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## UNIT 70 WOMEN AS BEARERS OF CULTURE

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### 70.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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After studying this Unit you will be able to:

- Understand the concepts of gender in migration and diaspora formation
- Identify the forces of cultural differences and change vis-à-vis gender representation
- Examine the role of gender in cultural retention and transmission
- Evaluate the role of gender in identity assertion and formation

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### 70.2 INTRODUCTION

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As mentioned in the earlier units, diasporas having lived for generations in the receiving country, continue to retain their identity and culture of the country of origin. But they also, at the same time, take up the customs, rituals and cultural practices of the adopted country, leading to formation of 'creole' culture. A diaspora's identification with their home country has generational impact as the first generation immigrants are more intimately connected to their home country as compared to the second generation who are born and brought up in the host country. While the parents continue to identify themselves with the country of origin, the second generation children find themselves much closer to the culture of the adopted country. The process of assimilation and integration has been found to be more effective with the second generation than the first generation.

During the 19th and 20th century, women were the passive partners in the immigration and diaspora formation process. But there has been a change in the 21st century when women have assumed a dominant role in immigration and now outnumber their male counterparts. Women are also a common link between the first and second generation immigrants and major transmitters of identity, culture, rituals and customs of the home country.

This Unit will focus on the role of gender, especially women as the main vehicle of cultural transmission and the ensuing cultural assimilation over generations. Some of these cultural norms are expressed through celebrations of festivals, dress, food, music, cinema and art. As it is not possible to cover the cultural practices of Indian diaspora living in various countries, the Unit has taken a case study from South Africa to understand the phenomenon of cultural transmission through women.

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### **70.3 THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ON GENDER ROLE**

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The process of immigration and diaspora formation is a dynamic and ongoing process and there is a continuum of change over the generations. As mentioned earlier, the first generation migrants continue to identify themselves with the home country because of emotional attachment and cultural and religious identification. The second generation because of cultural proximity to the host country is far removed from the 'other' culture of their parental place of belonging. The difference extends not only socially, culturally and politically but also in their habits and daily rituals, choice of music and art. There are also differences in culturally constructed ideologies and worldview between the first and second-generation migrants and the diaspora with women playing a major role in the process.

These cultural aspects in general could be understood as "the total shared, learned behaviour of a...functionally autonomous society that has maintained its existence through a sufficient number of generations" (Margaret Mead; see Mead and Rhoda, 2000: pp.22-23). It is passed down inter-generationally through tangible and intangible heritage that includes physical artifacts, clothing, food, language, religious beliefs, traditions, festivals and music. Historically, the choice of leaving home for a new location was decided by men, but the onus of retaining memories of home, of recreating them within the new contexts and ultimately acting as harbingers of homeland culture is a task deeply associated with women.

Women have a central role as homemakers and keepers of the diasporic cultures. Traditional gender norms kept men engaged in work to earn a livelihood, while women were confined within domestic walls, as home makers. They were primarily mothers, wives and sisters who took care of their home; were responsible for the bearing and rearing of children and cooked food. Women formed the foundation of family life (Kuper, 1960: 118). Women also carried the responsibility for safeguarding 'proper' cultural traditions and appropriate behaviour as "transmitters of cultural traditions, customs, songs, cuisine and... the mother tongue" (Yuval-Davis, 1993: 627).

Women are at the forefront of cultural propagation and occupy a significant role

as bearers of culture in society. In the process of migration to a new land, women act as custodians of their cultural heritage. They employ multiple strategies for the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage, reproduction of memories of homes, family values and culture within new geographies. They are also the one who form the nodal point of interaction between the home and host countries' culture and devise ways to handle the cultural differences and avoid the point of conflict between diverse social groups.

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## 70.4 SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN DIASPORIC LIVES

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Understanding the historical experiences of Indian indentured women is a difficult task because colonial history has excluded women's narratives. In fact, the White colonizers did not consider women as valuable workforce and requisitioned only strong/healthy men as indentured labourers. However, in 1860 for example, the colonial government in India made it mandatory that of the total number of indentured labourers shipped to Natal, 35% were to be women. A few years later, this proportion was raised to 50% (Kuper, 1960: 5).

