

Unit 23

Sub-National Identities and Diaspora

Contents

- 23.1 Introduction
- 23.2 Factors for the Growth of Diasporic Community
- 23.3 Factors for the Growth of Transnational Community
- 23.4 The Indian Diaspora
- 23.5 Indian Diaspora: The Regional Dimension
- 23.6 Conclusion
- 23.7 Further Reading

Learning Objectives

This Unit will help you understand:

- The concept of diaspora and its relevance to social sciences and humanities;
- The factors for the emergence of Indian diaspora;
- The nature of emigration of Indians;
- The significance of transnational and transnationalism in diaspora studies; and
- The role of socio-cultural factors in diaspora studies.

23.1 Introduction

Migration is a phenomenon that has been taking place for millions of years and continues even today all over the world. When individuals can no longer acquire the necessary resources to sustain themselves at their location they migrate to the places where these resources are available. In the earlier period people moved either because of the poor working environment and economic conditions of the home country or the attraction by the images of destination promising greater socio-economic opportunities. The processes of globalization and advancement in communication technology have provided further impetus for individuals to migrate. Economic reasons alone no longer hold strong. Linkages between sending and receiving countries are established through sharing the news and information of both home and host countries. The people who are now on the move are labour migrants (both documented & undocumented), highly qualified specialists, entrepreneurs, refugees and asylum seekers or the household members of the earlier migrants.

What do we mean by the term “migration”? Generally, the term has been associated with some notion of ‘movement’ through a spatial/territorial shift resulting in a temporary or permanent settlement in the new location. Migration is generally viewed as a process that begins at the ‘place of origin’ and ends at the ‘destination’. Consequences of migration - socio-cultural, economic and political - are experienced at both the locations. Migrations often take place under a multitude of conditions and circumstances, for different - economic, political, personal - reasons in vastly varied contexts and consequences. Diaspora is one of the consequences of ‘international migration’.

In 1990, the International Organization for Migration estimated that there were over 80 million migrants who have moved out of the country of their origin. Among them 30 million were said to be irregular migrants and another 15 million were refugees or asylum seekers. By 1992, the number of migrants increased to 100 million, of which 20 million were refugees and asylum seekers. The United Nations Population Division in July 2002 estimated that there were 185 million people living for 12 months or more outside their country of birth or citizenship (<http://www.un.org/esa/population/unpop.htm>). A majority of them are international migrants who are potential immigrants in countries of their destination.

Drawing from the works of Safran (1991), Sheffer (1993), Bruneau (1994) and Cohen (1999), a group or community may be called a “diaspora” if four conditions are met: firstly, if the group or community has immigrated and settles beyond the borders of their nation-state and maintains their ethnic identity and consciousness; secondly, an active associative life; thirdly, contacts with the land of origin in various forms, real or imaginary; fourthly, there should be relations with other groups of the same ethnic origin spread over the world.

23.2 Factors for the Growth of Diasporic Community

Tambiah (2000) saw the origin of diasporic communities from two different sources:

- Voluntary migrations of groups of peoples, mostly with useful occupational skills in search of better economic opportunities and standard of life elsewhere.
- Involuntary displacement of people running away from political turmoil and wars, or refuge from natural disaster in their country. They are mostly known as refugees and asylum seekers who, although with exception, are considered more of a burden to the host nation.

Box 23.1: Typology of Diaspora

Robin Cohen (1999: 178) included under his definition of diaspora such categories as Jewish, Armenians, Greek, Indian, Lebanese, and Chinese and then branches out to deal a number of minorities across the globe. He also attempts to arrange the diasporas under different analytical subtypes:

Type	Example
Victim/refugee diaspora	Jews, African, Armenian Others: Irish, Palestinians
Imperial/colonial diaspora	Ancient Greek, British Russian Others: Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch
Labour/service diaspora	Indentured Indians, Chinese & Japanese, Sikhs, Turks, Italians
Trade/business/professional	Venetian, Lebanese, Chinese Others: Today's Indians, Japanese
Contract/hybrid/post-modern	Caribbean people Others: today's Chinese, Indians

