
UNIT 18 ASIAN DIASPORA

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18.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the history of major diasporic groups of Asia
- Familiarise yourself with ‘old’ and ‘new’ diaspora
- Understand the potential contributions of the diaspora and how various governments are engaging with them.

18.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit you will learn some of the major Asian diasporas.

The earliest known Asian diaspora of note is the Jewish Diaspora, which refers to the dispersion of Israelites or Jews out of their ancestral homeland (the Land of Israel) and their subsequent settlement in other parts of the globe. In its classical usage, “diaspora” is historically specific to the forcible expulsion of the Jewish people from Babylon, and as such it carries a tragic connotation associated with an enduring sense of loss and a longing to return to an ancestral homeland.

The South Asian diaspora is estimated to be over 50 million, or about 2% of the South Asian population, with 32 million Indians (MEA, 2018) comprising the lion’s share. The largest Asian diaspora outside of Southeast Asia is the [Indian diaspora](#). The overseas Indian community, estimated at over 32 million, is spread across many regions in the world, on every continent. It constitutes a diverse, heterogeneous and eclectic global community representing different regions, languages, cultures, and faiths. The history of South Asian diaspora is usually told in two distinct phases—the nineteenth-century colonial phase and the twentieth-century post-independence phase. There are sharp contrasts between these two phases, but there is also continuity in the history, especially for the

descendants of nineteenth-century migrants who migrated to new lands in the twentieth century, such as Indian Caribbean to Canada, or Indians who migrated from Uganda to Britain and from there, to USA. Their widespread, divergent, yet inter-connected histories capture the full range of diasporic experiences, but also reveal the inadequacy of the term diaspora in describing this population.

Overseas Chinese are people of Chinese birth or descent who live outside the Greater China region, which includes territories administered by the rival governments of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC). Today there are over 40 million overseas Chinese, mostly living in South East Asia where they make up a majority of the population of Singapore and significant minority populations in Indonesia, Malaysia Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam. The overseas populations in those areas arrived between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, mostly from the maritime provinces of Hainan, Fujian and Guangdong. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Chinese also emigrated to Central and South America, and to the United States, Canada, and the nations of Western Europe. In 1984, the announcement that Britain would transfer the sovereignty of Hong Kong to the PRC triggered another wave of migration.

There are a number of causes for Asian migration. A **root cause** is both push and pull factors with *push factors* being reasons why people would want to leave their home country and *pull factors* being reasons why people would want to come to a new country. There are many economic, social and physical reasons why Asian people migrated. However, economic and political factors are the main reasons in all Asian countries.

Asian Diaspora is a huge subject. This Unit focuses on how international movement of South Asian and Chinese people constitutes an important framework for an understanding of Asian diaspora discourse. Accordingly, this Unit will focus on exploring distinction between 'old' and 'new diaspora' in the context of Asian diaspora movement, and also explain potential contributions of Asian diaspora, and various mechanisms that governments of Asian countries have adopted, to engage their diasporic people.

18.3 SOUTH ASIAN DIASPORA

When we talk about South Asian Diaspora, we mean people of South Asian descent who are not living in their original homeland. They may be Indians in Durban, Pakistanis in New York, Sri Lankans in Oslo, and so on. Some people of the South Asian diaspora may never have set foot in their original 'homeland'. There is no doubt that the South Asian diaspora community is huge in numbers and widely dispersed all over the world.

However, there is no reliable estimate for the total size of the South Asian diaspora. This is probably due to the nature, scope, and time period of emigration from South Asia, which makes it administratively challenging to monitor the net migration (Tan and Rahman, 2013; Jayaram, 2011; Nayyar, 1994). In emigration statistics, we also need to consider annual outflow of emigrants from South Asia and children of emigrants born overseas. It is roughly estimated that there are over 31 million Indian diaspora, 7 to 9 million Bangladeshi diaspora, 5 to 7 million Pakistani diaspora, 2 to 3 million Sri Lankan diaspora, 4 to 5 million

Afghan diasporas, and around 2 million Nepali diasporas living around the world. In total, the global South Asian diaspora thus might be over 50 million strong and continues to grow (Tan and Rahman, 2013). It is, moreover, one which of late has seen phenomenal growth, both due to natural increase and the result of a continued movement of professionals and labourers in the late 20th and early 21st century from the subcontinent to countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and Singapore.