The female populace that migrated with the men was initially confined to the domestic sphere but later joined the labour force, albeit at a lower remuneration than their male counterparts (Walker, 1990: pp.151-152). Indentured women faced enormous challenges as they were given smaller food rations than men and often denied food if they were pregnant or ill. Many were also subjected to sexual violence.

Quite disparagingly, the colonizers saw women as amoral subjects and an 'unnecessary nuisance' in society, which made them largely invisible in the eyes of the law (Desai and Goolam, 2010: pp.105, 218). The Coolie Commission required the compulsory registration of Indian women as either 'married', 'single' or 'concubines'. Widowed women were excluded from official marriage records which were 'a further loss of identity for women who already had a "nonhuman status" for being without a husband' (Ibid. 21).

Women's role has been both symbolic (to represent the nation or culture), and functional (to transmit it) to their children and other women. Women have borne the weight of cultural representation through prescriptions concerning their appropriate appearance and behavior, but at the same time they deeply internalize culture and the religious traditions that often communicate it to other social group. Particularly in anti-colonial or racial minority contexts, religion and culture have been politically mobilized and women have been called upon as both cultural emblems and as cultural police, in relation to other women (Winter 2016).

Diasporic women are not only cultural bearers of their families or communities, but also of their nations. Women "represent the nation through moral virtue and social norms, and to reproduce the national/ethnic group in biological as well as cultural terms" (Mortada 2010: 56). Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias's (1989) important work entitled *Woman-Nation-State*, laid the groundwork for understanding the connections between women and national/ethnic processes. Yuval-Davis and Anthias focus on women as "reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic/ national groups, ... as transmitters of its culture; [and] ... as signifiers

of ethnic/ national differences-as a focus and symbol in ideological discourses used in the construction, reproduction and transformation of ethnic/national categories" (Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1990: 7-9).

Indian women usually migrate within the patriarchal framework and cultural considerations, and are supposed to preserve it as the bearers of Indian tradition, yet the process of migration and economic self-dependency give them an opportunity to assert independence, and redefine roles and perceptions of the self. Standing in-between the two worlds, with complex realities of unequal power dynamics of the homeland and stereotypical spaces of the hostland, women tend to experience conflicting subjectivities of freedom and subjugation. The space of the hyphen often gives them a freedom for self-exploration and deliberation to conceive new identities and move beyond the fixed definitions of femininity. Indian culture in a diasporic setting is under constant making and remaking while women as carriers of Indian culture play an important role in this process of both continuity and rupture (Pande 2018).

The public performance of Indian culture is a key element through which diaspora re-create meanings to identities relevant to a multicultural world. For example, the Miss India-Worldwide pageant is one such event. The kickoff banquet of the 2002 Miss India-Worldwide pageant, held in downtown Durban, was designed to be an elite and high-profile event broadly aimed at South Africans, including South African Indians. Beauty pageants of this sort offer an important site for observing globalized, gendered productions of national identity. Particularly in the case of India, the success of Indian beauty queens at international beauty pageants generated considerable debate and in thinking about Indian women and thus Indian culture as "global" (Sangari 2001).

The construction of Indian culture during this event offers a compelling snapshot of the ways in which the diaspora draws on both preexisting notions of high culture and transnational scripts of authentic Indianness. Women who were politically active during the political struggle tend to challenge more overtly prevailing cultural constructions of Indianness and Indian womanhood through transnational notions of Indianness while embracing an inclusive identity (Radhakrishnan 2005).

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## **70.5 THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN CREATING 'INDIAN IDENTITY'**

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Indentured women's unique struggle and their spirit for community, family and religion brought them together. The practice of Indian traditions in a foreign land provided them with a sense of normality, security, belonging, comfort and a link with the homeland. This not only strengthened their unique Indian identity but also enabled them to preserve and recreate their culture in a new geographical context. Thus, 'Indianness' has not only survived, but has been re-imagined and transmitted across generations over the last 160 years (Patel and Tina, 2012).

