

Unit 7

Indians in the Caribbean

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Learning objectives

After reading this Unit, you will be able to describe:

- phases of Indian emigration in the Caribbean;
- common features of Indian immigration;
- experiences of Indian emigrants;
- emergence of Indian identity; and
- cultural strategies of the Indian diaspora.

7.1 Introduction

The score of islands and mainland from Mexico to Panama are popularly called the Caribbean. The area is marked by some geographical peculiarities. It has coral reef formations set in a sub-tropical condition. The region is prone to earthquakes and hurricanes. It has rich fertile soil, which allows cultivation of a variety of products.

The Caribbean now has many independent nations but their history is relatively young. It is recorded from the time Columbus landed in one of the islands there in 1492 A.D. Briefly it may be stated that Caribbean region first came under the control of Spain. For about a century the control of Spain was unbroken but by the early years of the seventeenth century, Spain pulled back from several areas and began to concentrate more on the vast areas of South America. Later other Europeans namely English, French and Dutch came to the Caribbean in swarms. The earlier Spanish presence was tragic, transient and highly exploitative. They ruthlessly destroyed the indigenous populations but did not develop any systematic production system. They ran authoritarian governing systems. Their dominant interest was in metallic extraction. However when other Europeans got a foothold in the various islands and mainland of the Caribbean they developed a thriving plantation economy based on slave labour.

7.2 Three Important Phases

In order to have a quick grasp of the overview of the entire Caribbean region it would be most convenient to view it in three phases namely post-discovery, post-emancipation and post-independence.

In the post-discovery phase, people belonging to different races and languages inhabited the islands. The Europeans had the dominant position. The economy was based on plantation. The policies for these islands were determined in the metropolitan colonial offices. The significance of the post emancipation period was the liberation of the slaves but the plantation economy continued and so also the old type of governance. For our purpose here the most important aspect of this phase was the entry of Indians in the Caribbean as indentured labour. Before we discuss the presence of the Indians in the Caribbean it may be briefly stated that the post-emancipation period saw the beginning of some trade and commerce by the planters and a nascent emergence of the peasantry. The post-independence phase is marked by the emergence of so many independent countries in which coloured people acquired power including Indians. The process of democratization set in and party politics began to play its role. Old white colonial administration came into the hands of the brown and black educated class of people. It saw a definite movement away from plantation economy towards industrialization and modernization. While European powers declined, the United States of America entered as a major player in the Caribbean region. It developed strategic interests and also interest in oil and natural gas. This was the background, by and large, in which the Indians entered the host countries as indentured labourers. In the initial stages, the Indian emigrants encountered difficult times. However, at later stages, there was transformation from that hopeless situation to a better position where they could establish their identity and social security and emerge as an educated and accomplished community engaged in a variety of modern professions.

Indians play a central role in the political arena in several countries. The presence of Indians is noted in Surinam, Trinidad, Jamaica, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Grenada and St. Lucia in the Caribbean. Though the history of the emergence of the Indians in each place is influenced by the local circumstances particularly by those who were the colonial rulers in the specific country, here we will discuss them in general terms. However, most of the material here has been drawn from the experience in Trinidad.

7.3 Arrival of Indians

Indians were brought to the Caribbean by the colonial administration to safeguard the plantation industry in the wake of abolition of slavery. From the 1830s the East India Company allowed trading in human resources by private agents under a sort of indentured labour scheme. This scheme had to be suspended for a while owing to its widespread abuse. However, Britain came out with the "Colonial Emigration Act, 1837", which was controlled by the East India Company. A set of officers was put in position to oversee the movement of the labourers from India to the various colonies in the Caribbean and elsewhere. In the late 1830s when the emigration of Indians began the situation in India was highly unsettled. There were widespread economic problems. Owing to the Permanent Settlement System, the peasants had already lost their small land holdings. The artisans particularly the weavers lost their occupation owing to the export of cotton. New forest laws had deprived the peasant's access to life-sustaining resources. Epidemics and famines were common features. Ravages of war between the East India Company and the local rulers made the peasantry homeless too. There was continuous persecution by the tax collectors, rent collectors, the zamindars, the moneylenders, and the marauders (*thags*) who would not hesitate to kill for even small gains. The British also started systematic reprisals following the upheaval of 1857.

In the beginning the British were a bit cautious in recruiting Indians as labourers and sending them to overseas colonies for fear of being criticised for bringing slavery in a different form. They began the recruitment from the hinterland of Bihar hoping that the larger society may not notice it. Moreover, the tribes living in that region had less dietary taboos. As a result of the new forest and land regulation some unrest was brewing up even in that area. The British wanted to crush it before it could gather into a storm and recruited labourers from that area and sent the troublemakers overseas.

7.4 Common Features of Immigration

We may briefly highlight some common features of immigration of the Indians in the Caribbean before we discuss the emergence of the Indian identity in that part of the World.

- i) Immigration was spread out over 72 years from 1845-1917, which suggests the inflow the Indian population at regular intervals that was significant in terms of social, cultural and political formation of Indians in the Caribbean.
- ii) People came from different regions of India including southern India but majority of them were from the Indo-Gangetic belt.
- iii) Majority of the people were poor from rural areas and of lower castes. Approximately 15% of them were Muslims.
- iv) The sex ratio among the immigrants was highly imbalanced.
- v) Majority of the people were young. Those who arrived in the first 30 years had hardly any elders as role models.
- vi) Whatever be their social, cultural, economic or religious background, all were recruited as indentured labour on the same terms. This is a very important factor in breaking or shaking the traditional system of social stratification among the Indians.
- vii) Away from their homes and villages, the experience of staying together in depots and being together for a long, difficult and hazardous sea journey, not only made them hard but also generated a 'we' feeling among them cutting across the barriers of caste and religion. They also established a life-long bond such as 'jehajibhai'.
- viii) For the women recruits, depot stay, voyage and work in the colonies was an experience by itself. Perhaps for the first time they were getting wages in their hands as workers. As a result of these they carved out some space for themselves.
- ix) On arrival the Indians were assigned to different estates. In the early years there were a lot of restrictions on their movement. It was only on Sundays they were allowed to move away from their estates, that too after taking permission. All of them suffered a sense of isolation. They were out of their social and cultural network. They were not used to the monotonous nature of work. Their work-supervisors treated them very harshly. A little deviation from work or laziness immediately attracted punishment. Often they were kept in isolation for some petty mistake. The environment was generally hostile.
- x) The former slaves did not like the presence of the Indians. For at the time when the slaves were emancipated they had begun to organize themselves. They had begun to demand better facilities of work and higher wages. They were sure that the planters had no alternative and eventually would negotiate with them. That did not happen. Instead

the planters were able to find a good source of cheap labour, which flourished close to 72 years. So whatever bargaining capacity ex-slaves had vis-à-vis planters was lost and their demand for higher wages could be easily suppressed forever. At the same time a permanent cleavage was created between two sets of labour: ex-slaves and Indians.

- xi) Indians on their part had no choice but to work to their full capacity, otherwise punishment was waiting for them. They were strangers on the island. From people to environment—everything was alien for them. On account of their hard work, production in the plantation got accelerated. There was more demand for labourers from India. The scheme of indentured labour got full support from the planters as well as from the administration. Socially and culturally the Indians were much different from the local populations. They never mixed with them. They also cherished a desire that one day they would be able to go back to their homes but there were so many hurdles on the way.

Box 7.1: Hurdles for Returning Home

The hurdles for returning to the native homes were:

First the dread of returning back on a long and hazardous sea voyage was a serious deterrent. *Second*, the circumstances under which they had left their homes were neither cheerful nor they were sure they would be accepted back.

Third, those who had gone back had depressing experiences.

Fourth, the planters were keen that the experienced Indian labourers stay back in their plantation.

For this they adopted a twin strategy. One, they put maximum hurdles on the Indians so that they did not return after the completion of their term. Second they began to give allurements so that they decided to stay back in the colonies. They offered them land from 1850 onwards and also some money if they surrendered their right to claim free passage back. Later they also allowed them to buy land. Obviously these were big attractions.

Reflection and Action 7.1

Highlight some of the common features of emigration.

7.5 Experiences of the Emigrants

For Indians no doubt there was immense suffering particularly for those who had arrived earlier. Living in barracks under most unhygienic and cramped conditions was an entirely new experience. They were not only strangers to the total environment but often to each other. Their next-door neighbour could be a person from an entirely different region whose language and culture could be very different. However, there were common threads too. They were all labourers and had to put up with the same hostile and adverse conditions. They worked hard but at the same time led a simple life and believed in saving. Once they were offered land and some bounty in lieu of surrendering their right to claim free passage for going back home people grabbed these and reindentured themselves for a further period of five years. Later they were also given the opportunity to buy land. Majority of them reinvested eighty percent of their savings in buying free plots of land. This was encouraged by the colonial administration for several reasons. First,

this way the planters were assured of the continued services of the experienced hands and allowed them to save some energy, time and money in getting an entirely new set of inexperienced workers trained. Second, the Indians began to make the land productive by growing paddy and numerous other things. Till then the plantation economy had been peculiar in the sense what people grew was for a distant market and what people consumed was imported from distant places. Thus by growing consumable farm products the Indians began to give a new shape to the Caribbean economy. Besides, in terms of economy, it suited ideally both the planters and the colonial government to shift the burden of feeding the population at least partly, on to the ex-plantation workers themselves. Third, many of the Indians who for some reason were not willing to work in the plantation after the expiry of the term and were considered as vagrant were getting productively employed.

7.6 Emergence of Indian Identity

Identity formation is a complex phenomenon depending upon a variety of factors. The Indians who had decided to stay back were trying to carve out a way of life, develop a set of social relationships and institutions among themselves, and also had to participate in the social, political and economic life of the emerging nations - the nations which were located in the Western hemisphere, dominated by the Western thought, values and Christian religion. Modern science and technology too were rapidly evolving and casting their impact on the lives of the people. The early Indian settlers recognised all this, and they also recognised that acquiring modern education was an important means of enhancing their life-chances. They desired and sought education for their children. But the education available at that time had a price tag and that was conversion to Christianity. This added a Christian dimension to the Indian community of the Hindus and the Muslims. Along with the growing demand for education, the Hindu, the Muslim and the Christian missionaries also were active. Some sought reforms, some wanted them to go back to fundamental values of traditional practices of their religion and some wanted them to convert to other faiths. These created agreements and disagreements among the settlers. In other words, identity formation was not one single linear progression. Some scholars thought that in course of time Indians like other populations in the Caribbean would get creolised while others felt that Indians persisted with their traditional values and cultures. Both of these views have their own merit but the fact is that the Indians have projected an identity of their own in a multi-ethnic situation of the countries in which they live, which shows some creolisation, some persistence and some creation.

We may here briefly summarise the factors, which have contributed to the formation of Indian identity.

1. **Ancient Civilization:** The long civilization history of the Indians was very useful. In the Western sense, the immigrants were illiterate but were well educated in their social, cultural, religious and moral tradition. Identity formation was greatly helped by repeated recitations of epic stories like Ramayana, Mahabharata and numerous other stories. These stories contain a wealth of information on social and cultural life as well as on moral values. Some cultural specialists began to interpret these stories and tell people how to conduct their lives as elders, as husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, friends and so on.
2. **Population:** Emergence of Indian identity is correlated to the size of the

population in relation to the total population. Wherever their population was significant Indian identity has emerged strongly like in Trinidad, Surinam, Guadeloupe, and Martinique and to some extent in Jamaica, Grenada and St. Lucia.

3. **Land:** The decision to have land in lieu of their right to claim free passage back to India was very significant. This meant a shift from transient to permanent settler status. For the Indians land was a valuable asset, it provided them subsistence, economic stability and helped them to move up in the social hierarchy. It also helped them to gain their economic independence. The places where they obtained land became nuclei for the formation of Indian villages.
4. **Villages:** The formation of the villages was a turning point in the history of the Indians in Trinidad. These were generally uni-ethnic villages. The process of the Indians settling in the rural areas was further helped by the fact that the Blacks were generally moving away from the land-related activities. For the Indians it was indeed a great change. After having done ten years of degrading industrial labour in cane cultivation, constantly under harsh supervision and living in crowded barracks, they were living in the villages founded by them and as free persons at last. They got the opportunity to reconstruct their way of life by shedding some aspects, reformulating some and creating some new aspects in their cultural baggage. The new environment circumscribed all this.
5. **Events in India:** As the indentured labour kept on coming to the Caribbean for close to seventy two years the Indians kept themselves relatively abreast about the events in their native land. The conditions were chaotic when they left India. The revolt of 1857 against the Britishers was ruthlessly suppressed but the seeds for the Indian independence were sown which later took the shape of a mass movement. A number of highly dedicated and charismatic Indian leaders were emerging on the Indian scene which generated a new awakening in the country and which also gave some sense of confidence and pride to the Indian emigrants. They were becoming familiar with popular Indian slogans such as Inqalab Zindabad (long live revolution) , Gandhi Zindabad (long live Gandhi) and so on. The later emigrants were familiar with the idea of Indian independence. They brought a sense of belief and confidence in their own culture and traditions. They knew that their leaders were fighting to throw off the yoke of colonialism. They had also learnt a new tool of resistance that was 'satyagraha' (fight for truth). In popular terms it meant passive resistance.
6. **Political Action:** In Trinidad between 1880 and 1914 there were at least 18 major strikes on plantation estates by the Indian settlers. The most important outcome of these strikes was that it brought people together on a common platform. Suffering under a common adversary was a powerful binding force among the ethnically diverse Indian population. The Indians formed their own organizations and took up a variety of issues such as protection against certain immigration ordinances, pressing the administration for the employment of Indians in government service, for legal recognition of Hindu and Muslim marriages, recognition of their traditional funeral rites, etc. At about the same time, educated Indians began to articulate their views in newspapers published in the island. Wide circulation of the views contributed to the increasing sense of group solidarity among the Indians. Also these activities conveyed a message to the governments in power that the Indian community existed

and was capable of organising itself in defense of its group interest. They also contributed money for the welfare of the victims of the famine back in India. Who else would have known better about the pains of hunger than the Indian emigrants!