It can also be added here that South Asians - for example, Indians abroad - have facilitated and galvanized building the Indian and subcontinental image in a far greater way than they could have done in their original country. Repatriation of foreign earnings of the diaspora also helped the development of their homeland. Lord Meghnad Desai observes: 'South Asians abroad has shown that they can make a success in any country they go to. In most countries in the West, the South Asian groups which have settled there have succeeded in most adverse circumstances.' (Desai, page 290).

The 2,500-year history of South Asian migration can be traced back to travels by pilgrims and missionaries who spread the word of Buddha in East and Central Asia (Jayaram 2004; Rangaswamy 2004). Maritime voyages from the sixth to the eleventh century also left a legacy of Buddhist and Hindu cultural influence, which can still be seen in contemporary Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Cambodia. The long-distance trading networks and financial practices of the Indian trade diaspora have also attracted scholarly attention (Dale 1994; Markovits 2000; White 1994; Rudner 1994). For example, by the seventeenth century, commercial networks of Gujarati merchants spanned the Indian Ocean from the Philippines and Indonesia in the east, to East Africa in the west, and Russia to the north (Jha 2009). But larger and more permanent trading communities of South Asians were not established until the nineteenth century (Oonk 2007).

The largest South Asian diasporic community was based in South East Asia, South and East Africa, the Caribbean, Mauritius and Fiji. While they remain a significant community, in these parts, the period after the Second World War has seen a rapid escalation in the number of South Asian settled in the West. Demographically, Asian Indians are the fastest growing ethnic group of the United States, growing at the rate of 69.37 per cent, according to the 2010 United States Census. Similar increase has also been recorded in places like United Kingdom, Canada and Australia. Coupled with this, there are around 5 million South Asian transient workers in Gulf countries.

The phenomenal growth of South Asian diaspora and their contribution in the host countries encourages scholarly work on diaspora. These works have given significant insights on diaspora's experiences. The picture that emerged from this scholarly work is that of two distinct diasporas. The 'old' diaspora was born out of the age of colonial capital and the 'new' diaspora was formed during the age of globalisation. These diasporas reflect the very different historical conditions that produced them. While the 'old' diaspora signifies a break from the homeland, the more recent migration has given a degree of connectivity between the diasporas and the homelands, which did not exist in earlier times. There is one consistent theme to these two categories. They were, and continue to be, created by a labour migration – unskilled labour starting two centuries

ago, and highly skilled labour after the mid-1960s.

In the 19th Century, the demand for Indian indentured labour increased dramatically after abolition of slavery in 1834. In rubber, tea and sugar plantations all over the world, in places like Burma, Malaya, Kenya, Tanzania, Zanzibar, Caribbean Islands, Fiji and Mauritius, nearly 1.5 million labourers from the Indian subcontinent were hired as girmityas or indentured labourers. (Lal 2007). There were around 240,000 people from the Indian sub-continent sent to British Guiana (Guyana); nearly 150,000 were sent to Trinidad; and over 38,000 to Jamaica to replace the slave workers in the plantations (Northrup 1995). Indians also replaced slaves in South African mines and railroad construction projects in East Africa. When the French and Dutch colonies experienced labour shortages after the emancipation of slave labour, over 100,000 South Asians were similarly imported to work on their plantations (ibid.). Mostly labourers were hired from North India, especially from the poor and backward region of Chota Nagpur plateau before 1860s, and the eastern districts of the present Uttar Pradesh from the 1870s onwards. Most of them were from lower social and economic strata of rural North Indian society. Indian labourers were also recruited from Bengal as well as the southern India. Their indenture contracts started at five years and were sometimes extended to a decade. Less coercive migration took the form of petty merchant traders, and Indians serving abroad in colonial governments as administrative clerks and teachers (Oonk 2007).