Source: Robin Cohen (1999:178)

23.3 Factors for the Growth of Transnational Community

Peggy Levitt (1999:4) has examined the significance of several factors that lead to the emergence of the transnational networks. These include a) easy travel and communication, b) the increasing role immigrants play in the countries of their origin to legitimise themselves by providing service to migrants and their children, c) the increased importance of the receiving country states in the economic and political futures of sending countries, d) the society and political marginalisation of migrants in their host countries, and e) migration takes place within an ideological climate that favours pluralism over the melting pot.

Robin Cohen (cited in Schnapper, 1999) has examined some of the preconditions for the emergence of transnational communities. These include 1) the number and activity of non-governmental organisations, 2) the action of international associations such as Amnesty International and Green Peace, and 3) membership in supra national organisations and the number of populations they are directly involved with.

23.4 The Indian Diaspora

Indians have migrated to different parts of the world at different periods of time. In terms of sheer numbers, they make the third largest group, next only to the British and the Chinese. The people of Indian origin with nearly 20 million populations settled in 70 countries constitute more than 40 per cent of the population in Fiji, Mauritius, Trinidad, Guyana and Surinam. They are smaller minorities in Malaysia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Uganda, UK, USA and Canada.

Historically, Indian emigration to distant lands may be categorised into broadly four patterns: They are:

- a) Pre-colonial migration;
- b) Colonial migration that began in the 1830s to the British, French and Dutch colonies;
- c) Post-colonial migration to the industrially developed countries; and
- d) Recent migration to West Asia.

Pre-colonial Migration

In the Indian context, emigration has been a continuous process since pre-colonial times when it was for the purposes of trade and the propagation of religion. As far as historical and archival data is concerned, Indian emigration goes back to the first century AD when Indian princes, priests, poets and artisans migrated to Southeast Asian countries. Among the distinguished names of this period Angkor Wat, Lara Djonggrang and Borobudur stands testimony (Suryanarayan, 2003). The early emigration from India owed its origins to the Buddhist missionaries, when the Hindu kingdoms of medieval Southeast Asia attract labour and craftsmen from India during the 16th century CE. The trade contacts slowly developed and thereby small colonies established themselves in East Africa and Southeast Asia. It is observed that merchants from Gujarat, Bengal and Tamilnadu settled down in the great port cities of Southeast Asia like Malacca, Acheh, Ternate and Tidore during this period. They gradually got assimilated with the local people (ibid.).

Colonial Migration

It was only in the wake of European imperialist expansion during the 19th and 20th century that conditions for emigration of large numbers of Indians to different parts of the world were created. New plantations, industrial and commercial ventures in European colonies needed large supplies of labour and, with the abolition of slavery in the British, French and Dutch colonies respectively in 1834, 1846 and 1873, there were severe shortages of labour to work in the sugar, tea, coffee, cocoa and rubber plantations. Looking for alternative sources of labour, aside from the African ex-slaves and European immigrants, the colonial government imported Indians under the ingenious scheme of “indentured labour.”

Indentured labour is a system in which individual labourers were required to sign an agreement or contract (*girmit*) to work on a plantation for a specified number of years, usually three to five years. The emigration of indentured labour started during the late 18th century and continued up to the early 20th century. Thousands of Indians emigrated to South and East Africa, Mauritius, Fiji and the Caribbean under this system. Calcutta and Madras were the main ports of embarkment and the major districts for recruiting labour included parts of Madras Presidency with Tamil and Telugu populations and the districts of Bhojpuri region of Eastern U.P. and Northern Bihar. Approximately 1.3 million Indians crossed the oceans under contracts of indenture.