There were several reasons that led to the development of a specific Indian identity among the diaspora in which women played an equal role as their male counterparts.

a) Majority of the indentured labourers chose to settle in cities where there

was a concentration of the diverse communities of Indians. They formed a geographical and sociological identity through close community and kinship and in which women were closely associated.

- b) In the 1920's, Indian identity was strongly influenced by the growth of the nationalist movement in India. It helped formulate ideas of Indian subjectivity and strengthened the connection that Indian immigrants had with their home country. Some of the Indians like Madam Bikaji Cama played an important role in espousing India's cause in European countries.
- c) The British colonizers felt threatened by the increasing economic and cultural prosperity of the 'Passenger Indians' and lobbied for restrictions to be placed on them. The Asiatic Land Tenure Act of 1946 (also known as the Ghetto Act) in South Africa for example restricted Asian ownership and occupation of land. It prohibited Asians from owning or occupying property without a permit (Berghe, 1965: 127).

The British colonial power was also responsible in creating racial divisions by dividing the human race into the Whites, Asians (which included Indians, Coloureds, and Black Africans. It was irrespective of the gender and women too were classified based on the colour of the skin. They were also discriminated against based on colour while accessing and possessing resources. For example in South Africa, the Population Registration Act (1950) required citizens to be classified and registered according to their racial characteristics. There was also the Group Areas Act that ensured separate housing for each racial group.

As a result of this, Indians were forced to move into residential townships such as Chatsworth and Phoenix in Natal, reserved exclusively for them (Kuper, 1960: pp.263-264). This new social engineering and geographical exclusiveness in the newly established Indian townships marks the beginning of a racialized identity - what came to be officially known as the 'Indian community'. Prior to this there was a greater degree of mixing between people of various colour compositions.

Apparently, Indians practiced cultural exclusivity by marrying within their own communities, religions and caste groupings, but the notion of caste has evolved over time (Yengde, 2015). In the recent decades, there have been some marriages between Indians and people of other races, thus diluting the homogeneity of the Indian community. However, during the last few decades there have been a number of cases of mixed marriages between the Afro-Asian communities which has been popularly called 'Blasian'. But, this is not as common as marriages between the White and the Black people.

There were an estimated 8,114 'Blasian' married couples in 2018, which is about 0.1% of the total percentage of the married peoples (Mohan, 2020). 'Blasian' couples face a number of challenges. The Black and the White couples are likely to be Christian, whereas 'Blasian' couples are likely to be from different religions; either Christian or Muslim/Hindu etc. which is an added cultural barrier. Almost all mixed marriages receive some form of backlash from the older generation who grew up in the era of racial segregation (Amoateng and Tim, 2017: 13).

### **Check Your Progress 1**

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

1. Write a short note on the role of women as bearers and transmitters of culture.

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2. How have Indian women been able to retain the Indianness' of their tradition?

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## **70.6 WOMEN AS BEARERS OF CULTURE: CASE STUDY OF INDIAN DIASPORA IN SOUTH AFRICA**

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Although interracial marriages dilute the cultural traits, women who marry within the community are known to carry it forward from generation to generation. Sometimes, identity groups have to face conflict and struggle to retain their culture as was noticed among the Indians in South Africa who were also involved in a cultural struggle – to practice, preserve and promote the Indian heritage. They strove to keep their vibrant cultural heritage alive by propagating their language, clothing, food, festivals and traditions. Women were at the forefront of this struggle and were successful in transforming for example Durban into ‘Little India’ – the largest Indian city outside of India (Mukherji, 2011).

Indian immigrant women had carried with them their rich cultural heritage – tangible and intangible. They took with them images/statues of their revered Gods, jewellery, spices (turmeric, chillies, curry leaves) and food grains like lentils, rice etc. These elements found their way into the culture, cuisine, costumes and traditions of their lives within the South African society (Pande, 2020: 116). Today, Indian culture is visible in Durban as “Indian women are distinctive in vivid saris; mosques and temples break the line of colonial architecture with minarets and domes;...shops are stocked with silks, brassware and spices,... oriental jewellery and trinketry,...lentils, rice, beans and oils, betel leaf and areca nut, lime, camphor, incense sticks, curry powders and masala” (Kuper, 1960: xiii).

