emigration to Malaysia, Ceylon, Mauritius and the West Indies and petty bourgeoisie emigration to East Africa had to wait for British colonial settlement in these places. Thus Indian overseas emigration is obviously the result of the workings of British colonialism both in India and abroad, which is highlighted by the fact that the vast majority of Indians migrated only to the British colonies. The only exceptions in this regard were the Reunion Islands and Surinam—French and Dutch Colonies respectively.

4.2 Emigration: Volume and Destination

Until the Second World War Indians emigrated mainly as indentured laborers to Guyana, Trinidad, Surinam (then a Dutch colony), South Africa, Fiji and Mauritius and as kangani or maistry labourers to Burma, Ceylon and Malaysia. The migration of traders also took place, especially to Burma, Malaysia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, South Africa and Fiji. Such migration, however, was proportionately very small and became of some political significance only in 'passage' emigration—the nomenclature being derived from the fact that the emigrants paid their own passage and were free in all respects.

Box 4.1: Indentured Labour System

An indentured labourer is under contract to work (for a specified amount of time) for another person or a company/corporation, often without any monetary pay, but in exchange for accommodation, food, other essentials, training, or passage to a new country. After working for the term of the contract (traditionally four to seven years). He is allowed to be free. During this term of bondage the servant was considered the property of the master. He could be sold or given away by his master and he was not allowed to marry without the master's permission. An indentured servant was normally not allowed to buy or sell goods although, unlike an African slave, he could own personal property. He could also go to a local magistrate if he was treated badly by his master. After the servant's term of bondage was complete he was freed and paid "freedom dues". These payments could take the form of land or sugar, which would give the servant the opportunity to become an independent farmer or a free labourer. There have been multiple occasions where the indentured servitude has been abused. For example, indentured servants need goods or services not available or supplied at a cost within the terms of the indenture and find obtaining such goods or services requires an extension to the period of their indenture. In these circumstances, the system can represent a form of unfree labour.

(Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indentured_servant)

It is estimated that between 1834 and 1937 some 30 million Indians migrated to different parts of the world, while during the same period about 24 million of them returned home, resulting in the net emigration of 6 million (see Table 4.1). As the figures in the table show, overseas Indian emigration

was largely 'ephemeral' or transitory in character. During the period 1834-1900, the average annual emigration was about 202,000, whereas for the period 1901-1937, it was about 451,000.

The data in the table also indicates four major periods of fluctuations in the migration patterns. The first, from 1834 to 1915, was the period of steady increase in indentured labour emigration. In the same period the increased net migration since the early 1890s represents the added migration of kangani/maistry labour to Burma, Ceylon and Malaysia. The second period (1916-20) highlights not only the difficult years of the First World War but also the end of indentured emigration in 1917. In the third period (1921-30), emigration again picked up, mainly responding to the demands for labour on tea, rice and rubber plantations in Ceylon, Burma and Malaysia respectively. The largest number of Indians returned home between depressions. During the depression particularly during 1931-35, more Indians returned home than left. The kangani/maistry form of emigration was stopped by 1938. By then not only was sufficient labour available in the colonies, Indian public opinion was also opposed to Indians' emigration and their mistreatment abroad. Thereafter only voluntary labour, over whom the government of India had no control, continued to emigrate. But such migration was proportionately very small and was confined to Malaysia, and possibly Ceylon.

Table 4.1: Estimated Total Migration to and from India: 1834-1937 (000's)

Year	Emigrants	Returned	Net*
1834-35	62	52	50
1836-40	188	142	46
1841-45	240	167	72
1846-50	247	189	58
1851-55	357	249	108
1856-60	618	431	187
1861-65	793	594	199
1866-70	976	778	197
1871-75	1,235	958	277
1876-80	1,505	1,233	272
1881-85	1,545	1,208	337
1886-90	1,461	1,204	256
1891-95	2,326	1,536	790
1896-1900	1,962	1,268	694
1901-05	1,428	957	471
1906-10	1,864	1,482	382
1911-15	2,483	1,868	615
1916-20	2,087	1,867	220
1921-25	2,762	2,216	547
1926-30	3,298	2,857	441
1931-35	1,940	2,093	-162
1936-37	815	755	599
Total	30,191	23,941	6,250

(Source: Davis, 1968: 59).

* Net migration refers to net emigration. The figures do not always correspond to the exact differences between the first two columns because of rounding off.

Following the Second World War Indian migration to the advanced industrialized countries of Europe and North America had also begun to gain momentum. The post-war economic expansion in these countries created heavy demand for skilled labour and professionals. Simultaneously, immigration laws were also relaxed in Canada and the U.S.A. This form of overseas Indian migration of skilled and educated personnel, popularly known as the "brain drain," thus resulted in the formation of sizeable Indian diasporic communities in Canada, the U.K., the U.S.A. and other European countries (Aurora, 1976; Desai, 1963; Saran, 1985; Tinker, 1977). Since the early 1970s Indians have also been sojourning to the oil-rich West Asian countries.

4.3 Colonial Background of Indian Emigration

The historical background against which the Indian overseas emigration was intensified was the penetration of British mercantile capitalism in Asia. In the second half of the nineteenth century, as a result of the communication revolution and the opening of the Suez Canal, the Asian peripheral economies were fully integrated into the world capitalist system with the result that Britain earned a considerable surplus on her trade with Asia in general, and India in particular (Latham, 1978: 175).

The profits from imperial trade were invested by the British in the mines and plantations, in Asia and Africa, which created a further demand for labour throughout the British Empire. While the expanding capitalist economy in the British Empire created a great demand for labour and trading classes, in India a combination of the following factors created socio-economic conditions that led to the Indian exodus overseas.

The Distress of the Small Peasantry

The impact of British colonialism in India arose from the new land policies attuned to capitalist development by the middle of the nineteenth century. In 1765 the revenue administration of Bengal had passed into the hands of the East India Company (Mukherjee, 1958). The Company had fixed the land taxes at ninety per cent of the rental in Bengal and over eighty per cent in North India, rates that were excessively burdensome to the peasantry. The distress of the peasantry was further accentuated by the introduction of the zamindari system whereby landlords who were rent-collectors (for ten years on 2.5% commission) were converted into landlords in perpetuity (vide Permanent Land Settlement Act, 1793). In the Madras Presidency the land tenure system of raitwari was introduced in which raitis or individual cultivators were the registered occupants of land and as such were free to mortgage, sell or gift their land subject to registered transaction. In the Madras Presidency the land revenues for the most part of the nineteenth century were even higher compared to Bengal. TA

Under these land tenure schemes, not only land transfer became easier, disputes over land also encouraged litigation, crime and corruption. Indebtedness forced many cultivators to sell or mortgage their land to the rich peasants or the money-lenders. Consequently, the pauperization of the marginal peasantry increased the number of landless labourers who eventually joined the ranks of overseas migrants. Commenting on the agrarian conditions in the nineteenth century in India, Nehru (1960:204) writes:

"For at the basis of all this exploitation lay the policy deliberately pursued by the British in India. The destruction of cottage industries

with no effort to replace them by other kinds of industry; the driving of the unemployed artisan to the village and the consequent over-pressure on land; landlordism; the plantation system; heavy taxation on land resulting in exorbitant rent, cruelly collected; the forcing of the peasant to the bania moneylender, from whose iron grip he never escaped; innumerable ejections from the land for inability to pay rent or revenue in time; and, above all, the perpetual terrorism of policemen and tax-gatherers and landlords; which almost destroyed all spirits and soul that he possessed”.

Famines

Widespread and frequent famines and local scarcities, throughout the nineteenth century and during 1905-1908 periods, were also a major factor in adding to the misery of rural populations, especially small cultivators, artisans (mainly native weavers), agricultural labourers and other depressed classes. The frequency of famines increased considerably after 1860. In the last four decades of the nineteenth century, the government's economic policies led to a decline in food production and a rise in food prices. On the other hand, during the same period the export of foodgrains increased resulting in further shortages of foodgrains. According to one economic historian (Bhatia, 1967: vi):

As for prevention of famine, the Government laid greater emphasis on railways, which served commercial interests of Great Britain, than on canals which were so necessary to increase food production. By legislative measures the government tried to restore the balance between creditor and debtor and between landlord and tenant, but it failed to industrialize the country, which was the ultimate remedy for unemployment and poverty. In the matter of food supplies, the compulsions of imperialism forced the Government to permit unrestricted export of foodgrains even during times of famine and allow their prices to be determined by the market forces of demand and supply.

Table 4.2
Flow of Labour from Different Continents/regions,
1834-1900 and 1901-1937

Regions	1834-1900		1901-1937	
	Average annual	% of total	Average annual	% of total
Asiatic	186,000	92.2	443,700	98.4
African	8,600	4.3	3,200	0.7
American	6,900	3.4	2,600	0.6
Oceanic	200	0.1	1,200	0.3
Total	201,700	100.0	450,700	100.0

Source: Prabhu Mohapatra, "Indian Labour Diaspora, 1830-1940", paper presented at a Seminar on International Migration, Remittances and Development held at the V.V. Giri National Labour Institute, Noida, April 7-8, 2005 (mimeographed).

Table 4.3
Out-migration from India and other Countries: A Comparison, 1846-1932

Country of Emigrations	Number (millions)	Per Cent of population in 1900
British Isles	18.2	43.3
Portugal	1.8	33.3
Italy	10.1	31.1
Spain	4.7	25.3
Sweden	1.2	23.5
Austria/ Hungary	5.2	19.8
German	4.9	9.7
Russia	2.3	1.8
India	27.7	9.4
Africa (1500-1760)	4.5	-

- This volume of emigration was by far the largest emigrant flow from any single country in the whole period.
- Much larger than the Slave labour flow from Africa to the Americas between the 16th and the 18th centuries.

(Source: As in table 1)

The Decline of the Handicraft Industry

In the seventeenth century, India was a great manufacturing power mainly because of its handicrafts industry which provided employment to millions of people. The cotton industry was especially thriving, its produce exported to a number of markets in Europe and Asia. As the British cotton industry was unable to compete with its Indian counterpart, the British government charged heavy customs duty on Indian imports into England. In 1720, Indian goods were prohibited entry into England. During the nineteenth century India imported an increasing amount of cotton goods from Britain. According to one estimate, the value of British exports in cotton goods, just over 100,000 pounds in 1813, rose to 5.2 million pounds in 1850 and 18.5 millions. This had a substantial negative impact on the handicraft industry in India.