7. **Indian Family:** In the Caribbean, it is popularly believed that the Indian families as compared to that of other ethnic groups were stable and different. The family was one of the institutions most dramatically affected by migration. First, in most cases people had come as individuals, leaving behind all other members of the nuclear and extended families back in their home in India. Second, on migration, the sex ratio among them was highly imbalanced. Third, they did not have elders among them to guide them. In spite of this situation the Indians did not show any inclination to marry outside their community, especially among the Blacks. The Indian family that evolved over the years was basically nuclear but retained a joint family model, in the sense that the members of the extended family generally lived in the same compound or in the neighbourhood. The family was relatively stable. The value of the filial solidarity was retained. Members of the extended family got together for celebration of numerous life-cycle rituals and seasonal festivals. On such occasions they not only helped and supported each other but also get an opportunity to fulfill their mutual obligations. Frequent interaction among themselves brought in a certain degree of solidarity and reinforcement of ties.
8. **Films & music:** The introduction of films and popular music from India from the late 1930s sparked a cultural awakening among the Indians. Later they also developed their own classical, devotional and popular form of music, which reinforced their identity.
9. **Religious activities:** Most Hindu religious traditions involve observance of life-cycle rituals, worship of the many gods and goddesses which they think ensures them a wholesome life, healthy children, good yields from their land, protect them and their crops and cattle from diseases, evil spirits and hazards. Singing devotional songs and recitation of religious texts, particularly Ramayan are other aspects of the Hindu religious practices. The Indians may have gone to the Caribbean from different regions of India with different religious practices but once they have settled there they tried to homogenize those practices. For their social and cultural survival this was an urgent and essential demand. On one hand, the others considered Indians as heathens and they were being persistently persuaded to give up their traditional beliefs and adopt Christian practices and ideology. On the other, the Indians needed to celebrate births, puberty and marriage, and appropriately mourn deaths. They also needed to express their gratitude to the Almighty for their survival. During their hazardous voyages and stay in barracks they had experienced that there was a very thin line between life and death. Invocation of the deities and seeking their blessings could not be postponed. They had to come to some agreement among themselves on these matters and get along with their lives. The missionaries and reformers, who came from India, also helped them in the process of homogenization.

Reflection and Action 7.2

Discuss the factors that contributed to the formation of Indian identity in the Caribbean.

This particular aspect is very well reflected in temple construction and temple architecture in the Caribbean. In the beginning temples were small, made of bamboo. The temples constructed after the 1950s were relatively large and had a raised area where all deities were enshrined, and a dome topped the temples. The deities could be viewed by the audiences sitting on the benches, in the style of churches. The hall was utilized for religious discourses and congregational worship. The Hindu religious environment in and around temple was further strengthened by putting up various symbols like Jhandis (flags of different colour), Om signs, plants such as Pipal, Neem, Tulsi, Bel etc. etc.

10. **Cuisine:** Indian cuisine is a strong identity marker. The Indian food, the way it is processed, cooked and eaten is quite distinctive, particularly the food that is prepared for ceremonial occasions. The Indians, particularly the Hindus observe a variety of food taboos. Vegetarian food is considered to be high ranking. All ceremonial food is vegetarian. Like religious practices Indian cuisine too has been standardized to a great extent. In the process of standardization they have also created some new food items, which have become very popular.

Box 7.2: Cultural strategies

There are many other cultural strategies that Indians adopted to form their identity and preserve it. In a hostile environment, in particular, these strategies are likely to come in all kinds of innocent activities and formal forms. Each of them interconnects people, link ideas and mythologies, generate moods and motivations and transmit messages. A pattern starts emerging. A culture gets constructed and its boundaries get marked. A culture is an on-going phenomenon with some anchorage. So many things happen at the same time. There are compelling economic and political circumstances, which create pressures for some and opportunities for others for cultural expressions. Think of the hopeless, illiterate Indian peasant uprooted from his surroundings, surviving a shattering sea journey and planted in a hostile and unsympathetic environment. Whatever he had in the name of culture was perceived as heathen, degrading and also contested by the fellow next-door neighbour. He was coerced and also enticed to convert himself.

There were other compelling circumstances too, but he resisted, recoiled, withdrew, advanced and changed, and yet he did not become what was expected of him. He adopted the old, created some and constructed a cultural system, which gave him a sense of satisfaction, a feel-good phenomenon. For instance, those who converted to Christianity became the favoured ones. They got education, acquired professional skills and jobs. Their status went up in the larger society. But they were still identified as Indian. Whatever personal agenda they may have had, they became facilitators of the Indian identity. They established bi-directional communication. They played the role of cultural brokers. They became the spokesmen for the Indians. Similarly the temple architecture was changed so that people may walk in to participate in 'Sunday Service' and hear not Bible sermons but Vedic hymns, Ramayana, devotional songs, ringing of bells and blowing of conches. These are but a few examples, which illustrate how the Indians were able to establish their identity.

7.7 Conclusion

It is indeed an enigma that all along the Indians in the Caribbean have been treated as a transient population. This image continues even now. The self-image of the Indians too is of a transient population. This gets amply reflected in the literary writings of the Indian scholars. Whatever be the reasons for this emic and etic imagery, it helped Indians to consolidate their identity as the East Indians, notwithstanding the internal fissures, factions and disagreements.

In the political arena, after the First World War the attitude of the Indians and people of African origin changed towards the European population. There was a rising consciousness towards self-rule. Politics is all about striving for political gains and therefore in the process the political leaders exploited all kinds of cleavages. In the plantation societies of the Caribbean, ethnic identity was a ready-made cleavage, which of course was fully exploited by the political leaders. The colonial rulers, as could be expected, pursued the well-known policy of divide and rule. However, in spite of this, the various islands in the Caribbean became independent in course of time but ethnic cleavages have remained a part of political discourse. Independent nations have been formed with some sort of democracy in which adult franchise and regular elections are the common features. Indians participate in these elections, aligning themselves to one or the other parties. By and large, it can be safely stated that wherever Indian presence is there, they have not taken any extreme position either in terms of ethnicity or mobilization on class lines. They tend to take a more centrist position but have remained an exclusive population in social, cultural and religious terms.

The score of islands and mainland from Mexico to Panama is popularly called the Caribbean. It is a vast area inhabited by people belonging to different ethnic groups and languages. In the past the Europeans dominated the region and the economy was based on plantation worked by cheap labour. After the slavery was abolished there was an intensive and desperate search for cheap labour. At that time, India had come under the British colonial domination. They devised the scheme of indentured labour. Indian labours were exported to the various colonies of the Caribbean. In course of time through hard work and perseverance Indians were able to stabilize not only their position but also helped the plantation economy to grow and flourish. Socially and culturally the Indians have been able to establish their identity and in each country of their habitat they play active role in political arena too.

7.8 Further Reading

Misra P.K. 1995. 'Cultural design in identity formation in Trinidad.' *The Eastern Anthropologist*, Vol.48 No.3.

Unit 8

Indian Diaspora in Africa

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Learning objectives

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

- situations of Indian diasporas in various parts of Africa;
- identity issues of Indian diasporas in Africa and their responses; and
- situations of Indians in Mauritius.

8.1 Introduction

There is a 2.25 million strong Indian Diaspora in Africa.¹ The People of Indian Origin (PIO) form a majority in Mauritius. Around one million PIO live in South Africa. A substantial number of PIO are present in East Africa and in the Western Indian Ocean Islands. There are significant numbers of PIO in Central African countries. Except the PIO in East Africa, most of them went as indentured plantation workers during the colonial rule in the same way as they were taken to the Caribbean islands.

In East Africa they were taken to construct railways in the interior forest areas. This region also had a significant number of free passenger Indians who had gone there as traders since colonial times and even before that. A large number of Franco-phone African countries have PIO but they form a small percentage of local population. Their identity suffered the same fate as of those in the Caribbean Franco-phone territories except in those territories, which were snatched by the Britishers from French colonisers. They were juxtaposed here with Africans. In a few places like in Kenya and South Africa they were sandwiched between Black and White populations. Their struggle to preserve their identity, seek their legitimate place in the society is also similar to that in the Caribbean. The government of India under Nehru maintained the same overt and covert policy towards PIO in Africa with the exception of South Africa where it mostly maintained an overt policy of support. The comparative understanding of PIO in the Caribbean and Africa needs an analysis of African PIOs and Indian responses.

¹ There are roughly 22,59,300 PIOs in Africa. In some countries- they are significant in number and percentage. They are 220,000 in Reunion (31%), 1 million in South Africa (2.4%), 715000 in Mauritius (68%), 100,000 in Kenya (0.35%), 81,000 in Seychelles (6.1.%) 28,000 in Madagascar, 90,000 in Tanzania (0.28%), 16000 in Zimbabwe (0.1%), 9000 in Botswana (0.66%) around 20,000 in Mozambique (0.13%).

8.2 Indian South Africans

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

The Asiatic Land Tenure Act also known as Ghetto Act became law in June 1946. It was directed against Indians, confining them to specified areas alone.² On 3 September 1946 in the United Nations General Assembly session, the Indian representative Chagla articulated Indian concerns to the United Nations sub committee. He condemned South Africa's "discriminatory treatment of Asiatics in general" as a denial of human rights and the Ghetto Act, both of which impaired friendly relations between India and Africa. The Franco-Mexican resolution - supported by India - calling for treatment of Indians in South Africa to be in conformity with international obligations and Charter of the United Nations - was passed. The Indian approach of special support to Indian settlers in South Africa lasted until the late 1950s. Till then, resolutions of Indian National Congress articulated and strongly supported the Indian settlers' cause in South Africa. They used to express support to South African non-Indian sufferers also but in general terms.³

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

The above considerations started a shift in Indian approach on South African issue. India started associating with the cause of discrimination of Black and Indians together. The Indian President Dr. Rajendra Prasad in his address to Parliament in 1952 explained the shift of the approach. He said, "The question is no longer merely one of Indians of South Africa; it had already assumed a greater and wider significance. It is question of racial domination and racial intolerance. It is a question of Africans more than that of Indians in South Africa". India mobilised twelve other countries and raised the question of racial conflict in South Africa resulting from apartheid policy and succeeded in the appointment of a U.N. commission to study the racial situation in

2 Ajay Dubey, "Identity Politics of Indian South Africans: Democratisation and governance of South Africa", paper presented at ICSSR-HSRC seminar on *The Dynamics of Social Identity in India and South Africa: Its Implications for Democratisation and Governance* held at Bungler between 20-22nd October 1998.

3 See Indian National Congress Resolutions on Foreign Policy. AICC New Delhi 1946-66.

South Africa. From then onward, the issue of Indians in South Africa was merged with the larger issue of apartheid policy in South Africa, which involved both Indians as well as Black African. Indian policy then worked for the establishment of majority rule in South Africa and merging of the Indian settlers cause with that of Black Africans.

During his interim Prime Ministership in March 1946, Nehru recommended termination of trade agreement and breaking up of diplomatic ties with South Africa. Lord Wavell, the Indian Viceroy did it immediately.⁴ This strong step was taken when India was free in foreign relations but not free internally. The stakes involved were high. India at the time of independence needed economic support from all quarters but this decision deprived India of 5% of its trade. Currently, there are more than 1 million PIOs in South Africa. During the post-apartheid period they merged their political future with ANC. Around 20% of ministerial/M.P. positions were given to them by ANC. However PIO did not vote for ANC in the 1994 general elections fearing the massive majority the African base ANC had. As a result they are again facing the displeasure of the government in power. Their representation as M.P.s/Ministers in ANC government has been reduced. The Historical Disadvantage Community (HDC) categorisation still clubs them with the African and coloured population. But politically and socially, the gap between the majority community and PIO is increasing.⁵

8.3 East African PIO

A good number of PIO had gone to East Africa as traders since ancient times and they were settled across the Eastern Coast of Africa. Kilwa was a very important port, which had a good number of Indian traders. In fact, the Swahili language, which is spoken in East Africa, has a substantial number of words, which are from Gujarati and other Indian languages. The bulk of PIOs who were brought to hinterlands of East Africa were railway construction workers. Most of them were from Punjab. Many were killed by lions and wild animals in the dense forests of East Africa while laying railway lines. The presence of PIO in hinterlands facilitated Gujarati businessmen, retail traders to penetrate in the interior of East African towns. They were called *Dukawallas* and they own most of the corner shops. Since they were brought in by the colonisers and became visibly rich, they were seen as exploiters by the African population.

PIOs in East Africa were a confident community since colonial times. As early as 1920 they asserted their political identity under leaders like Jeevanji and wanted PIOs to be linked to India. The assertion made the colonial government announce the policy of "paramountcy of native" thereby keeping PIO from inheriting any kind of political power sharing under decolonisation plan. This was further used by the British colonial government to increase the gap between Africans and PIOs.

During the decolonisation phase the Indian government under Nehru tried to make amends. Aba Saheb was entrusted to exhort PIO to lead the freedom

4 Indian High Commissioner did not returned to South Africa since 1946 when Ghetto Act was passed But India used to maintain a small office in Durban which was finally closed in 1954 and thereafter all direct link between Indian and South Africa ceased.