Despite the generally involuntary mode of labour migration during the nineteenth and the twentieth century, revisionist studies have also described indentured emigration as a 'rational and deliberate choice on the part of migrants, prompted by hopes of bettering their future' (Emmer 1997 cited in Satyanarayana 2001). After the expiry of their contracts, these girmityas mostly decided to stay back - purchasing land and property. However, their condition varied as per the local government policies regarding citizenship and stay in foreign land which changed constantly. In the case of South Asians working in the Caribbean Islands, they were given ready citizenship by the imperialist British government. Susan Koshy terms South Asian diaspora as "one of the oldest, largest and most geographically diverse." (Koshy 2). Similarly, in Mauritius, formerly indentured Indians became landowners, traders and small manufacturers. They were able to send remittances to India and arrange for the migration of their kin. Records of remittances sent by postal money orders have also been recorded from British Guiana and Trinidad (Northrup 1995).

With the Partition of India in 1947 and the formation of Pakistan, there started an influx of a second group of immigrants from South Asia to Britain. The South Asian diasporic group or travellers from the Indian sub-continent increased largely with the change in configuration of the sub-continent. The independence of India caused such upheavals that many were forced to flee and several migrated willingly, because independence had opened avenues for migration. Later, the expulsion of Indian communities from East Africa also contributed to the strong presence of the South Asian population in the UK.

The mid-20th century witnessed the beginning of a change of the pattern of Indian migration. For the first time, people went not to the colonial periphery but to the metropolitan centres at the heart of the Empire Commonwealth. (Lal et al, 2006:66) (Encyclopaedia of Indian Diaspora, 2006). According to UK 2011

Census, Asians make up 3.5% of total UK population. Of this, 1.8% are Indian, 1.5% Pakistanis and just under 0.5% Bangladeshis. Liberalization of the US and Canadian immigration laws in the 1960s also drew large-scale migration of engineers, doctors and scientists from the sub-continent. Increasingly, over the past few decades, it became a steady flow of Indian professionals to countries like USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. As of 2016, South Asians constituted 5.4% of the Canadian population; in the US, they numbered 2.83 million by 2010 and represented the fastest-growing segment portion of Asian-Americans. Also, since the 1990s, Australia and New Zealand have become important destination countries for Indian professionals. Both countries look to employ English-speaking, highly-qualified professionals for their IT industries. By 2011-12, Indians became the largest source of permanent migration to Australia, forming 15.7% of the total migration programme.

The migrants who came in the late 20th century constitute the Non-Resident Indians (NRI). These NRIs have become even more prominent after the explosive growth of the Information Technology (IT), with the US turning into the hub of professionals and engineers. These NRIs have changed the nature of the diaspora and brought high levels of skills and entrepreneurial 'flair' to the new hostlands.

Another very important component is the 'Gulf Diaspora'. Both skilled and unskilled Indians migrated to oil-rich states in the Middle East after the discovery of oil reserves in the late 1960s, and especially after the spike in oil prices in 1973–74. These Gulf countries have a common policy of refusing to naturalize non-Arabs, even if they are born in the Gulf Countries. Thus members of the diaspora in these countries are relegated to a kind of "second class" status. At one time, the fastest growing segment of our diaspora, the Gulf Diaspora, has now stabilized at around 5 million.

The people of South Asia have carried on a tradition of internal and international migration as traders, indentured labourers, skilled workers, businessmen and professionals. Despite a shared history of uprooting, South Asia is not a homogeneous entity and inherent tensions exist within it. However, South Asia with its several independent nation states has certain commonalities and continuity because of a shared culture of 4000 years. Wherever South Asians have migrated, they have carried with them religious, social and cultural practices of the homeland. It is not surprising therefore that South Asian religious and cultural institutions, films, restaurants, music, fashion shops are common sights all over the world.