Sluggish and Enclavist Industrialization

While the handicrafts industry in nineteenth century India declined, modern industrial development was late, slow, limited and enclavist. Modern industrialization in India which began in the late nineteenth century was "fundamentally concentrated in three isolated enclaves—Bombay City, Calcutta and the West Bengal/ Bihar coal belt—with strictly limited impact on one another and on other regions" (Charlesworth, 1982, pp. 37-8). The Madras Presidency, which in the nineteenth century had already become an important area of labour exodus, had no industrialization even comparable to the scale of Bombay or Calcutta. Moreover, foreign capital which dominated the modern industries was not evenly and broadly invested.

There was also a marked absence of a coordinated government policy regarding industrial development until 1914. Indeed, in the name of *laissez faire* the

colonial government adopted a "passive state policy.....with respect to industrial development" (Lamb, 1955: 478). Perhaps more harmful to industrial development were the effects of the imperial connection which meant that until the First World War, Indian industry was denied any significant tariff protection. Thus, the overall progress of industrialization during the British Raj remained very slow. As late as 1931, out of a total population of 353 million, only just over 1.5 million workers were employed in modern factories (Buchanan, 1966, p, 136). Under these circumstances, it is obvious that the manufacturing sector of the colonial economy was not capable of absorbing the surplus labour force created in the rural areas.

Other Factors

Excessive dependence on agriculture, seasonal unemployment, mass illiteracy and a caste-bound occupational structure were additional contributory factors in creating a class of proletarians, a fraction of which was compelled to seek sustenance abroad. Under these circumstances, the Indian government was readily persuaded by the imperial and other colonial government to export Indian labourers. It must be pointed out here that 99.6 per cent of the labour moved across waterways to the ports in the British Empire. A small percentage went to French, Dutch and Danish colonies. About 98 per cent of the total Indian migration abroad during the colonial period was of labourers and the rest was of traders and other middle class personnel.

Reflection and Action 4.1

Collect from different sources (Internet, friends, books-both fiction and non-fiction and movies) the stories of early labour migration to colonial plantations of the British Empire. What do you think were the ways and means by which these indentured labourers survived the harsh environment?

4.4 Five Patterns of Indian Emigration

Historically, five distinctive patterns of Indian emigration can be identified: (1) Indentured labour emigration, (2) kangani/maistry labour emigration, (3) "Free" or "Passage" emigration, (4) "Brain-drain", or voluntary emigration to the metropolitan countries of Europe, North America and Oceania, and (5) Labour emigration to West Asia. Whereas the first three forms of emigration were colonial phenomena, the last two are the results of the inherent contradictions of the post-colonial socio-economic development of India. These patterns are briefly described below.

Indentured Labour Emigration

Indenture was a contract by which the migrant was bound to work for a given employer for a three-to-five-year term, performing the task assigned to him for a specified wage (Kondapi, 1951). At the end of the contract the labourer was free to reindenture or to work elsewhere in the colony. After ten years he was entitled to a subsidized return passage. As already mentioned, the migration of Indian indenture labour began in 1834, and was officially ended in 1920. The chief importing countries of Indian labour were the West Indian colonies, Fiji, South Africa, Mauritius, Malaysia and Ceylon. The total number of government-sponsored emigrants in each case was as follows: Guyana 240,000; Trinidad 144,000; Surinam 324,000; Mauritius 451,000; Fiji 68,000; South Africa 142,000 (Jain, 1982; Nath, 1970; Tinker, 1977).

In the first phase beginning in 1834 the majority of emigrants were recruited in the 'hill coolie' districts of Chota Nagpur division and Bankura, Birbhum and Burdwan districts of the Bengal Presidency. Soon the recruiting areas were pushed westward into the Hindi-speaking zones of Bihar and Eastern U.P. There remained the leading recruiting areas in Northern India (Tinker, 1974). In South India the Tamil-speaking areas of Trichinopoly, Madurai, Ramnad, Salem and Tanjore and the Telugu-speaking areas of Vizagapatnam and Ganjam were the main recruiting districts. In Bombay Presidency, Ahmadnagar district was the main area of recruitment. Of the three Presidencies, Calcutta stood first in volume of recruitment and embarkation and Madras second.

On the basis of an analysis of Calcutta emigration reports, the ratio of Hindus and Muslims appeared to represent the then all India ratio of the two communities, i.e. 86:14 (Saha, 1970: 34). Among Hindus 16 per cent belonged to higher castes, 32 per cent to agricultural intermediate castes and the rest to lower castes and 'untouchables' (Smith, 1959). Typical of the mode of recruitment of indentured labour, the emigrant population was predominantly male and young.

Following the completion of their indenture period some Indians preferred to settle down in these colonies. Others were compelled or lured to do so as in lieu of their guaranteed return passage to India the colonial authorities provided them with some cultivable land. Once settled as peasant proprietors these Indians soon to evolve into distinctive communities.

Kangani/Maistry Labour Emigration

The kangani system of recruitment was used to supply South Indian labour to Malaysia and Sri Lanka and the maistry system to Burma. The word kangani is the anglicized form of the Tamil word kankani meaning overseer or foreman. Under this system, a kangani (himself an Indian immigrant) used to recruit the coolies in India paying them in advance for expenses (Jain, 1970:199). The maistry system was more or less characterised by a gradation of middlemen- employers (the labour contractor, the head maistry, the charge maistry, the gang maistry) and the innumerable illegal deductions. In contradistinction to indentured labourers, coolies under these systems were legally free. There was no contract and no fixed period of service.

Kangani system began early in the first quarter of the nineteenth century and continued until its final abolition in 1938. Maistry system began some time in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. How many Indians migrated under these systems is not definitely known. In all, probably ten million Indian migrants moved back and forth between India and Burma, Ceylon and Malaysia (Sandhu, 1969). The majority of Indian immigrants were Tamil-speaking Hindus, the remainder being Muslims, Christians, and in the case of Malaysia only Sikhs (Arasaratnam, 1970).

Indian emigration to Southeast Asia consisted of such groups of migrants as traders, shopkeepers, entrepreneurs, salesman, clericals, and professionals. In Malaysia, until 1957, this constituted about one-third of the total immigration. A somewhat similar situation existed in Burma, though in the case of Ceylon non-labour Indian immigration was substantially less. South Indian Chettiar Hindus were the leading Indian commercial and business community in Burma and Malaysia (Chakravarti, 1971).

'Passage' Emigration

The third form of Indian migration within the British Empire was 'passage' or 'free' emigration or the emigration of trading castes and classes. Passage emigration was predominant to South Africa as well as to the East African countries of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, where Gujaratis and Panjabis immigrated largely during and after the Second World War (Bharati, 1972; Kuper, 1960; Morris, 1968). Indian immigration in East Africa followed the 'opening up' of East Africa by the British and other European powers. The completion of the Ugandan railway offered new economic opportunities in the hinterland as well as along the railway route. Indians, mainly Gujaratis, soon established themselves as *dukanwalas* (shopkeepers). In the towns they monopolized trade and commercial activities. Indians were merchants in native produce, carters and teamsters, small contractors, moneylenders, quarry-masters, dealers in lime, sand, stone and domestic firewood, barbers, saddlers, bootmakers, nurserymen, tailors, etc. (Ghai, 1965). Some of these businessmen were highly successful and quite a few of them rose to prominence.

No reliable data are available regarding the total volume of Indian migration to East Africa. However, different census reports throw some light on the growth of Indian communities in East Africa. Accordingly, there were 40,000 Indians in 1901 and 92,000 in 1931. During the war their number increased considerably and by 1963 there were about 372,000 Indians in the East African countries.

Since the mid-sixties, however, negligible volumes of immigration and growing political uncertainties in East Africa have caused the number of Asian minorities to decline. In 1969 censuses of East African nations, there were less than 300,000 Asians left – 139,000 in Kenya, 74,000 in Uganda and 84,000 in Tanzania. Expulsion of about 70,000 Asians from Uganda in 1972 was a further setback in this regard (Ramchandani, 1976).

Today there are about 105,000 Indians in Kenya, 90,000 in Tanzania and 15,000 in Uganda. A large number of Indians from East Africa had migrated to Britain, Canada and the U.S.A., aptly described as 'twice migrants', and many of them are now well settled in these countries. The remaining Indians in East Africa continue to thrive in business and professions.

"Brain Drain"

The large-scale Indian migration to the advanced industrial societies of Europe and North America began in the late sixties, though the history of Indian emigration goes back to the early years of the twentieth century in North America and nineteenth century in Britain. The characteristic features of this type of migration have been its totally voluntary nature, and the migration of highly educated professionals and skilled or semi-skilled industrial workers.

Box 4.2: Brain Drain

A brain drain or human capital flight is an emigration of trained and talented individuals, due to conflict, lack of opportunity and/or health hazards where they are living. Investment in higher education is lost when the trained individual leaves, usually not to return. Also whatever social capital the individual has been a part of is reduced by their departure. Spokesmen for the Royal Society of London first coined the expression "brain drain" to describe the outflow of scientists and technologists to the United States and Canada in the early 1950s.

(Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brain_drain)

Early Indian migrants who went to settle down in Britain and North America were mainly the Sikhs. The Sikhs still constitute the single largest ethnic group in Britain, Canada and the US, although now more and more non-Sikhs are also migrating. Currently, there are about six million people of Indian origin in Europe, North America and Oceania. In the US the majority of Indians are educated professionals—scientists, engineers, doctors, etc. In Britain and Canada Indian communities are occupationally more diversified and therefore relatively less well off.

Table 4.4
Population Estimates of Indians Abroad, 2005
Major PIO Communities

Country	No. of Indians	Country	No. of Indians
Australia	250,000	Netherlands	250,000
Canada	1.0 million	New Zealand	150,000
Fiji	350,000	Portugal	100,000
France	100,000	Reunion Island	250,000
Hong Kong	50,000	Singapore	310,000
Germany	80,000	South Africa	1.1 million
Guyana	400,000	Spain	100,000
Indonesia	75,000	Sri Lanka	3.5 million
Israel	60,000	Surinam	150,000
Jamaica	62,000	Tanzania	90,000
Kenya	105,000	Thailand	100,000
Malaysia	2.0 million	Trinidad & Tobago	500,000
Mauritius	850,000	UK	2.0 million
Myanmar	2.9 million	USA	2.0 million
Nepal	6.0 million	Yemen	110,000
Major NRI Communities			
Bahrain	170,000	Qatar	160,000
Kuwait	400,000	Saudi Arabia	1.5 million
Oman	450,000	UAE	1.0 million

Source: These are the author's own estimates based on a number of sources including the *High Level Committee Report on the Indian Diaspora* of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2001.

Indian communities in all these countries have begun to exert political influence in varying degrees. In the UK, four members of the House of Commons and about a dozen members of the House of Lords are of Indian origin. In Canada, Ujjal Sing Dosanjh rose to become the Premier of British Columbia for a couple of years. Similarly in the U.S. Indians are not only the richest ethnic group, but some of them have also been appointed on several high level administrative posts.