The various markers of Indian culture include food, language, clothing, religion, festivals and cinema.. The following sections look at these various markers of Indian culture and examine them through a gendered lens.

We take the example of the diasporic Indian community in South Africa as a case study. ‘Indian’ culture has survived well in South Africa. Herein, the contribution of women in the Indian diaspora needs to be underscored. As harbingers of native traditions, they have successfully practiced and preserved their languages, religions/festivals, cuisines, clothing styles and art forms.

These have been passed down through generations and most of these traditional practices/cuisine and clothing styles survive even today, though there has been some dilution in certain markers of Indian culture over the years. The current generation of Indian diaspora is westernized and has assimilated well into the majority South African culture – their values, education, media/entertainment and food. South Africa is one of the most heterogeneous countries on the African continent. The Indian temples, mosques, markets, fusion dishes, and cultural community centres, have kept the ‘little India’ alive in Durban. Women in the diaspora have made sustained attempts to maintain and carry forward their ‘Indianness’, retrieve and safeguard Indian values, culture, traditions and cuisine, and transmit them to future generations.

### 70.6.1 Food, Cuisines and Spices



**Indian Spice Bazaar, Durban (Photo: Victoria Street Market, 2018)**

Food consumption is largely contingent upon purchasing capacity and traditional tastes. A survey carried out in 1941 indicated that of the typical income of £125 per year in Indian immigrant households in Natal, approximately 55 to 70 per cent was spent on food (Burrows, 1943: 33). In 2004, the average annual expenditure on food for South African households in the lowest income group was estimated around 4000 rands (approx. 16,000 INR) (Martins, 2005: 43).

The poor among the immigrant community most commonly consumed Rice, as it was cheap and easily accessible. Other dietary staples included dal (lentils), cereals and pulses, ghee (clarified butter), chilies, vegetables and tea. A majority of the Indian population were Hindus who followed a strict vegetarian diet, while the Muslim and Christian communities, who constituted the bulk of the trading class, also consumed beef, mutton and poultry (Burrows, 1943: 34). Women were responsible for sourcing and preparing these foods using Indian traditional methods and flavours and thus were able to preserve their traditional cuisine. The influence of older women, particularly grandmothers, was significant in terms of how food was prepared, what their families ate, when they fasted and what they consumed on those days (Singh and Nadene, 2010: 41).

In addition to the pure Indian cuisine passed down through generations, fusion food too, is popular within the Indian community. Indian cuisine blended with South African flavours because women incorporated traditional Zulu ingredients like Amasi (fermented milk drink) and relishes like Chakalaka (spicy vegetable condiment) (South African Tourism, 2020). One of the most iconic dishes and a true symbol of Indian and South African fusion cuisine is Durban's signature

‘Bunny Chow’. It is a spicy Indian curry served in a bowl of hollowed-out bread. The dish was created by the Indian indentured labourers. It is a staple food in South Africa and is available in almost every restaurant and food stall.

Another well known marker of ‘Indianness’ is the Indian Spice Bazaar at the Victoria Street Market, in Durban Central. Operational since 1870, it is the oldest market in Durban and exhibits the vibrancy and richness of Indian culture. Although famous for its Indian spice varieties, the bazaar also stocks traditional African artwork, seafood, Indian clothing, accessories and food and henna tattoo stalls, amongst others.

### **70.6.2 Language**

South Africans invariably understand the Indian community as a monolithic unit. However, it is divided along linguistic, religious and cultural lines. South African Indians speak at least five Indian languages – Tamil, Telugu, Gujarati, Hindi and Urdu – along with English, Afrikaans and Bantu languages (Kuper, 1960: xvii-xviii).