18.4 THE CHINESE DIASPORA

Overseas Chinese are spread over the globe, residing in almost every country in the world, although with heavy concentration in Asia. An overseas Chinese is defined here as a Chinese person who resides outside the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan. Around 2011, there were over 40.3 million Chinese residing in 148 countries of the world. The term "Chinese overseas" is generally employed as a neutral term to refer to the approximately 46 million ethnic Chinese who reside outside of mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macau in the early 21st century. As a result of the growing impact of theories of globalization during the 1990s, however, the term "Chinese diaspora" also

became widespread. Since then, the study of the Chinese overseas in national contexts and of Chinese migration as an account of departure, arrival, and settlement has been supplemented with an emphasis on mobility, networks and flexible identities. The topic of Chinese diaspora is interdisciplinary in nature, typified by changing approaches, and encompasses all aspects of the life of ethnic Chinese dispersed over 148 countries.

18.4.1 The major patterns of Chinese emigration

According to Wang (1991), there have been five principal patterns of emigration over the past two centuries:

1. The first is Huashang who went abroad as merchants or skilled workers. This was the dominant form of migration between the 18th and mid-19th centuries. It comprises mainly men who were settled in the hostland after one or two generations. The Huashang pattern has predominated throughout history. The first recorded Chinese emigration occurred during the Qin Dynasty (221–206 BC), and was to either Japan or the Philippines, followed the Huashang pattern (Zhu, 1991).
2. The second is Huagong (Chinese coolie) pattern comprising labour migrants, usually of peasant origin, landless labourers, and the urban poor. It occurred between 1840 and 1920s. This migration involved 'coolie trade' in low-level occupations concentrated in gold mining and railway building. Pan (1990: 61) has written that the Chinese coolie migrants 'went to work in virgin territory across the world ...[and] most lived by the sweat of their brow.' Poston and Luo (2007: 328) have written about Huagong migration, noting that 'during the rapid growth period of the frontier economy in the United States between 1850 and 1880, thousands of Chinese immigrated, mainly to the western United States, under the indenture system as miners, railroad workers, and agricultural labourers. Unskilled Chinese labourer went as cooks, laundrymen, and in other jobs that American workers did not want. Later, they were instrumental in building the western part of the trans-continental railroad.'

It was the coolie trade which 'took the bulk of the Chinese to the New World, with shipload after shipload reaching Cuba, Peru and ...British Guiana in the years between the 1840s and 1870s' (Pan, 1990: 67). In the late 1870s and 1880s, many Chinese went to Hawaii and to California. Pan (1990: 94) estimates that 'by 1870, one out of every four workers in California was Chinese.'

3. The third is Huaqiao (Chinese sojourner) who are Chinese educated professionals, who live abroad with the intention of returning and whose political loyalty and cultural orientation are towards China. This pattern was dominant for several decades after the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1911 and was strongly tied to feelings of nationalism. This is both a migration pattern and a term still dominant today. (Hong Liu, 2004). Moreover, Huaqiaos in Malaysia comprise 29% of the population and control 61% of the economy of the country. In Philippines (1% of population), the Huaqiaos manage 67 of 100 big companies. They control 90% of private sector in Thailand and the whole economy of Singapore (90 per cent). Not only in South East Asia, there are 1.27 million Chinese emigrants in the USA, and Huaqiaos control 112,000 big commercial companies. The main duty of the Huaqiaos

in the US is to promote the interest of China (Poston Dudley and others, 1994).