Reflection and Action 4.2

1. Why do you think some of the Indian professional seems to do so well when they go abroad to countries like the U.S.A., the U.K., Canada and Australia?
2. In what way is emigration of highly skilled professionals from India a "brain drain"?

Labour Emigration to West Asia

The fifth and the final emigration pattern consists of the Indian migration to West Asia. This migration pattern differs from the previous ones in that all the migrants are generally 'contract' workers and are not allowed to settle permanently in the countries of their destination. But this was not always the case, as will be clear from the following.

Table 4.5: Indians in U.S.A.

Basic Facts		
Total number of Indian Americans		1.9 million
U.S. citizenship		1.07 million
Urban residence		96.7%
Born in the U.S.		27.07%
Medium Household income		\$61,322
Medium Household income of U.S. population		\$41,994
Top ten cities with Indian-Americans:		
City	Population	Indo-American Population
New York	21,199,865	453,896
San Francisco	7,039,362	158,396
Chicago	9,157,540	125,208
Los Angeles	16,373,645	121,745
Washington	7,608,070	98,179
Houston	4,669,571	57,158
Philadelphia	6,188,463	57,124
Dallas	5,221,801	53,975
Detroit	5,456,428	49,879
Boston	5,819,100	48,188

(Source: 2000 U.S. Census)

India has had trade and cultural relations with the Persian Gulf region since antiquity. However, there is evidence of Indian settlements in the region only since the sixteenth century. Small communities of Indian traders called *baniyans* (a distorted form of the term *Baniyas*) 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 nineteenth century, Indian merchant communities flourished in a number of towns in the Gulf countries. Indians served as bankers, importers and exporters, customs farmers, agents for local merchants, government contractors, pearl-financiers, etc.

Some of the members of traditional Indian trading communities like the Parsis, Gujarati Hindus and Jains, Thattai Sindhi Bhatias, Kutchi Bhatias, Bohra Muslims, Khojas, etc, were involved in these activities and have been continuing to operate even after the independence of the Gulf countries. At the same time, the emergence of the Gulf countries as oil-producing and exporting economies and the consequent demand for labour have further 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 the upward trend has continued since then.

The labour market in West Asia being highly transitory, the skill composition as well as the volume of the Indian migrant workforce varies from time to time. Thus, in the early 1970s there were only about 50,000 Indians in the region. Since then, as a result of the booming oil economy and the shortage of indigenous skilled and unskilled manpower, there has been a phenomenal increase in the total volume of Indian migration. Whereas in 1975 there were about 150,000 Indian 'workers' in West Asia, their number increased to over a million in 1985 and about 1.5 million in 1991.

Currently there are about 4.0 million Indian expatriate in the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Indians constitute about one-third of the total expatriate population and 10 per cent of the total GCC population. The largest number of Indians live in Saudi Arabia (1.5 million), followed by the UAE (1 million), Oman (450,000) and Kuwait (350,000). Keralites constitute the largest group among Indian immigrants in West Asia. The skill composition of the migrants' workforce is dominated by unskilled and semi-skilled workers, followed by administrative staff and skilled workers. There are about 100,000 Indians in Yemen who are permanently settled there. Following the creation of Israel in 1948, over 25,000 Indian Jews had migrated to Israel until 1987. Well settled in their new homeland, Jews of Indian origin today number around 60,000. Currently, the Gulf migrants are the major source of remittances and foreign exchange to India.

4.5 Conclusion

In sum, this brief survey of overseas Indian migration highlights the socio-economic conditions of colonial India in fostering substantial pressures for Indian emigration abroad. Under British colonialism, Indian agriculture continued to stagnate, the handicrafts industry declined, and an already poor country was subjected to excessive economic drain which retarded indigenous capital formation and thereby the growth of any significant industrialization. Against this backdrop a combination of factors like poverty, famines in the second half of the nineteenth century, unemployment and ignorance of the agrarian masses, and trickery on the part of the recruiting agents played its part in stimulating Indian emigration abroad.

It hardly needs to be emphasized that Indian labour and non-labour immigration vitally fulfilled the economic needs of British colonialism. Indian immigrants, however, were welcome only in subservient economic roles – roles which the natives as well as the white colonists could not perform. Whenever Indians tried to compete with whites, as within trading activities or government services, attempts were made to block their progress. It was for this reason that labour immigration was encouraged, while passage immigration was usually resented.

If the socio-economic conditions resulting from British colonialism in India was a factor behind the Indian exodus abroad, this did not change much after India's independence. Western neo-colonialism continued and attempts to build India as a "mirror image" of the West resulted only in the growing economic inequalities on the one hand and the "revolution of rising expectations" on the other. Lopsided development of education which produced surplus skilled manpower (especially engineers, doctors, scientists and managers) against the background of unfulfilled "expectations" led to the "brain drain" type of emigration. At the same time, the West Asian booming oil economy since the mid-1970s encouraged labour emigration of unskilled and semi-skilled workers who were unable to find gainful employment in the stagnating Indian economy.

Thanks to the colonial legacy of Indian emigration, the Indian Diaspora today is spread virtually all over the globe. The distribution of the major overseas Indian communities (along with their current population estimates) is presented in Table 4.2. These Indian diasporic communities are often classified into two categories on the basis of the fact whether they hold Indian passports or not. Those who do are called Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and those who do not are called People of Indian Origin (PIOs). In all, the total population of Indian Diaspora is presently estimated at about 30.0 million.

Like other diasporas, Indian diasporic communities too maintain ties with their motherland through visits, pilgrimage, marriage, remittances, trade networks, transfer of technology and skill, and political lobbying, etc. In 2005 remittances from the Indian diaspora amounted to over 21 billion US dollars. About 45% of these remittances came from the Indians working in the Persian Gulf countries.

4.7 Further Reading

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Unit 5

Indian Emigration During Colonial Rule

Contents

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Historical Context of Indian Emigration
- 5.3 Abolition of Slavery
- 5.4 Politics of Humanitarian Consideration
- 5.5 Evolution of Indenture Labour Scheme
- 5.6 Sources of Cheap Labour
- 5.7 Streamlining and Abuse of the System
- 5.8 Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Identity
- 5.9 Conclusion
- 5.10 Further Reading

Learning Objectives

After reading this unit you should be able to:

- understand the historical context of emigration from India;
- place indentured labour in the context of the colonial interest of the British Empire;
- analyse the indentured system of labour; and
- get an overview of emigration of Indian labour during colonial times.

5.1 Introduction

In the previous unit we talked about migration patterns in general, where we gave you a brief background to the context of migration during colonial times. In this unit we will discuss migration during the colonial period in detail.

As mentioned earlier, the migration of Indians during ancient times was sporadic and did not result in Indian settlements abroad, but during the British colonial period there was migration on a large scale, which resulted in Indian diasporic communities wherever the British had their colonies. In this unit, we will discuss the specific historical context of this migration. We will be talking about the indentured labour system, and how this system evolved out of the specific needs of the industrial agricultural pattern during colonial expansionist times. We will also be talking about exploitative nature of this system as well as its social consequences. In trying to understand the nature of migration we will be examining the socio-economic conditions of people who were forced to migrate out of necessity.

5.2 Historical Context of Indian Emigration

In order to understand the characteristic feature of the emigration of Indians during colonial rule, it is essential to know the context in which it was engineered. It may be stated at the outset that this emigration was on a large scale and very different from the earlier ones. At the time the British and other Europeans entered India as traders, India was politically fragmented,

its economy was in a shambles, its science and technology were stagnating and the social and cultural life of its people indicated decay and inward looking. However, it could easily claim a glorious existence in the not too distant past. It could boast of excellence in a variety of fields such as agriculture, engineering, architecture, philosophy, literature, dance, drama, music etc. Its people in the past had traveled to south-east Asia, Central Asia, Sri Lanka, China and Japan as scholars, priests, teachers carrying the message of the Buddha of peace and understanding, and to raise the spiritual consciousness of the people. Indians had also gone abroad to countries like Burma, Indonesia, Malaya, Singapore and to many countries in East Africa as traders. In ancient times, the Indians had trade links with the people in the African continent. These trade links were spread from Gujarat in the north to Kanyakumari in the south. But the scenario was quite different in India when the British and other Europeans entered the Indian sub-continent.

There were a number of reasons for this decay. It is not possible to go into them here. Suffice it to say that economic stagnation and political instability were the main factors, which were further accentuated by the entry of European interests in India. There was intense competition among the Europeans to locate resources in different parts of the world to enlarge the scope and production of their home industries. The industrial revolution had set in. During this period, they not only discovered new areas of resources in different parts of the world but also began to colonise them. The intense tussle for power among the European nations in India encouraged local aspirants to seek the support of one or the other European power. In the process they not only weakened themselves but there was virtual chaos. Agricultural production suffered badly resulting in immense problems to the peasants, artisans, small traders as well as merchants. Eventually with deceit and some tactful power game, the British East India Company gained ascendancy and began to control the various parts of the country.

They began to export raw material from India like cotton, spices, indigo to strengthen industries in England. This accelerated growth of the British economy and technology but inflicted untold miseries and hardship on the people of India, particularly peasants. Village industries such as spinning of cotton, weaving of clothes and various village crafts suffered immensely. The economic situation in the countryside being bad became still worse because of the export of foodgrains, mainly rice and wheat, to England. The export of foodgrains to England rose sharply from £ 3.8 million in 1858 and to £ 9.3 million worth in 1901. One of the central factors which significantly stunted the growth of rural economies was the change of the traditional landlord-tenant relationship. This was directly brought about by the so-called permanent land settlement in the Bengal region. By this the British turned the landlords into persons responsible for extracting rent from peasants in their jurisdiction. They fixed amounts of cash as rent regardless of the land's production in the year. This requirement put enormous pressure on peasants. An increasing number of people could not pay rent and therefore had to be evicted. Already in 1973 'notices of eviction were being issued at the rate of 60,000 annually'.

In order to keep the growing cash-and-rent economy alive, lands belonging to families for generations had to be sub-divided and sub-let. This obviously further reduced the economic viability of the plots.

Added to this, if there was a drought or excessive rains agricultural production

suffered and often food supply would become critical. This resulted in famines. There were major famines in 1804, 1837, 1861 and 1908 apart from many minor ones in north India. There were approximately 400,000 famine deaths during 1825-1850, it was five million in 1850-1875 which rose to fifteen million during the following 25 years. Broadly, during the first phase of the British control over India, there was large-scale poverty, unemployment and displacement of the peasantry from their roots prompting them to emigrate. Besides, the oppressive regime of the colonial government particularly after the first war of independence (1857), invoking new legislations which took away the rights of people to land and forests and bringing a new set of rules for administration were equally responsible for increasing the agony of the people.

