

Unit 19

Films

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Learning Objectives

This Unit will help you to:

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

19.1 Introduction

Meera joota hai Janani

Yé Patloon Inglistani

Sar pé lal topi Rusi —

Phir bhi dil hai Hindustani.

(*Shree 420*)

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

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

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

19.2 Bollywood and Diaspora — Consumption and Representations

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

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

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

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

Box 19.1: Bollywood as a tool

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Reflection and Action 19.1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

19.3 Diasporic Filmmakers and their Communities

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

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

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

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

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

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

INTERVIEWER: What is 'Modern India'?

NARGIS: Dams...

(Rushdie, 1992, p. 108-109)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Reflection and Action 19.2

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

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

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

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

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

19.4 Conclusion

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

19.5 Further Reading

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Unit 20

Indian Diasporic Writing

Contents

- 20.1 Introduction
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Learning Objectives

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

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

20.1 Introduction

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

20.2 Diasporic Communities—Circumstances and Reasons for their Formation

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

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

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

20.3 Diasporic Communities—Cultural Identity Versus Cultural Assimilation

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

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

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

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

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

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

20.4 Indian Diasporic Communities—History and Evolution

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

20.5 Diasporic Writing as a Marker of Cultural Identity

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

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

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

Reflection and Action 20.1

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

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

20.6 Indian Diasporic Writing

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Reflection and Action 20.2

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

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

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

20.7 Indian Diasporic Novel in Canada—a Case Study

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Reflection and Action 20.3

Write an essay on the Indian diasporic novel in Canada.

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

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

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

20.8 Conclusion

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

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

20.9 Further Reading

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Unit 21

Popular Perception

Contents

- 21.1 Introduction
- 21.2 Model Minority: Indians in America
- 21.3 The Curry Tide: Indians in UK
- 21.4 Inter-Racial Divide: Indians in Caribbean and Africa
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Learning Objectives

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

- The model minority of Indians in America;
- The Indian diasporic situations in the UK;
- The inter-racial divide of Indians in Caribbean and Africa; and
- The Indian State's view of Overseas Indians;

21.1 Introduction

The last two units of this block discussed the imagery of the Indian diaspora that is found in film and literature. In this unit we are going to talk about popular perception about the Indian diaspora. In a sense this unit is continuation and extension of the previous two units, which discuss the imagery exclusively in terms of literature and film. This unit takes you to a wider level where we try and put together images and perceptions of the diaspora, both in terms of the host country as well as the country of origin. In putting together we draw from various social spaces to get a sense of what Indians are thought of abroad and what immigrants are perceived back home.

As we know popular perception which border on stereotypes that type-cast a community or ethnic groups in certain terms draw their fodder for such imagery from many sources- word-of-mouth, every-day encounters, media which include print, film and television, as well as travel etc. In trying to talk about the way Indians are perceived we will try to draw from some of these sources.

21.2 Model Minority: Indians in America

Recently (October, 2006) the NASDAQ-a stock exchange - building in New York, towering over many stories, was draped in Indian tricolours, in celebration of the festival of *diwali*. Many Indians hope that the Empire State Building would be lit up for the festival of lights. The White House is slated to celebrate the Diwali festival, indicating that India has arrived in the US. "In the US, we are living in the 'India' moment. Everywhere you turn, there's another article about either successful Indian immigrants who have found the American dream, Bollywood film festivals, or the rise of

high-tech economic India, and the loss of American jobs to outsourcing. India - and South Asia - has never before made such an impression on the American psyche" (Budhos:2004).

The Indian images and people are now part of every-day life. Not just the convenient store owner and the gas station owner or the Patels who own most of the motel industry. Incidentally, Gujaratis, mainly Patels, now own 21, 000 of the 53, 000 hotels and motels in US, worth \$40 billion. Apart from this, Indians are seen on television not just as caricatures of Indianness but as part of mainstream America, whether it is the political analyst and journalist Farred Zakharia or the medical correspondent and war reporter Sanjay Gupta. Writers such as Salman Rushdie, V.S.Naipaul, Rohinton Mistry among others had put the Indian diaspora on the map of literature. Jhumpa Lahiri won the Pulitzer, the most coveted literary prize in America, for 'distinguished fiction by an American author, preferably dealing with American life.' The recent Booker Prize was won by America based Indian writer Kiran Desai, yet again bringing to the fore the achievements of the Indian diaspora. Film makers like Night Shyamalan of *Sixth Sense* fame, and Shekhar Kapoor who made the movie *Elizabet* and scores of other successful Indians are making Indian Diaspora ever so much more visible. As *New York* magazine reported in one of its articles India has now acquired "cool quotient". "Indeed, America has become so South Asianized that *Newsweek* recently ran a cluster of articles under the rubric 'American Masala', declaring in the subtitle of the influence of the Subcontinent on the superpower: 'They've changed the way we eat, dress, work and play.' Most Americans take the presence of *chai* on the menu at Starbucks for granted (if in versions as alien to the Indian original as a vanilla-flavoured and iced). Many are becoming comfortable with Indian music, whether of the 'Asian dub' variety, remixed with hip-hop or listened to straight. 'Basement Bhangra' at SOB's in New York, presided over by disc-jockey queen DJ Rekha, just named the 'best DJ in New York' by *Time Out New York* magazine, has been dubbed 'the best party in NYC' by *New York* magazine. The latest fitness craze in California is the 'Masala Bhangra Workout'. Hindi film songs have begun to appear in the most unlikely venues, from the popular television series *The Sopranos* to Lata Mangeshkar singing on the soundtrack of *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, starring Jim Carrey and Kate Winslet" (ibid).