There are several factors that pushed Indian migrants into seeking employment under indenture. The first was the poor condition that prevailed at that time in India because of the social oppression, shrinking of cottage industry, periodic famine resulting in extreme poverty and unemployment. The West, on the other hand, was getting affluent because of industrial development. Second, all colonial masters found Indians skillful, hard working and useful, as a result of which the British, the French, the Dutch, and the Portuguese all took Indian skilled labour for development of plantations and agricultural economies of their territories. Upon their arrival in the colonies, the immigrants were assigned to plantations to which they were “bound” for five or more years. They lived there in isolated and insulated conditions. Although they were promised fair wages and a return voyage to India in exchange for a predetermined number of years spent working in the colonies, poverty and the desire to build a new life ensured that very few of these indentured labourers ever returned to India. Many chose to settle down permanently in those countries as they neither had the financial resources to return back nor hope for better life at back home.

Emigration to Sri Lanka, Burma and Malaya presents a marked difference in contrast to the African and Caribbean countries. All the emigrants to Sri Lanka and Malaya were from the Southern parts of India and the immigrants were recruited by the headman known as the ‘Kangani’. The Indians worked on the tea, coffee and rubber plantations. During the period 1852 and 1937, 1.5 million Indians went to Ceylon, 2 million to Malaya, and 2.5 million to Burma. After 1920 the Kangani emigration (totalling around 6 million) gradually gave way to individual or un-recruited, free migration due to fall in demand for Indian labour.

Box 23.2 Distinction between Old and New Indian Diaspora

Any analysis of Indian diaspora cannot ignore the distinction between the emigrants during the colonial period and the post-colonial emigrants, who may be termed respectively as the *Old Diaspora* and the *New Diaspora*. Not

only they vary in the contexts of their emigration and destinations but also in terms of their socio-economic background and the degree of interaction with the motherland. While the New Diaspora has retained vibrant relationship with their family and community in India, majority of the Old Diaspora has lost their contact with the motherland. In the course of their long journey by ship to distant destinations, the unknown co-passengers became 'jahaji bhai' (literally meaning 'ship brother', a brotherly affinity owing to travelling together). The Indian diaspora communities formed during the colonial era were totally denied access even to their own folk attached to different plantations under a new system of slavery called 'indenture labour' invented by the British colonialists, leave alone any access to the then existing means of transportation and communication to engage with the motherland. The post-colonial emigrants on the other hand not only enjoyed the advantage of being professionally trained, middle class, Anglophone Indians but also earned adequate income that could facilitate visits and frequent communication with the place of their origin. The recent advancement in technologies of travel, transport, communication, information and Internet has contributed immensely to the growth of transnational networks and virtual communities. There is revival of the local at the global context, with the shrinking of space and time.

Post-colonial Migration

The post WW-II scenario has changed the whole international migration process by affecting each and every migrant country, and India was not far behind in this process. During this period migration was directed towards developed countries, and the migrants were mostly constituted talented professionals, skilled labourers, entrepreneurs from the peripheral, colonial and under-developed countries besides *Anglo-Indians*. This post-war migration was totally different from the earlier migration of indentured, kangani and other forms of labour migration. Large-scale migration of Indians took place during this period to the developed countries like the U.K., the U.S.A., Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Apart from India, Indians from other parts of the world especially from the former colonies (diasporas) also started coming to these countries. They are best referred to as Twice Migrants. There are two instances: a) Africanization policies; and b) Ethnic violence in which Indians from former colonies express their interest to immigrate to these new lands.

- a) In 1972, Uganda's dictator Idi Amin ordered 75,000 Ugandan Asians out of the nation. Most of these people were of Indian origin and were successful traders, bankers and administrators or labourers. Around 27,000 emigrated to the United Kingdom, while another 61,00 went to Canada. Some even emigrated to India despite never having lived there previously.
- b) A second example is the case of Fiji. By the 1970s, native Fijians had lost their majority to people of Indian origin - mostly descendants of farm workers brought in by the British as indentured labour. In 1987 the first Indian-backed coalition was elected to government, raising tension between the ethnic Indian and ethnic Fijian populations. Subsequent events have ensured ethnic Fijian political dominance. Many Indo-Fijians have left the country of their birth; some came to India, others to New Zealand and Australia.