Languages help formulate distinct socio-linguistic sects within homogeneous communities. For example, Urdu was brought to Durban by indentured labourers as an ‘Islamic’ language in the 1890s. A sacred geographical community that spoke the language practiced Islamic rituals and traditions that helped form a distinctly Muslim identity. Urdu was also chosen as the language of instruction in mosques, madrasas and shrines in place of regional languages like Konkani, Malayalam or Tamil. Similarly, various other ethnic and religious sects were also formed along linguistic lines within the Indian community. Language thus helped preserve the diversity of the Indian diaspora (Green, 2008: 531-532).

The Constitution of South Africa also provides for the establishment of a statutory Pan South African Language Board to promote and ensure respect for all languages; including German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Portuguese, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Arabic, Hebrew, Sanskrit and other languages used for religious purposes in South Africa (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996: 4).

Today, English is gradually replacing most Indian languages as the lingua franca of the younger generation. As a result of westernization, successive generations have lost touch with the ancestral language and cannot read their sacred texts as they are not familiar with the language in which they are written. However, a small minority of the Indian population, mainly older women, have been making sustained efforts to preserve and promote Indian culture through local community organizations and culture programmes. They also promote their traditional languages by speaking it at home and passing them down through generations.

### **70.6.3 Religious Festivals**

The Indian diaspora in South Africa is a mix of Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jains, Zoroastrians and agnostics (Kuper, 1960: xvii-xviii). More than eighty percent of the indentured immigrants that came to South Africa were Hindu, about twelve per cent were Muslims and the rest were Christians (Hughes, 2007: 157). Among the ‘passenger Indians’, Muslims formed the majority, whereas



Parsis and agnostics made up a small minority (Hiralal, 2008: 27). Muslim traders were often referred to as 'Arab traders' due to their traditional attire and long robes (Hiralal, 2008: 28; Tayob, 1995: 55). The indentured laborers brought with them a rich heritage steeped in their ancestral religion and culture. To express their spirituality, the well-to-do trading class with financial means established places of worship wherever they settled. In doing so, they enriched the broad cultural vistas of South Africa (Naidoo, 1986: 136).

For many years, women performed most religious functions at home. As they were bound to domestic duties, it made the observance of religious rituals relatively easy. Religion was also the defining factor for finalising matrimonial alliances, the beliefs they chose to pass on to their children and the food they ate. Levels of religious influence within households were traditionally determined by age and experience – grandmothers and elder female members guided on rituals procedures regarding rites of passage such as death, or celebratory occasions such as birth or marriage ceremonies (Singh and Nadene, 2010: 41). However, over successive generations, women have become more active economically, and thereby less interested in ritualistic religious practices which they learnt from the earlier generations (Naidoo, 1987: 135).

**Hindu Temples:** Indian women were instrumental in setting up Hindu temples in South Africa (Desai and Goolam, 2019). They played an active part in temple-related activities and in celebrating festivals in the temples at a community level. The first Indian immigrants established the Durban Hindu Temple, believed to be the oldest temple in all of South Africa, in 1875. The temple complex has three shrines – dedicated to Shiva, Draupadi and Mariamman each. It was declared a national monument in 1980.

The Hindu religion has one of the strongest presences of the 'Divine Feminine' amongst all major world religions. A considerable number of goddesses are known and worshipped throughout the various Hindu sects (Bryant, 2007: 441). The most revered goddess is arguably 'Shakti' (meaning: energy, power or strength), who represents the dynamic cosmic energy that moves the universe. She is regarded as a divine feminine power who takes various forms – the gracious Parvati (Mother goddess or the goddess of fertility, love and beauty), the fierce Kali (goddess of time, creation, destruction and power), Durga (goddess of war), Saraswati (goddess of knowledge) and Lakshmi (goddess of wealth) (Bryant, 2007: 443-444; Klostermaier, 2007: 238-247). Sita is an incarnation of goddess Lakshmi. She is often worshipped by Hindu women as the ideal wife, mother and daughter. She is also a symbol of true female resilience as she remained honorable throughout her abduction, imprisonment and exile. Draupadi, on the other hand, is worshipped as a reincarnation of goddess Kali. Goddess 'Mariamman' (meaning: Mother Mari) is the South Indian Hindu goddess Mother as well the goddess of rain. (Hiltebeitel, 1988: 72).