4. The fourth is Huaren (ethnic Chinese or Chinese overseas) who were Chinese descendants and whose political allegiance was toward their countries of residence, but whose lifestyle and cultural values still resonated closely with those in China. This was the prominent form of migration from the 1950s through the 1980s. (Liu, 2004: 25). A good example would be the Chinese in Southeast Asia, many of whom have migrated to Western Europe in recent decades, ‘especially since the 1950s when some Southeast Asian nations made those of Chinese descent feel unwanted’ because of their dominance in the economy. (Wang, 1991: 9)
5. The fifth pattern is Huayi. They are Chinese descendants, including naturalized ethnic Chinese who have assimilated the culture of their host countries or have re-migrated from one foreign country to another. Unlike Huaqiao, they have no direct intention of migrating or returning to China. Wang has speculated that, with a few exceptions, future Chinese migrations ‘will be based on the Huashang pattern and supplemented by the new Huayi pattern, with some features of the Huaqiao pattern surviving here and there’ (Wang, 1991: 12).

The Chinese diaspora is long established in many countries, since many years. It is often very diverse, combining several generations of settlers from Hong Kong and southern China, with a large wave of new poor and illegal migrants, and a growing number of students. The mass emigration known as the Chinese diaspora, which occurred from the 19th century to 1949, was mainly caused by wars and starvation in mainland China, invasion from various foreign countries, as well as problems resulting from political corruption. Chinese people emigrated primarily to Western countries such as United States, Australia, Canada, Brazil, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Argentina and the nations of Western Europe; as well as to Peru, Panama, and to a lesser extent, Mexico. Most migrants in this era were unskilled workers, driven by the growing demand for cheap manual labour elsewhere. Since the 1980s, Chinese migrants have developed an increasingly “multi-class and multi-skilled” profile, in line with the requirements of a globalised and technologically advanced economy (Ding, 2010).

The diaspora’s overall population is estimated to be as many as 50 million people. Most of them are living in [Southeast Asia](#) where they make up a majority of the population of [Singapore](#) (75 per cent) and significant minority populations, in Thailand (14 per cent), Malaysia (23 per cent), [Indonesia](#), [Brunei](#) (10 per cent), the [Philippines](#) and [Vietnam](#). More recent Chinese presence has developed in Europe, where they number nearly a million, and in [Russia](#), where they number over 600,000, concentrated in Russia's Far East.

In Africa, there is a significant increase of Chinese diaspora due to massive Chinese investment in most of the African countries. China is now Africa’s largest trading partner, having edged out the United States in 2010. The Chinese in Africa these days ‘have rapidly penetrated every conceivable walk of life like farmers, entrepreneurs building small and medium-sized factories, and practitioners of the full range of trades, doctors, teachers, (French, 2014: 5). In 2011, there were less than 250,000 overseas Chinese in Africa, the smallest number in all continents. However, if the annual population growth rate of

Chinese in Africa of 6.1% remains unchanged, the numbers will double every 11 years, to 500,000 in 2022 and to 1,000,000 in 2033. The number of Chinese in Africa will never reach the level of Chinese in Asia, but it is in Africa where the greatest relative increases will likely occur over the next few decades.

Notwithstanding the diversity of their communities - in terms of origin and length of stay - the overseas Chinese enjoy an extremely strong sense of shared identity as well as a powerful attachment to China, feelings that tend to override regional and political differences. This affinity finds expression in many ways. The overseas Chinese have played a crucial role in China's economic growth, providing the lion's share of inward investment since the late 1970s. According to the World Bank, in 2007, China received more remittances - nearly \$26bn - than any other country except India.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Check your answer with possible answers given at the end of the unit

1. Describe South Asian Diaspora

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2. Who are Overseas Chinese? What are the major patterns of Chinese emigration?

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18.5 POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF DIASPORA

The potential contributions of diasporas to their countries of origin or ancestry are numerous. Some of these are discussed below.