Recent Migration to West Asia

Recent migration of Indians to the West Asian countries is basically oriented toward labour and servicing occupations on a contract basis. The year 1973 experienced the beginning of the rapidly increasing demand for expatriate

labour in oil exporting countries of the Gulf and North Africa such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar and Libya. These countries adopted a development strategy centering on the building up of infrastructure and, in turn, created demand for labour in unskilled manual work, especially in the construction sector. At the termination of the first phase of infrastructural projects and with the new emphasis on industrialization in the Middle East, there has been a significant change in the structure of labour demand. Between 1975 and 1980 more than a million skilled workers from India were employed to manage and operate this new infrastructure. By the year 2005 this figure had gone up to over 3.5 million.

Reflection and Action 23.1

Describe the nature of Indian emigration.

23.5 Indian Diaspora: The Regional Dimension

India is culturally diverse in terms of regional, religious, linguistic and caste composition. Indian diaspora is no exception to these diversities wherever they are found in sizeable numbers to pursue the distinctive cultural features akin to those found at their place of origin. The following section will briefly discuss some of the significant diasporic communities from a regional perspective and their emerging transnational networks. Along with the history of migration and their transnational presence, this section focuses specifically on three diasporic communities, namely Punjabis, Gujaratis and Telugus. These communities are chosen here for detailed discussion in view of their visible presence and extensive networking among the Indian diaspora communities. They endeavour to retain traditional practices, language, religion, marriage patterns and, above all, extensive interaction between the members of the regional/linguistic diaspora community scattered across several countries besides their homeland-the region of their origin.

Punjabi Diaspora

The Punjabis settled abroad have migrated from the state of Punjab, situated in the northwest of India. It is bounded by Jammu and Kashmir on the north, on the east by Himachal Pradesh and the Union territory of Chandigarh, on the south by Haryana and Rajasthan and on the west by Pakistan. The very word "Punjab" is an amalgam of two Persian words, *Panj* (five) and *ab* (water), signifying historically the land of five rivers. The principal spoken language in the present day Punjab is *Punjabi*, which is also the official language of Punjab, written in the Gurmukhi Script. The majority population of Punjab (nearly 60%) follows Sikhism, a faith originated from the teachings of Guru Nanak. The Hindus form the largest minority, followed by Muslims, Buddhists, Christian and Jains. Today Punjabis are dispersed worldwide, especially to countries like Canada, the USA, the UK and other European countries.

Although migration of Punjabis began during the early part of the nineteenth century, it was only after 1840s that a fairly large number of people began migrating to the US and UK. During the next half-century, the benefits of economic development were exhausted due to rapid demographic growth, recurrent famines and the uneconomic subdivision of land. Further, the severity of land revenue along with rising rural indebtedness, increasing population pressure and the consequent land hunger contributed to the mass migration of Punjabis to the outer world (Sood, 1995: 28). Some of the Punjabi peasants were compelled to out-migrate under the influence of

new economic and social forces, which were unleashed by the British administration.

During the 1860s Punjab entered the orbit of colonial labour migration, where some Punjabis were entitled by colonial agents (Tatla, 1999: 46). When the British recruited labour for Ugandan railway project, Punjabis were given the preference. The migration of Punjabis to East African countries gained momentum during the end of the nineteenth century, when several thousand craftsmen, primarily Ramgarhia Sikhs from Julandhar region, were recruited to work on the railway construction under indentured system. After the construction work was over only a few workers returned home while the majority stayed there to further work for the railway. However, not many Punjabis continued to work under the indentured system since they found themselves temperamentally unsuitable to be "slaves." Describing the conditions of Punjabi workers in the plantations, Darshan Singh Tatla (1999: 46-47) mentions "...the first few hundred Punjabis so recruited were found 'unsuitable' by the planters in the West Indies, who protested that these Punjabi migrants are very objectionable as field labour. Many absconded to the Spanish Main, refused to work in the fields, and nearly all have been unruly and troublesome."