5 See Ajay Dubey - "Identity Politics of Indian South Africans (ISAs) : Democratisation and Governance of South Africa" *Indian Journal of African Studies*, vol.XII (2) pp.39-51.

struggle and accept the leadership of the Black Community without any reservation and special demand. In 1967, the government of Kenya started the Kenyanisation of its economy when all non-citizens, largely Indians, were asked to take work and residence permits. It allowed them to trade only in restricted areas and items. Though it was a purely internal policy measure of the Kenyan government, India advised them to surrender their British passports and get local citizenship. Indian diplomats mobilised PIO in favour of this move but not many responded to it. For PIOs accepting the advice to mix with Africans meant giving their daughters in marriage to local Africans. PIOs were not willing to migrate to England because of social insecurity and degeneration of their children in western culture. Going back to India and being trapped in the vicious trap of poverty, filth and unemployment was out of the question.⁶ Partly, Indian policies also did not allow them to forget their old links as it appealed to them thrice in two years, for financial help for defence funds to contain China and Pakistan. A large number of visitors from India, religious leaders, fund collectors for charity and politician kept coming and made contact with PIO. All these were strengthening the feelings of mutual dependence. When they were in crisis this time, India did not react in the same way as it used to do.⁷ The Indian Parliament discussed the issue at length. Mrs. Indira Gandhi made an intervention during debate to assure the members that government was monitoring the situation.⁸

Indian government had started economic initiatives at the bilateral level to bring Indian settlers in Kenya within the policy framework of India. It proposed to establish Africa-India Development Corporation with Kenyan 'PIO' and Indian capital, its aim being to seek integration of the Indian community in the economic life of Kenya, thus fortifying the foundation of a multiracial society.⁹ Though finally it could not materialise, due to reasons other than disinterest of India, but it did show the shift which was coming in Indian policy for PIOs in Africa. Uganda was another country in East Africa where India's policy on Indian settlers demonstrated the shift. When Idi Amin came to power in January 1971 in Uganda, he wanted to put the entire Ugandan economy in the hands of Ugandans of African origin. He said that 80,000 Asians in Uganda were sabotaging the economy and encouraging corruption and therefore there was no room for them in Uganda.¹⁰ All PIOs who were Kenyan citizens or British and Indian passport holders had to leave in 90 days before November 8, 1972. Amin called the expulsion of PIO "as part of the war of liberation". Indian Deputy Minister of External Affairs said in Parliament, "We are in touch with the Ugandan authorities and I can assure the House that we shall do everything we can to protect the interest of Indians there". The Indian President while in Lusaka denounced the expulsion and stated "The happenings in Uganda have cast heavy clouds of doubt and uncertainty over the minds of many people of Indian origin in several countries of Africa.... The pernicious doctrine of racialism may permeate even free Africa."¹¹

6 For a detailed discussion see Anirudha Gupta, *"India and the Asians"* opp. cit. p.130.

7 Nehru used to say that if they are not ready to become citizen and not welcomed there they should come back to India.

8 Indian parliament was told that there were 186,000 people of Indian origin in Kenya. Out of this 130,000 were British citizen, 44,000 Kenyan and only 4,000 were Indian nationals.

9 *AICC Economic Review* (New Delhi) October 1966.

10 *Africa Digest* Vol. 19, No.57, October 1972, p.96

11 Quoted in A Gupta "Uganda Asian, Britain, India and Commonwealth" *African Affairs* (1974), p. 322

Though public opinion was aroused in India it refuted strongly and ridiculed Amin's allegation that India was planning to invade Uganda along with Tanzania and Zambia. However, India made it clear that it was going to support any international move, which would persuade Amin for extending the expulsion deadline. India did not take the tougher line because Indian move against a purely racial issue would have been interpreted as Indian interference and design in Africa. Indian support for Afro-Asian solidarity was another constraint. But the main consideration of India in not taking a tougher line on the issue seemed since "there is nothing to be gained by using strong words, if they can not be backed by meaningful action in Uganda, any show of strong sentiment may trigger off an anti-Asian wave."¹² Years later India faced the same constraints when Bavadra government was dismissed in Fiji and anti-PIO moves started there.

The Ugandan crisis made India realise that the leadership and political system of African states vary considerably from country to country and Indian support to Afro-Asian solidarity had to be qualified by long-term national interests. These expulsions brought home another point to India. Despite Indians, consistent support to African decolonisation and Afro-Asian solidarity none of the African countries howsoever friendly to India and opposed to Idi Amin's action, offered to accommodate expelled Indians even in small numbers as a gesture to sympathise with India.¹³ As far as India was concerned, it was never its policy to debar entry of PIO if they wanted to resettle in India with their saving and assets. The Government of India made special provisions and gave inducement for Asians to resettle in India with their saving and assets. Despite such offer, almost none opted to return to India. The restrained approach of India, however, succeeded in getting Amin agree to pay compensation for business and properties of Indian passport holders, which was not given to Indians of holding passports of other nationalities.

8.4 PIO in Francophone Africa

There are around one million PIOs in Francophone Africa. The bulk of them are in Mauritius, Reunion, Madagascar and Seychelles. Other countries in Francophone Africa having smaller number of PIOs are Benin, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Chad, Senegal, Mali, Djibouti and Algeria. Reunion Island, which is a French *Department*, not an independent country, also has a good number of PIO. Most of the PIO of the region except in Mauritius have lost their identity because of the assimilation policy followed by the French colonial master. Under this policy the subject population was to be fully acculturated in mainstream French culture in terms of language, religion, dress, manners etc. The original cultural identity of PIO, Africans or Chinese was lost. Only racial features remained the main distinguishing factor, though one finds a small sprinkling of well-off Gujarati trader population, which maintained some kind of links with India and retained some resemblance of Indian culture. Because of the language barrier and lesser interaction of Indian government and socio-cultural organisations they remained largely out of Indian policy supports or responses.

Madagascar has around 25,000 PIOs. They are mostly Gujaratis who came as traders around 1900. A majority of them run merchant shops. This merchant community maintains its Indianness. They maintain a very low social profile,

¹² *The Times of India* (Delhi) 6 October 1972.

¹³ See Ajay Dubey, *Indo- African Relations in the Post Nehru Era* (Delhi, Kalinga Publication, 1990)

though in a country of 15 million, this small number of 25000, controls more than 50% of economy. On the other hand Seychelles has a large population, around 307,000 PIOs. It has a large number of indentured PIOs who came from South India. Most of them have been subsumed into French culture. Reunion received some families from French territories in India like Pondicherry who came at the time of Indian independence. This group despite being from French Indian territories had good influence of Indian culture. There are around 220,000 PIO in the island. A large number of them came as slaves or artisans or indentured workers during colonial times. In recent times, one notices a revival of Hindu religion among Tamil communities, which forms the bulk of PIO. A large number of temples and Ashrams are visible and *double practice of religion* i.e., simultaneous observation of Hindu and catholic rites by the same family. There are a number of associations of PIOs who promote Indian dance, music, painting, literature and food etc but language remains major barrier.

8.5 Indians in Mauritius

Mauritius is also a Francophone country. It is the only country in the world where PIOs are in a majority (68% of population). It had PIO led government since its independence. If India is the mother country of PIO, Mauritius is treated as its capital. It was earlier a French territory but in 19th century it was captured by the British. Under the Treaty of Capitulation, Britain was to maintain French custom and law even during British colonial rule. A large number of indentured workers from India went to Mauritius since 1834 to replace the African slave labour in sugarcane field. There were Indian merchants as well who went in the 19th century and maintained their links with India. Today there are around 700,000 PIO in a population of 1.2 million. Despite being under French culture for more than one and half century, they maintained the major traits of Indian culture and still retain a strong sense of Indian cultural identity. Though the Bhojpuri language, dress, cuisine is getting diluted very fast in the younger generation, Mauritius remain one of the few countries where Indianness and its manifestations are celebrated with pride and confidence. Though PIOs are not a monolithic lot, they are divided on linguistic (Bhojpuri and Non-Bhojpuri) religious (Hindu-Muslims) and caste lines they have been able to retain political control since 1948 when adult suffrage was introduced.¹⁴

Mauritius was the first country where Nehru, under his interim Prime Ministership, appointed the first ever High Commissioner in 1946. Mahatma Gandhi had visited Mauritius in 1902 while coming back from South Africa to India. He met PIO community leaders and advised them to educate their children and to take active part in politics. He had deputed Manilal Doctor to organise and politically prepare the PIOs. After independence of Mauritius, successive Indian governments, maintained very close relations with Mauritius. It received huge financial and HRD support from India. India also kept a close watch on the democratic set up of Mauritius because in the past attempts had been made to usurp the political power from the PIOs by non-democratic means.

8.6 PIOs in Central Africa

In this part of Africa, Indians are very small in number and unlike the PIOs

¹⁴ For details on political aspects of PIO in Mauritius see, Ajay Dubey, *Government and Politics in Mauritius* (Delhi, Kalinga, 1996)

in East Africa, they did not strive for a special position in these countries. They were exhorted from very beginning by Apa B Pant and his successor Indian High Commissioner Nirmaljit Singh to fight along with black African nationalist. In Zimbabwe the fight against the White ruler, Indian settlers fought along with Africans in demolishing the racist regime. Their relation with Africans was one of trust. There had been inter African riots but hardly any Indian settlers were ever the target or issue. However, the same is not true in case of Zambia. Military and police under Kaunda administration time and again intimidated the Indian business community.

Mozambique has over 20,000 PIOs. The Portuguese rulers took Catholic PIOs from Goa as petty officials, soldiers, and ecclesiastics. Many Hindus from Goa had also gone as traders. They were persecuted by the colonial Portuguese government. When India liberated its territories like Goa from Portuguese rule, many PIOs in Mozambique were imprisoned for six months and their bank accounts were frozen. Despite their marginalisation, they have maintained their distinct culture, dress and traditions. They celebrate Indian festivals with great pomp and show.

8.7 Identity Issues of the PIOs in Africa: Indian Responses

Both domestic and international changes have altered the priority and agenda of India's policy towards PIOs in Africa. The major concern of India during colonial rule in Africa was to see to it that the colonial government gave equal privileges to PIOs compared to European settlers. It advised PIOs to join black Africans in the freedom struggle and to become one with them without seeking special privileges or status. With the abolition of colonialism, both internal and external, such imperatives do not exist. Second, in the post colonial phase of Africa, India by its experience, realised that expectation of 'dual loyalty' and inclusion of PIO in policy framework neither wins them over for Indian investment or other economic needs nor does it please African governments who have to deal firmly with PIOs according to domestic imperatives and pressures. Even the PIOs after their experience in Zanzibar, Uganda, Zambia and other countries have realised that Indian support for their protection is going to be limited because India's own capacity to intervene is limited. Even during their crisis, the PIOs themselves did not respond to the Indian offer to come and invest in India and get Indian citizenship. Thirdly, PIOs have historically and politically become a part of African states and the issue of PIO has receded as a major concern. Therefore, it is not surprising that in aggressive diplomatic and economic initiatives of Indian government during the 1970s and 80s the issue of PIO hardly got an important place. Perhaps India learnt through its East African experience that it is unrealistic and counter-productive to expect extra care for South African Indian settlers from South African government as a reciprocal gesture for the Indian contribution to struggle against apartheid. The real test of this policy will come when Indian settlers may have to share the burden of economic and social restructuring programmes in South Africa. Such pressures and demands from black groups have already started surfacing openly. However, because of the long isolation of South Africa from India they will not have, unlike East African Indian a 'dependency' attitude towards India. Therefore, India does not have to respond to a non-existent expectation of PIO. But this does not mean that PIOs have no place in Indian policy.

of Indian Origin in Africa (PIO). In the last fifty years, Indian policies showed a remarkable change though there is continuity as well. The advancement of PIO cause no more seems to be a concern of Indian Government, until the formation of BJP government in 1998. Indian settlers who represented 'mini India' or were 'ambassadors of India' promoting goodwill for India in Africa, turned for India a non-issue or a sensitive issue if not a liability. South African Indians, for whom Mahatma Gandhi struggled in South Africa, whose cause India took to the UN even before becoming independent and sacrificed its substantial trade relations with South Africa was a very special issue for India. For this, even Nehru made deviations from his strongly held policy on Indian settler's abroad but now it became a better-to-avoid issue between Indo-South African interactions. At the same time, cultural identification of PIO, the informal interaction of Indian visitors, holy men, fund collectors and religious activists from Swayam Sewak Sangh still goes on intensely. In other words, India's policy on issue of PIO in Africa has demonstrated both changes and continuities. The following sections would attempt to analyse and highlight the experience of interaction between Indian policies and PIO issues in Africa during the fifty years after Indian independence.

Discriminatory treatment in racially structured society of South Africa had drawn Mahatma Gandhi into active politics when he had gone to South Africa in late 19th century. Later Indian nationalists of all shades had demanded improvement in working and living conditions of Indians settled abroad. Indian settlers protest began to be articulated in East Africa also. The East African Indian National Congress, based on the model of Indian National Congress was founded in 1914. A.M. Jeevanjee had started voicing the grievances of Indian settlers in East Africa. He had gone to the extent of advocating "the annexation of African territory (Tangyanika) to the Indian Empire" arguing that it had been an Asiatic kingdom in ancient times."¹⁵ Indians in Africa formed the middle section in its three-tier society, whites at top and blacks at the bottom. However, their presence was more apparent to Africans as they came directly in contact with them through their retail shops and business. At the same time, they were aggressive in the commercial sector. Elspeth Huxley once observed, "In all countries the backbone of the country is the small man, the White colonialist with small means, but there is no place for him in the country when once the Asiatic is there.... It means if open competition is allowed, the small White colonialist must go to the wall."¹⁶

Jawaharlal Nehru had long ago visualised the clash of interests of Indians and Africans. Though he was more involved with Indians who had migrated to Burma, Malaya and Sri Lanka,¹⁷ it was he who was responsible for evolving Indian's policy towards Indians settled abroad including in Africa. In 1927, when he was appointed secretary of the All India Congress Committee (AICC), an organisation of the Indian National Congress (INC), he prepared a paper 'A Foreign Policy of India' for AICC. In this paper for the first time he categorically outlined the policy of INC regarding Indian settlers in other colonial countries, the role India wanted them to play in their country of adoption and the kind of support they could expect from India. He asked in the paper, "What is the position of Indians of foreign countries to-day?" He said that the Indian overseas went as "a hireling of an exploiter", i.e.,

15 AM Jeevanjee, *An Appeal on behalf of Indians in East Africa* (Bombay 1912)

16 *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 2, (Delhi, 1992) pp. 353-62.