1) There has been an increasing awareness in the past several years that there are some ways in which diasporas can stimulate economic development in their homelands. In the first place, unquestionably, are the remittances that Asian diasporas send back to their homelands. Remittances to developing Asian countries stood at \$244 billion in 2016. These are important for some countries: for instance, nine countries— Armenia, Georgia, the Kyrgyz Republic, Nepal, the Philippines, Samoa, Tajikistan, Tonga, and Tuvalu - posted remittances equivalent to or over 10% of their respective gross domestic product. They are relatively stable compared with other foreign exchange inflows such as foreign direct investment and, therefore, support macroeconomic stability in these remittance-receiving countries.(ADB and World Bank, 2018)

According to World Bank records, the top three remittance receiving countries are India with \$72.2 billion; the People's Republic of China, \$63.9 billion; and the Philippines, \$29.7 billion (ibid). This is only the official estimate - a significant portion of remittances are transferred through informal channels that are not reflected in the official data. Nonetheless, for the migrant-sending countries in Asia, "remittance earnings" are a major source of income, contributing to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as well as its foreign exchange earnings.

Unlike foreign aid, remittances directly enter the family back home, and in most cases, they go to relatively backward rural regions (Kapur, 2003). Hence, Jones (1998) notes, 'there is probably no other more bottom-up way of redistributing and enhancing welfare among populations in developing countries than the remittances'. Drawing on the case of emigration, remittances, and its development potential for Bangladesh, noted economist, Jonathon Moses, in his article argues that the most efficient way of developing Bangladesh is to encourage more emigration (Moses, 2009: 457). Even Pakistan's economic lifeline is its remittances - a staggering \$2 billion from overseas Pakistanis per month on an average is a blessing in disguise for the cash-starved economy and has widely helped in balancing payments towards imports, especially oil.

As per the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recognition, the inflow of remittances to India is of two types namely, direct inward remittance and local withdrawal from Non-resident Indians (NRI) accounts. The inward remittances are direct transfer of funds from person abroad to person in India. Such transfers are generally meant for providing family support. However, the NRI deposit accounts are created with the aim to attract the foreign capital and foreign currency to boost the economy. (Gupta P. and Jordon, 2004).

Chinese Diaspora greatly influences the economic development of China. According to some sources, including the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, overseas Chinese have been the biggest contributors of foreign direct investment into China. Chinese economic growth since the late 1970s has largely depended on foreign direct investment, and Chinese diaspora has contributed as much as 70% of total FDI. This helps explain why the Chinese government has vigorously pursued and attracted overseas Chinese to their ancestral homeland.

- 2) The increasing use of concepts such as "brain gain," "brain bank," "brain trust" and "brain circulation" (Kapur, 2001) highlights a growing interest in diaspora members' skills and experience and how these can be tapped by countries of origin. Small and poor countries in Asia find it difficult to compete in the global market for skills, but may persuade skilled emigrants to devote some portion of their professional lives to endeavours in their home countries as teachers, mentors, research directors or simply practitioners who perform services on return visits.

The Chinese government initiated plans and programmes to attract overseas talents since 2008 in order to achieve rapid economic growth. These measures include establishing special economic zones, pass preferential laws, and use patriotic appeals. As a result, returnees have played a pivotal role in opening up and globalizing China. As a special group, returnees have

contributed to the nation's development especially in education, science, culture and health. Their work has lifted the status of China's academics in the world. Among the winners of the National Award for Science and Technology, 66.67% are returnees. They have not only made remarkable scientific achievements, but also pushed for the reform of the education and scientific research systems.

India has also made efforts to reach out to its 30 million expatriates. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas was institutionalized in 2003 and has become an annual event. India is also taking steps to grant dual citizenships for selected NRIs. It can be expected that India will continue to appeal to the many high-tech industry-based NRIs in the hope of perhaps turning India into the world's technological lab much like overseas Chinese have helped turn China into the world's workshop.