"Real-life films such as *Monsoon Wedding* and *Bend it Like Beckham* have been extraordinarily successful not only because each was, in its own right, simply a great film, but also because the Indians portrayed in these films are so much like, well, everyone else. These movies, both made by Indian diaspora women directors, depict Indians at home in the globalized world, whether it's the trials and tribulations of a young woman negotiating conflicting expectations between her Indian immigrant home and her British teen environment in *Bend it Like Beckham* or a young woman juggling the conflicting expectations of patriarchal family values under siege, an American *desi* husband-to-be and her own desires in *Monsoon Wedding*" (ibid).

Indians in the USA are one of the largest among the groups of Indian diaspora, numbering about 2.5 million, and probably the one of the most well off - their median income is 1.5 times that of the host country. They are well represented in all walks of life, but particularly so in academia, information technology and medicine. There were over 4,000 PIO professors and 33,000 Indian-born students in American universities in 1997-98. The American Association of the Physicians of Indian Origin boasts a membership of 35,000. In 2000, *Fortune* magazine estimated the wealth generated by Indian Silicon Valley entrepreneurs at around \$250 billion

(www.wikipedia.org). "Addressing the Indian American Forum of Political Education in September 1997, Jesse Helms, the senator from North Carolina, acclaimed: "Indian Americans represent the best and the brightest the United States has to offer." Over the last decade, such lavish praise has become commonplace as Indians shot to prominence in the U.S. If in India newspapers prominently featured Bill Clinton's visits, The New York Times carried a long story about Neera Tanden, a second generation Indian who managed Hillary Clinton's Senate campaign. Jhumpa Lahiri figured on the covers of literary magazines. And so on. All this cannot be explained merely by the 106 per cent growth in the Indian population since 1990. Much more important is the status afforded to Indians as a "model minority"(Ramana, 2001).

This presence of India in America's popular consciousness in a positive sense as successful immigrants and model minority is of recent origin. In early 1900s when Sikhs immigrated into US, they were thought to sully the white Anglo-Saxon culture. There was fear that they would steal their jobs. They could not buy any land and were virtually forced to leave; many left for Canada. Since this early migration things have changed. The working class population was replaced by educated professionals in the 1960s. The US immigration policy, Vijay Prasad argues, was deliberate in its choice with respect to immigrants from India. In his book *The Karma of Brown Folk*, Prashad points out "that the cross-section of Indians in the U.S. is not some random mixture of typical inhabitants of the sub-continent, nor chosen by a process of natural or cultural selection, but a sample carefully selected by immigration laws"(ibid). The educated upwardly mobile Indian emigrants Prashad says were apolitical and passive: "absorbed in the pursuit of pleasure and success without a developed social consciousness" (quoted in Ramna, 2001).

The successful Indian professional who is a bit of nerd and who is so brainy that he has to hold cup of coffee to his forehead to heat it up, is epitomized by characters such as Ashok in the cartoon strip *Dilbert*. The nerdy professional, who is sexless and is incapable of fun is partly demolished by the character Kumar in *Harold and Kumar Go To White Castle*. The movie has as its main leads a Chinese American and Indian American, Harold and Kumar respectively. Harold is bored with his job as investment banker while Kumar has little heart in pursuing a career in medicine, unlike his father who is a surgeon. While Kumar is not exactly your nerdy Indian geek he still fits in the stereotype that is played over and over again both in the imaginations of Indians and Americans at large where second generation Indians struggle between individual aspirations and family pressure. There are other images, and not so complimentary that dot the landscape of American popular consciousness. Apu, the character from the very popular animated series, *Simpsons*, fits the convenience store owner end of the spectrum. There appear to be class differences within the Indian American community, with earlier professional immigrants looking down upon working-class communities who are later first generation immigrants. Gujarati shopkeepers and Punjabi cab drivers are common stereotypes of the latter community.

Things may have changed a bit from the highly orientalist perspective of India-of snake charmers, Maharajas, and of spirituality and Yoga. The spiritual element has contemporary twist, in this new age fondness for all things alternative and traditional, which can be seen in the success of modern gurus like Deepak Chopra and to some extent to previous ones like Rajneesh-the *Osho*. However, the general ignorance which stems from a largely

insular America, is still real and palatable. This can be seen in attacks on Indians in New Jersey (the dot busters) to the more recent post 9/11 attacks on turbaned Sikhs, who were apparently mistaken for Afghans. The fears that 'foreigners' will take away the American jobs has reentered the popular consciousness once again with the issue of outsourcing which has become much debated topic for the forthcoming elections. Commenting on how America is beginning to notice India, Mira Kamdar writes: "How could I have foreseen that the T-Shirts that said 'My parents went to Disneyland and all I got was this lousy T-Shirt' would be replaced some day by ones lamenting 'My job went to India and all I got was this lousy T-Shirt?' Suddenly, the tide of the Yellow Peril was reversed: instead of Asian workers pouring into the United States to work for slave wages (in their own country they had it even worse and they were used to sleeping ten to a bed anyway), now it looked like that 'giant sucking sound' that used to come from down Mexico way had been amplified about a thousand times and was coming from, of all places, India" (Kamdar, 2004: 65).

Reflection and Action 21.1

What are the varied images of Indians in America?

Indian diaspora is making a beginning to enter political arena too. The American Indians are organizing themselves into strong political lobbies. One of the most powerful one of these lobbies is USINPAC (United States India Political Action Committee).

21.3 The Curry Tide: Indians in UK

The Indian diaspora falls into the loose term of "British Asian", a term employed for immigrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and India. Many Indians feel that there distinct differences between some of these south Asian communities in terms of religion, language, culture etc. There is debate whether the Indians should adopt a nomenclature or term for themselves based on nationality or religion such as British Indian or British Hindus.