No doubt, Indians had migrated in the past and they did during the colonial rule too but with the fond hope that will return to their 'home'. Home was where their ancestors, the extended members of the family lived, which were also associated with numerous celebrations of festivals and life-cycle rituals.

Reflection and Action 5.1

What were the specific circumstances, which forced the poor peasantry to migrate as indentured labour?

5.3 Abolition of Slavery

While the 'home' context was trying to push the Indian peasantry to emigrate, there were many factors pulling them to migrate to the tropical colonies of the European powers. This was induced by the imperialist economy, and within that, substantially by a single commodity that is sugar. By the nineteenth century, imperialist governments vied with each other for control over territories which could produce sugar so that the maximum benefit could be derived in European market. In Europe the demand for sugar was rising. For instance, in 1820 in Britain the per capita sugar consumption was 16.8 pounds per annum. It became 34.8 pounds in 1860 and by 1880 it was 61.8 pounds. In order to promote sugar production in their colonies the British government gave several incentives to their planters so that they could compete with the sugar producing colonies of other European countries. For these reasons, cane production has been called 'industrial agriculture'. The indigenous population in these colonies was either too thin and dispersed or traumatized or they were not found fit to serve the interests of 'industrial agriculture'. For this the labour force was imported from the old world, particularly Africa and the institution of slavery was developed with all its cruel and extremely harsh features. In the beginning tropical products were luxury products consumed by the affluent in Europe. Then as the Industrial Revolution advanced in England and Western Europe, and purchasing capacities of the people increased, tropical items such as sugar, tea, coffee, cocoa became items of mass consumption generating enormous revenue which promoted increase in production. As production expanded, in a labour intensive operation it became necessary to find the necessary workforce. The demand for labour exceeded far beyond what slaves could provide. Moreover, on account of the conditions of work, the harshness of those who supervised the work, lack of proper nutrition and living facilities, mortality among the slaves was very high.

5.4 Politics of Humanitarian Consideration

The condition of the slaves pricked the conscience of some people in Europe and they began to demand the abolition of the system of slavery. The issue was sensitive and nobody could openly defend the system of slavery. For the government in power in England, continuation of slavery was a matter of embarrassment but the harsh reality was that tropical colonies were generating much wealth for the nation through slave labour as well as access to many scarce resources. It was not only in the interest of planters that slavery should continue but it was also in the interest of the nation. Thus, in spite of vested interest in the continuation of the slavery, the government had to ban the inhuman practice the slave trade in 1802, though slavery was allowed to continue. In other words, open trade that is, sale and purchase of human beings, were banned. Yet, the sinister aspects associated with it continued till 1834 when the system of slavery was abolished by the British government, later by the French in 1848 and the Dutch in 1863. It is obvious that in spite of the pressure exerted by the abolition of slavery, the governments in power were dragging their feet. They were dragging their feet because they were concerned about production through 'industrial agriculture'. Even at that stage a compromise formula was devised to protect the interests of the planters. According to this formula after the legal termination of slavery in 1834, the planters were to continue to command full rights on the labour of ex-slaves for twelve years, in the form of apprenticeship. The anti-slavery lobby felt this arrangement would prolong the reality of slavery. As a result of this pressure, the period of apprenticeship was reduced to seven years and finally all forms of apprenticeship were terminated in 1838. Thus, it took approximately 32 years for the British government to abolish slavery after abolishing the slave trade. Even after abolishing slavery, the condition of the ex-slaves had not significantly changed. They had hardly any alternative but to go back to their ex-masters for work for their survival. They did not even have a place for shelter in the islands unless they worked for their old masters. Today it may sound very strange but the fact was that it was not the slaves but the slave owners who were paid compensation for freeing their slaves. The slaves were left to fend for themselves or go back to their masters and work for them. Whatever be the humanitarian considerations the emancipators may have had, they were also a part of the system which directly derived benefits from the system of slavery. Their agitation, however, showed the softer underbelly of the socio-political system of the day.

Liberation of the slaves accentuated the demand for cheap labour in the colonies. The question was how to get cheap labour. The ex-slaves were not interested to work on the plantations. They had begun to demand higher wages and also better facilities. Encouraging labour to come from other countries like America, Europe, China and a few others did not work well for a variety of reasons such as high cost of recruitment, transport and inability of the workforce to thrive in a tropical climate. Meanwhile the British had consolidated their hold on India. As indicated earlier, the traditional Indian economy was in a shambles. Plenty of workers were available and locally enough work was not available, and there was large-scale poverty.

5.5 Evolution of Indenture Labour Scheme

The abolition of slavery resulted in a great demand for cheap labour from elsewhere. Already more than 25,000 Indians had been supplied to Mauritius

by a private firm in Kolkata. A planter from the West Indies came to know about this and established contact with that firm in Kolkata. The reply of that firm is interesting 'we are not aware that any greater difficulty would present itself in sending men to the West Indies (than to Mauritius), the natives being perfectly ignorant of the place they go to or the length of the voyage they are undertaking'. The letter continues 'The Dhangars are always spoken of as more akin to the monkey than to the man. They have no religion, no education, and in their present state, no wants beyond eating, drinking and sleeping; and to procure which they are willing to labour. Thus, in spite of the slow communication system of that period, arrangements to supply labourers to the planters were made soon. The planters further instructed the Kolkata firm that if the hill-women were prepared to undertake field-work, they might form forty or fifty per cent of the total, but if not, then one female to nine or ten males for cooking and washing is enough'.

The above statements clearly indicate that while the planters were desperate to get cheap labour, the private firms were not less eager to oblige. By sending the human cargo they were easily able to make profits. They had least regard for the human values and wanted to make full use of the ignorance of the poor people of the country.

Box 5.1: The Plight of Indentured Labour

While it is entirely reasonable to expect that a small fraction of the indentured emigrants left 'voluntarily', however one is to construe so absurd a notion considering the extraordinary economic hardships afflicting the vast majority of Indians, and with no other thought than that of escaping the wretchedness of their lives, most others left under duress, as victims of a system of deception and subterfuge. Agents who promised them relief from the misery of their lives and substantial pecuniary gain lured peasants to the city; and indubitably many were kidnapped or otherwise tricked. These "girmityas" (a corruption of the word 'agreement') were initially bound to serve five years, it being understood that the planters would pay for their passage, and at the end of this term the indentured laborers were to receive their freedom. If they wished to do so, they could return to India at the expense of their employer, or they could settle in their new homeland, and gain the rights accorded to free men, or at least such rights as colored people could expect. The Europeans almost never adhered to these agreements. From Calcutta and Madras Indian men, and a much smaller number of women, especially in the first few decades of indentured migration, were herded into "coolie" ships, confined to the lower deck, the women subject to the lustful advances of the European crew. Sometimes condemned to eat, sleep, and sit amidst their own waste, the indentureds were just as often without anything but the most elementary form of medical care. Many did not survive the long and brutal "middle passage"; the bodies of the dead were, quite unceremoniously, thrown overboard.

(Source: <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/southasia/Diaspora/freed.html>)

In the beginning the labourers recruited were from the tribal belt of Chota Nagpur. It may be worthwhile to ask as to why in the beginning, the tribals from Chotanagpur were sent. Tinker's estimate is that during the 1840s and 1850s, Dhangars formed a sizeable proportion of those taken overseas under indenture; roughly 'two fifths to one-half of the emigrants were Dhangars'.

5.6 Sources of Cheap Labour

The Chotanagpur region had a number of communities like Munda, Oraon and Santhal. By no stretch of imagination they could be called wild. They had a rich culture of their own and within the larger Indian society they had full autonomy. Hitherto, they had not experienced any penetration of the outside administration. But these populations were held in low esteem by the colonists and their cohorts. In order to quickly move men and material the British were laying down rails and roads, in the process exposing the tribes who hitherto had enjoyed relative peace in their areas of habitation. Not only that they were being progressively driven out of their unquestioned claims over the forest, its produce and land. The colonists began to subdue them and bring them under overall colonial administration. Obviously, the tribes of that region began to resent new forest laws and the new system of administration. There was also penetration of missionary activities in the area which was also being opposed. In the meanwhile pressure for dispatching labour was increasing. It may be surmised that if the labour was sent from the backwaters of Bihar it may not come to general notice and in the process some troublemakers among the tribes could also be dispatched.

However, from the 1850s the proportion of tribes began to dwindle and by the end of the 19th century they were not systematically recruited for the sugar colonies. The reasons may be briefly summarized as below:

1. Mortality rate among them was high, both when they were transported and while in the tropical colonies. In British Guiana almost one fourth of their population perished in the course of five years. The mortality of indentured labourers was a big loss to the planters.
2. The tribals were used to autonomy and freedom. They loved music and dance. In their homeland they worked to enhance the joys of life and were not used to drudgery.
3. Demand for their labour also started coming from eastern India where tea had begun to be cultivated from 1860 onwards. They preferred to go there rather than to far off colonies.
4. The scheme of indenture was becoming successful and therefore the authorities began to throw their net wide for recruitment. They moved into the Indo-Gangetic belt where the peasants with rich experience in agriculture resided.
5. The peasants from these areas transformed the economy of the colonies in later years.

As the first dispatch of labourers to the West Indies proved successful, there was more demand for labour from other planters in the West Indies. Soon the colonial authorities took note of the operations and in 1838 a general scheme of immigration was passed by the then administration.

5.7 Streamlining and Abuse of the System

As the new system of immigration began to operate, the wider public came to know the actual circumstances of the labourers. Agitation against the emigration of labourers got started both in Britain as well as in India. The 1830s was a period of intensive social and political stock-taking in India. A range of issues were being debated in which kidnapping of labourers for taking them to Mauritius was also focused. There were reports that the labourers taken to Mauritius and also to the West Indies were ill treated.

Mortality of labourers during their stay in the depot at Kolkata and in the subsequent voyage was high owing to epidemics and ill-treatment. It was never below 4% during transshipment. Even after enquiry and setting up of a bureaucratic machinery, mortality was high. In 1852 of 313 persons sent 20 died on the way. In 1858 in a ship called Salsette 120 passengers died out of 324. There was no security for labourers. As a result of agitation, a full enquiry into the sending of labourers from India to various colonies was instituted in 1838. In the meanwhile emigration of all labourers to the colonies was suspended. The enquiry was conducted from August 1838 to 1839. The full report of the enquiry was published in March 1839. The enquiry indicated how badly the recruiters, their agents, the people who were in charge of the depots and also the authorities treated the labourers. At every level labourers were exploited and also beaten. At one stage the members of the enquiry committee took the matter before a magistrate. The magistrate advised the committee not to take the matter any further. He observed 'they (labourers) were unworthy of sympathy. They have got their liberty and that is all they are entitled to'.

