

Unit 14

Immigration and Emigration Policies and their Implications

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Learning Objectives

This unit will help you understand:

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

14.1 Introduction

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

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

14.2 Evolution of Restrictive Immigration Policies

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

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

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

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

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

14.3 Lifting of Restrictions in the New World and Antipodes

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

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

Reflection and Action 14.1

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

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

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

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

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

14.5 Typology of Issue-based Emigration Policies in Origin Countries

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

Restrictive policies

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

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

Compensatory policies

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

Restorative policies

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

Developmental policies

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

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

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

Multilateral Initiatives

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Regional, Bilateral, and Sub-regional Initiatives

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

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

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

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

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

Unilateral Initiatives

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

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

Reflection and Action 14.2

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

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

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

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

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

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

14.8 Conclusions

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

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

14.9 Further Reading

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Unit 15

Indian State and Diaspora

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- 15.1 Introduction
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Learning Objectives

After reading this unit you will be able to:

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

15.1 Introduction

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

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

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

15.2 Pre-Independence Era: Legacy of Mahatma Gandhi

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

15.3 Evolution of Nehru's Policy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Reflection and Action 15.1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Above considerations started a shift in Indian approach to South African issue. India started associating discrimination of Black and Indians together. India's President Dr. Rajendra Prasad in his address explained the shift to parliament in 1952. He said, "The question is no longer merely one of Indians of South Africa; it had already assumed a greater and wider significance. It is question of racial domination and racial intolerance. It is question of Africans more than that of Indians in South Africa". India raised the question of racial conflict in other countries and raised the question of racial conflict

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

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

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

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

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

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

Reflection and Action 15.2

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

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

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

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

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

15.6 Conclusions

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

15.7 Further Reading

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

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Unit 16

Socio-Cultural Linkages Between Indian Diaspora

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Learning Objectives

After reading this unit you will be able to :

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

16.1 Introduction

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

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

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

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

16.2 Transnational Linkages

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

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

Socio-Cultural Linkages

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

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

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

Diversity of Inter Diaspora Socio-cultural Linkages

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

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

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

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

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

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

Old Indian Diaspora

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

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

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

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

Festivals

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

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

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

Religious Networks

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

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

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

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

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

Reflection and Action 16.1

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

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

16.3 Preservation and Promotion of Socio-Cultural Linkages

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

Technology

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

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

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

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

Ethnic Media and Film

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

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

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

Diasporic Writers

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

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

Reflection and Action 16.1

How is the old diaspora different from the new diaspora ?

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

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

16.4 Organizational Linkages Between the Indian Diaspora

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

Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO)

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

Box 16.1: Objectives of GOPIO

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

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

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

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

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

Indian council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)

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

16.5 Regional Diasporas: Global Networks

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

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

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

Telugu

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

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

Gujarati

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

Punjabi

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

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

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

Tamil

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

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

Caste based Transnational Diasporic Networks

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

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

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

Box 16.2 The Dalit Diaspora

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

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

16.6 Conclusion

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

16.7 Further Reading

Held, David, 2004. *A Globalizing World ? : Culture , Economic and Politics*, Routledge: UK

Karim, H.K, 2003. *The Media of the Diaspora: Mapping the Globe*, Routledge: UK

Vertovec, Stephen, 2000. *The Hindu Diaspora : Comparative Patterns*, Routledge: UK

Unit 17

Indian Diaspora-Homeland Linkages

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- 17.1 Introduction
- 17.2 Mapping the Indian Diaspora
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Learning Objectives

Reading this unit will help you in:

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

17.1 Introduction

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

17.2 Mapping the Indian Diaspora

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

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

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

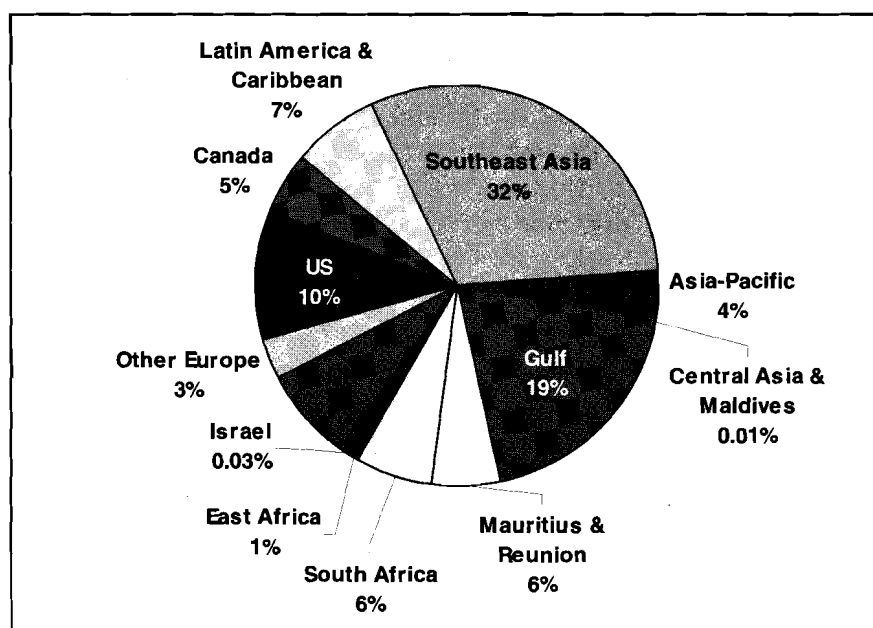


Figure 17.1: Distribution of NRI and PIOs by Regions (in %)