17 The cause of Indians settled in Africa and other places was taken up by Sapru, Shastri, Kunjuru, Maharaj Singh and others.

British government and he wanted this position to be changed. He suggested at another place, that, "an Indian who goes to other countries must co-operate with people of that country and win for himself a position by friendship and service... The Indians should co-operate with Africans and help them, as far as possible and not claim a special position for themselves."¹⁸

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

The agitation of Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa was also confined to the betterment of the Indian settlers' cause. In the succeeding years, the issue of discrimination of Indians in South Africa became a sentimental issue for Indian nationalists, as Mahatma Gandhi was very closely associated with it. Nehru represented the left wing of the Congress. He differed with the conservative wing whose demand was confined only for betterment of Indian overseas. Nehru believed in co-operation between Indians and Africans, however until the late 1940s, his sympathy and worry were also confined only for Indians in South Africa. This contrasted with his general policy of Indian support to combined struggle of Indian settlers and Africans in which African cause was paramount. Nehru's special support to Indian settlers in South Africa was very obvious. In a message to INC of South Africa, Nehru wrote in 1939, "India is weak today and can not do much for her children abroad but she does not forget them and every insult to them is a humiliation and sorrow for her. And a day will come when her long arm will shelter and protect them and *her strength will compel justice for them.*"¹⁹ Those days still appear distant! It is this duality between Nehru's policy and the presence of two wings (conservative and left) in Congress, which help us to understand the change and continuities in Indian support to Indian settlers in Africa. However, by the early 1950's it was Nehru's policy towards East African Indians that ultimately prevailed even in South Africa and other countries.

The Congress had set up an overseas department in 1929 and a slender contact was established with local Congress organisations in South and East Africa. Nehru took over foreign relations when an interim nationalist government was formed under him on 2 September 1946. He took the issue of Indian discrimination in South Africa beyond the Commonwealth to the United Nations. After independence, Nehru expressed his views on the position of Indians in Africa and other places in free India. Speaking in the Constituent Assembly on 8th March 1948 he said, "Now these Indians abroad what are they? Are they Indian citizens - are they going to be citizens of India or not? If they are not, then our interest in them becomes cultural, humanitarian and not political... Either they get the franchise of the nationals of the other country or treat them as Indian minus franchise and ask for them the most favourable treatment given to an alien". He advised Indian immigrants, "If you can not be, and if you are not friendly to the people of that country, come back to India and do not spoil the fair name of India."²⁰

18 See, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (New Delhi, 1972), pp.353-68.

19 *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (Orient Longman, Delhi, 1976), p.618.

20 *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1976) Vol. 9, p.618.

Nehru made it clear in 1950, "In many parts of Africa-East, West, South - there are considerable number of Indians, mostly business people. Our definite instructions to them and to our agent in Africa are that they must always put the interest of indigenous populations first. We want to have no vested interests at the expense of the population of those countries."²¹ He emphasised the same view repeatedly. He said about Indians abroad, "if they adopt the nationality of that country we have no concern with them. Sentimental concern there is, but politically they cease to be Indian nationals."²² Nehru asserted in 1953, "About Africa and Indians there, I may tell you, the policy we have pursued for many years.... We have told them very definitely and precisely that we as government do not encourage or support them in anything they might want and which goes against the interests of the Africans. We have made that perfectly clear."²³ Nehru was very clear any overt move by Indian government for PIO would do more harm than good to them. He was not against people-to-people contacts or non-governmental association. Nevertheless, Nehru also talked about double loyalty of Indians overseas. During the Indo-Chinese war India welcomed contributions from Asians of East Africa to help boost its defence efforts. When questioned on this Nehru told a foreign journalist that - "Indians overseas have dual loyalty, one to their country of adoption and other to their country of origin."²⁴ Further India deplored it as an act of disloyalty when it found that Asians were selling and promoting Chinese made goods at the cost of Indian goods.

Nehru stood for primacy of Africans if their interest was to clash with Indian settlers'. However, when the Asian Relation Conference was organised, two South African Indian leaders - Y.M. Dadoo and GM Naicker were invited but there were no black participants from South Africa. Even during Nehru's prime-ministership when the question of racism in South Africa was taken up in U.N., it was only the case of Indians discrimination in South Africa that was India's concern, though soon India had to change its policy to include black Africans also. This caused great misgiving among Africans.²⁵ Between 1960-66 the gulf between India and Indian settlers abroad widened as India came to believe that Indians were more of an obstacle than an asset in its diplomatic relations with Africa. In the urgency after Chinese attack, it seemed a matter of smaller consequence if PIOs were to face some degree of discrimination.

When Nehru formulated India's position on Indians overseas, most of the countries in Africa were under colonial rule and most of the Indians in Africa were in British colonies. Before independence the Indian concern about the treatment of Indian settlers abroad was with the intention of making British rulers of our country responsible for the welfare of overseas Indians and securing for them fair treatment and justice in relation to White settlers. The assumption that such responsibility continued was occasionally expressed in parliament and press. Immediately after India's independence, Government of India was not in a position to insist on full justice to India settlers in

21 H.S.Chhabra *India & Africa* (New Delhi), p.15.

22 *India's Foreign Policy 1946-61*, p. 130 (Nehru's reply to debate on foreign policy in Lok Sabha, 2 September 1957).

23 H.S.Chhabra *India & Africa* (New Delhi), p.15.

24 See Anirudha Gupta, "India and Asians in East Africa" in Michael Twaddle, ed. *Expulsions of Minority: Essay on Ugandan Asians* (Univ. of London, 1975),.134.

25 See, Ajay Dubey, "Nehru and Indian role in African liberation struggles (1947-64)", *Africa: Journal of African Studies Society of India*. July 1989, P. 27.

Africa. Moreover, the leaders of white settlers in Kenya and South Africa had seen Indian independence as a threat to British rule in Africa. They called Nehru as a Hindu communist who wanted to replace European rule by Indians.²⁶ Their propaganda about India's sinister design on African colonies where Indians were in substantial number, and the image of Indian settlers in Africa as an exclusive community whose only interest in Africa was economic exploitation, made Indian leaders very sensitive on question of Indians overseas. Nehru had other priorities like mobilisation of Afro Asian countries to keep them away from cold war rivalries.²⁷ For such mobilisation, the issue of PIO was not to be emphasised in Africa.

Nehru's policy of exhorting Indians to identify themselves with Africans in East Africa was not based only on his ideological commitment. In Kenya, the presence of Indian settlers was larger than the European community and Kenyan Europeans wanted to keep Kenya as Whiteman's country. A strong anti-Indian campaign was pursued by whites in Africa and several riots broke out in Kenya, Uganda, and South Africa involving Indians and Africans during 1944-49.²⁸ If African's struggle was to be weakened and divided there was the likelihood that white Kenyan settlers could have extended the South African model in East Africa. Therefore, it was necessary that Indian settlers joined hands with blacks in opposing white settlers, even sacrificing their short-term gains.

The fears of British settlers in Africa and the close watch of British government on free India's relations with Indian settlers in Africa became clear in the appointment of Apa B. Pant as Indian High Commissioner to East Africa. The British government received a cable from Sir Philip Mitchell of Kenya that he had been informed by a retired ICS officer, now resident in Kenya, that Pant was "far from being desirable... and is most likely to cause trouble if he comes to East Africa. Indeed I am told that it is not beyond the realm of possibility that he is being sent here for that purpose"²⁹. However, Pant was given clear instructions by Nehru to exhort East African Indians to identify themselves with the Black African cause and not to seek special privileges. Pant's appointment was not welcomed by the British government or colonial governments in East Africa. It was obvious from the very beginning that his pronouncements would be closely watched and scrutinised.

It was to remove these sort of fears that Nehru said in the Constituent Assembly on 9th August 1948, "The Indian Commissioner will not be entitled to discharge consular function in respect of Indians who may not be considered to be (Indian) national, that is permanent resident in those territories or to act as spokesman of such Indians". When the Mau Mau rebellion (1952-53) broke out in Kenya very few Indian settlers in Kenya sided with the Britishers. So they were accused of being with the rebels.

26 Group Captain IR Brigg, the conservative White settler leader in Kenya asserted about India that they want to squeeze us out and make it an Indian colony (*The Times*, London, 4 August 1954). Again South African High Commissioner in London had stated in 1954 "If Nehru could weaken European influence in Africa, then it will mean Africa for Indians." V. Mc Kay *Africa in World Politics* (New York, 1963), p.170.

27 See, Ajay Dubey, "Nehru and Africa in Afro-Asian Solidarity", *Ind-Africana* (Delhi University), vol.2, no.2, pp.38-46.

28 Sadiqu Ali, Shanti, *India and Africa*, pp.32-33 and pp. 51-52.

29 Tinker has given a documented account as how Pant appointment had to face hurdles and delays, for his alleged subversive intentions. Hugh Tinker, *The Banyan Tree: Overseas Empire from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh* (London, 1977), p.318.

“There were few Europeans in Kenya who do not insist that New Delhi through its official and non-official representatives in Africa has encouraged and added the rebellion of Mau-Mau.”³⁰ Apa B Pant was charged in British Parliament for fomenting the Mau-Mau trouble.³¹ Unlike what it did in South Africa, India took a softer stand and recalled Pant under pressure.

During the late 1950s, Indians of East Africa were considered as hurdles in consolidating Indo-African relations. ‘But after Indo-Chinese war of 1962 when Indian isolation was exposed in Africa, Mrs. Indira Gandhi in her capacity as official delegate toured African countries in 1964. She continued to emphasise that Indians settled in Africa must identify themselves completely with the African people and make their fullest contribution to the societies in which they lived. However, as seen by her tour programme in Africa, besides her official engagements, she made it a point not to miss Indian settlers, leaders and members of the community though in certain small locations their numbers did not exceed even fifty.’³² She also called Indian settlers “Ambassadors of India” in Africa. It shows a subtle departure from Nehru policy, as Indian settlers became now a useful instrument for generating goodwill for India. Their position as ambassadors of India implied that they were no more excluded from policy considerations of India. These shifts became more noticeable in many areas when Mrs. Gandhi became the Prime Minister of India. By the second half of the 1960s there was increasing realisation that Indians in Africa whatever passport they may hold should not be put outside India’s Africa policy. This also suited the Indian move of economic diplomacy in Africa and other developing countries as Indian settlers in East Africa had requisite capital and will to share it with Indian economic initiatives in African countries.

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

30 Michael Blundell, *New York Times*, 19 July 1953.

31 Lord Alport raised the question concerning “the contribution made to prevailing conditions of transition and unrest in Kenya during Mau-Mau rebellion by the staff of Indian High Commission office”. Alport demanded that government of India should be asked to withdraw its staff from Kenya. *Britain: House of Commons Debates*, Vol.518, and 29 July 1953.

32 See Ajit S.Gopal, “The Indian Journalist who covered her entire safari”, *World Focus* (No.53, October 1984), p.15.

conference of Parliamentarians of Indian Origin in New Delhi.³³ It issued the PIO card, which provided very substantial advantages to PIOs, compared to other foreign nationals.³⁴ On the side of PIOs also things changed which enabled them to look towards India from a different footing. By the mid 1990s, except in South Africa, PIOs got a long enough time to prove their loyalty to the country of their adoption. They emerged from isolation at home and emerged as a confident identity group. By the 1990s they see no contradiction, after proving their loyalty to their countries, between their citizenship and getting a favourable commercial deal from their countries of origin. After all it is not peculiar to the Indian Diaspora. Many countries have successfully used the presence of different Diaspora community to mobilise economic and diplomatic support for the country.³⁵ In fact by the 1990s, diasporas - Black, Jewish, European, Chinese or Indian are not a centrifugal, sectarian force which needs to be contained or crushed. Rather it has emerged as secular, acceptable identity force at international level. In such a changed scenario the proactive interest of India in the 1990s does not have any element of imperialist design or racist preference as was likely to be construed during Nehru period.

8.8 Conclusion

The Indian Diaspora in Africa has a prominent place in the global Indian diaspora with a population of over 2 millions. They are found mainly in South Africa, East Africa, Central Africa, Western Indian Ocean Islands, and Mauritius. With the exception of the people of Indian Origin in East Africa, most of the Indian diaspora in the continent were indentured plantation workers, which happened during British colonial rule. There are varied experiences of the Indian diaspora in these regions. However, there was a general trend in terms of the kind of transition the Indian diasporas had to undergo. Initially they encountered difficult moments in their struggle for establishing their social position and preserve identity in the host countries. Gradually, due to various factors, significant transformations were brought about in the last fifty years.

8.9 Further Reading

Dubey, Ajay. 2000. "India and experience of Indian Diaspora in Africa." *African Quarterly*.

Tinker, Hugh. 1977. *The Banyan Tree: Overseas Empire from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh*. London: Oxford University Press.