Now in the threshold of 21st century Punjabis could be found in every corner of the world and they have entered into every sphere of work. In comparison to the pre-independence period where the emigration was directed towards Canada, US, Australia, East Africa and UK, the post-independence emigration also includes destinations to various countries of Europe and South East Asia. Punjabis have established extensive transnational networks through religious and cultural associations to pursue their social, cultural and economic interests both in the countries of their residence and the motherland.

Transnational Networks of Punjabis

The Punjabis uphold their social network through family ties and kinship obligations, marriage ceremonies and other ritual activities. Overseas Punjabis retain their kinship relations through contact with the families back home in Punjab and also with kith and kin around the world. These kinship ties are kept alive through frequent visits to homeland on various occasions. As pointed out by Angelo (1997: 118) that, "...the frequency of social contacts exchanged through home visitations, some times more than twice a month and occasional home visits". Marriage is an important institution among Punjabis in sustaining the ethnic bond. One of its important roles is to create positive self-image through arranged marriages in which region, religion and caste identities are maintained and perpetuated. The Punjabis choose their marriage partners not only in their respective place of residence but from the homeland and other countries. Now marriage partners are increasingly chosen across the continent (Angelo, 1997: 66). The matrimonial advertisements, which are available in the newspapers and in the Internet, offer increasing opportunities for searching and locating the marriage partners. Social linkages have also been improved through the advent of public telephone stations (STD's), cell phone linkages and Internet email services.

The culture of Punjab is best reflected in the folklore, ballads of love and war, fairs and festivals, dance, music and literature. The rich cultural heritage, common language and a strong sense of being 'Punjabi' bind the Punjabis together. The 'Bhangra' dance, which is synonymous with Punjabi culture is now finds its prominent place in the Punjabi diasporic identity. During the last two decades there were several Bhangra troupes that crossed

the Atlantic to provide entertainment to the Punjabis in the Canada and the US. The Punjabi diaspora experiences a sense of nostalgia while such groups perform the familiar dance, as they (Bhangra dancers) depict the conditions of Punjabis abroad and their struggles in new lands for honour and livelihood. Punjabi media consisting of weekly newspapers, monthly and quarterly magazines also play a significant role in informing overseas Sikhs about their homeland. The transnational television and radio channels also provide information and entertainment to the Punjabis around the globe. There are several transnational TV and Radio channels such as *Punjabi Radio*, *Netguruindia*, *TV India*, *Live 365.com*, *Punjabi+many*, *AM1320 Vancouver*, *Multicultural Radio Punjabi Saturday*, *Montreal Canada*, *Radio Sikh-info*, *Daily Kukamnama* etc., provide information to Punjabis in the diaspora. These satellite channels take images of Punjab and Punjabis to Punjabi diaspora spread over different parts of the world. Punjabi films, videos and magazines are now available in most of the Asian shops abroad which further supplement the cultural environment of Punjabis (Tatla 1999: 68-71).

From economic point of view, the Punjabi immigrants today remitted a high proportion of their earnings to support their families back home so also to improve the economy of the home state (Thandi, 1996). They invested their remittances in the form of "...establishing industries, factories, and buying land and transport companies in most of the major towns in Punjab such as Julandhar, Ludhiana, Chandigarh and other towns" (Tatla, 1999: 63). They also contribute most part of their remittances for the development of charities, hospitals and educational centres in Punjab. For instance, contribution of overseas Sikhs in the field of agriculture has led to the "the green revolution" during the 1960s. One of the examples of this type of transnational philanthropy is the development of "model village."

The Sikhs are one of the most identifiable religious groups in the world. The Sikh temple is called Gurdwaras which is one of the fundamental institutions in Sikhism. The Gurdwaras play an important role in social, cultural and linguistic life of Sikhs everywhere, besides the promotion of the religious beliefs and rituals. Through the Gurdwaras the Sikhs maintain their socio-religious identity. The Gurdwaras help them to keep the cohesiveness of the community. The religiousness of Sikhs and their ability to organise themselves have made possible to build Gurdwaras wherever Sikhs have migrated. There are thousands of Gurdwaras around the world, which promote both religious and cultural life of Sikhs by organising functions and festivals. They also mobilise people for political activity besides maintaining both the religious and social identity.