Box 5.2: The Destinations of Indian Labour Emigration

Indian labor emigration under the indenture system first started in 1834 to Mauritius, Uganda and Nigeria. Later the laborers emigrated to Guyana (1838), New Zealand (1840), Hong Kong (1841), Trinidad and Tobago (1845), Malayd (1845), Martinique and Guadeloupe (1854). Grenada, St. Lucia and St. Vincent (1856), Natal (1860), St. Kitts (1861), Japan and Surinam (1872), Jamaica (1873), Fiji (1879), Burma (1885), Canada (1904) and Thailand (1910). Under the indenture system some 1.5 million persons migrated overseas (Clarke 1990).

Emigration to Sri Lanka, Burma and Malaya presents a marked contrast to migration to the West Indies. All the emigrants to Sri Lanka and Malaya were from the South and headmen known as the 'Kangani' recruited the migrants. The Indians worked on the tea, coffee and rubber plantations. During the period 1852 and 1937 1.5 million Indians went to Ceylon, 2 million to Malaya, and 2.5 million to Burma. After 1920 the Kangani emigration (totaling around 6 million) gradually gave way to individual or unrecruited, free migration due to fall in demand for Indian labor.

Emigration to East Africa, Natal, Mauritius, Burma, Malay and Fiji during the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries presents a third pattern: the free emigration of traders, skilled artisans, bankers, petty contractors, clerks, professionals and entrepreneurs. Though initially indentured laborers from India were brought to East Africa to build the Mombassa railway, most of the present Indian population of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania arrived after the railway had been constructed which stimulated opportunities for trade and industry (Bhat, 1998:2-3).

Although emigration of all labourers was prohibited, some smuggling of labourers continued particularly to Mauritius, Ceylon, etc. In the meantime colonial authorities were busy in finding a way so that they were able to recruit labourers for the various colonies and at the same time they were not accused of promoting slavery through the backdoor. Thus a scheme of contract labourers that was popularly called the indentured labour scheme began to take shape. In 1842 the colonial authorities permitted emigration of labourers to Mauritius from Kolkata, Chennai and Mumbai, under certain

conditions such as that the labourers would be under contract for five years. At the end of the five years they would be entitled for free return passage. The first shipload of labourers under this scheme was allowed to proceed in January 1943.

The colonial authorities found the scheme justifiable. In the meanwhile, the planters had tried other sources for cheap labour which were not found successful. All eyes were now fixed on India. By this time, politically the Indian sub-continent had come in the full grip of the colonial authorities. In 1844 the Indian government passed the Act which legalized emigration to Jamaica, Trinidad and other parts of the West Indies.

The various provisions of this act were revised from time to time. The essential feature of the indentured labour scheme was that it was contractual. The assumption was that the labourer of his free will had entered into a contract with his employer for a certain period of time. After the fulfillment of his contract, the labourer was entitled for free passage back home. During the period the labourer had to fulfill his obligation of work but at the same time was entitled for free lodging, wages, medical attention, etc. This contract was signed before a magistrate.

In the eyes of the law it was a contract between two parties, of which one was a poor labourer and the other was his employer in a colony. This whole process was mediated by the colonial authorities. In other words the contract was between two totally unequal partners. Therefore, it is not at all surprising that the contract was just a smokescreen to provide cheap labour from India to the planters spread out in different parts of the colonial world. The colonial power in India was helping the planters to get cheap labour. This scheme proved to be a boon for the planters. Sugar production began to increase significantly. The flow of labourers from India was now assured for a long time, for India had become a colony of the British Empire.

There is no doubt that the scheme of sending labour abroad to work on plantations was started with some hesitation but in course of time a bureaucratic machinery was set up to send labourers to the colonies. According to Tinker, 525,482 Indians emigrated under indenture to French and British sugar plantations. In spite of the fact that there were so many officials looking after the emigration of labour there was much abuse in the system.

First the licensed recruiter had many unlicensed recruiters called *arktias*. These were basically unscrupulous persons. Because of their unethical practices they dared not go to the villages. They trapped their preys at fairs, pilgrim centers, towns and other places of congregation. They were in look out for the people who for some reason had wandered away from their homes. The *arkatia* gave them some sweet talk, some food and allowed some indulgence. Soon they were transferred to the licensed recruiter and the *arkatias* earned their commission. From here on the *arkatias* themselves would not know what had happened to their prey. The licensed recruiter transferred them to a depot where they were briefed, medically examined and their travel papers were made ready. They were kept there till the ship by which they were to travel arrived.

The majority of the emigrants were simple, poor village folk, totally ignorant where they were going, what work they were going to do and who would be their employer. Most of these people were recruited by deception. The

various committees appointed by the government of India found that invariably the recruiters made 'fraudulent statements' to the recruits.

Reflection and Action 5.2

Do you think the indentured labour system was short of slavery?
Explain?

5.8 Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Identity

Anybody conversant with the Indian social situation will know that irrespective of caste hierarchy and economic situation, the Indians are very much rooted to their home and environment. There is a network of relationships in which rights, duties and obligations of every individual are built in. These rights and obligations are re-emphasized and renewed during life-cycle rituals and innumerable festivals observed by the Indians generation after generation. As a member of a tribe, caste and village each person has a social position and role to play. The system of caste is highly decentralized. It has a built-in autonomy within a larger system which in fact is one of the main reasons for the system to have survived for such a long time. For a person from a village it is hard to imagine existence outside the caste, tribe or community. In brief a person's culture, economic and religious universe are well defined. Therefore, it is not easy for the Indians to emigrate. If at all, they may like to go for a short period leaving their family in the home village.

Thus when the labourers were taken away from their villages and put at the depot they were already devastated persons. But once they got into the ship there was a severe blow to them as a social being – they lost their castes or membership to a community and along with that all the associated little traditions. Their experience of the long voyage of the sea, if at all they survived, made them very hardened persons. Imagine an innocent villager who had hardly stepped out of his village remaining on ship for two to three months often facing rough seas and also very harsh treatment from the ship crew. In every voyage there was some mortality but often it could become high. Seeing a compatriot die in distress and, without performing any rites his mortal remains simply tossed out of the ship would have made a serious dent on the psyche of survivors. Those who survived became *Jehazi bhai* (ship brothers) for the rest of their lives.

In spite of so much hardship, on landing the Indians transformed the plantation economy. Production began to increase. The planters therefore were eager to retain the indentured labour beyond the period of contract. In 1851 in Trinidad they offered £10 to those who would stay back in the colony and forfeit their free return passage. Later in 1861 they offered a land grant of 10 acres if they decided to stay back and continue to work in the plantation. Once again they revised it to 5 acres of land plus £ 5 for the labourers and if he stayed along with his wife another £ 5 was given to them. In other words the planters had found the Indian workers very useful for their plantation and therefore were willing to give them incentives. They also helped them to buy land at cheap rates as long as they were willing to work in the plantation as free labourers.

The Indians knew the value of land. They had rich experience of agriculture. The system of land ownership in India had become highly distorted during the colonial rule. So once the land ownership was offered to the emigrant

Indians they seized the opportunity. They began to settle around the areas where they were given land and also continued to work in the plantation. Those places became the nuclei of Indian villages. They began to grow paddy, vegetables and several other products. Thus not only did they transform the economy wherever they lived in the Caribbean but also a community of the Indians was formed. In course of time they became vibrant and established their own identity.

5.9 Conclusion

We have briefly touched the many aspects of migration during colonial times. The specific historical conditions which led to the impoverishment of the peasantry is something that we are sure you have read as a history student but probably did not realize that there was massive migration of impoverished peasantry and artisans around that time to British colonies and plantations. These are some of the oldest Indian diasporic communities who survived and formed communities and though maintaining their distinctiveness have become part of the culture and landscapes they have migrated to. We will be reading more about such issues as identity, community consciousness, as we proceed along our course towards Book II. As we mentioned in Unit 4 and as well as this unit, the migration during colonial period was essentially of two types—the indentured labour system and the kangani/maistry system. Though subsequently we also find that there were passage émigrés who were essentially business communities who went to mostly East Africa to set up small businesses.

5.10 Further Reading

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Unit 6

Post-Independence Patterns of Migration

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- 6.5 Types of Migration Flows
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- 6.8 Conclusion
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Learning Objectives

This unit will enable you to understand:

- the patterns of overseas migration which emerged in post-independence India;
- the diversity in the migration flows in the contemporary era; and
- the processes and patterns of socio-cultural adaptation of the overseas migrants.

6.1 Introduction

Migration is an integral and regular part of livelihood strategies and production systems. People of the Indian sub-continent have migrated to different countries for various reasons at various periods of its history. Among the immigrants of diverse nationalities, overseas Indians constitute a sizeable segment. Given their significant presence, unique socio-cultural histories and being subject to different economic and political milieu in the host countries, Indian communities abroad have evolved as distinct diasporic communities and have been under academic focus.

Though International migration has existed since the dawn of time, the driving force behind this was the search for sources of food and arable land. As civilization grew this became a search for better economic, social, political, and other factors of prosperity. Throughout history the socio-economic and political epicenters of power and prosperity have shifted from one region to another—from Asia to Africa to Europe and America.

Clearly, two main phases of emigration can be discerned: 'Overseas emigration in the 19th century' and '20th century migration to industrially developed countries' (see R. K. Jain, 1993). It is important to recognize the distinctive nature of the causes, courses and consequences of these two phases of migration, termed as the colonial and post-colonial phases of the Indian diaspora. You have already read about Indian emigration in the colonial phase in the previous unit.

The contemporary period of overseas migration began early this century, but accelerated especially after the Second World War. Despite a dearth of information and academic scholarship on Indian communities migrating to industrially developed countries like Britain, the U.S.A. and Canada, the significance of this form of migration has gained over that of the 19th century immigrants on account of their socio-economic implications.

6.2 Overseas Migration: Trends and Patterns

During the past few decades international migration has taken new strides. What we see now is a trend of global migration where movement of human resources is induced by international demand along with specific regional demand. As national boundaries dissipate and the world economy becomes more integrated by forces of globalization, labor from all skill levels moves to meet demand with relative ease. Unlike migration in colonial times the main types of migration in the contemporary period have been more sequential. We will examine some of the patterns of migration in the following sections.

6.3 Migration in Post-Independence Period

A new and significant phase of emigration began after India became independent in 1947. Broadly, three patterns can be identified in the post-independence emigration: (1) The emigration of Anglo-Indians to Australia and England. (2) The emigration of professionals to the industrially advanced countries like the United States of America, England and Canada. (3) The emigration of skilled and unskilled laborers to West Asia.

The emigration of the Anglo-Indians is one of the least studied facets of the Indian diaspora. Feeling marginalized in the aftermath of India's independence, many of these descendants of intermarriage between Indians and the English left India for England in the first instance. Finding that they were not racially and ethnically acceptable to the English, several of them emigrated to Australia, which has become a second "homeland" to a significant section of Anglo-Indians.