33 This conference was organised by Indian Council of International Co-operation, New Delhi.

34 By paying a one time fee of US\$ one thousand, they can get Multiple entry visas for 20 years. PIO cardholders will have almost all commercial rights as Indian citizens except in case of purchase of agricultural property.

35 Mauritius used the presence of Indians, Europeans, Africans and Chinese for economic and diplomatic gain.

Indian Diaspora in South and Southeast Asia

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Learning Objectives

After going through the Unit, you will be able to:

- comprehend the nuances of Indian diaspora in South and Southeast Asia;
- classify various types of Indian diaspora;
- discuss the emergence of Indian identity; and
- explain the evolving perspective of Indian diaspora.

9.1 Introduction

The Encyclopedia of Social Sciences defines that “diaspora is a Greek term for a nation separated from its own state or territory and dispersed among other nations but preserving its national culture”. In the idea of dispersal and fragmentation and in much of the presumed relationship between the diasporic community and the country (motherland), which they left, the possibility of return remains. This may be true in the context of Jews but the possibility of return is a complex issue in the context of Indian diaspora in South and Southeast Asia.

Indian diaspora is spread in different parts of the world and its number is around 20 million. It is the third largest in the world after the British and the Chinese diaspora. Such persons are prosperous in the US, Mauritius, Singapore and Thailand but struggling very hard in Myanmar, Fiji, Malaysia and Sri Lanka.

Indian diaspora became important for India when the policy of command economy was replaced by market economy. India became sensitive about the challenges of the new world order and evolved the policy of “Look East” to promote strategic and economic ties with Asia-Pacific. In that endeavour, it was found that Indian diaspora had immense potential to support Indian contacts with East Asian neighbours. As the Chinese diaspora greatly contributed to the development of new economic zones in China, so it can be similarly expected from the Indian diaspora if the necessary infrastructure

is evolved. Indian diaspora in the ASEAN region (a region of the “Association of South East Asian Nations”) is resourceful and capable of facilitating India’s connections with the countries of their adoption.

9.2 Understanding Indian Diaspora

Indians have gone overseas as travellers, labourers and businessmen in the past, but in the wake of partition of the country in 1947, millions went from one part of the subcontinent to another. There was exodus of Indian Muslims to Pakistan, where they are known as Mohajirs. Despite having a common religion, their integration with the native population remains a distant dream. There was exodus of Hindus from Pakistan to India and they also faced problems in adjusting with the new environment. India, which emerged as a secular state and stood against the “Two-Nation Theory” provided religious freedom to all its citizens and tried to rehabilitate displaced persons without discriminating against their ethnicity and religious affiliations. All those who migrated from India to settle elsewhere were projected as its diaspora.

Hindus who migrated from Pakistan to India and Muslims who migrated from India to Pakistan are nostalgic about their ethnicity and place of origin. Both of them are in the category of diaspora and it is a sensitive matter to project them whether they are Pakistani diaspora or Indian.

Dilemmas about Diaspora

There are outstanding issues and dilemmas about the diasporic community in the South Asian context. For instance, East Bengal became Pakistan after independence, and it emerged, as a new nation of Bangladesh in 1971. The people of Bangladesh are known as Bangladeshis but Bengalis in general parlance. They have migrated to Assam and other parts of India in recent years. It is debatable to project them Indian diaspora, but Bengalis are an essential part of Indian civilization. There has been exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from the Kashmir valley. They have been dispossessed of their properties and they are struggling for their shelter. Can they be projected as a diasporic community even if they inhabit the same country?

There are groups of Punjabis, Sikhs and Gujaratis who have migrated in different directions of the world more than once. Fijians of Indian origin have migrated to Australia and New Zealand after Lt. Col. Sitiveni Rabuka staged a coup d’etat in 1987. Sindh is an important part of Pakistan and Sindhis are proud of claiming their Indianess outside. A large Indian diaspora in the region emigrated from one country to another and they have forgotten their native language also. The section of Indian diaspora, which is “twice migrant” have lost touch with India. For the host country, they may be projected as Indians, but they are fragmented and have very little to share especially with those groups, who are “twice migrant” from two or three countries respectively.

They do not speak the same language, or visit the same temple and hardly intermarry. As a supporter of “Unity in diversity”, India may project them as Indian diaspora, but it is difficult to categorise them as an India-centric homogenous group.

Diaspora Affluence

The Indian diaspora is affluent not only in the US, Mauritius and the Caribbean,

but they are also influential in Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines. There are two types of diaspora in the ASEAN region of which one is affluent and another is striving to be affluent. They need interaction with the motherland for business, trade and religious purposes. It is also felt that if India has to play a constructive role at the international level, the feedback of the diasporic community and their support is solicited. Indian diaspora is playing an important role in the ASEAN economy and they are trusted by the local leaders. It was the Indian diaspora with whose mediation various indigenous groups in Southeast Asian region were supporting the Indian National Army (INA) of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. They had kept affiliation with Indian National Congress and supported the anti-colonial struggle. However when India became independent and pursued a non-alignment policy, it was not within their framework to support the diasporic community more openly. Its socialistic drives and nationalization policies deterred the investors, but the situation started changing in the post-liberalisation era. The influence of the diaspora on Indian decision-making could not be ignored and overseas Indians were ready to reciprocate. The Indian diaspora are applauded for developments in India for science, technology, human resources, and for extending support to bring together business network to forge closer linkages with the country of their adoption.

Diaspora Policy in the past

India had been very circumspect regarding its policies towards its diaspora in South and Southeast Asia. From Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, the advice to Indian diaspora was to integrate in the mainstream of national life of the countries of their adoption. It could not exercise its diplomatic influence to deter democratic Burma under U Nu from its anti-Indian crusades. The Citizenship Act (1948) was tailor-made to deprive Indians of Burmese citizenship. Naturally when General Ne win usurped power in 1962 and nationalized the properties of Indians, India was unable to restrain military rulers. There was turmoil and unrest in Bangladesh and Pakistan, but the Indian government viewed these developments as too sensitive to express its opinion. The political developments in Burma had wide-ranging repercussions. Indians, who were affluent in business and trade, were evicted and subsequently Burma turned from a rich to a poor country of Southeast Asia.

If Burma was compelled to embrace friendship with the Chinese, it was because of its poor economic situation. The Chinese have filled up the vacuum created after the eviction of Indians and today they are powerful element in the politics and economy of Burma.

India has overlooked the plight of the Indian diaspora in its neighbourhood in the post-independence era. As India's unity was challenged on regional, linguistic and religious considerations it was engaged in putting its own house in order. It believed that if it supports the integrative drives of its neighbours, others would also reciprocate the gesture. It was one of the reasons that India decided to support Singalese in Sri Lanka against militant Tamils in 1987. India dispatched its troops to fight against Tamils (LTTE). These steps proved counterproductive. It neither subdued the Tamils nor did it create any good will for India in the neighbourhood. Pakistan's crusade for Kashmir was intensified and external agents of destabilization became active against India.

India's "inaction" in Burma (1948-1962) and its "Pro-active" role in Sri Lanka (1987-88) vis-à-vis its diaspora lacked vision and rationality. India was criticized for its inaction in Burma and its was condemned for its action in Sri Lanka. These events gave wrong signals and complicated the process of conflict resolution.

India began to attach importance to its diasporic community with sensitivity and care in the era of liberalization. When India opened its markets and the economic situation and global competition became matters of concern, it became necessary to review its perspectives and policies in the light of new developments. India needed infrastructure and in that endeavour "Foreign Direct Investment" (FDI) was required. It was only thereafter that the importance of overseas Indians was emphasised and high-powered committee under L.M. Singhvi was established to understand the problems and perspectives of Indian diaspora.

India overhauled its economic policies to create an attractive economic environment. It offered tax holidays and removal of tariff barriers. It assured its support for free trade and promote economic integration with Asia-Pacific. Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee offered special incentives to the Indian diaspora and assured them he would create special economic zones for their project of dual citizenship facility and full solidarity. He gave the idea of celebrating Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas every year, which has proved useful in establishing rapport and understanding with the diasporic community.

The changes in the economic policies and friendly gestures for the diaspora were widely appreciated. India, which was welcomed as the dialogue partner of ASEAN, and partnership with ARF ("ASEAN Regional Forum") was happy to cultivate its diaspora. It was believed that with the assistance and support of NRIs in the ASEAN region, the objectives of Mekong-Ganga project and BIMST-EC ("Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Srilanka, Thailand Economic Co-operation") would be achievable. In all those endeavours and to assure fruitful partnership, the feedback and support of diaspora are crucial.

9.3 Categorising Indian Diaspora

Indian diaspora is of different types. In order to understand it, we need to understand various categories of Indian diaspora. They are known as Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), Persons of Indian Origin (PIO), Persons Resident in India (PRI) and Overseas Indians and each term has a different legal connotation.

NRIs & PIOs

According to the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) 1999, which came into effect from 1 June 2000, an NRI is an Indian Passport holder who stays outside India on employment, business or vocation or for any other purpose for more than 182 days in a financial year. The 182 days need not be continuous. On the other hand, a PIO is a person, who while not being a citizen of Pakistan or Bangladesh, shall be deemed to be of Indian origin if he or either of his parents or any of his grand parents was a citizen of India by virtue of the Indian Constitution or Citizenship Act of 1955. Foreign wives of Indian citizens are treated as PIO, though they don't have Indian parentage. Indians who emigrated as indentured labourers during the British colonial period also come under this category. The concentration of PIOs is high in countries like Malaysia. An NRI will become a PIO if he acquires the citizenship of another country. Because there was no provision for dual

citizenship under the Indian Constitution before 2004, they were unable to get Indian citizenship. But now the situation has changed and the facility of dual citizenship can be attained.

PRI & overseas Indians

The next category is the PRI. Persons Resident in India are those Indian citizens who go to foreign countries for higher studies, educational training, medical treatment or my other purpose indicating their intention of not staying outside the country for an uncertain period. Indian students abroad who take up jobs on completion of their education abroad would attain the PRI status from the day of joining the employment.

The concept of Overseas Indians emerged during the 20th century when the plight of the Indian emigrants overseas kindled a strong political protest in India against the British Indian government's attitude towards them because India was then a part of the British empire and all in India and overseas were said to be the British subjects.

Generally speaking, the term PIO and NRI have been used interchangeably by the Government of India (GoI) in Parliamentary debates and other official literature as well as by the Indian Press. There are different categories of migrant Indians; this includes emigrants under the British colonial system including indentured labourers and free passage migrants to Southeast Asia and the Caribbean countries. Free passage/commercial emigrants are those who left India after independence for higher education and better jobs in the U.K., the U.S. and Australia and the labour migrants in the Gulf countries to this day.

9.4 The Problem about Indian Diaspora

The problem of the Government of India is that it tries to group the Indian diaspora under one definition. This is the principal reason why the debate on dual nationality has stagnated. If a PIO has the inherent right to apply for Indian citizenship and is allowed to maintain his or her other nationality, it would also by default allow Pakistanis or Bangladeshis to seek Indian citizenship.

From time immemorial, Indians have migrated from India to different parts of the world. Indian diaspora comprises persons who migrated both involuntarily and voluntarily, namely, the PIOs, NRIs and the stateless persons of Indian origin. The present government's classification of the Overseas Indian communities into Indian citizens, PIOs and stateless persons can be collectively referred to as the Indian diaspora. Therefore, a multi-layered, broad and all encompassing definition is required. An accurate definition or acronym for the Indian diaspora is difficult to come by.

In the Southeast Asian region, the Overseas Indians invited their families to their countries of settlement and started family-owned shops. They built railroads and involved in development of port facilities. PIO constituted a significant number in Burma where they were involved in money lending and bureaucracy. They also worked as watchmen, prison officers, school teachers, etc.

In South Asia, Sri Lanka accounts for a large number of PIO. Here, they are called Indian Tamils. In Nepal, the skilled and unskilled labourers are called *Madhesias*. In West Asia, Kuwait has a large number of Indian emigrants, who

are involved in skilled and unskilled labour. They also work as drivers, nurses, and housemaid. Bachelors alone can stay on temporary contracts. They cannot bring their family. They are not allowed to settle permanently.

9.5 Indian Diaspora in South Asia

India encompasses a vast territory inhabiting a large number of ethnic groups. The Punjabis, Nepalese, Gujaratis, Sindhis, Biharis and Marwaris are spread into different parts of South Asia. Their ethnicity and primordial loyalties are not monolithic, but they are Indians in temperament and outlook. The British colonial masters had facilitated the movement of Indian diaspora through indentured labour system, Kangani or Maistry system and finally when they transferred sovereignty to the natives, various nationalities took their shape in different countries. India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Nepal and Maldives emerged as separate independent nations. The regions of Bengal and Punjab, the main Centre of India's nationalist movement is divided and is the constituent units of Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. Though all the nations have tried to establish separate identities, it is difficult to bifurcate their culture from Indian civilization, if they are outside the sub-continent, they are an essential component of Indian diaspora. Although it is debatable but people of the subcontinent have similarities and the people of South Asia, outside the territory of India, may be called diasporic.

Burma had been a part of British India from 1824 to 1937 and ruled from Calcutta and New Delhi respectively. The Britishers encouraged Indian farmers and labourers to go to Burma for farming and trade. Indians found this venture profitable. There was large-scale emigration of Indians to Burma. Subsequently they ultimately preferred to settle down in that country. But when Burma became independent Indians were projected as foreigners and their properties and businesses were nationalized. Similarly Sri Lanka had been governed from Madras during the colonial period till 1802. There were frequent movement of the people from Madras to Colombo and a large section of Tamils stayed back in that country. Sri Lanka discriminated them from Sinhalese and projected them as illegal immigrants. Similarly a large number of population in the Tarai region of Nepal are considered alien. Indians treat Himalayan mountain ranges as sacred and sacrosanct on religious grounds and have been visiting Nepal from time immemorial. The socio-economic interaction with Nepal is so deep-rooted and overwhelming that isolation of Indians from Newaris or Gurkhas and vice versa is impossible. Moreover the Janakpur and Birat Nagar regions are inhabited by Madhesiyas and they play an important role in the national life of the country.