The Indians are the largest in number among the British Asians. According to the 2001 UK Census there are 2.33 million British Asians, making up 4% of the population of the United Kingdom. This further subdivides to 1.05 million of Indian origin (1.8% of the population), 747,000 of Pakistani origin (1.3%), 283,000 of Bangladeshi origin (0.5%), and 247,000 from other Asian origins (0.4%) (largely of Sri Lankan origin). British Asians make up 50.2% of the UK's non-white population. British Indians tend to be religiously diverse, with 45% Hindu, 29% Sikh, and 13% per cent Muslim, while their counterparts of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin are much more religiously homogeneous, with Muslims accounting for 92% of each group. British Indians tend to originate mainly from two Indian States, Sikhs are largely from the Punjab region whilst Hindus tend to originate from the Gujarat, Punjab and West Bengal regions.

Indian settlement in UK has a long history dating back, according to historians to some early migration during the East India Company contacts with India. People from South Asia have settled in Great Britain since the East India Company (EIC) recruited lascars to replace vacancies in their crews on East Indiamen whilst on voyages in India. Many were then refused passage back, and were marooned in London. There were also some Ahyas, domestic servants of wealthy British families, who accompanied their employers back to "Blighty" when their stay in Asia came to an end.

The Navigation Act of 1660 restricted the employment of non-English sailors to a quarter of the crew on returning East India Company ships. Baptism records in East Greenwich suggest that young Indians from the Malabar Coast were being recruited as servants at the end of the seventeenth century, and records of the EIC also suggest that Indo-Portuguese cooks from Goa were retained by Captains from voyage to voyage. In 1797, 13 were buried in the parish of St Nicholas at Deptford.

These immigrations were few and far between; a major wave of migration from India took place in post World War II period, when there was labour shortage. Thus a bulk of immigrants from India, especially Punjabis, formed the working class immigrants. Additionally there was demand for doctors and health professions for the expanding health care system of post World War II Britain. Indian doctors were recruited as they conformed to British standards of medicine. In 1970s there was another wave of immigration of Indians, who were settled in Africa but were forced to leave due to socio-political tensions and negative reaction towards Indians by the native Africans.

As we mentioned the migration to UK was spread over several decades and the profile of the migrants changed with times depending on circumstances and requirements in British society along with the push factors back home. The perceptions about these migrants too changed along the way. The image about the Indians and the Asian British, like in America, is a complex one; while there is large scale discrimination, along side is an orientalist fascination for all things Indian.

India was after all the Jewel in the imperial crown and there was a romantic fascination which basically essentialised India as a mystic, spiritual, mysterious magical land from whom the disenchanted West had much to learn or draw from. These images are seen not only in colonial literature such as E. M. Foster and Rudyard Kipling but continued to inform the way the West looked at the sepia tinted India. This spirituality and magic continued to inform the hippies' quest for the land of dharma and karma (a book that captures this fascination with India is captured by Anita Desai in *Karma Cola*). To this day, this spirituality that is associated with India continues to dominate many new age perceptions of India.

The majority of immigration has happened after 1950s but there is evidence of Indians going to Britain as early as 1688. The immigrant population was very scattered and small; it consisted of mostly lascars-sailors from Bengal and Goa -ayahs and nannies or *ayahs*. East India Company (EIC) recruited lascars to replace vacancies in their crews on East Indiamen whilst on voyages in India. Many were then refused passage back, and were marooned in London. There were also some Ayahs, domestic servants of wealthy British families, who accompanied their employers back to UK. "Indian lascars settled near the London docks from the eighteenth century onwards and many became a part of the multi-racial dock communities, cohabiting with and marrying local English women. In 1858 the Strangers Home was opened in London's West India Dock Road to provide accommodation for lascars and assist them to find employment on ships returning to India. In the 19th century individual cases of destitute South Asians requesting repatriation back to India appear sporadically in the records of the British Library. Nannies or ayahs lived with the British families that brought them to England. An institution known as the Ayahs' Home was established in 1897 in Aldgate to accommodate ayahs who were waiting for a return passage to India. It has been estimated that by 1932 approximately 7,000 South Asians lived in Britain" (source: www.movinghere.co.uk).

In the 19th century Indians were free to enter Britain as British subjects, though persons known to have political affiliations working towards India's freedom and who were considered anti-British were restricted entry into Britain. There was also restriction placed on those with "limited means" from early 1930s. "The control of passports was directed primarily at Indian peddlers from the Punjab who sought to bring family members to Britain to assist them with their businesses, selling goods door-to-door.

After the introduction of the 1948 British Nationality Act, guaranteeing free right of entry to British subjects and Commonwealth citizens, the numbers of South Asians arriving in Britain increased" (ibid).

Many of the immigrants stories talk about racial discrimination that was meted out to them. A majority of the immigrants in mid 1900s were from working class rural backgrounds from India who were not very conversant with English or Western ways unlike some of the professionals who went to UK around the same time. Those from working class backgrounds ended up doing menial and non-professional jobs. South Asian immigrants settling in post-war Britain established themselves, mainly in London, the Midlands and industrial areas in the north, taking up employment in factories and foundries. The stereotype of Indians was of workers, bus-conductors, waiters, and small shopkeepers. They faced lot of problems being accepted in to British society.

Many immigrants recount how difficult it was to rent apartments and find accommodation. Early post-war South Asian migrants faced prejudice in finding private rented accommodation and council housing. "A survey by Willesden Council of press advertisements for accommodation in the local press showed that 90 per cent of advertisements specifically discriminated against non-European. As early as 1957, a Home Office document provided evidence of white flight and future segregation, which would come to characterise some northern towns and cities: 'The Nottingham, Wolverhampton and Warwickshire police say that white house-holders in better class districts resent coloured people buying houses in these districts and when this happens, those who can, move.'

This was supported by a 1964 article in the *Daily Telegraph* in which an Estate Agent in Southall, London had agreed to sell houses owned by Southall Residents Association exclusively to white buyers. Many Indians sought to overcome these housing problems by buying old houses often in slum areas and letting them out to newcomers" (ibid). There were negative representations in media that black and coloured immigrants from the commonwealth were drain on public funds.