The large-scale and steady emigration of doctors, engineers, scientists and teachers to the industrially advanced countries of the West is essentially a post-independence phenomenon, and particularly so of the late 1960s and the 1970s. It somewhat declined with the adoption of stringent immigration regulation by the recipient countries. This pattern of emigration, often described as "brain drain," is essentially voluntary and mostly individual in nature. With the second and subsequent generations having emerged, and the emigrant population enjoying economic prosperity and socio-cultural rights, this stream of emigration has resulted in vibrant Indian communities abroad.

To be contrasted with the above is the emigration of skilled and unskilled labourers to West Asia in the wake of the "oil boom" there (Gracias 2000, and Nair 1991 and 1994). This emigration is voluntary in nature, but its trends and conditions are determined by labour market vagaries. It is a predominantly male migration, characterized by uninterrupted ties with the families and communities back in India.

Let us look at the immigration patterns of Indians to Britain, the U.S.A. and Canada since independence to understand the contemporary trends and patterns of migration.

Britain

A major influx of Indians to Britain did not take place until the 1950s and early 1960s when an expanding economy called for more labour in Britain. During this period, individual male 'pioneers' came and found work, lived together in shared houses, gradually brought over their family members and eventually re-established their families and accumulated material assets in the new context. Chain migration was the key feature of transplantation of Indian communities to Britain during this period. A comparatively new kind of overseas Indian community arose, that of 'twice migrant' towards the end of the 1960s and the early 1970s. The bulk of these twice migrants were Indians who had lived for decades or generations in East Africa but who were induced or forced to leave in large numbers due to radical Africanisation programmes introduced by the Kenyan and Ugandan governments.

U.S.A.

From 1820 onwards there has been a constant trickle of Indians to the United States. But large scale migration of Indians to the United States of America started only after the repeal of the Immigration and Nationality Act in 1965. Whereas in 1965 only about 600 Asian Indian immigrants to the United States had arrived, close to 10,000 came in 1970.

The reasons for the Asian Indian emigration of the post-1965 era have more to do with the American 'pull' than with the Indian 'push' factor. Indians who migrated to the USA belonged to the class of educated and professional elite such as engineers, scientists and college teachers as well as accountants and businessmen. Their life style and aspirations are similar to the general American population. Whatever distinctive religious and political ideology and values the Asian Indian might otherwise profess as symbols of their ethnic identity, one thing stands out is their full participation in the American materialistic culture. They are driven by the same social and economic imperatives as the white upper- middle class.

The U.S. economy witnessed a massive surge in information and other technology since the 1990's. Local labor forces were not fast enough to catch up with meeting industry needs. The education system also plays an important role in the shaping of the labor force in a country. It is somewhat accepted that U.S. students in general lag behind compared to their Asian counterparts when it comes to mathematical or analytical skills. Asians, or mostly South Asians, are more eager to learn technical skills—hence their proficiencies in those areas. This means highly educated Asian workers possessed educational and technological advantages over local workers and were able to fill the void very quickly. Skilled immigrants face fewer restrictions than the unskilled. Their class resources, corporate sponsorships, and immigration policies to foster growth in certain sectors enable them to move with relative ease. The average annual inflow of Indian immigrants to the U.S.A. increased from 26,184 persons during the 1980s to 38,330 (3.5% of total immigrants) during the 1990s (4.5 per cent of its total immigrants). The numbers are huge mostly due to favorable political and trade conditions between these two countries. With its huge population base and large middle and upper class, India serves as a huge market for U.S. companies like Pepsi, Maytag, Microsoft, and more. These companies effectively employ and transfer Indian employees.

Canada

Indians are the largest component of people of South Asian origin in Canada. They are one of Canada's most rapidly growing ethno-cultural populations. The majority of the Indians in Canada emigrated during the post -1947 period as the Canadian racial immigration barriers were systematically dismantled. Whereas early immigrants had been almost all Sikhs, the people arriving in the 1950s and 1960s came from an increasingly diverse range of ethnic and religious backgrounds. They soon began to establish new communities across the country. The overall Indo-Canadian population increased by more than four times between 1971 and 1981. This led to a rapid rise of Indian communities across the country where none had existed before and to a dramatic increase in the size of the communities that were established earlier. Sikhs remain by far the largest Indian group, numbering around 130,000 or over one half of all Indians in Canada today. Nevertheless many new communities were formed by comparatively new immigrant groups such as Hindi-speaking (25,000) and Punjabi-speaking (6,000) north Indians, Gujaratis (20,000), etc.

As a consequence of the 1969 immigration policy of Canada, the flow of Indian immigrants has been highly selective. About three-fourths of the recent immigrants are educated and highly skilled.

Table 6.1

Shows a comparative table based on higher-skilled occupation

	All Immigrants	Indian	% of Total
Professional and Technical	67286	6202	17.8
Executive, Administrative, and Managerial	26931	1786	5.1
Sales	13024	386	1.1
Administrative Support	21590	747	2.1
Precision Production,	24518	192	0.5
Craft, and Repair Service	50646	846	2.4

(Source: Alarco'n)

It is estimated that around 15 million Indians live abroad (World Migration Report, 2000). Every year hundreds of thousands of Indians emigrate. In 1997 alone 416 thousand Indians left the country to join those working abroad (Government of India, 1999). Indian professionals and technical workers migrate in large numbers, more or less permanently, for jobs in the USA, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia. Australia and New Zealand are the new emerging destinations for Indians, with more than 2000 arrivals every year for permanent settlement in each of these countries (World Migration Report, 2000).

West Asia

Since migration of Indians to the West Asian countries is basically oriented to labour and servicing occupations on a contract basis, most of the socio-economic researches on this expatriate community have addressed themselves to the issues of recruitment, migration and job opportunities in the labour market. Following the oil boom of the mid-1970s, the Middle East has witnessed a massive injection of South Asian workers. Here, the need for

unskilled South Asian labourers has been eclipsed by the requirement for skilled labour but for both groups spatial segregation has been enjoined.

During the past fifteen years, a new form of migration from south Asian countries has gathered momentum, which differs markedly in its economic and social implications from the 19th and early 20th century movement of indentured labourers. This is a new phase of migration based on fixed temporary contracts, attracting labourers from South Asia to work in oil-rich countries of the Middle East. The economic development of Pakistan, Bangladesh and to a lesser extent India has become increasingly dependent on this type of labour export. Migrant workers remittances of foreign exchange in 1983 paid for 20 per cent of all merchandise imports of India. They amounted to more than 25 per cent of India's all merchandise exports. It is well known that by far the most important demand for expatriate labour today originates in the oil-exporting countries of West Asia which, according to the estimates, currently absorb up to two million Indians, 1.5 million Pakistanis and 200,000 Bangladeshis. The year 1973 witnessed the beginning of the rapidly increasing demand for expatriate labour in oil exporting countries of the Gulf region, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar and Libya. These countries adopted a development strategy which concentrated on the building up of physical infrastructure and therefore created a demand for labour, especially in the construction sector, and largely for unskilled manual workers. At the beginning of the 1970s, there were not too many South Asians among the migrant workers in West Asia. They had migrated individually, most of them from India which has a tradition of sending labour to the Middle East since the Second World War. However at this stage workers were available from Arab countries that fulfilled labour demands of their capital-rich neighbors for several years. It was in the middle of the 1970s that scarcity of labour was felt, as a result of which Indians and Pakistani immigrants began to be brought in large numbers. The advantages of the South Asians in the labour market were that they were cheap, disciplined and hard working.

At the termination of this phase of infrastructural projects and the new emphasis on industrialization in the Middle East, the structure of demand for labour changed and the supply had to adapt accordingly. Between 1975 and 1980, one million skilled workers had to be imported to manage and operate this new infrastructure.

At the end of the 1970s growing social unrest among the South Asian immigrants which resulted in hostility and riots, changed the employment prospects of the South Asian immigrant workers. East Asia became the new source of expatriate labour. In view of the increasing competition from the East Asian countries, South Asian immigrants are increasingly playing the role of 'replacement migrants', i.e., as immigrants who come into the country to fill a vacancy created by the departure of a national for employment abroad. This secondary labour migration has occurred specially in Jordan, Oman and the Yemeni Arab Republic (YAR).

Table 6.2

Migrants Stock in Gulf Countries in West Asia, 2002

Country	Population (in million)	Migrants (in million)	% of migrants to total pop.	Immigration Levels	
				View	Policy
BAHRAIN	0.64	0.25	39.8	Satisfactory	No intervention
KUWAIT	1.91	1.11	57.9	Too high	Lower
OMAN	2.54	0.68	26.9	Too high	Lower
QATAR	0.57	0.41	72.4	Satisfactory	Maintain
SAUDI ARABIA	20.35	5.26	25.8	Too high	Lower
UAE	2.61	1.92	73.8	Too high	Lower

(Source: United Nations, 2002)

Reflection and Action 6.1

What kind of migration trends and patterns have emerged in India after Independence? How is it different from the previous trends of migration?

Table 6.3

Countries with Estimated Indians above 100,000, 2001

Country	People of Indian Origin	Indian Citizens	Stateless	Total
Australia	160,000	30,000	0	190,000
Bahrain	0	130,000	0	130,000
Canada	700,000	150,000	1,000	851,000
Fiji	336,579	250	0	336,829
Guyana	395,250	100	0	395,350
Kenya	85,000	15,000	2,500	102,500
Kuwait	1,000	294,000	0	295,000
Mauritius	704,640	11,116	0	715,756
Myanmar	2,500,000	2,000	400,000	2,902,000
Namibia	32	78	0	110
Netherlands	200,000	15,000	2,000	217,000
Qatar	1,000	130,000	0	131,000
Reunion Islands	220,000	55	0	220,055
Saudi Arabia	0	1,500,000	0	1,500,000
Singapore	217,000	90,000	0	307,000
South Africa	0	0	0	1,000,000
Surinam	150,306	150	0	150,456
Trinidad & Tobago	500,000	600	0	500,600
U.A.E	50,000	900,000	0	950,000
Uganda	7,000	5,000	0	12,000
United Kingdom	0	0	0	1,200,000
Ukraine	0	3,400	0	3400
United States of America	0	0	0	1,678,765
Yemen	100,000	900	0	100,900

(Source: Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. 2001)

6.4 Government Policy

Political elites in the pre-independence period had shown great concern for its 'nationals' abroad. The British imperial system had made the immigration possible and the Indian government had supported that development. Yet political developments in pre-independence India also laid the foundation of a very anti-imperialist, anti-racial course.