South Africa also has several temples dedicated to specific cultural deities. For example, the Clairwood Shree Siva Soobramoniar Temple (estb. in 1889) is dedicated specifically to 'Muruga' – son of the deity Shiva and an ancient God of the Tamil community. The Temple is known for its annual Thaipusam Kavadi festival, which is celebrated in the Tamil month of Thai (January/February). It entails large processions and is a major public event for the Tamilians in South Africa.

Another notable temple is the Umbilo Shree Ambalavaanar Alayam Temple, traditionally known as the First River Temple. It was built along the banks of the Umbilo River in 1875. It is believed to be one of the very first Hindu Temples on the African continent. The Umbilo Temple was also the first to celebrate the fire walking festival, which takes place annually in the month of March. Thousands of Hindu devotees attend the festivals, a majority of whom are women.

One of the largest religious movements in Durban today is the Hare Krishna Movement. Srila Prabhupada founded it in 1975, when he first visited Durban. The sect has also built the Sri-Sri Radha Radhanath Mandir (also known as the ISKCON Temple) in Chatsworth, Durban. It is one of the largest Hindu temples on the African continent and a popular site of worship for the Hindu diaspora.

**Hindu Festivals:** Some of the most widely observed Hindu festivals in South Africa are Diwali, Shivratri (Night of Shiva), Mariamman and Thaipusam festivals, Pongal, Ram Navami (Rama's Birthday), Krishna Ashtami (Krishna's Birthday) and 'Thimithi' (or 'fire walking'). Diwali is the most widely celebrated festival throughout all sects of the South African Hindu community. It is celebrated with the ritual lighting of lamps and prayers, which are usually led by the elder women of the household. Many Hindu organizations and local communities organize funfairs, dance and singing programmes on this day.

Mariamman and Thaipusam Kavadi festivals are major public events in South Africa. For the Indian Tamil community, they are a part of the process of mobilizing identity as well as personal devotion. The Mariamman festival is celebrated through animal sacrifice, possessions, making vows, fasting, skin piercings and fire walking. Thaipusam Kavadi, involves many of the rituals and austerities of the Mariamman festival. In addition, devotees ceremoniously carry a Kavadi or 'burden' (such as a pot of milk carried on the head). They walk on a set route around the temple carrying the Kavadi on their head and offer it at the temple (Ganesh, 2010: 33).



**Firewalking festival (Photo: Getty images, 2016)**

'Thimithi' or firewalking is a festival that celebrates Draupadi, one of the female characters of Mahabharata, who is considered an incarnation of goddess Mariamman. According to the Tamil Hindu mythology, Draupadi walked on fire to prove her chastity and purify herself after several attempts were made to

defile her. Similarly, devotees walk on hot coals as an act of purification and as an ordeal to prove their innocence before God. It is believed that those with a strong faith will emerge from the fire unharmed. Devotees often enter a state of trance, and believe that they are possessed by a deity who bestows extraordinary powers upon them (Diesel, 1991: 33; see also Maurya, 2017).

Islam in Durban: Many among the Indian immigrant population that first came to South Africa were Muslims. They carried with them a rich cultural heritage that gradually percolated into the socio-cultural ethos of Durban. Today about 1.6% of the total South African population practices Islam. Majority of them are Sunni Muslims, while a small percentage is Shias and Ahmadis (Lehohla, 2016: 42). The main festivals celebrated by the Muslim community include Muharram (month of mourning, marked by a procession on the tenth day), Ramadan (month of fasting), Eid-al-Fitr (end of Ramadan), Eid-al-Adha (marked by animal sacrifice) and Eid-e-Milad (birthday of Prophet Muhammad).

Muharram was the first communal indentured event to be observed in Natal. It was the only occasion in the year for which labourers from different plantations could come together as they were granted three days of annual leave. It was also known as ‘Coolie Christmas’ because it brought Muslims, Christians and Hindus together in a carnival-like celebration on the streets of Natal. Muharram thus became less of a Muslim festival and more of an ‘Indian festival’ (Desai and Goolam, 2010: 223). This is representative of the unity that binds the heterogeneous Indian community in South Africa.