Source: Government of India, Singhvi Report, 2001

17.3 Changing Diaspora-Homeland Relations

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

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

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

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

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

17.4 Multi-Layered Home Connections

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

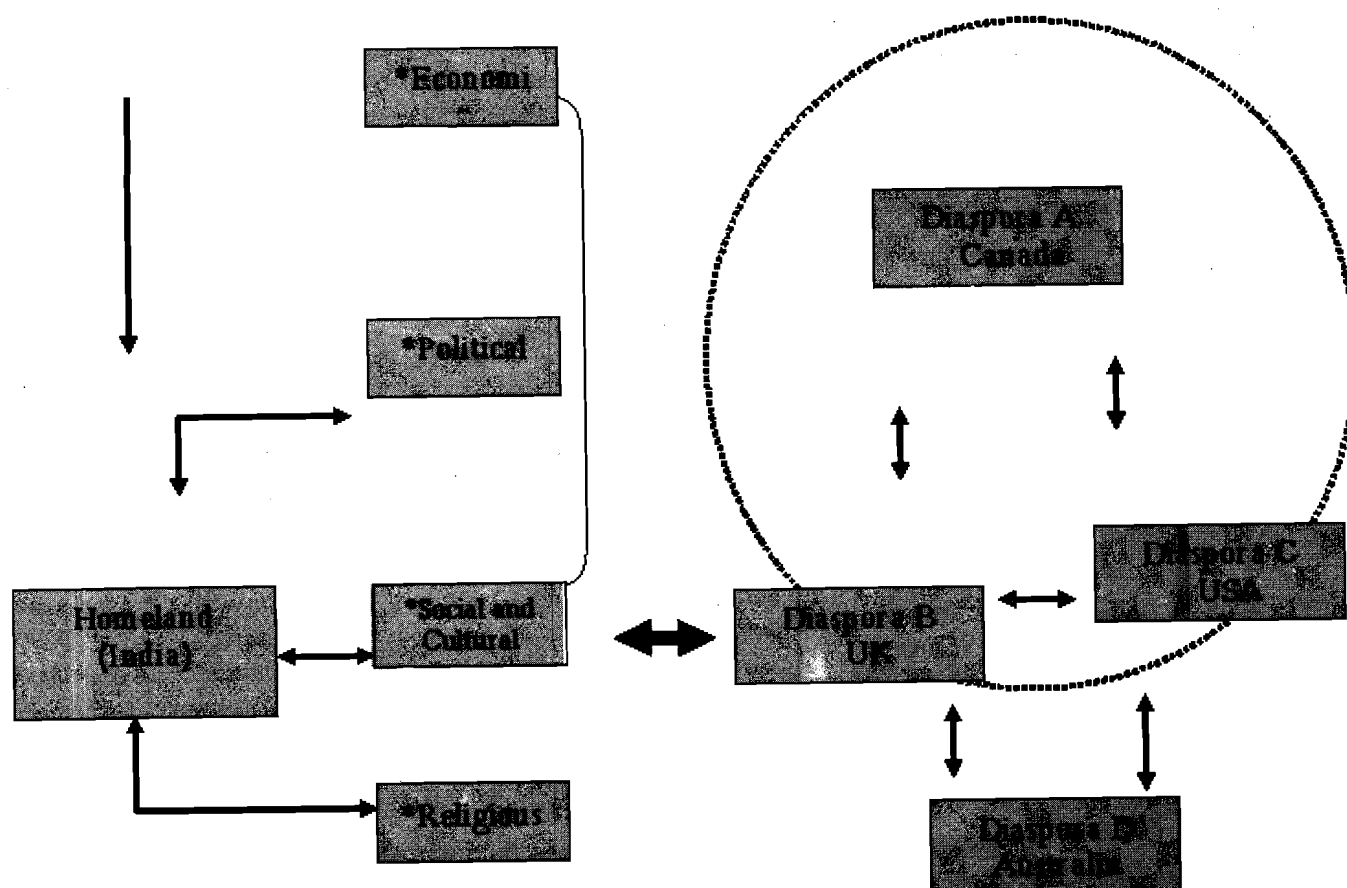


Figure 17.2: Circulation within the Indian Diaspora Transnational Space

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

Table 17.1: Examples of linkages within the Indian transnational community

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

17.5 Growing importance of Diasporas

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

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

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

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

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

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

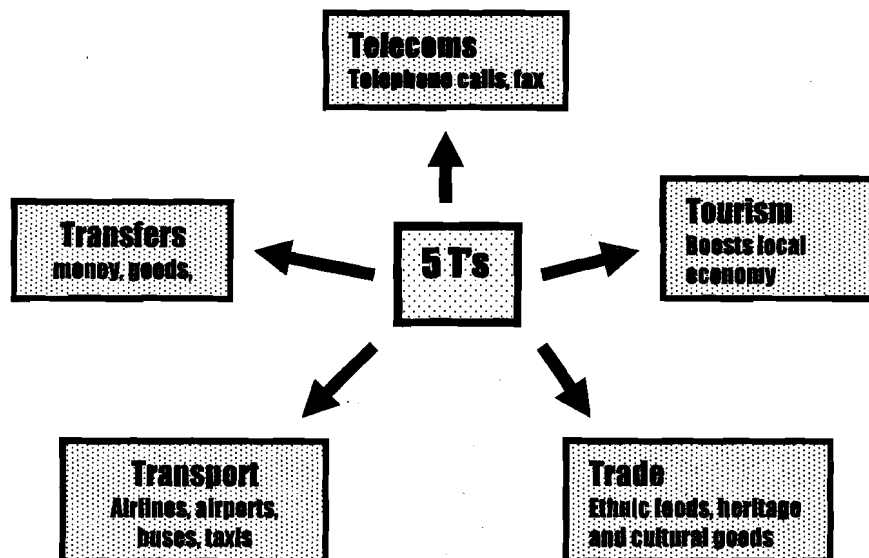


Figure 17.3: Diaspora-Homeland Connections: The 5 T's Model

Source: Orozco (2003)

Reflection and Action 17.1

Trace the growing importance of Indian diaspora to homeland.

Discuss the different aspects of connections between Indian diaspora and home

17.6 Diaspora Finance

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

Box 17.1 World Bank (2000) on Diaspora Finance

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

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

Remittances

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

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

Portfolio Investment

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

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

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

Foreign Direct Investment

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

Box 17.2 Difference Between China and India With regards to FDI

Kapur (2001) explains the differential experience as follows:

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

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

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

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

Table 17.2: Top States Receiving NRI-FDI in India

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

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

Business Networks

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

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

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

Diasporan Philanthropy: Case Study of Punjab

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

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

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

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

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

Source: Thandi (2002)

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

17.7 Political Connections

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

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

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

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

Reflection and Action 17.2

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

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

17.8 New Policies for Mobilising Diaspora-Homeland Relations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

17.9 Conclusions

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

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

17.10 Further Reading

Parekh, Bhikhu, Singh, G. and Vertovec, Steven, 2003. *Culture and Economy in the Indian Diaspora*, Routledge: London

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Unit 18

Indian Diaspora in Cyberspace

Contents

- 18.1 Introduction
- 18.2 Defining Cyberspace
- 18.3 Understanding Virtual Community
- 18.4 Indian Digital Diasporas
- 18.5 A critical Overview of Literature on Indian Digital Diasporas
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- 18.8 Conclusions
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Learning Objectives

After completing this unit you will be able to :

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

18.1 Introduction

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

18.2 Defining Cyberspace

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

Box 18.1: What is Cyberspace?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

18.3 Understanding Virtual Community

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

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

Box18.2 Some Definitions of Virtual Community

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

18.1 Reflection and Action

What do you understand by cyberspace?

Do you think cyberspace can be real?

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

18.4 Indian Digital Diasporas

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

18.5 A Critical Overview of Literature on Indian Digital Diasporas

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

18.6 ICTs, Nationalism, Religious Diasporas

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

18.7 South Asian Digital Diasporas - Mobile (Gadget) Generations

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

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

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

Reflection and Action 18.2

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

18.8 Conclusions

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

18.9 Further Reading

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

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

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