- 3) Diaspora members are excellent intermediaries, who can facilitate their home countries' integration into the global economy and influence foreign policy of their host countries. Chinese and Indian diaspora communities in the United States are staunch supporters of close Chinese-American and Indian-American relations respectively. They are powerful lobbying groups to influence US policies towards their home countries. The Chinese-American community is actively working "to promote the full participation of Chinese-Americans in all fields of American life, and to encourage constructive relations between the people of the United States and Greater China." For example, Chinese-Americans were a major force in supporting the granting of Most Favoured Nation (MFN) trade status to China during the 1990s. Many of these Chinese-Americans are well-positioned either to directly invest in China or to be sent to China by US companies in need of representatives with contacts and language skills. Similarly, in the 1980s a group of wealthy Indians who lived in America's affluent suburbs began to worry about the community's lack of political involvement. They set up such grass-roots organizations as the Indian American Forum for Political Education (IAFPE) in the late 1980s. Since then there has been a growing political lobby from Indian-American groups.

For example, during the 1999 Kargil conflict, Indian immigrants flooded congressional offices with emails urging speedy resolution. Their pressure influenced then President Clinton to take a policy decision in India's favour. According to the Washington Post, "Lawmakers complied and a few days later, in a White House meeting, Clinton cited Congressional pressure in urging (Pakistani Prime Minister) Sharif to withdraw his forces." It must be mentioned that Pakistan immigrants in the United States have also been lobbying "at a frenetic pace" in recent years, especially with focus on the Kashmir issue to win the support of the United States.

18.6 ENGAGING DIASPORA

Governments in Asia have engaged diasporas through various mechanisms. There are some countries which introduced flexible citizenship laws (such as Australia, Bangladesh, Philippines, South Korea and Tonga). Pakistan also accepts dual citizenship but only for citizens in 16 countries. While an increasing number of countries are issuing special registration and identification cards that allow members of the diaspora to enter and stay in the country visa free, there

are some countries in the region which grant political rights to their overseas citizens— that is, the right to vote. Some Asian countries have granted their diaspora citizens right to property. In India, for instance, anyone who has ever held an Indian passport or whose father or grandfather was a citizen of India can acquire unlimited residential and commercial land. A few governments are offering reduced income tax rates for returning citizens who have worked abroad for a certain number of years.

Five countries in the region have established ministries whose explicit purpose is to address the needs of diaspora populations. For example, India created the Ministry for Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) in 2004 to address the lack of government policy coordination on migration and to implement programmes that reach out to the Indian diaspora, in particular to youth. Bangladesh's Ministry for Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MEWOE) and Sri Lanka's Ministry of Foreign Employment, Promotion and Welfare focus mainly on ensuring the welfare of their expatriate workers, and on increasing their ability to find suitable employment abroad. Both ministries attend to complaints from migrant workers, provide international job placement services and conduct training programmes.

China's Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (SCOCAO) is uniquely positioned within the Chinese central government. It is an administrative office under the State Council, the country's highest executive body (which includes the premier and ministers, among others). A SCOCAO staff of 120 supports the premier and assists in a wide range of activities. These include maintaining databases of information categorized by city, county and province (so that overseas Chinese can find their ancestral roots, homes and properties),

China has one of the most extensive networks of diaspora offices in the world. Some Indian states have diaspora offices, the most active of which are in Kerala and Gujarat. In 1996, the Kerala government established the Department of Non-Resident Keralites' Affairs (NORKA). This organization's primary goal is to provide social security for non-resident Keralites and their families. NORKA is a one-stop shop established to fulfill a promise made by the Kerala government to its expatriate community.

The local government in Gujarat established a Non-Resident Indian (NRI) Division within its administration department, the Non-Resident Gujaratis' Foundation (NRGF). It gathers information from all districts in the state where NRIs have contributed to the development and undertaken public welfare projects.

In recent years, governments have been increasingly using their consular networks to market diaspora bonds, designed to tap into diaspora assets. For instance, India issued diaspora bonds in 1991, 1998 and 2000 to avoid balance-of-payments crises and to shore up international confidence in India's financial system during times of financial sanctions or special needs. Similarly, Sri Lanka has offered Sri Lanka Development Bonds since 2001 to a number of investor categories, including non-resident Sri Lankans.