India was caught in a dilemma when it came to the expatriate Asians right after independence. The radical shift in policy and emphasis concerning the diaspora took time. India was pushing the settlers to identify with their host country and acknowledged the legal jurisdiction of the foreign states and their settlers, yet they were not India's problems, but that there was a certain interest in their welfare. Added to this was the emotional attachment of the Indians who had their kinsman abroad. This was reflected in the Indian Constitution where Part 11 Article 8 provided that any person being abroad whose parents or grandparents were born in India could be granted Indian citizenship by registration. However it is useful to point out that dual citizenship was not allowed at any point as India believed that one cannot be loyal to two masters. Yet Indians who had taken on new nationality could, if they wished to return to India, revert to Indian citizenship, although this process was not without complications.

It would be useful to distinguish the following categories:

PIO (people of Indian origin): A person is deemed to be of Indian origin if he at any time held an Indian passport or he or either of his parents or any of his grand-parents was an Indian and a permanent resident in undivided India at any time.

NRI (non-resident Indians): These are people who hold an Indian passport and stay abroad for study, employment, business, deputation, etc., indicating an indefinite period of stay outside India.

The Government of India was lukewarm to the issues of overseas Indians until the potential of the New Diaspora, or NRIs who emigrated after independence to the developed world was realized. They came from the middle class elite families, were a highly skilled group of professionals, scientists, doctors and engineers. The NRIs made substantial money and maintained informal ties with their mother country. Throughout its economic development in the 1970s and 1980s India tried to make room for the remittances coming from the gulf, but failed to open up the economy for any serious NRI investment which went beyond the family state border. Liberalization and the new industrial policy in the 1970s sought the involvement of overseas Indians in investing both in terms of capital and technology. NRIs were encouraged to invest in India through certain attractive schemes as much as they were welcomed to launch industrial enterprises along with transfer of technology. There is hardly any evidence of reaching the majority of the People of Indian Origin, the Old Diaspora, till the announcement of the new scheme of PIO Card was announced during early 1999.

Box 6.1: Do you know?

The People of Indian Origin Card was launched by the Ministry of Home Affairs in March 1999 to reinforce the emotional bonds of Indians who have made other countries their homes, but who now have a yearning to renew their ties with the land of their origin.

Persons of Indian origin up to the fourth generation settled anywhere in the world, except for a few specified countries, are eligible to avail themselves of this facility. The foreign spouse of a citizen of India or PIO would also be covered under the scheme. This scheme will entail a host of facilities to PIOs which were generally open to Non-Resident Indians (NRIs).

However, the factor of NRIs being a “hidden” asset did not strike the Indian government until the 1990s. With the opening up of the economy in 1991, in theory many barriers for investment were removed but in practice several obstacles remained and the special incentives set up for NRIs did not prove too useful. Issues of reform, citizenship and representational rights put the government and the NRIs at loggerheads. India’s policy of foreign non-involvement slowly changed over the years to allow the expatriate Asians to take a certain part in its economic development, but the barriers remained so high as to keep them at bay quite effectively.

6.5 Types of Migration Flows

With Globalization accentuating the trend in international migration, there is considerable diversity in the types of migration flows. Broadly, such migration can be categorized as authorized or unauthorized and as temporary or long term. Each form of migration has varied impacts on economic and social development at the points of origin and destination.

Permanent High-Skilled Migration: Over recent decades, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States have selectively granted permanent residence to a limited number of high-skilled foreigners who are likely to offer these countries positive economic benefits. Whereas Australia, Canada and New Zealand operate a “points” system to rate the desirability of potential immigrants, the United States primarily relies on nominations of potential immigrants by local companies who wish to hire them. Among source countries, India and China lead the way.

Temporary High-Skilled migration: In many developed countries, programs that grant permanent residence to foreigners who do not have historical or ethnic ties to the destination country are politically difficult. In such cases, governments may seek to fill occupational shortages through the recruitment of high-skilled migrants on a temporary basis. Historically, these flows have been concentrated in education and health-related services. During the 1990s, however, booms in information and communication technology (ICT) led to a shortage of related skills in many high-income countries, resulting in a jump in flows of technology professionals, most from India.

Temporary Low-Skilled Migration: Despite the fast growth of temporary high-skilled migration, these flows are dwarfed by temporary low-skilled migration, in which countries admit migrant workers to provide low-cost services on a strictly temporary basis. Countries typically implement these programs when rapid economic growth has improved the wages and work conditions of the local workforce and left them correspondingly unwilling to work at low-wage jobs. India and Pakistan are major sources of manual laborers and construction workers.

Family migration: Family migration is among the largest official channels of migration and represents a large share of flows from low- and middle-income

countries to high-income countries. This mode of migration enables foreign spouses of citizens, children born abroad and even foreign-born parents and siblings of citizens to gain permanent residency.

Visa-Free migration and Students: Visa-free migration exists (with some exceptions) within the European Union, as well as between New Zealand and Australia. This channel grants citizens the right to work for an unlimited time in any of the countries that are party to the agreement. Finally, students who travel to foreign countries for educational purposes have emerged as a major avenue by which young people from developing countries can, having satisfied a number of conditions, obtain the right to work and permanently reside in developed countries.

In recent years some categories of migration have increased significantly and pose particular challenges. These include the movements of refugees, asylum seekers, trafficked women and children and unauthorized labor migrants. While in many destination countries, there are policies in place to accept foreign workers with professional and technical skills, there are no policies to accept unskilled labour. This has given rise to undocumented migration. In order to meet the demand for foreign workers, both skilled and unskilled, and to augment the workforce for economic development, these countries recently adopted various measures to employ labourers by establishing new channels of entry. Many labour-exporting countries have in place procedures to deploy official contract workers, but owing to the time-consuming, cumbersome and expensive process of deployment, workers tend to avoid the system and leave the country (Hugo, 2002). Hence, the level of undocumented migration is on the rise. Undocumented migrants reportedly face high levels of abuse and exploitation, raising the issue of migrant protection. Migrant workers are seldom aware of their rights because of their lack of familiarity with the country, culture and language (World Health Organization, 2003).

Feminization has emerged as an important feature of international labour migration in South-East Asia. In recent years, there has been a growing tendency for women to migrate overseas for employment in their own right, rather than accompanying a family member. These women in many cases are more poorly educated than men (Skeldon, 2003a). The important factor in the sustainability of female migration is the demand for domestic workers, caregivers and entertainers. As the number of women migrating as domestic workers has increased, so have reports of discrimination, exploitation and abuse of these workers at their destinations. It has been noted that female migrants, especially domestic workers and entertainers, are particularly vulnerable to exploitation because of the nature of their work. Unlike male workers, who are more likely to work in groups in factories, on construction sites or plantations, female migrants often work under isolated conditions, which make it difficult for them to establish information and social support networks.

Reflection and Action 6.2

Talk to the family members of those who have migrated to other countries. Find out their reason for migration, their current status in the destination country, impact on their family and the possibility of return, if any. You may then categorize these into a particular migration type.

6.6 Processes and Patterns of Socio-Cultural Adaptation

Historically the emigrants from India have been a heterogeneous lot. They are varied in terms of their regional, religious, caste, occupational, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. These variables explain the differential evolution of Indian communities abroad in general. Further the plight of Indians as a diasporic community abroad is to a considerable extent determined by ethnic, religious and socio-economic composition of the 'host' country. The economic and political changes taking place there have an impact on the Indians as a diasporic community. In polities where Indians have been numerically significant, their ethnic orientation has been tied to the struggle for political power. Crucial to the evolution of Indians as a diasporic community has been their ability to adapt themselves in an alien setting.

In contrast to the ex-indentured populations, Indian migrants in contemporary times have been able, due to comparative affluence and worldwide improvements in communication, to maintain extensive ties with South Asia. Marriage arrangements, kinship networks, property and religious affiliations keep many migrants well-linked to their places of origin in the sub-continent, especially as a large number are still first generation migrants. The benefits of migration, in the form of remittances, also play a significant role in keeping many overseas South Asians connected to persons in their homeland; in fact, remittances from abroad can even represent critical aspects of the local economy in parts of South Asia.

In contrast to Indian migrants in the USA, those in Britain lived in segregated settlements. This is largely because of the type of employment and opportunities for settlement in Britain during the post-war economic expansion and its recent collapse. Whereas the majority of migrants from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh lived in ghettos, the twice migrants from East Africa, now settled in Britain and elsewhere, have fared better in urban middle class occupations such as shopkeeping. Many of them arrived with experience in this field plus the capital to invest in business. Various immigration acts in Britain particularly in 1962, 1968 and 1971 served in many ways to curtail the rights and status of Indians in seeking to migrate or actually moving to the United Kingdom.

In the U.S.A. the problems of acculturation for the Asian Indians were relatively few and dependence upon others for initial support was usually for a limited time. The need or desire to form ethnic clusters seems to have been minimal. An important reason for the lack of ethnic concentration of ethnic neighborhood development of the Asian Indians in American cities may have to do with the very limited role of Hinduism as a religion. The majority of the Asian Indians are Hindus, but Hinduism has a very different religious organization from Christian denominations, Islam or Sikhism. It remains to a great extent an individual oriented rather than a congregational religion. The widely dispersed Asian Indians are probably among the most affluent ethnic groups in the USA and are largely professionals concentrated in medicine, engineering and the natural sciences. Recent South Asian migrants to Australia and Canada follow a similar occupational pattern, though their place of residence is more markedly clustered in the largest cities than it is in the U.S.A. National infrastructure pertaining to migration and settlement of South Asians has varied from country to country and over the years.

Religion, language and region of origin are closely intertwined amongst South Asian migrants. Out of Britain's, 1,271,000 South Asians, Muslims account for 44% and two-thirds of them are Urdu-speaking Pakistanis. The balance is made up of Bangladeshis and Gujarati or Punjabi Indians in almost equal numbers. Similarly, of the 30% of British South Asians who are Hindu, over two-thirds are Gujaratis, the remainder being composed of an equal number of Punjabis and other Indians such as Sikhs—practically all from Punjab—comprise just over 20% of the British South Asian population. To complicate matters, many of the above are twice migrants with experience in East Africa. The complexity of South Asian immigrants has led Robinson (1986) to define not less than 12 religious ethno-linguistic groups present in the UK. Caste has remained an important source of identification for some groups in the modern South Asian diaspora. Caste affiliations, religious sectarianism and regionalism have usually undermined tendencies towards cultural homogenization. The lack of Asian Indian spatial concentrations and their diversities in the U.S.A. should not convey the impression that ethnic identity is not developing at all. Actually the process of identity formation is proceeding apace at several levels— at some levels 'fusion' and at others 'fission' appears to be dominant. Although some blending of regional traditions within Hinduism has occurred in Britain (Knott 1987), Canada (Wood 1980) and the U.S.A. (Bhardwaj and Rao 1983), exclusive practices and associations have nonetheless developed among overseas Hindu groups (Bowen 1987; Barot 1987).