Since these early migrations things have changed considerably Indians in Britain are now the third generation. Despite some ethnic racial conflicts few of the stereotypes have changed to Indians being perceived as a successful immigrant community. They are considerable number of professionals and successful business men, media person, writers, actors, doctors and politicians who are now part of mainstream life of Britain, who have changed the way English think about the Indians.

Indian culture and Indianess has now after many years have now captured the imagination of the British. Indian cuisine now has become a part of the English landscape. The biggest influence of British Asians on popular culture has probably been the Indian restaurant, though the majority of these are run by people of Bangladeshi origin. A recent poll found that chicken tikka

masala has surpassed fish and chips in terms of popularity as the national dish. Chicken tikka masala, like the popular balti, is itself a British Asian invention. These dishes were unknown in the Indian sub-continent until requests from British holiday-makers led to their introduction

Since the 1970s, British Asian performers and writers have achieved significant mainstream cultural success. The first British Asian to gain wide popularity in the UK for being a mainstream celebrity in their own right and worldwide fame was the late Freddie Mercury, who led the rock band Queen. However, there had been others earlier such as Sabu Dastagir who had been famous for playing non-descript foreigners in British and Hollywood films. The comedians Sanjeev Bhaskar, Meera Syal and Shazia Mirza are all well-recognised figures in British popular culture. The actress Parminder Nagra has a prominent role in the US TV series ER, and played the lead role in the successful British film Bend It Like Beckham. The actor Naveen Andrews plays the role of Sayid Jarrah in the popular US TV series Lost, and also had a prominent role in the award-winning film The English Patient. The broadcaster Krishnan Guru-Murthy and Sameera Ahmed, meanwhile, present the respected Channel 4 News.

Box 21.1 Growing up in Britain

Gurinder Chadha could well be an example of a British-Asian woman who has bent rules to achieve her own success. Her family came to settle in Britain from East Africa in the seventies. Daughter of a small-time Indian grocery shop-keeper, she experienced, at first hand, the trauma and humiliation which Asians go through in Britain, when they don't have money or status. During her growing years, Chadha also observed the inhumanly trivial lives of women of the Punjabi community settled in Britain – especially in cities like Leicester where one-third of the population is Asian. Through the older generation – like Gurinder Chadha's father – which opened grocery shops or stationery corners and joined the huge lower middle class of the British population, she noticed how the racist Whites treated them. "My father was made to wait for hours for service in a bank because his depositing capacity was small. The early Asian settlers in Britain, like my parents, had little education and a huge complex about living in an alien society. The Punjabis especially stood together in their isolation and developed their own lifestyle of *bhangra* and family gatherings over tea and *bhajias*. They joined their compatriots in Southall for nostalgia meals or shopping and still felt lost between their Indo-African heritage and the strident call of the vibrant British culture they came to experience. I felt a part of this confusion; yet my generation thought differently and we were rebellious and unwilling to accept our second class status."

21.4 Inter-Racial Divide: Indians in Caribbean and Africa

In this section we will discuss how race was one of the main issues that was the basis of tension between Indian migrants and other communities. Many times it was Blacks versus Indians, whether they were natives or settlers. This situation of racial tension or a situation where natives were pitted against the Indian settlers was true of Fiji, Malaysia and even Mauritius, though the Indian community there was a minority. However, we are going to keep our discussion to Caribbean countries and Africa. We hope that these two cases will give you sense of a general scenario of how PIOs in general are perceived in their adopted countries.

People of Indian origin are variously known as Indo Caribbean or East Indians, though the term East Indian is used less and less to denote people of Indian origin. Indo-Caribbean people or Indo-Caribbeans (the colonial term “East Indian” is fading) are people with roots in India who live in the Caribbean region or are the descendants of such people. From 1838 to 1917, over half a million Indians from the former British Raj or British India, were brought to the Caribbean as indentured servants to address the demand for labour following the abolition of slavery. The first two shiploads arrived in British Guiana (now Guyana) on May 5, 1838 (see the unit 6 in Book 1).

The majority of the Indians living in the English-speaking Caribbean came from eastern Uttar Pradesh and western Bihar, while those brought to Guadeloupe and Martinique were mostly from, but not only, from Tamil Nadu. A minority emigrated from other parts of the Indian sub-continent, including present-day Pakistan and Bangladesh. Other Indo-Caribbean people descend from later migrants, including Indian doctors, Gujarati businessmen and migrants from Kenya and Uganda. A vague community of modern-day immigrants from India is to be found on Saint-Martin/Sint Maarten island or other islands with duty-free commercial capabilities, where they are active in business.

Today, Indo-Caribbeans are the largest ethnic group in Guyana, Suriname, and Trinidad. They are the second largest in Jamaica. Other Indo-Caribbeans live elsewhere in various Caribbean countries where they often form the second largest ethnic group. There are small Indian populations in Barbados, Grenada, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Martinique and Guadeloupe (source: <http://en.wikipedia.org>).

The Indo-Caribbeans, unlike the recent Indian migrants to western countries, have moved out of home a few centuries ago. They have no contact with their homeland India and for all practical purposes derive their identity from the nations they inhabit. These Indians, having gone through history of adversity, clung to their culture and memories of their home to sustain themselves. Much of that culture was reinvented, sometimes duplicated and very often hybridized over long periods, drawing from other groups, which came to inhabit the Caribbean, mainly the African groups.