Indian diaspora in South Asia have been influenced by the Indian way of life and they are sensitive about their culture, religion and ethnic genealogy. Their marriages with other groups, especially of tribal descent, are abhorred. Indians endeavour to maintain their separate ethnic identity and therefore their patriotism towards the country of their adoption are questioned. Moreover, it has been a common trend in South Asia to criticize India at various forums to project their own separate identity. Indian diaspora in South Asia has suffered because of irrationality in nation building and integrationist drives pursued by the governments in Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. In all those countries, a particular ethnic or religious group, which wants to establish their preponderance in the political system,

comes out with parochial ideas of discrimination, on religious, caste and ethnic considerations. The Sinhalese versus the Tamils, Hindus versus Muslims and Newaris versus Madhesias etc. are the endeavour of assertions of one community over another.

India has tried to convey that its diaspora should forge harmonious relations with natives of the country of their adoption, without demanding any special rights and privileges. It wanted that the Indian diaspora should evolve a practical approach to be integrated in the mainstream of national life. It never spoke about any guarantees of support if its diaspora was discriminated at the political and economic levels in the countries of their adoption. In fact, it remained silent when Indians faced discrimination vis-à-vis the natives in Burma, Malaysia and Fiji. This was in sharp contrast to the Chinese attitudes, which support their diaspora more openly. When Vietnam discriminated against and persecuted Hoas (ethnic Chinese in Vietnam), China displayed its disapproval by dispatching its troops, to teach a lesson to Vietnam. India has merely used its moral and diplomatic influence to support its diaspora, which is insufficient and too little to make any significant impact to address the problems of the diaspora.

The attitude of Indian government is changing in the post-cold war era. Indian diaspora is viewed as an important asset in enhancing its economic interests. A new policy towards Indian diaspora takes into account their economic contribution to India. According to the Economic Survey 2000-2001 and Reserve Bank of India's Annual Report 2000-2001, the NRI deposit during April-September 2000 in India was 1,362 million US dollars.

9.6 Indian Diaspora in Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia, known as 'Subarnabhumi' ('golden hand' or 'land of gold') in the ancient past was frequently visited by Indians for business, trade and missionary activities. Indian culture is prevalent in art and architecture, language and literature, religion, customs and traditions of most of the countries. The famous temples of Angkor Wat (Kampuchea), Borobudur (Indonesia), Emerald Buddha (Thailand) etc. prove our connections and the epic of Ramayana and Mahabharata in different versions in the region indicates our cultural influence and interaction from that region from time immemorial. Streams of Indians have been going to that area but some of those who went under indentured labour system or Kangani system, stayed back. These people played crucial role in the production of sugar, tea, coffee, cocoa, rice, tobacco and rubber. Since Southeast Asia is located at the doorstep and labourers were getting different types of incentives by the colonial rulers, Indians were very enthusiastic to go there for their bread and butter. During 1852 to 1937, about 2 million Indians went to Malaya and nearly 2.5 million went to Burma. Besides Malaya and Burma, thousands of Indians went to Siam, Sumatra, Java and the Philippines especially after the economic depression of 1929. A number of people from Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Gujarat, Madras and Bombay transmigrated. The Marwaris from Rajputana, Chettiars from Madras, the Punjabis from Gujranwala went towards Rangoon, Bangkok and Singapore respectively and they played important roles in the economic spheres of those countries. Although they faced stiff competition from the Chinese business circles the hurdles did not deter them. The bulk of Indian diaspora are located in Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand as their contribution in the national economy have been regarded positive by their political masters.

There are three types of Indian diaspora in Southeast Asia, namely NRIs, PIOs and state-less Indians. The largest number of NRIs are in Singapore (90 thousand), followed by Malaysia (15 thousand) Thailand (15 thousand), Brunei (7 thousand), Myanmar (2 thousand), the Philippines (2 thousand), Indonesia (500), Vietnam (320) Cambodia (150) and Laos (107). The number of PIOs is largest in Myanmar (25,00,000) followed by Malaysia (16,00,000) Singapore (2,17,000). Thailand (70,000) and Indonesia (50,000). The number of stateless Indians is largest in Myanmar (4,00,000) and Malaysia (50,000). The citizenship laws in Myanmar and Malaysia are difficult especially for Indians. The knowledge of language, customs, traditions and residential criteria are difficult to be fulfilled and there are ethnic lobbies to work against them.

As far as Indo-China is concerned, the number of Indian diaspora is small. Although India was very close to all the three countries, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia during the cold war years, yet Indians did not prefer to stay there for long. The total number of NRIs and PIOs in Vietnam are 320, followed by Laos 115 and in Cambodia 300. In fact, that area was a battleground between communist and anti-communist forces. All the three had been supporting nationalization campaigns for decades and business opportunities were limited.

Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia on the other hand, offered business opportunities. Indians found it profitable to go there for trade, investments, and jobs. In Brunei, the number of Indian doctors, engineers and teachers is around 3000 and they are famous for their hard work and professionalism. On the other hand, Indians have been associated with textile industries in Indonesia. The bulk of investors in textile business is Sindhis whereas the Sikhs are engaged in the sports goods business. The contribution of Indians in IT, medical, accounting and law are appreciated and incentives are offered to take their services. Such professionals are also in demand in Malaysia, but a majority of the diaspora are engaged in rubber and palm plantations. Their economic situation and literacy rates are low compared to Indian diaspora in other parts of Southeast Asia.

The position of the Indian diaspora in the Philippines is encouraging. The Sindhi community is engaged in trade and manufacturing whereas Punjabis are dealing in money lending. Manila has been treated as an important conduit to immigrate to the United States and services of Indian professionals are appreciated. However, Singapore is the most favoured destination of the Indian diaspora despite Singapore's prohibitive immigration laws. Tamils, Malayalis, Sindhis, Gujaratis and Punjabis are the major components of the Indian diaspora and they are involved not only in business and trade but also in civil services, the judicial system and educational institutions. Besides traditional business, Indians are contributing in the advancement of knowledge in IT, medical sciences and pharmaceutical research. Their role in transforming Singapore, as the economic hub has been recognised and their professional inputs are widely appreciated.

Indian diaspora in Thailand is respected for its knowledge and skills. The largest number of Indian diaspora in Thailand is Sikhs followed by Sindhis, Punjabis, Tamils and Purabias. They have been traditionally engaged in textile business. Some of them are also dealing in real estates and jewellery sectors. On the other hand, the services of Indian professionals, IT experts and skilled personnel are in great demand in international financial institutions and MNCs based in Bangkok. Indian diaspora feel at home in that country and some of them have assumed Thai names and a Thai way of life. Inter-

marriage between Indian and Thai nationals, which was not allowed in the past, is permitted now. The level of socio-economic interaction with the natives is ideal.

9.7 Evolving Perspective

Indian diaspora has a mature perspective to co-exist in the countries of their adoption. If they had a weakness to look towards India in the past, it was because most of them had emigrated with the support of the Britishers and Britain was the common colonial master. The Congress Party was a nationalist party to act as a safety valve to articulate the grievances of the people and the diasporic community wanted to express their grievances through that party. The Congress party under Mahatma Gandhi had effectively argued the case of the Indian diaspora in South Africa, Fiji and Burma during the colonial era. Indian diaspora was indebted to Mahatma Gandhi for what he had done against apartheid in South Africa and indentured labour system in Fiji. It was for this reason that they were politically affiliated with developments in India. But when the Britishers transferred sovereignty to India and other countries in the region, the situation started changing. Although, it took some time, gradually they de-linked their political affiliation with the parties in the motherland.

When India became independent, it could not fulfill the expectations of Indians in Burma, Malaysia and Fiji. India advised its diaspora to adjust and co-exist with the natives and evolve indigenous solution to resolve their problems. It was made clear to the diaspora that Indian government will not mediate and if they have to survive in the countries of their adoption, they have to seek political and economic affiliation with the natives. This proved painful in some cases, but it also helped integrationist drives. Indian diaspora in the ASEAN region are thus changed their perspective and evolved professional values, to play a useful role in the culture and economic life of the countries of their adoption.

The post-independence era has witnessed the struggle for national identity and ethnic assertion. The nation building activity, which began with the dawn of freedom, is continuing. India with a plural society supported "Unity in diversity" and tolerated ethnic, religious and linguistic diversities. Its own problems were gigantic in proportion and its advice was not solicited in the politics of the region.

After 1947 Prime Minister Nehru suggested that the overseas Indians should identify themselves with the aspiration of the local population. The assumption was that such a course would facilitate the building of bonds between the overseas Indians and native population and contribute to healthy relations between the two. India's policy since 1947 has been determined by this very assumption.

Presently the world is changing rapidly in view of globalisation. The countries of Asia-Pacific have to evolve a common strategy and the diasporic community can act as a facilitator in that process. Indian diaspora in the ASEAN region is inadvertently endowed to play the diplomatic role of a facilitator so that the countries of Asia-Pacific comes closer to face the challenges of the new world order and contribute to the emergence of an "Asia Century" in the near future.

Box 9.1: Important Lessons

- The number of Indian diaspora in the ASEAN region are estimated about 2 million, but their figures for South Asia are difficult to be mentioned. Most of the new nations in South Asia are trying to carve out a separate identity for themselves, which may prove different from India.
- Indian diaspora is fragmented along caste, religion, region and ethnic lines. A Sikh in the ASEAN region or a Muslim or a Sindhi or Gujarati have their own separate cultural and political affiliations.
- Most of the Indian diasporic community is inhabited in the capital cities of ASEAN. Bangkok, Singapore, Manila, KLM Bandar Seri Begawan and Jakarta have been their favoured destination and they are connected with business and commerce.
- Indian diaspora have played important role in the ASEAN boom. Their contribution in IT sectors, construction business, textile industries and human resource developments are appreciated.
- The diasporic community has supported the transformation of India from command economy to market economy. It is in the economic area that they are willing to cooperate and coordinate contacts between India and the countries of their adoption.
- ASEAN region have proximity with India. We share common maritime borders with Indonesia, Thailand and Myanmar. We also share common land frontiers of 1600 kilometres with Myanmar. We are willing to establish growth areas on the common frontiers and develop Andamans as an important trading Centre. Indian diaspora can provide important input in those directions if the proposals are mutually beneficial.

9.8 Conclusion

In short, most of the Indian diaspora in the ASEAN region are skilled people, who are gradually integrating with the mainstream of national life. They are no longer disliked even in Myanmar and Malaysia now. Their role in the economic life of the countries of their adoption are substantial and they have proved themselves relevant for the countries in the region.

Indians remain a heterogeneous group with their loyalty and allegiance towards their own ethnic community, religious institutions, customs and traditions in conjunction with the customs and traditions of the countries of their adoption. They are no longer India-centric. Sikhs or Muslims or Buddhists identify themselves with their respective religions. On the other hand, Sindhi, Tamil, Bengali or Bhojpuri communities differ in their life style, culture and rituals. They have affiliation with their ethnic groups and they have proved themselves assimilative, permissive and accommodative in recent years.

9.9 Further Reading

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Indian Diaspora in Europe

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Learning objectives

After reading this Unit, you will be able to describe:

- the distribution of Indian diasporas in Europe;
- background of Indian diasporas in Europe; and the
- profile of the Indian Diaspora in the UK.

10.1 Introduction

The Indian Diaspora is the third largest Diaspora in the world following the British and the Chinese. The over 20 million Indian diasporic population is spread over all the continents. In Europe, the strength of the Indian Diaspora is very large with a staggering share of about 5-8 % of the total population of Europe. In fact, the Indian Diaspora is spread over a large section of Europe, particularly in West Europe. The United Kingdom (UK) is said to have the single largest Indian Diaspora in Europe.

There are two main characteristic features of the Indian Diaspora in Europe: *one*, the emigration took place primarily in the second half of the 20th century; *two*, the emigration is based mainly on professional and skilled labour in various fields and sectors.

Europe comprises forty-five countries. It has the largest economy in the world. In the recent past, with the emergence of a unified political entity called *European Union* (EU) in November 1, 1993, a majority of the erstwhile countries of Europe have become members of the Union. At present, the EU has twenty-five member states.¹ The Indian Diaspora in Europe is mainly found in the countries of the EU. Therefore, much of the discussions on the profile of Indian Diaspora in Europe need to focus on some of the countries of the EU.

10.2 Distribution of Indian Diaspora in Europe

The Indian diaspora is distributed in various countries of Europe. The presence of Indian diasporics (both PIOs and NRIs) in Europe varies from country to country. There are countries with large Indian diaspora presence while in many other countries the presence is relatively low. The figures in Table 10.1

¹ The names of the European Union member states are: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, UK (as of May 2006).

would give us some idea about the general picture of the demographic strengths of 'People of Indian Origin' (PIOs) and 'Non-Resident Indians' (NRIs) in Europe. In terms of demographic strengths of the presence of Indian diasporics we can loosely club the host countries into the following three categories for analytical purposes. In the first category, we have countries where there is a large presence of Indian population, such as, the UK, Netherlands, Italy, Portugal and France.² The Indian diasporics in the UK is exceptionally high with a population of about 1.2 million. The Netherlands rank second with a good strength of over 2 lakh Indian population. The remaining three countries vary from around 65,000 to 71,500.³ The Indian emigrants in these countries primarily consist of businessmen, jewelry dealers, craftsmen, doctors, engineers, computer programmers and academicians.