Gujarati Diaspora

Gujaratis settled abroad have migrated originally from the state of Gujarat, which is situated on the west coast of India. It is bounded by the Arabian Sea in the west, the State of Rajasthan in the north and north-east, Madhya Pradesh in the east and Maharashtra on the south and south east. The State at present comprises of 25 districts, covering a geographical area of 1.96 lakh sq. kms. According to the population census of 2001, the population of Gujarat stood at 5.06 crores (Census of India 2001).

Although the merchants from Gujarat have been involved in overseas trade for almost a millennia in spices, ivory and textiles especially in East Africa, significant migration of Gujaratis occurred during the end of the 19th and the early part of 20th centuries to the Middle East besides East Africa. The pressure to emigrate was fuelled by the conditions in Gujarat itself, such

as plague epidemic during 1899-1902 and again in 1916-18, an influenza epidemic raged in 1918-19 and there was also famine in 1899-1900. There were also the perennial problems of land shortage and employment exacerbated by the decline of local textile industry (Ballard 1996: 179-80). Coincidentally around the same time a lot of economic and commercial opportunities opened up in East African countries, new cities built up along with the railway in the areas such as Nairobi, Nakuru and Kisumu in Kenya, and Kampala, Jinja and Tororo in Uganda. As a result, many Gujaratis migrated to Uganda, Fiji, Zambia, Kenya, Malawi, and Zanzibar.

With the opening up of global economies, Gujaratis have made remarkable presence in the USA, UK, UAE, Canada and other countries. Many Gujaratis moved to the United States at the turn of the 20th century. Today, Patidars form the largest group among the Gujaratis in the diaspora. They are identified by the popular surname Patel followed by the Lohanas of Saurashtra origin, who are commonly referred to as Banias. In many countries such as the U.S.A, U.K., Canada and the Caribbean, where the Gujaratis have made a name, they are generally regarded as the most affluent and successful South Asian settlers. They are not only in business, which is their first love, but also in professional fields such as technology, science, medicine, and business management. Today, Gujaratis constitute one of the prominent Indian diasporic communities in the world. Although their numbers vary from one country to another, they have significant in number in most of the African countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and South Africa. They have also settled in most parts of the Europe, North America, UK, Canada, and New Zealand. The transnational network among Gujaratis is being examined below from social, cultural and economic point of view.

Transnational Networks of Gujaratis

The relation that the Gujaratis maintain with the country of their origin is not only a matter of memories but also an ongoing vibrant linkage. These transnational relations can be broadly divided into two categories, i.e., micro and macro linkages. The micro level transnational linkages among the Gujaratis can be analysed from two perspectives. First, the ties between the Gujaratis in India with their relatives in other parts of the world, and secondly, the mutual contacts between the Gujaratis living all over the world. The macro level linkages are manifested in institutional, organisational and associational basis between diaspora and the mother country as well as among the diaspora community members from different countries.

Gujaratis world over are distinctly known for preserving their language, culture and distinctive food habits, including vegetarianism. Gujarat has a rich tradition of performing arts and customs. '*Dhandhya*', a folk dance with *sticks* and *Garba* are popular among the Gujarati youth in India and abroad. Originally *Dhandhya* was performed by rural folk, but today it is brought to urban locale by remixing the pulse of disco, hip-hop, reggae, funk, Hindi film music, and other African, American and Caribbean popular music. These fused styles are exported from London, U.S., and West Indies to India, and are captured in Hindi films, played at wedding receptions, dance parties, and community celebrations. There are some special occasions on which these cultural programmes are performed. For instance, during '*Navratri*' - a nine night religious ceremony to worship Goddess Durga - *Dhandhya* dance is a major attraction and people from all backgrounds dance together. The fondness of these dances and music is apparently a transnational phenomenon.