Box 21.2 Indian Elements in Caribbean Culture

In food and patterns of eating, as well, Indians were to show their capacity for adaptation. Those caste distinctions that made impossible commensality in India were, in the conditions of migration, broken down, and vegetarianism was to have little appeal among Indo-Trinidadians. Tandoori cooking remains unknown among Indians in Trinidad and the Caribbean, and curry is made with a curry powder, rather than by mixing a curry paste. But it is the prevalence of “curry” in Trinidadian food that impresses, and in most respects Indo-Trinidadian food bears an astonishing similarity to certain varieties of Indian food. As one author of a cookbook on Caribbean food was to note in 1974, “the Indians have had a deep effect upon the Caribbean Cuisine primarily through their enthusiasm for curry, which is becoming as much a part of Caribbean as of Indian cooking.” Trinidadian fast food, usually eaten with chutney, is mainly of Indian origin: their *saheena* is like *pakoras*, “doubles” is a variation on the *channa batura*, though more in the form of a chick-peas sandwich, and their *kachowrie* has a marked similarity to its namesake in India. Though many Afro-Trinidadians will not admit it, even their own main meals are now predominantly Indian in origin, for alongside *callooloo* there is curried goat, and roti is easily the most popular food in

Trinidad. Indeed, to understand just how far roti has come to be a marker of 'Indianness', and the resentment felt by some Afro-Trinidadians, consider that in the 1961 election, the black party took up the slogan: "We don't want no roti government." Roti shops proliferate, and though in India the middle-classes have adopted a Western-style breakfast, complete with poor white bread and corn flakes, in Trinidad roti with *dhal* and *subzi* or *tarkari* constitutes the bread and butter of most people at breakfast and dinner and often at lunch as well. The prevalence of Indian food is reflected in calypso, and many songs sing, often with mockery, scorn, and disturbing caricature, of 'roti' and 'chutney'. (Vinay Lal in <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/southasia/Diaspora>)

Indian presence is not only numerically strong in these countries of the Caribbean but the Indian culture as well. The early migrant indentured labour or coolies, as they were referred to sometimes by the colonizers, lived in conditions of abject poverty but over the years through hard work, thrift, determination and seeking refuge in the culture, at the cost of insulating themselves from other native groups, have managed to capture trade and commerce of their new homelands.

Though a minuscule white populations controls some of the resources and finance and trade in Caribbean it is the Indians who are pretty much the upwardly mobile middle and upper crust of the society. This relative success as compared to the Africans who were brought to the Caribbean as early as 17th century does not seem to sit very well with the African populations. The Indians are seen as avaricious and greedy and very clannish. The Indians think the Africans are lazy among other things.

"Racial stereotypes developed early in the two colonies. British planters characterized Africans as physically strong but lazy and irresponsible. East Indians were stereotyped as industrious but clannish and greedy. Views that are still present today. To feel sleepy after eating is referred to in and around the Caribbean as having "niggeritis", a direct allusion to the laziness of Africans. To some extent, these stereotypes were accepted by the immigrant groups themselves, each giving truths to positive stereotypes of itself and negative stereotypes of other groups. They believed what was said of the other group but none of what was said of them. The stereotypes provided a useable explanation of behavior and justified competition among groups. Africans were described as indolent when they refused to work for low wages or make long-term contracts with the plantations as the Indians had. East Indians were considered selfish when they minimized their expenses to acquire wealth" (Seenarine, 2000). The fact that there is hardly any intermingling among these two groups cements the perceptions they have of each other. Almost all neighbourhoods are segregated on racial lines. There was hardly any interracial marriages, as the Indians considered themselves not quite black but Caucasian and preferred that their off springs not have a "nappy hair" (curly hair) of the Africans. These stereotypes are perpetuated early on with continued socialization where perceptions of each other are woven in to everydaylife like this song that school children have for the Indians: "Black man is falling. When the Black Man used to wear feathers in his cap, the coolie was eating water-rice. Black man used to say, "Go way, you water-rice coolie!" Today the coolie think they are big people. After one time will be a next. Today is time for coolie. I don't mind cause the Lord say, "In the last days, race will rise against race, and nation will rise against nation, and there will be wars and rumors of wars" (Horowitz 1971).

Though at the time of struggle that sought independence from the colonial rule, blacks and Indians have formed some solidarity, however it was short-lived. The racial divide has been a continuing undercurrent to not only the political scenario but in social and cultural life.

A situation very similar to the Caribbean is that of ethnic and racial tensions that exist in Africa between the blacks and Indians. In our next section we take a brief look at how interracial perceptions are between Indians and Africans.

Indians in Africa

There are 2.5 million Indians in Africa. The People of Indian Origin (PIO) form a majority in Mauritius at 68% numbering around 715,000. There are 1 Million Indians in South Africa, 100,000 in Kenya, 81,000 in Seychelles, 28,000 in Madagascar, 90,000 in Tanzania, 16,000 in Zimbabwe, 9,000 in Botswana, and around 20,000 in Mozambique. The majority of Indians are concentrated in East Africa and South Africa. The Indians in Francophone countries are a small percentage except in Mauritius.

Indians went to Africa as indentured labour. The white colonist had got them to Africa to build the Uganda Kenya railways in the late 1800s. Of the original 32,000 contract laborers, about 6,700 stayed on to work as "*dukawallas*," the artisans, traders, clerks, and, finally, small administrators. Excluded from colonial government and farming, they straddled the middle economic ground above the native blacks. Some even became doctors and lawyers.

It was this entrepreneurial *dukawallas* who were willing to move to inland to explore more business opportunities. In fact the potential for trader had attracted many free-passengers to Africa around this time and even before that. Indian traders had followed the Arab trading routes inland on the coast of modern-day Kenya and Tanzania. Indians had a virtual lock on Zanzibar's lucrative spice trade in the 19th century, working as the Sultan's exclusive agents.

"Between the building of the railways and the end of World War II, the number of Indians in East Africa swelled to 320,000. By the 1940s, some colonial areas had already passed laws restricting the flow of immigrants, as did white-ruled Rhodesia in 1924. But by then, the Indians had firmly established control of commercial trade – some 80 to 90 percent in Kenya and Uganda – plus sections of industrial development. In 1948, all but 12 of Uganda's 195 cotton ginneries were Indian run" (Brueggemann, 2000).