Table 10.1: Indian Diaspora in Europe

No.	Country	Population (million)	PIOs	NRIs	Stateless	% of Population	
1.	Armenia	3.7		200		0.005	
2.	Austria	8.1	3005	8940		0.154	
3.	Belgium	10.2		7000		0.069	
4.	Bulgaria	8.2		20		0.003	
5.	Cyprus	0.7		300		0.460	
6.	Denmark	5.3	900	1252		0.040	
7.	Finland	5.2	410	750	10	0.220	
8.	France	58.8	55000	10000		0.110	
9.	Germany	82.0	10000	25000		0.042	
10.	Greece	10.3		7000		0.050	
11.	Ireland	3.7	600	1000		0.027	
12.	Italy	57.4	36000	35500		0.063	
13.	Netherlands	15.9	200000	15000		1.350	
14.	Norway	4.4		5630		0.127	
15.	Poland	38.6	75	750		0.002	
16.	Portugal	10.0	65000	5000		0.700	
17.	Russia	145.6	44	16000		0.010	
18.	Slovakia	5.4		100		0.001	
19.	Spain	40.0	16000	13000		0.040	
20.	Sweden	8.9	9000	2000		0.012	
21.	Switzerland	7.2	8400	4800	300	0.117	
22.	Ukraine	49.0		3400		0.069	
23.	U.K	56.9 (Total PIOs + NRIs = 1,200,000 approximately)*					2.109

* Exact figures of NRIs and PIOs not available. Total number of Indians is currently estimated to be 1.2m.

(Source: See MEAs, 2001)

In the second category, there are countries with a medium range Indian population ranging from 1000 (in Finland) to 35,000 (in Germany). They are: Germany, Spain, Russia, Switzerland, Sweden, Austria, Belgium, Greece, Norway, Ukraine, Denmark, Ireland and Finland. In these countries, the Indian emigrants mainly comprise industrialists in the sectors of fashion designing,

2 The countries are listed in descending order of population strengths.

3 The figures used for this analysis are taken from the reports of the MEAs, 2001.

garment making and textile designing, computer professionals, doctors, engineers, academicians, semi-skilled and unskilled labourers.

In the third category, there are European countries with a minimum Indian population. They are Poland, Cyprus, Armenia, Slovakia and Bulgaria.⁴ The strengths of Indian presence in these countries range from 20 to 825. These Indian emigrants primarily comprise businessmen, doctors and engineers. There are also illegal Indian emigrants in these countries in semi-skilled and unskilled labour sector.

Most of the Indian populations in Europe, especially in the countries of the first two categories mentioned above, largely live in or near the urban centers, primarily the capital cities or the regional headquarters. They have a good concentration in the capital cities. For instance, London has a concentration of 41 %, Paris (85%), Brussels (45%), Berlin (43%) and Amsterdam (49%). The other regional headquarters and industrial towns have lesser concentrations, such as, Manchester with 19%, Cardiff (16.1%), Edinburgh (16.9%), Dresden (11%), Dusseldorf (10.1%),⁵ Antwerp (41%), Lyons (9%), and Grenobles (8%)⁶ to cite a few examples.

In these countries, most of the Indian population is employed in the services sector. The gap between employment and unemployment is quite high. Generally, the gap between the male and female employment situation is immense. In countries like Germany, France and Netherlands, the immigration laws wherein the spouse visa restricts employment of the concerned persons, result in a gender imbalanced employment condition. In the United Kingdom and Belgium the lack of available alternative child and elderly care creates a constraint in the female employment rates.⁷

In the realm of religion, there is also diversity in the concentration of Indian diaspora in different countries of Europe. Nevertheless, there is a general trend where the Hindus are in majority in most of the countries. However, there is a sizeable proportion of Indian Muslims and Sikhs in the Netherlands and the UK. Besides the Hindus, Muslims and the Sikhs there is also the presence of other religious groups such as Christians.

10.3 Background of Indian Diaspora in Europe

The history of Indian diaspora in Europe can be discussed under two eras. The first era consists of the period from ancient times till World War II, while the second era would deal with the post-World War II situation. The two eras may be considered respectively as '*old diaspora*' (or pre-modern diaspora) and '*new diaspora*' (or modern diaspora).

Indian emigration in pre-World War II

The Indian connection with Europe could be dated back to the 10th century B.C. There were evidences of trade and commerce being carried out between the peoples of the Indian sub-continent and Europe. The Indus River and the Gulf of Persia were said to be important points of passage of ships. The Old Testament Bible also mentions the import of spices, ivory, and peacocks

4 There could be some other countries Europe with minimum Indian Population, but they could not be mentioned here due to unavailability of data.

5 Census of Germany, 2001.

6 Census of France 2001 (See www.insee.org).

7 See Census of UK 2001- "Men and Women, Equal Opportunities Office."

from India. The queen of Sheba is said to have procured spices from India and gifted to the King Solomon. Several Indian rulers sent emissaries to Rome and trade flourished between the two kingdoms more than two thousand years ago. Indian literature and science had also influenced the Western societies. For instance, the Greeks learnt from Indian science, especially the medical sciences and arithmetic. Europeans learnt of the concept of Zero invented by Indian mathematicians. The Panchatantra was translated in the 6th Century A.D. from Sanskrit to Latin, Spanish, Italian and other European languages. Indian philosophy was greatly admired by German philosophers and writers including Kant, Hegel, Goethe, and more recently the humanist Herman Hesse, who recognised that India was a major civilisation. There were Indologists of great repute such as Max Mueller.⁸

The connection of Indian diaspora in Europe is also found in the lists and histories of traders of pearl, gold, diamond and semi precious stones, muslin cloth, supplying the royal houses of France, UK, Netherlands, Portugal, Germany and Belgium along with the various nobles who patronized them. Amongst those who immigrated to these nations, and especially UK and France were 'students, seafarers, cricketers, and housemaids'.⁹ Also present in the diasporic community of that time were the exiled princes of India, the most noted of whom was Dileep Singh, a Sikh prince who had an estate in East Anglia. In France, the first contact was with Prince Dwarka Nath Tagore, who had been invited to Louis Phillip's court.¹⁰ Here contact was established between Prince Tagore and Eugene Burnouf, one of the noted French Indianists who was the teacher of the famed German Indianist Max Mueller. Dwarka Nath Tagore, Rabindra Nath Tagore's father had also given a vocal recital and Teophile Gautier, a French writer of the nineteenth century had also noted that Indian dance performances were held in Paris in 1836. It is also said that Prince Tagore had visited England, Germany and Belgium on his visit to the European continent.

By the 19th century onwards, the colonialists in India- British, French, Dutch and Portuguese brought about migration of Indians in a significant way, mostly as indentured labour (a kind of slavery),¹¹ including traders, teachers, clerks, etc. to the European colonies. The emigration of indentured labourers to European colonies was to primarily fill up the vacuum of the liberated African slaves in plantations after the ban on the practice of slavery. Amongst the traders, people settled in Europe (Paris) was also one Ratanji Dadabhoy Tata, whose second son was J. R. D. Tata, one of India's famous industrialists'. Due to sustained cultural exchanges between India and the European nations, particularly, the UK, France and Belgium, and the founding of institutions for Indian studies in some of these countries, some Indian artists were attracted to make frequent visits to these countries. In the process, some of these artists opted to settle in the host countries. As a case in point, Amrita Sher Gill, an eminent artist and the first Asian to receive international consecration attributed by the *Grand Salon* for one of her paintings, *Conversation*, Uday Shankar and Alauddin Khan was one of the settlers in Europe.

⁸ Refer Narayan, 1999; MEAs, 2001; Abraham, 1993.

⁹ See Tatla, 2003.

¹⁰ Berthet, 2003.

¹¹ Indentured labourers are like slaves who have been engaged in work (mainly plantation) under captivity in the European colonies. The contract period generally varies from 3 to 5 years. It is said that the first indenture labour system began sometime in 1830s in Mauritius, Uganda and Nigeria. Cf. Bhat et al, 2002.

In another significant situation, the indentured Indian labourers among others, in various European colonies went through a second emigration process due to a political 'power-shift' brought about in the host countries in favour of the native peoples. Following the emergence of aggressive nationalistic regimes in several countries in Africa, the Asia-Pacific and Latin America after they achieved independence, a significant proportion of these Indian communities migrated to the colonial centres. Thus Surinamese Indians went to the Netherlands; Indians from Madagascar, Mauritius and Indo-China went to France; Indians from Mozambique and Angola went to Portugal and Indians from East Africa went to the UK. The immigration of Indians to these countries during the colonial days was also facilitated by business and family ties and through exposure to metropolitan centers while receiving their education.¹²

Indian emigration in post-World War II

The second wave of Indian migration to European countries began after World War II. This wave is also known as the 'new diaspora'. Indian migration began during this period largely in response to demand for cheap labour and professionals for the post World War II economic reconstruction in West Europe. The high rate of Indian emigration to Europe during the 1960s and 1970s was also mainly because of the relaxation of immigration laws of the welcoming countries for both skilled and unskilled labour. The Indian emigrants during the period consist of mainly the educated and professional talents from urban middle class families. It was a kind of 'brain drain' situation even though the unskilled labour were also still part of the labour system.

The UK, France, Netherlands, Belgium, Portugal and Germany were some of the main destinations of the Indian diaspora in Europe. In the United Kingdom, the settlers were workers primarily in the industrial sector and small retail traders, personified in the small street corner grocery shops. Shops owned by Indians are estimated at 20,000 out of total 46,000, constituting about 70% of the corner shops.¹³ Many were construction labourers and transportation workers. Amongst the skilled professionals, the most prominent were the doctors, who today have become the most visible face of the National Health Service in the UK, accounting for about 16% to 20% of the total medical work force.

Portugal has a relatively large Indian community owing to its colonial connections with India. The bulk of the Indian emigrants in Portugal (PIOs) hail mostly from Mozambique, whose ancestors were once part of the Portuguese colonial administration from Goa. Gujarati traders followed them from Daman and Diu. The Indian emigrants were mainly engaged as junior administrators, teachers and doctors. The Goan emigrants in Portugal were soon assimilated into the Portuguese society due to their Catholic background and knowledge of Portuguese language and their culture.

France has also a large population of Indian emigrants. The Indian emigrants were primarily traders and skilled professionals, such as scientists, doctors and engineers. Traditionally, France has been regarded as a seat of arts and aesthetics and this has been maintained as training in art, sculpture, literature and design, and draw some of the brightest from the Indian shores. However, the bulk of immigrants in France too were skilled and unskilled workers from India. People of India who were former residents of the French colonies in

¹² Refer MEAs, 2001.

¹³ Tatler, Op cit.

India and Africa also migrated to France, contributing to the growth of the Indian diaspora community.

The Netherlands witnessed the migration of a major portion of the Indian Surinamese who had been taken to Suriname as indentured labour. They formed the main body of the diasporic community in the Netherlands. Later on, skilled professionals, especially in the field of remote sensing technology, software and IT professionals, doctors and social scientists have migrated to Netherlands. The Surinamese Hindu diaspora (*the Hindustanis*) have well been integrated in the civilian life of the Dutch people. Similarly, the Indian Surinamese Muslim community residing in Netherlands has a different development trajectory, as they were not included in the Hindu religious fold.¹⁴

Belgium, once a major seat of Indic studies has given way to commerce related activities within the Indian diaspora residing there. The Indian diasporic community in Belgium is miniscule, and yet they control the majority of the diamond trade in the country. They are the major dealers in cutting and polishing of stones. They also control the wholesale trade in uncut diamonds. Today, they have overtaken the Jewish community of Antwerp in the control of diamond trade.

The Indian diasporic community in Germany is composed primarily of technocrats, scientists, research scholars, medical personnel and businessmen. The new entrants here are the software and the IT professionals, for whom Germany has relaxed the 'work permit' laws, though it has not granted full citizenship. Germany is one of the European countries where immigration laws are strict and so very few people could avail permanent resident statuses.

The third emigration wave took place in the 1980s. This wave largely excluded the unskilled and semi-skilled labourers from India and other Asian countries from entering the European countries. This was mainly due to the re-imposition of emigration restrictions after the alarming rate of Asian immigration into Europe. They would permit only restricted professionals to emigrate such as doctors, engineers, scientists, nurses, and teachers.

The fourth wave of Indian emigration began in the 1990s. Although, the bulk of the Indian brains were channeled to the United States, the European countries also have their own share of the Indian brains. Most of these Indian emigrants were trained in premiere educational institutions such as the Indian Institute of Technology (IITs), Indian Institute of Management (IIMs) and Universities. In computer professionals and its sector, people have become numerous in the Information Technology sector workforce in Britain. In the recent times, there has been considerable presence of the Indian diasporic community in the merchant banking and accountancy sectors as well. One of the characteristic features of the new emigrants is that they are very mobile and maintain close socio-economic ties with India. It should be mentioned, however, that in recent years illegal migrants from India and refugee settlers from strife-torn colonies like Sri Lanka have also entered and settled in European countries. For obvious reasons, it is not possible to estimate their actual numbers.

Reflection and Action 10.1

Describe the historical process of Indian emigration to Europe.

10.4 Indian Diaspora in the UK: A Case Study

The United Kingdom (UK) is one of the largest host countries of Indian diaspora. Amongst the European countries, the UK ranks first in terms of the presence of Indian diaspora. The colonial connection between India and Britain for over two centuries has largely contributed to the presence of large Indian diaspora in the UK since two centuries. It is not exactly known as to when the first Indian emigrant settled in the UK. However, the Parsis and Bengalis are considered to be the first Indian settlers in the UK from the 18th century.