Television plays an important role in sustaining transnational linkages among the ethnic groups. The world-wide networks of online media allow much easier access, relatively at less cost, offering interactive opportunity to the dispersed people around the world. For example, the diasporic Gujarati web sites are creating global directories of individuals, community associations, and business organisations owned by members of the diaspora. The online media help the users to reconstitute pre-migration relationships, at least in cyberspace, as well as *create 'virtual communities'* with distinct identities.

The role of international Gujarati associations and organisations is very significant in the promotion of transnational networks by bringing all the Gujaratis together; work for Gujarat and to preserve the Gujarati culture, tradition and folklore. There are considerable number of Gujaratis living in the countries like USA, U.K., Canada and East Africa. They have formed their institutions and associations in order to look after their fellow Gujaratis in the local context and to pursue interactions with other Gujaratis all over the world.

Telugu Diaspora

Telugus have the distinction of being the largest among the South Indian communities to have immigrated to different parts of the world since the early 19th century. They originally hailed from the state of Andhra Pradesh, which is the third largest and most densely populated state of India. The official language of Andhra Pradesh "Telugu," is spoken in India by 65 million constituting around 7.8% of the total population of the country (Census of India 1991). Telugu is the first language of at least 68 million people including the diasporic population.. The language has made inroads into Mauritius, Singapore, Fiji, South Africa, the USA, Canada, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and UAE where Telugu immigrants are present in considerable numbers.

Being a coastal state bound by the Bay of Bengal on the east, Andhra Pradesh occupies a unique place in the Indian sub-continent and the Telugus have a long tradition of overseas trade with Burma, Sumatra and other countries of Far and Middle East. Large-scale migration of Telugus to other parts of the world occurred during the 19th and early 20th century for employment under the 'indentured' system of plantation labour in the British and French colonies.

There are several factors - both push and pull - which are responsible for the migration of Telugus. While on the one hand, natural calamities like famine and flood, shrinking of the cottage industry, increase in population and lack of employment has *forced* many Telugus to migrate to other countries, on the other, there were opportunities of plantation labour in the British plantation colonies that *lured* many Telugus to migrate to the countries such as Fiji, Malaysia, South Africa and Mauritius in order to escape from starvation and death.

Telugus migrated to South Africa, Fiji and Mauritius as part of indentured labour to work in the plantations during 19th century. Telugus *especially* from the coastal regions migrated to work in the tea and coffee plantations of Ceylon and rubber plantations of Malaysia, chiefly as *kangani* and *maistry* form of labour. By the year 1921, it was observed that, there were as many as 39,986 Andhras from the Vishakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh in Malaya (Naidu 1981: 2). Among the immigrants recruited as plantation labour by European enterprises, 80 percent were unskilled labourers from

the untouchable castes of Telugu and Tamil origin. The post-war migration was totally different from the earlier migration of indentured, kangani and other labour migrations, in the sense that, many of the young Telugu professionals migrated to developed countries such as the USA, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and France in search of better opportunities. The transnational networks among Telugus can be examined from social, cultural and economic point of view.

Transnational Networks of Telugus

The Telugus settled in various parts of the world have close contact with their families back home in Andhra Pradesh. In the past, their kinship networks were maintained through sending letters and through occasional home visits. In comparison to the past, when any letter took months to reach home and get a reply, it has now become possible to keep in touch with the family and kin instantly on a global level. It is made possible by the improvements in communication technology such as telephone, telegraph and Internet. These technological developments have now reached a stage that has enabled the dispersed people to create a 'virtual community' in a cyberspace. The basis of family among Telugus is marriage. Traditionally marriages were performed among close relatives in accordance with the customs followed by the community within a local or regional context. At present marriages among Telugus may be found binding two families transnationally. Telugu communities world over has now managed to keep the cultural continuity through their marriage practices. They generally prefer to arrange the marriage of their son/daughter with the Telugus in India. The matrimonials, which are now available on the Internet, facilitate searching the brides/grooms based on caste and regional preferences through out the globe.