The success of Indians was resented by the native population of East Africa, be it in Uganda, Tanzania or Kenya. The insularity and lack of social interaction didn't help in reducing the perceptions of mutual distrust between the black population and the Indians. Despite the fact that a good number of Indians fought along side the blacks in their struggle for freedom; these newly emergent nations sought to build nations that sought to Africanize their countries. In Kenya new laws were introduced which said that "'Foreigners' could only hold jobs until a Kenyan national could be found to replace them: and more and more cities, including Nairobi, were demanding that the government ban non-Kenyans from owning a shop or trading in municipal markets"(source: <http://www.wairua.co.nz/ruth/culture/africa>.) In Uganda the resentment had finally led to the expulsion of Indians. In 1972, Idi Amin gave the country's 75,000 Asians 90 days to leave. In Tanzania, the people of Indian Origin constituted only one percent

of the total population, however their place in Tanganyikan political economy was bolstered by colonial policies that favored Indians over Africans in trade, commerce and property ownership; and encouraged segregation among races in all spheres. The backlash against Indians were felt strongest when Tanzania, under the leadership of President Nyerere issued the Arusha Declaration in 1967, which essentially called for indigenisation of economy and where People of Indian Origin were not considered outsiders despite them being in the scene for many decades or rather centuries. In the decade of the 1970s over 50,000 Asians left Tanzania, mainly for the UK and Canada.

The family seems to have been the fortress and haven that Indian families retreated in to, they also served as economic networks and a source of social capital. This aspect of Indian family is best captured in V.S. Naipaul's book *A Bend in the River*. The West Indies author's 1979 book remains the best-known literary work in English addressing the *Mhindi* (Swahili for Indian) experience in East and Central Africa. Mira Nair who spent much of her growing up years in Uganda brings out the racial tension between blacks and Indians in small town Southern America in her movie *Mississippi Masala*. The story of this movie concerns a Ugandan Indian family living in Mississippi whose adult daughter (Sarita Choudhury) becomes romantically involved with a Southern black man (Denzel Washington). The relationship potentially threatens to undo the family's ethnic solidarity and its economic vitality. The affair also ignites old racial fears of the woman's father, who experiences flashbacks to his Uganda youth and his family's sudden and violent exile in August 1972.

As in East Africa the Indians who are now settled in South Africa were brought as indentured labour or coolie labour as they were called. As elsewhere where native black population was pitted against relatively successful Indians, the reaction from the natives and other ethnicities have been negative. Very often the Indians, who are entrepreneurial and insular in their cultural practices and social interactions, have been dubbed as being Jewish or called Indian Jews. They were assumed by native populations and by nationalists to be akin to Jews, and were smeared with the purported Jewish tendencies of being "crafty, mendacious, and money-minded" (as an anti-Indian tract published in Johannesburg circa 1950 claimed). All over Africa the general impression was that the Indians gained as community at the expense of the native population. This perception was strongest in South Africa and to that extent Vinay Lal feels that the South African situation is very distinct. He writes: "it is here that the ideology of racial segregation received full-blown expression. Racism was no longer to be predicated on mere sentiment; on the contrary, racial discrimination was institutionalized. The African National Congress (ANC), the main organ of resistance to apartheid, had at one time been inspired by both the Natal Indian Congress and the Indian National Congress. In the apartheid era, Indians not only fought alongside black people, but came to occupy significant leadership positions in the ANC."

The end of apartheid should have been a signal to Indians that the disabilities under which they had suffered would be removed. As elsewhere around the world, the white race in South Africa had set itself up as a transcendent entity, representing itself as a people whose presence alone kept the country from disintegrating into racial and ethnic hostilities. The racialized hierarchies white South Africa brought into existence have prevailed. Thus, discrimination is no longer sanctioned by state policy, but black animosity has increasingly turned towards Indians. Matters came to the fore in mid-2002, when the

Kwa-Zulu writer and musician, Mbongeni Ngema, released a song entitled 'AmaNdiya', the Zulu word for 'Indians'. 'Oh brothers,/Oh, my fellow brothers,' begins the song:

We need strong and brave men

To face the Indians.

This situation is very difficult,

Indians do not want to change

Whites were far better than Indians

Even Mandela has failed to convince them to change,

Whites were far better than Indians.

Ngema then suggests that politicians, bribed by Indians, remain indifferent to the plight of Zulus. He invokes great figures from the Zulu past - just why he does so becomes clear from these lines:

Indians have conquered Durban.

We are poor because all things have been taken by Indians.

They are oppressing us.

Mkhize wants to open a business in West Street,

Indians say there is no place to open a business

Our people are busy buying from Indian shops...

They [the Indians] don't want to support a single black shop

(Vinay Lal, 2004:15)

Almost everywhere where Indians and blacks form part of the population, there is the perception that Indians are discriminatory towards the blacks, they have been found to be racist and insular shutting themselves away from any meaningful interactions with the black populations. An Indian marrying a black person would be much more of a taboo than if she/he were to marry a white person, for instance.

Vinay Lal while accounting for racist policies against the Indians in Africa, also points out to the insularity of Indians and the discriminatory attitude they have towards blacks. He writes; "the retreat into the family home, the concerted refusal to engage with a wider notion of the 'public', the general segregation from other communities, and the often mindless replication of 'timeless' Indian traditions have been among the more distressing characteristics of Indian existence abroad, particularly in the affluent West. We cannot but fail to recognize, when we keep vividly before our mind, the story of Indian indentured labour, that in the marginalization and pauperization of blacks and Hispanics there is also, however unwilling most Indians in the US may be to recognize it as such, their own humiliation. Or, to take another example, if Indians are all too often heard describing black people as 'lazy', they might be reminded that, for 200 years, the British were wont to use the same language for them" (ibid).