The first Indian emigrants were qualified lawyers, doctors and professionals. They were followed by a series of Indian emigrants particularly after World War I and World War II. But the bulk of Indian emigration into the UK took place after the World War II. In the 1950s, there were many Indians, mainly Punjabis of Indian origin who migrated to the UK as workers for reconstruction purposes post World War II. The second major wave was in the 1960s and 1970s when people of Indian origin (PIOs) mainly of Gujarati origin were forced to migrate to the UK from former British colonies of East Africa including Uganda.¹⁵ They were mainly skilled in trade and commerce. Indian migrations to the UK still continued in the 1980s and 1990s. But the bulk of these Indian emigrants are well-trained managers, teachers and computer professionals. In the following section we shall discuss the various profiles of Indian diaspora in the UK.

Socio-Demographic profile

The UK has the largest Indian population in Europe. In fact, the Indian Diaspora forms the single largest minority group in the UK amounting to almost 1.8 % of the total population and another 2 % - 3 % of British citizens of Indian origin could be added to the population. Hence, the total Indian population can be estimated at about 2.1 % of the total population of the UK. This figure constitutes about two-thirds of the total Indian emigrants in Europe.

The largest Indian emigrants hail from Punjab constituting about 45% of the total Indian population in the UK. The Sikhs alone have strength of about 300,000 people. Besides the Punjabis, the Gujaratis comprising Hindus, Muslims, Ismailis and Bohras have sizeable population. There are also other Indian populations with significant numbers in some selected pockets hailing from West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, etc.¹⁶

The Indian diasporics are settled mostly around the inner city clusters and around the fringes of the industrial towns. Over 40% of them live in inner and outer London.¹⁷ The Indian emigrants in the UK like some other recent emigrants from other countries, have a relatively larger proportion of young population as compared to the general population of the host country. The Indian population in the UK forms a higher than average percentage of pupils and young people pursuing education. The enrolment of Indians in educational institutions is quite high compared to the poor enrolment of the whites (English) students especially in the age group 16-24. The performances of the Indian boys and girls are also relatively better than most of the other emigrants. Among the Indians, girls do better than boys in some

¹⁵ Cf. MEAs, 2001.

¹⁶ Op cit.

¹⁷ Op cit.

subjects like English but are much closer in subjects like Mathematics and Science.¹⁸ However, gender differences in enrolment ratio (in favour of males) in educational institutions (in the level of GCSE,¹⁹ Graduates, etc.) are highest in the Indian groups.

Education statistics for England in 2003 indicated that in the Indian community, girls did better than boys in English across Key Stages 1-3, but that results were much closer in Mathematics and Science. At age 14 the difference in the percentages of girls and boys achieving the expected level for English was in the range 12-15 percentage points for most groups.

Socio-cultural profile

The Indian diaspora in the UK is a very vibrant and dynamic minority group. The enormous diversity in India is also reflected in the Indian diaspora in the UK. The Indian migrants carry with them their religious, ethnic and regional origins. This is also true in the case of floating various socio-cultural organisations numbering about 1000.

There are various religion-based organisations among the religious groups of the Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Christians and Parsis. Some of the important ones are Hindu Cultural Society, Indian Muslim Federation, Arya Samaj, Sikh Forum, Ambedkar & Buddhist Organisation, Zoroastrian Organisation, Indian Christian Association, etc. Along with these organisation. There are also several religious places of worship such as gurudwaras, temples and mosques.

Then there are various organisations based on regional and/ethnic affiliations. Some of the better-known organisations are Confederation of Gujarati Organisations, Andhra Association, Bengali Association, Goan Association, British Malayali Association, Maharashtra Mandal, and Punjab Unity Forum. These associations are mostly registered as trusts or charities. They raise generous contributions for relief and rehabilitation of victims during national crises and calamities in India. Various cultural and religious functions and festivities are also organised by different organisations including informal exchange programmes between institutions in India and the UK.

In the recent years, there are new initiatives of setting up socio-cultural centres in the UK such as Nehru Centre, which was established in 1992 in London. The centre is being used as part of the High Commission of India. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan is also one of these centres.²⁰

Socio-economic profile

The Indians are one of the most prosperous emigrant groups in the UK. It has a per capita income of 15,860 pounds per year. In fact, the per capita income of the Indian emigrants is higher than the national average. The Indian community is engaged in various key sectors of commercial and industrial spheres. In the retail sector, they account for about 40%. Besides, there is a significant number of professionals, such as doctors, engineers, computer and IT professionals, academics and so on. Along with these, there are also many important Indian commercial organisations in the UK such as, Indian

18 See Education Statistics for England, 2003; Department for Education and Skills, 2004; Census of Great Britain, 2001; ONS (2004) Labour Force Survey Spring 2004.

19 The GCSE stands for General Certificate of Secondary Education. It is usually taken after two years of study in Years 10 and 11. It is graded A* to G.

20 Refer MEAs, 2001.

The statistics of the labour market (Table 10.2) also show a good overall picture of the Indian diaspora in the UK. The statistics is based on the Census Report of 2001.²¹ The observation of the labour market²² statistics may be summarised as follow.

Table 10.2
Employment by ethnic group 2001 (Age cohort 16-74)

	<i>In Employment</i>		<i>Employment rate*</i>	<i>Unemployment rate*</i>
	% Full-time	% Part-time		
Men				
Indian	91	9	65	6.5
All ethnic minorities†	87	13	56	11.9
All aged 16-74	60	40	54	4.4
Women				
Indian	71	29	50	6.6
All ethnic minorities†	71	29	42	9.6
All aged 16-74	60	40	54	4.4

Source: ONS (2004), Census 2001

†All the non-white groups, including those not listed separately. There were 3.2 million people from ethnic minorities in Britain in 2001.

* Excluding full-time students.

- i) In general, Indian women have higher unemployment rates than men. This disparity between women and men can be attributed to the fact that (a) women look after the home and/or family; (b) Figures for Indian men are generally low; (c) Women start families at the early age.
- ii) In the part time sector, Indian working women (29%) are much more likely to occur than men (8-9%).
- iii) Indian working men are much more likely to be self-employed than their female counterparts.
- iv) Indians in general are spread across almost all segments of industries. However, the non-resident Indians (NRIs) dominate in the Interactive and Communication technologies sector.
- v) At the employment level of managers and senior officials, there are more Indian men than women.
- vi) In professional occupations such as, doctors, researchers, educationists, economists and engineers there are more Indian men than women.
- vii) The high and middle class percentages of Indian population and U.K. cannot be worked out simply on employment figures. It is noteworthy that the percentage of dependants among Indian immigrants is much higher than that of employed persons.

²¹ See ONS (2004) Census 2001.

²² Labour market statistics from the 2001 Census are based on the 16-74 age group instead of adults of working age or under 65 years. So employment rates are slightly lower than usually reported. Full-time is defined as 31 or more hours per week and part-time up to 30 hours per week in main job.

Political profile

The Indian diaspora in the UK have also made a breakthrough in the political field. The political participation of Indians in the polity of the UK is vibrant and dynamic. There are Indian politicians who have made it even to the top positions of the UK polity. In the British Parliament, there are four Indian elected members and 11 members in the House of Lords.

The Indians have also a significant presence in the affairs of political parties, particularly in the three major political parties, namely, the Liberal Democrat Party, the Labour Party, and the Conservative Party. The first two parties have even formed a platform known as “Friends of India Parliamentary Groups”. In a significant development, Lord Dholakia has also been the Chairman of the Liberal Democrat Party. Even in the European Parliament, three Indian members have represented the UK.

At the lower level, there are about 300 Councillors of Indian Origin in the UK. They also have an association called “British-Indian Councillors’ Association” (BICA). Besides, there are a few Indian mayors of the Councils. The Indian parliamentarians in the UK also have an association called- “British-Indian Parliamentary Association” (also known as “Curry Club”) to discuss matters towards promotion of India’s interests and concerns.

Reflection and Action 10.2

Discuss the profile of the Indian diaspora in the United Kingdom.

10.5 Conclusion

The Indian diaspora has a large presence in Europe, the largest economy in the world. It is spread all over Europe with higher concentrations in West Europe, which is largely co-terminous with the European Union (EU). It accounts for about 5-8% of the total population of Europe. The United Kingdom (UK) is the single largest country with about two-third of the whole Indian diaspora in Europe. There are also other countries with significant presence of Indian diaspora, such as, Netherlands, Italy, Portugal, France, Germany, etc. The Indian emigration to Europe took place mainly in the second half of the 20th century. They are considered to be the second wave of Indian migration, which is also known as “new diaspora”. The new Indian diasporics mainly consist of the educated and skilled professionals. They have a good participation in various walks of life in Europe, be it, socio-cultural, socio-economic or political realm.

10.6 Further Reading

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Unit 11

Indian Diaspora in the New World – North America

Contents

- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Indian Diaspora in Canada
- 11.3 Indian Diaspora in the United States
- 11.4 Profile of Indian Diaspora in the United States
- 11.5 Indian Diaspora Associations of North America and their Political Potential in the 'New World'
- 11.6 Conclusion
- 11.7 Further Reading

Learning Objectives

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

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

11.1 Introduction

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

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

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

11.2 Indian Diaspora in Canada

Present Profile

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

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

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

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

Refugee Class

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

Skilled Worker Class

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

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

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

Business Class

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

Family Class

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

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

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

Past Policies

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

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

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

Future Trends

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

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

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

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

11.3 Indian Diaspora in the United States

Hindrance to the Formation of Service Diaspora

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

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

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

Prelude to a Knowledge Diaspora

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

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

The H1-B Phenomenon

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

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

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

11.4 Profile of Indian Diaspora in the United States

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

Employment Status

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

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

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

Occupation Profile

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

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

Education Profile

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

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

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

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

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

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

Income Profile

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

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

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

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

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

Table 11.1
Indian Diaspora Associations of North America

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

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

11.6 Conclusion

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

11.7 Further Reading

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Indians in Australia, New Zealand and Fiji

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- 12.1 Introduction
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- 12.6 Further Reading

Learning Objectives

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

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

12.1 Introduction

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

12.2 Indians in Australia

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

1 Gopal, 2004, p. 320.

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

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

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

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

2 Narayan, 1998.

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

4 Price, 1987, p. 175-180.

5 Gopal, Op. Cit.

6 Voigt - Graf, 2003.

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

Table 12.1
Indians Present in Australia

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

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

Table 12.2
Distribution of Indian Born Population in Australia, 1991

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

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

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

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

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

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

(a) Location

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

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

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

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

(b) Occupational Profile

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

(c) Identity formation within the Indian diaspora in Australia

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

⁸ Ibid, p. 324.

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

¹⁰ Connel, 2004, pp. 190-224.

¹¹ Gopal, 2004, Op. Cit.

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

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

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

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

12 Ibid, p. 324.

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

14 Chandrashekhar, 1992.

15 Hartney, 2003.

16 Connell, 2004, Op. Cit.

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

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

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

17 Connel, 2004, Op. Cit.

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

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

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

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

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

Reflection and Action 12.1

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

12.3 Indians in New Zealand

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

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

Table 12.5: Indian Population in New Zealand

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

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

21 Leckie, 1995.

22 Roy, 1978, pp. 16-20.

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

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

Table 12.6
Origin of Indian Immigrants in New Zealand in 1996

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

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

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

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

(a) Who are the Indians in New Zealand

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

(b) Location

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

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

(c) Demographics

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

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

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

Source: Census of New Zealand, 2001

(d) Education

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

(e) Work participation

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

(f) Region of origin and religion

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

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

²⁵ Census of New Zealand, 2001

²⁶ Roy, 1978, Op. Cit, p. 18-19.

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

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

Indian diasporic women have a more neglected health aspect than the males. They had the lowest rate of physical activity and highest rates of obesity ²⁷. Both men and women have higher rates of diabetes than the other immigrant populations and also a higher rate of treated high cholesterol as well as a higher prevalence of asthma. It is also found that they are in considerable stress and have poor housing conditions. The living standard of the Indians in the Antipodes are on the lower scales of well being for the majority, though there are also exceptions.

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

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

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

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

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

Reflection and Action 12.2

Discuss the profile of Indian diaspora in New Zealand.

12.4 Indians in Fiji

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

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

28 Crocombe, 2004.

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

30 Crocombe, (2004), *Opp. Cit.*

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

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

(a) Social integration in Fiji after 1970

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

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

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

33 *Ibid.*

34 *Ibid.*, p. 21.

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

36 *Ibid.*

37 Lal, 2004, p. 19.

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

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

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

³⁸ Lal, 2004, Op. Cit. p. 20.

³⁹ Nandan, 2004, Op. Cit. p. 54.

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

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

Reflection and Action 12.3

Discuss the situation of Indian diaspora in Fiji.

12.5 Conclusion

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

12.6 Further Reading

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Indian Diaspora in West Asia

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

Learning Objectives

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

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

13.1 Introduction

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

13.2 Historical Background

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

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

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

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

13.3 Indians in the Gulf Region

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

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

Indian Merchants in the Gulf

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Indian Labour Diaspora

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

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

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

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

Table 13.1
Annual Labour Outflows form India to West Asia, 1976-2005

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Source: As in Table 2.

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

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

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

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

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

Table 13.5
Estimated Population of Overseas Indians in West Asia, 2001 and 2005

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

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

Economic Profile

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Social Organisation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

13.4 Indian Diaspora in Israel

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

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

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

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

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

like Central Organisation of Indian Jews and Israel-India Cultural Association in recent years reflects the consolidation of the Indian Jewish diaspora in Israel.

13.5 Conclusion

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

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

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

13.6 Further Reading

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