Culturally Andhra Pradesh has a distinctive tradition, which is easily identifiable from other major Indian cultural strands. Some of the cultural symbols of Andhra Pradesh include "Kuchipudi dance", "Pochampally handlooms" and "Kalamkari" paintings etc., which are still maintained and sustained by the Telugus. The Kuchipudi dance, known for its grace and charm, is performed in almost all gatherings and festivities in the Telugus diaspora. Similarly, *Perini Thandavam*, an aesthetically performed male dance, is often performed by Telugus in the diaspora. Celebration of festival is another cultural premise, which is the basis of transnational networks. Among the Telugu festivals, the major one includes *Ugadi* (Telugu New Year's day), *Makar Sankranti*, *Dasara*, *Diwali*, *Siva-Ratri* and *Ganesh Chaturthi*. These are celebrated not only in Andhra Pradesh but also among all the Telugus in the diaspora. These festivals are celebrated both in individual homes and outside collectively, bringing all Telugus together.

Development of transnational, satellite aided TV channels and VCR technology has brought together Telugus from distant lands, creating an imaginary Telugu world. Channels like GEMINI TV and ETV, which are based in Hyderabad, reach out to the world of Telugus beyond the national boundaries. These satellite channels are dedicated to the Telugu population of the world to cater to their needs of information and entertainment. The programmes telecast in these channels suit tastes of all ages, genders and classes. There are several channels of two-way economic transactions between the homeland and diaspora. Firstly, there exists a "non-entrepreneurial channel" of economic linkage, in the sense that Telugus visit their places of origin with baggage full of novelties and valuable items *not easily available in the Indian market, to be given as gifts to relatives and friends or sold for a small profit. This flow peaks during festival and*

holiday seasons such as the Ugadi, Navaratri, Dasahra, Diwali and New Year's Day. Secondly, the "entrepreneurial channel" of linkage brings homeland and the diaspora in a formal manner. Several Telugus abroad send a significant part of their savings back home in the form of remittances in order to invest on real estate, industrial establishment, small business, and educational institutions and to contribute towards welfare activities such as charities, old age home, famine/flood victims etc. Corporate hospitals like Apollo Hospitals, Medwin Hospitals, C.D.R. Hospitals and LV Prasad Eye Institute in Andhra Pradesh are mentioned few, which are contributed to the healthcare sector by the NRI Telugus.

One of the important channels of articulation of common interest among the migrants is their ethnic association. The Telugus have formed their associations to maintain their cultural identity and to promote their socio-economic and political interest in the host country. They also maintain close network with the members of their community in the place of their origin. Through their active participation in the activities of the association, Telugus in the diaspora strive to preserve their cultural heritage. These associations sometimes organize conferences and observe festivals essentially to cater to the Telugu community settled in a locality, region or country. They also invite Telugu persons of distinction from Andhra Pradesh or from the diasporas for participation. Such associations are formed on the basis of caste, religious, regional and pan-Telugu identities.

Reflection and Action 23.2

What are the important factors that led to the international migration of Punjabis, Gujaratis and Telugus during the colonial and post-colonial period?

23.6 Conclusion

In this lesson we have discussed the importance of the concept of diaspora and transnational community, the history of migration of Indians during colonial and post colonial period and the formation of diasporas in the new world. The lesson has also discussed the three most important regional Indian diasporic communities who have made remarkable presence in the transnational sphere today. The lesson has discussed the transnational networks of these communities and their implication for the development of homeland from socio-cultural and economic standpoints.

23.7 Further Reading

Basch Linda, Nina Glick Schiller, and Cristina Blanc Szanton. 1994. *Nation Unbound: Transnational Projects Post-colonial Predicaments and Deterritorialized Nation-States*. Gordon & Breach:Langhorne, PA

Sheffer, G. 1993. 'Ethnic Diasporas: A Threat to their Host?' In M. Weiner (ed.), *International Migration and Security*. Westview Press:Boulder

Vertovec, Steven. 1997. 'Three Meanings of Diaspora: Exemplified among South Asian Religions'. *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, Vol. 6 (3).