21.5 The Indian and State's Perception of Overseas Indians

The Indian diaspora is estimated to be over 20 million spread over different countries and regions of the globe. They constitute in official parlance NRIs

(Non Resident Indians, Indian residing in other countries) and PIOs (People of Indian Origin, basically citizens of other countries with Indian origins).

Box 21.3 NRI and PIO

A **non-resident Indian (NRI)** is an Indian citizen who has migrated to another country. Other terms with the same meaning are overseas Indian and expatriate Indian. For tax and other official purpose the government of India considers any Indian national away from India for more than 183 days in a year an NRI. In common usage, this often includes Indian born individuals (and also people of other nations with Indian blood) who have taken the citizenship of other countries.

A **Person of Indian Origin (PIO)** is literally, simply a person of Indian origin who is not a citizen of India. For the purposes of issuing a PIO Card, the Indian government considers anyone of Indian origins up to four generations removed, to be a PIO.

(source:<http://en.wikipedia.org>)

It was only in 2000 the Government of India had taken concrete steps to look into the affairs of overseas Indians, by settling up High Level Committee and separate ministry-Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs. Prior to that the state response to Indians who left home many years ago or the one who left recently was very lukewarm, especially with relation to PIOs. As our unit 15 describes in detail, the Indian State response, to various situations which involved the diaspora, can be generalised as being constrained by diplomacy and an unclear stand as to exactly how to deal with PIOs. This ambivalence soon gave way to realization that the people who have migrated to overseas are a valuable asset, especially those who have been successful and who have made mark in their host country. Soon the general perception that the flight of professionals to greener pastures of Western countries meant a brain drain gave way to realization that it is not at all a loss. This realization in part was largely due to the fact that the remittances made by many NRIs were recognized for their economic value. The Indian diaspora, who went to the Gulf region as semi-skilled and skilled labour increased substantially post oil boom of 1973. The remittances sent by these workers increased the foreign exchange reserves. The remittances from North America also added to the foreign exchange reserve (see unit 13 and unit 15 for more details on migration to these regions of the globe). "According to one estimate, whereas India's forex receipts totaled less than \$ 300 million in 1974-75, by 1984-85 this figures has increased to \$ 2, 500 million. In 2005, it has reached more than \$16 billion." (Jain, 2006).

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.

Vijay Prashad feels that the Indian state was interested in the rich overseas Indians and that its interest in the Indian diaspora is mostly or mainly economic. He says: "What is important here is that the diaspora is being imagined now not so much as unfortunates who have to be championed (as in the 19th century), as the brain drain (in the 1960s and 1970s), or as cultural ambassadors (as in the 1980s). We now have the diaspora represented almost entirely by the very wealthy who reside mainly in the advanced industrial states and whose image is summoned by the term NRI. By 'NRI' we certainly don't mean the taxi drivers in New York City, the sugarcane

workers in Guyana or the domestic servants in the Gulf. 'NRI' now means the Hinduja clan, Sanjay Kumar and Kanwal Rekhi"(Prasad, 2004).

The ambit of this perception that Indians are not just citizens of the country but include the diaspora has now further expanded to include PIOs, especially by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government, who wanted to reach the global Hindu community through its offshore activities. Though People of Indian Origin have been recognized as members of larger community, the general perception among the PIOs is that they are the poor cousins in relation to the wealthy NRIs.

The recent Parvasi Bharatiya Diwas though espousing to embrace all the global Indian family, including what are known as the older diasporas, namely the PIOs, have conferred only politically correct platitudes and very little actual incentives. "But dishonesty cannot always dissimulate successfully: thus the stated intention of the Government of India to confer the privilege of dual citizenship upon the members of the newer, affluent diasporic communities of the north, while leaving Indian communities in the Caribbean, Fiji, South Africa, Malaysia and else-where out in the cold, and this on the pretence that the older diasporic communities have not maintained much of a living connection with the mother-land, comes as no surprise"(Lal, 2004).

Reflection and Action 21.2

Highlight the perception of the Indian State on the Overseas Indians.

The discussion above has been mainly on the official position and perception about the Indian diaspora. Let us see what the everyday popular perceptions about the Indian diaspora are in the following section.

21.6 What India Thinks of the Indians Abroad

"The desire of the Indian diaspora for India is mirrored by the desire of India for its diaspora population" (Kamdar, 2004). This fascination with the diaspora can be seen in the amount of news-space that the diaspora occupies, especially the NRI. Any news or event that relates to Indian abroad is highlighted and brought to notice to the ones back in India whether it is Kiran Desai winning the Booker Prize, or Lakshmi Mittal's daughter's lavish wedding or Bobby Jindal running for the elections in America. We are quick to bring this far away events in to the India where the NRI or PIOs identity as an Indian is reiterated. While India lauds the diaspora for their success it also has expectations and perceptions about them that are not always complimentary.

Ankur Bhal, a 22 year old, Fullbright student, in an interview on rediff.com says : Everyone has misconceptions about people they don't live with. People in India think Non-Resident Indians are promiscuous, parent-hating mongrels (<http://www.rediff.com/news/2005/jan>). If not parent hating, the general representation which comes out very strongly in movies, whether they are made by Indians or Indians who live abroad, is that there is constant struggle between the first generation Indians and their second generation children. Movies such as *Bend it like Beckham*, or even the earlier film *Bhaji on the Beach* are evocations of this theme. The tension in some sense represents so-called Indian values versus Western values. The Western value of individuality over community or family is what is supposed to guide the Indian abroad, particularly the second generation. If not for this outright westernization, than they are at best very confused, caught

between the West and India; and hence acronym such as ABCD, which stands for American Born Confused Desi.