Almost two decades after the arrival of the indentured Indian Muslims in Natal, the Jumma Masjid (or ‘Friday Mosque’) was built on Grey Street in Durban. It was the first formal site of Muslim worship in the country. It is built as a series of interlinking buildings, arcades and corridors, in which commerce, religion and community activities take place together. It is the second largest mosque in South Africa and can accommodate up to 6000 worshippers.

The Sufi Saheb Badshah Peer Masjid is another important religious site for Muslims in Durban. It was established in 1895 by saint Shah Ghulam Muhammad (popularly known as Sufi Saheb). It consists of a mosque, a residential quarter, an orphanage, a soup kitchen, welfare department, school, madrasa (Islamic school) and a cemetery within the same complex.



Muharram procession in Durban (Photo: SABC News, 2018).

**Christianity in Durban:** The Christian community is a small minority (only 1.4 %) of the ‘old diaspora’. It can be divided into two sub groups – the ‘traditional’ Christians (Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists and Roman Catholics), and the ‘pentecostals’ – Christians who are relatively newer converts (Pillay, 1991: 1). Since Christianity is the dominant religion in South Africa, the Indian Christian immigrants encountered less friction in settling and integrating into South African society. Some of the main Christian festivals celebrated include Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Pentecost (marking 50 days after Sunday) and Ascension Day (commemorating Jesus Christ's ascension into heaven). Some of the most popular churches in Durban are: The Methodist Church, St Thomas’ Church, St Mary’s Church, The Emmanuel Cathedral and St Nicholas Orthodox Church.

#### 70.6.4 Ethnic Dresses and Attires

Dress is a significant cultural marker – strongly rooted in religious and ethnic beliefs. Indian immigrants have adapted their traditional clothing patterns and styles in a foreign land and at the same time kept their roots intact. However, as a result of the creativity and efforts of the women folk, the Indian attire—among Hindus, Muslims and Christians—has survived in Durban, though with some modifications.

Dress among Indian women in Durban varies significantly – according to their religion, region, age, personal comfort and social circumstances. In almost all religions, women over 60 years of age cover themselves from neck to feet. However, the age-old practice of covering the face with the sari ‘pallu’ (the loose end of a sari) in front of elder men is no longer practiced in most communities (Singh and Nadene, 2010: 41).

For the Hindus, the sari continues to be the most popular and preferred form of dress outside the house. Within the home, a full length gown or dress is worn as a form of respect towards male members. These specific cultural dress codes followed by older Indian women teach younger generations the value of religious customs and prescribed clothing rules. The mythological characters of Sita and Draupadi are often used as reference points for younger Hindu women to emulate in terms of values and dress. The sari is a symbol of marriage among Hindu women and is generally worn by elderly women. However, it is widely available in myriad colours and styles and the younger Indian women also wear it on special occasions like weddings. The new generations of PIOs are quite flexible in terms of dress style and emulate western and Bollywood fashion trends. Longish dresses, jeans/trousers, sports shirts and Indian designed cotton tops (kurtas) are worn across all religious communities (Singh and Nadene, 2010: 42).

Among the Indian Muslim community in Durban, majority of the women wear the burqa/hijab or veil. Men sport long robes, especially for Friday prayers at the mosque and at festivals like Eid (Hiralal, 2008: 28). The Indian Christian community, on the other hand, has less strict dress codes and rules. It has integrated and adapted well to the cultural milieu of Durban. However, as successive generations become increasingly westernized, “traditional dress codes and personal choices become fertile grounds for contestation between... upward mobility and familial/community expectations about identities” (Singh

and Nadene, 2010: 43).

### 70.6.5 Music, Cinema and Television

Indian movies and TV channels are easily accessible and widely consumed by the Indian community. Although Indian languages are less frequently spoken among the younger generation of PIOs, Bollywood films and TV shows with English subtitles are quite popular. Indian TV channels like Zee TV, B4U, NDTV and Sony, as well as Tamil channels like Sun TV and KTV, have been introduced and well received in Durban over the last two decades. DVD and Netflix versions of Bollywood films are also in high demand in the country and a major source of influence on the youth culture. Spiritual and religious channels like Aastha and Lotus TV were launched in South Africa in 2004. They are two of the most watched channels in the country. They broadcast prayers, rituals, religious sermons and scriptures right into Indian homes in Durban, and thus contribute to keeping religious and cultural beliefs alive within the diaspora (Bansal, 2013).