The issuance of diaspora bonds is a form of innovative financing that can help developing countries support infrastructure projects. Issuers of diaspora bonds gain access to fixed-term funding, often at discounted interest rates due to

a “patriotic discount,” or the difference between the market interest rate for government debt and the interest rate that diasporas are willing to accept given their attachment to their country. However, India and other countries learned that this “patriotic discount” is often small in reality and sometimes does not materialize.

Check Your Progress 2

- Note: a) Write your answer in brief.
b) Check your answer with possible answers given at the end of the unit

3. Why do governments take care of its diasporas?

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4. What are the various schemes offer by the government of different Asian countries to engage its diaspora?

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18.7 LET US SUM UP

Asian diaspora is a wide-ranging subject. This Unit dealt with a broad and descriptive analysis on South Asian diaspora and Chinese diaspora as both India and China have large diaspora population around the world. It focuses on how international movement of South Asian and Chinese people constitutes an important framework for comprehending Asian diaspora discourse. We have tried to analyse the reasons why South Asians and Chinese people left their home and settled abroad in colonial, post-colonial and in contemporary times. Afterwards, we briefly explored the relations between the diaspora and homeland development and how this dynamic relationship contributes to economic growth and foreign relations of the homelands. Later we discussed the potential contributions of diasporas to their countries of origin and the various schemes that Asian governments offer to engage its diaspora.

18.8 KEY WORDS

South Asian Diaspora: Refers to South Asian descent who are not living in their original homelands. It is estimated that there are millions of members of the South Asian diaspora, though it is difficult finding accurate statistics for every country. The history of this diaspora is usually told in two distinct phases - the nineteenth-century colonial phase and the twentieth-century post-independence phase.

Chinese Overseas: They are people of Chinese birth or descent who live outside the People's Republic of China or Republic of China. They can be of the Han Chinese ethnic majority, or from any of the other ethnic groups in China. Today there are over 40 million overseas Chinese, mostly living in Southeast Asia, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand Philippines and Vietnam. The overseas population in these countries arrived between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Non-Resident Keralites' Affairs (NORKA) : The Non Resident Keralites Affairs abbreviated as NORKA is a department of the Government of Kerala formed on 6 December 1996 to redress the grievances of Non-Resident Keralites (NRKs).

MFN trade status : Most-favored-nation (MFN) status is an economic position in which a country enjoys the best trade terms given by its trading partner. That means it receives the lowest tariffs, the fewest trade barriers, and the highest import quotas (or none at all).

18.9 REFERENCES AND SELECT READINGS

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18.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS – POSSIBLE

ANSWERS

Check your progress 1

1. This diaspora comprises people of South Asian descent who are not living in their original homeland – Indians in Durban, Pakistanis in New York, Sri Lankans in Oslo, and so on. Some people of the South Asian diaspora may never have set foot in their original 'homeland'. There is no doubt that the South Asian diaspora community is huge in numbers and widely dispersed all over the world.
2. Overseas Chinese are spread over the globe, residing in almost every country in the world, although with heavy concentration in Asia. An overseas Chinese person is defined here as a Chinese person who resides outside the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan. There are five principal patterns over the past two centuries. They are Huashang, Huagong, Huaqiao, Huaren, Huayi.

Check your Progress 2

3. Various governments look after its diaspora interests by various means. For example some countries have established ministries whose explicit purpose is to address the needs of diaspora populations. For example, India created the Ministry for Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) in 2004 to address the lack of government policy coordination on migration and to implement programmes that reach out to the Indian diaspora, in particular to youth. Bangladesh's Ministry for Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MEWOE) and Sri Lanka's Ministry of Foreign Employment, Promotion and Welfare focus mainly on ensuring the welfare of their expatriate workers, and on increasing their ability to find suitable employment abroad. Both ministries attend to complaints from migrant workers, provide international job placement services and conduct training programmes.
4. Governments in Asia have engaged diasporas through various mechanisms. There are some countries which introduces flexible citizenship laws, right to vote, Right to Property, identification card for visa free entries. Five countries in the region have established ministries whose explicit purpose is to address the needs of diaspora populations.