The nature of ethnic pluralism, the political responses of governments to the existence of plural societies and the place of South Asian communities within them have varied considerably among the receiving countries. In Britain, Canada and the USA. They have tended to be characterized by high status occupations. Most South Asians who initially came to Britain in the 1950s and 1960s were manual labourers, though their occupational distribution now resembles more closely to that of the White British population (Peach et.al 1988). However institutionalized racism, particularly in housing (Brown 1984) has meant that they have been associated with a low position in Britain's class structure and therefore confront great difficulties in achieving other forms of social mobility. The role and status of South Asian women are also greatly affected by this state of affairs, as are the possibilities facing second-generation South Asians who are also confronted with difficult, culturally conflicting lifestyle choices. As regards political participation one finds that while the labourers and the lower class citizens of Indian origin in Britain take part in politics, the middle or elite classes tend to minimize such participation.

Regardless of their activities in the political sphere, contemporary Indian migrants have almost everywhere established community organizations wherever they have settled. Most of these, however, have taken considerable time to evolve and several have gone through phases of expansion, contraction, division and merger, whether instituted for the purposes of religion, community service or labour relations. Through these community organizations important leaders have come to the fore who have become involved in the conflict-ridden ethnic relations. In all major cases of contemporary overseas South Asian settlement in Britain, Canada, Australia and the U.S.A., South Asians have not escaped racial discrimination and abuse. Some of the organizations exercise an influence in the politics of their host country. The Association of Indians in America, which is considered to be broad-based and professionally oriented, worked to obtain a reclassification of Indians as 'Asian Indians' for the 1980 census. Most Indian

ethno-cultural people form informal communities in Canada through links between relatives and friends who share common ethnic, linguistic and religious roots. These include associations to ensure psychological protection against marginality, access to information, etc. Most social and religious organizations are very particular in observing religious festivals. Formal social boundaries between Indians of different backgrounds are generally sharp—each ethno-cultural group forms a somewhat discrete community. The socio-cultural adaptations of the Indians abroad in different diasporic situations have been varied ranging from persistence, assimilation to change and revival.

Box 6.2 Remittances from Abroad

Remittances are the main benefit of external migration, providing scarce foreign exchange and scope for higher levels of savings and investments. Remittances over the past 30 years have financed much of India's balance of trade deficit and have thus reduced the current account deficit. Remittances have had a considerable impact on regional economies. The most striking case is that of Kerala, where remittances made up 21% of state income in the 1990s. This flow appears to have increased wealth: although the average per capita consumption in Kerala was below the national average until 1978-79, by 1999-2000 consumer expenditure in Kerala exceeded the national average by around 41%.

International migration frequently results in the separation of family members, which in turn creates a greater dependence on the nuclear family, weakening wider kinship relationships and consequently widening the roles of nuclear family members, especially women. Families of international migrants are placed in a vulnerable situation, as those "left behind", particularly dependent members, confront social and emotional consequences. The women left behind face many hardships, from loneliness and isolation to financial difficulties. One of the consequences of the prolonged absence of migrants from the family has been marital instability and the consequent break-up of the family unit, leading to a higher incidence of divorce among migrant households (Hugo, 2002). Migration, on the other hand has also resulted in an improvement in the economic and social situation of women within the family and the community. There is evidence that, while male relatives remaining in the village may retain overall control, male labour migration has led to an improvement in the status of the women left behind (ESCAP, 2001). While migrants experience both positive and negative effects, even women migrants in highly vulnerable and exploitative situations often indicate that migration has improved their autonomy in some areas of their lives (Hugo, 2002).

Apart from the culture, lifestyles, migrants bring with them distinct skills or business contacts that can generate changes in technology, productivity and trade patterns that can affect an economy in ways unforeseen without their presence.

Reflection and Action 6.3

How have the diasporic communities adapted themselves in different socio-economic and political settings? Illustrate with examples.

6.7 The Phenomenon of Brain Drain

Migration has given rise to considerable debates on costs and benefits of emigration of certain categories of highly skilled workers through 'brain drain'. "Brain drain" is the phenomenon whereby nations lose skilled labor because there are better paid jobs elsewhere. In recent years, this has affected the poorer countries more, as some rich countries tempt workers away, and workers look to escape bleak situations in their poor home countries. The main flow of brain drain as a change of domicile starts from the underdeveloped countries towards the developed ones, due to social, cultural and psychological factors. There have been several efforts to define the concept of "brain drain", mainly by international organizations.

In a 1969 UNESCO report...." brain drain could be defined as an abnormal form of scientific exchange between countries, characterized by a one- way flow in favor of the most highly developed countries". One of the most comprehensive reports on the main characteristics of brain drain is as follows:

- There are numerous flows of skilled and trained persons from developing to developed countries.
- They are characterized by large flows from a comparatively small number of developed countries and by small flows from a larger number of developing countries.
- In these flows engineers, medical personnel and scientists usually tend to predominate.
- The above flows have grown with increasing rapidity in recent years.
- The higher the level of skill/training, the greater the susceptibility to migration tends to be.
- The flows respond increasingly to the changed economic complexity of world societies and to legislation which reflects the demands of a new era.
- The migratory trends are stimulated both by the character of national educational systems as by lack and inadequate planning for the training of students from developing countries, in developed states as well as the proper utilization of their-skills in their home country.
- Except possibly for South America, there are no signs that the migration of talents is decreasing and there are fairly definite signs that its increase will, under present conditions, continue to accelerate.

When the best of professional manpower leave their home country and settle in a more developed one, it is a political phenomenon, but it only rarely occurs that the motives are exclusively political. It involves a peculiar contradiction; it simultaneously indicates the lack of production and overproduction of professional manpower on the drained country.

It expresses the complexity and the interdependence of different societies; it derives from disproportionate economic, technological and scientific development of the developed and the developing countries. It is characteristic of the brain drain that the more underdeveloped a country is economically, the more it loses by brain drain while only developed countries profit from the process. It occurs through a complicated interplay of direct and indirect economic 'push' and 'pull' factors. It is stimulated by the lack of an educational system as well as the absence of a manpower policy in most of the underdeveloped countries, these deficiencies normally hindering the really efficient use of those qualified as well as those having talent. As

against this, there are higher living standards and better research and working opportunities of the more developed country, which provides thousands of possibilities for developing human potential. In addition to these objective economic factors, brain drain is also stimulated by the actually realized intention of the developed countries to acquire intellectual capital free, and as quick as possible.

The situation, in which many trained and talented individuals seek entrance into a country, is called a brain gain; this may create a brain drain in the nations that the individuals are leaving. A Canadian symposium in 2000 gave circulation to the new term, at a moment when many highly-skilled Canadians were moving to the United States but, simultaneously, many more qualified immigrants were coming to Canada. This is sometimes referred to as a 'brain exchange'. Despite the best of intentions, redirecting migrations is not going to be easy. Whether efforts to do so, by offering selective incentive are desirable must be a matter of debate.

After becoming the third largest country with diaspora population, India, which champions the cause of temporary relocation of skilled professionals at the World Trade Organization, is likely to experience a reverse flow of its migrants like China to increase the investment and trade potential. Much of China's recent success is largely due to its overseas population that ploughed back its savings into mainland China and turned the country into the global manufacturing hub. With many young Indian professionals returning home to a country increasingly seen as a land of opportunity, the brain drain from India is being reversed, according to a recent analysis.

Both in the colonial and post-colonial phases of Indian diaspora, some emigrants returned home for various reasons, termed as reverse migration. While in the normal course the returnees are individuals and families (Nair 1991 and Mohapatra 1995), under extraordinary circumstances reverse migration may assume massive proportions: The return of Indians from Burma (Myanmar) on the eve of the Japanese invasion of that country during World War II and from Kuwait during the Gulf War is a case in point.

Reflection and Action 6.4

The phenomenon of brain drain, according to many, is on the reverse. Find out the possible reasons and the consequent impact of this process on our country.

6.8 Conclusion

Global international migration is increasing exponentially not only in scale but also in the types of mobility and the cultural diversity of groups involved in that movement. Figures undoubtedly underestimate the amount of movement since data collection systems are poor and much mobility which occurs is clandestine. In addition, since much of the movement is circular, the actual numbers of persons who have ever lived in a foreign nation is larger than those currently abroad because of the revolving door pattern of much global migration. Replacement of more or less permanent migration by circulation as the dominant paradigm of global migration is a striking feature. This circulation is now occurring on an unprecedented scale and has been facilitated by developments such as the revolution in transport, which has seen the real costs of international travel plummet and their speed increase.

Accordingly, it is now much more possible for people to work in one nation while keeping their "home" in another country than was ever the case previously. Moreover, the cheapening of international telephone communication and the emergence of the Internet has enabled temporary migrants to maintain intimate and regular contact with their home area. This does not mean permanent settlement is insignificant. Indeed it has increased and often is associated with migrants maintaining strong relationships with their origin countries. However, the new reality is that more people are living and working in one country but still call another country home, many of their family members remain there and they maintain a fundamental commitment to the homeland.

Linked to the increasing degree of circularity in international movement has been the emergence of transnationalism which refers to the multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the boundaries of nation states (Vertovec 1999, 447). While such long distance ties have a long history, new technologies in transport and communication have facilitated greater speed, efficiency and intimacy in such connections and relationships. As Portes, Guarnizo and Landholt (1999) point out, it is the massive contemporary scale and simultaneity of long distance, cross border activities which provide the recently emergent and distinctive and in some case normative social structures and activities which has led to the emergence of transnationalism.

Thus the phenomenon of migration is becoming more complex, and its pattern is undergoing change. No longer a one-time move by an individual, it comprises multiple moves, often involving other family members. It remains one of the most challenging issues of contemporary times and there are serious economic and social implications emerging from migration flows. A grounded understanding of migration necessitates a study of the complex determinants and outcomes of the process. A number of important policy issues have not yet been resolved: increased multilateral coordination of migration flows, prevention of human rights abuses, care of refugee populations, facilitation of the temporary movement of natural persons in the services trade, the harnessing of remittance flows for poverty-reducing investments, management of the brain drain, and reduction of brain waste. These priorities compose a large and important policy agenda for better harnessing this important socio-economic process for development purposes in the modern world economy.

6.9 Further Reading

Ravindra K Jain, 1993. *Indian communities abroad: themes and literature*. New Delhi: Manohar

Jayaram, N. Ed. 2004. *The Indian Diaspora: Dynamics of Migration*. New Delhi: Sage

Colin Clarke, Ceri Peach & Steven Vertovec (Ed.). 1990 *South Asian Overseas: Migration and Ethnicity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.