Another perception about those who left India for greener pastures and to more affluent Western countries is that they have betrayed India and have not given back anything to India. Often the accusation is that those who have left never return back to India. An NRI therefore sometimes has been called a Nonreturning Indian. And that these NRIs then are out of tune with India and in their occasional trips in India they are seen as complaining, insulating, mineral-water-drinking-accented non resident, who has lost his/her Indianess. Writing about this stereotype a Non Resident Indian says; "Many desis, who are NRIs, suddenly find themselves having to defend their Indianness. Becoming an NRI, or being labelled as an NRI is somehow thought to be an overnight transformation and you are expected to have a different take, perception on everything, and your comments on India are no longer correct or valid. It is like some kind of switch is flipped and a whole version of software is downloaded into your OS when you move to another country"(<http://kamlabhattach.wordpress.com/2006/02/07>).

This caricature of the NRI as not Indian enough and therefore lacking in morals or of values of the right kind is stereotypically portrayed in many films made in India especially the Bollywood. In fact anyone who went abroad- *vilayat* (the word *vilyat* or *bilayat* is itself a corruption of *Blighty* which is England) came back to India corrupted. Some of the early films had these portrayal of *bilayati* returned Indian or foreign returned. Manoj Kumar's was famous for championing the Indian values as against the corrupt Western values, so much so that he is nicknamed Mr. Bharat, has the *vilayati* returned Indian who wears mini skirts , smokes and drinks regains her Indianess thanks to the hero of the movie and then seen sporting, *saree* and *binidi* and generally behaving like a *bharathiya nari* - a good Indian women- in his film - *Poorab aur Paschim*.

Many contemporary films too are mirroring a similar image of the NRI, starting from '*Pardes*', to '*Mujhse Dosti Karoge*', to '*Ramji Londonwaley*', have depicted most NRIs as not so good compared to Indians. Invariably, they are shown as people who get cleansed when they return to their roots and once here they never leave. New Yorker Anitha Venkataramani put it aptly in her observation that in Bollywood the Indian-American guy is always one of two types. Either the boy is a rich, amoral and a womaniser whose parents are looking for a girl from India to fix him - for instance Apurva Agnihotri's character in '*Pardes*', or a rich MBA who only wants a girl from India - like Hrithik Roshan's character in '*Mujhse Dosti Karoge*' or Abhishek Bachchan in '*Kuch Naa Kaho*'.

The Indian-American girl also comes in two types - rich and amoral with a serious alcohol problem - for instance Suman Ranganathan's character in '*Aa Ab Laut Chalen*' and skimpily-dressed Kareena Kapoor in '*Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham*' and Rani Mukerji in '*Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*' - or rich and beautiful with a wardrobe comprising entirely of *salwar-kameezes* and an affinity towards India - like Kajol's character in '*Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*'.

Additionally, more often than not, it takes a hardcore character from India to teach 'these Americans' what the true values of life are and how only Indians understand them. In '*Pardes*,' the goody two-shoes character of Arjun, played by Shah Rukh Khan, is characterised as the 'pure desi' at heart who is so moral he does not smoke or drink like the other immoral

Indian-Americans around him. In '*Kal Ho Naa Ho*,' we witness Aman Mathur (Shah Rukh again) coming from India and teaching Naina Kapur how to 'have fun' in her life. Which consists of drinking shot after shot of hard liquor, stripping her clothes off and dancing provocatively with several men at once (<http://www.mahiram.com>).

Reflection and Action 21.3

Write an essay on what the Indians think of the Indians abroad.

With more NRIs returning back to India and with greater interactions between home and abroad, it is possible that some of these perceptions may get more nuanced, as with most stereotypes which are based on partial truths.

Box 21.4 Returning NRIs

More and more medical professionals are giving up lucrative jobs in the USA and other adopted countries to return to India and join research institutes and hospitals, reveals the study by the Charities Aid Foundation of India (CAF). The statistics are revealing. Of some 250 research scientists working at Dr Reddy's Laboratories, 20 have returned from foreign shores. They are involved in new drug research. At Lupin Laboratories, four scientists came from the USA to join research in natural product chemistry. Ten of the 80 researchers in Nicholas Piramal have come from abroad and Wockhardt has weaned away 10 scientists for biotechnology, new drug research, chemistry and pharmacology.

According to CAF, a UK-based public trust that associates with corporate donors for social causes, this is proof of the "intensity of the reverse brain drain". The largest number of professionals is coming from the USA, where Indian doctors are the largest foreign health professional group. This inflow is aided by the powerful Association of American Physicians of Indian origin (AAPI) comprising 35,000 physicians that interacts regularly with the Medical Council of India. Non-resident Indian (NRI) doctors support various health facilities and drives in India, including Apollo Hospitals, L.V. Prasad Eye Institute, Etc.. Salaries offered to such NRI doctors in India have shot up, facilitating their return. Some large Indian corporate groups are hiring expatriates with packages ranging from \$250,000 to \$400,000 a year.

The study observes: "In India, they can afford luxuries they could not in the USA. The basic living conditions here are improving, research opportunities are opening up and drug companies are investing more in research." (<http://www.tribuneindia.com/2003/>)

21.7 Conclusion

In this unit we have talked about the perceptions and stereotypes about Indians in their host countries as well as what Indians who live abroad or thought of back in their home countries. We have not discussed every Indian settlement or community in detail as, it would be too voluminous and beyond the scope of this unit, however we tried to give you a comprehensive picture of some of the main images which seems to be created and perpetuated through film, literature and media, which incidentally is the theme of this block.

In trying to capture the images of Indians abroad a greater coverage has been given, not all inadvertently, to Indians settled in Western countries with its preponderance of media and hence great image producers. However we also wanted to bring to you the typical situations and problems and perceptions faced by Indians who went to Caribbean, Africa and Fiji and Malaysia to name a few. We encourage you to try and

take this unit further by exploring similar or different perceptions of Indians in other parts of the globe.

21.8 Further Reading

Gupta, Anirudh (ed.), 1971. *Indians Abroad: Asia and Africa*. Delhi: Orient Longman.

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Motwani, Jagat, K. *et al*, (ed.) 1993. *Global Indian Diaspora: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. New York: GOPIO.