The first Bollywood film festival in Durban was launched in 2002. It ran for about seven weeks. It travelled across the continent and screened a wide range of Bollywood films that attracted Indian audiences from across the country and across different generations of the Indian diaspora (Jager, 2002). Exposure to Bollywood and Indian TV shows is thus a persuasive factor in shaping the young generation of Indian women, many of whom uphold the Indian TV stars as their role models. It is also significant in educating the younger generations on the varied facets of Indian culture that otherwise might have been inaccessible (Singh and Nadene, 2010: 45).

#### Check Your Progress 2

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

- 3 Describe briefly the fusion of food between Indian and South African cuisines?

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- 4. Describe the religious practice and significance of 'Thimithi' or firewalking practiced by Indian diaspora.

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### 70.7 LET US SUM UP

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The Unit discussed the critical role played by women as carriers of cultural traditions in the diaspora. By virtue of their roles as wives, mothers and homemakers, women have been tasked with rearing and socializing the next

generation and inculcating in them the values and traditions of the native culture. Even though Indian women usually migrate within the patriarchal framework and cultural considerations, and are supposed to preserve it as the bearers of Indian tradition, we see that the process of migration and economic self-dependency give them an opportunity to assert independence, and redefine their roles and assert their selfhood and identity. Indian culture in a diasporic setting is under constant making and remaking while women as carriers of Indian culture play an important role in this process of both continuity and rupture. Through a detailed case study of the Indian diasporic community in South Africa, we examined the contribution of women in keeping alive and transmitting culture and tradition through food, dress, religion and ritual, language and popular culture.

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## 70.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS – POSSIBLE ANSWERS

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### Check your progress 1

1. Diasporic women are not only cultural bearers of their families or communities, but also of their nations. Indian women usually migrate within the patriarchal framework and cultural considerations, and are supposed to preserve it as the bearers of Indian tradition, yet the process of migration and economic self-dependency give them an opportunity to assert independence, and redefine roles and perceptions of the self. Standing in-between the two worlds, with complex realities of unequal power dynamics of the homeland and stereotypical spaces of the hostland, women tend to experience conflicting subjectivities of freedom and subjugation.
2. Indentured women's unique struggle and their spirit for community, family and religion brought them together. The practice of Indian traditions in a foreign land provided them with a sense of normality, security, belonging, comfort and a link with the homeland. This not only strengthened their unique Indian identity but also enabled them to preserve and recreate their culture in a new geographical context. Thus, 'Indianness' has not only survived, but has been re-imagined and transmitted across generations over the last 160 years. Apparently, Indians practiced cultural exclusivity by marrying within their own communities, religions and caste groupings, but the notion of caste has evolved over time. In the recent decades, there have been some marriages between Indians and people of other races, thus diluting the homogeneity of the Indian community.

### Check your progress 2

3. In addition to the pure Indian cuisine passed down through generations, fusion food has also become popular within the Indian community. Indian cuisine blended with South African flavours because women incorporated traditional Zulu ingredients like Amasi (fermented milk drink) and relishes like Chakalaka (spicy vegetable condiment) (South African Tourism, 2020). One of the most iconic dishes and a true symbol of Indian and South African fusion cuisine is Durban's signature 'Bunny Chow'. It is a spicy Indian curry served in a bowl of hollowed-out bread. The dish is understood to be created by the Indian indentured labourers. It is a staple food in South Africa and is available in almost every restaurant and food stall.
4. 'Thimithi' or firewalking is a festival that celebrates Draupadi, one of the female characters of Mahabharata, who is considered an incarnation of goddess Mariamman. According to the Tamil Hindu mythology, Draupadi walked on fire to prove her chastity and purify herself after several attempts were made to defile her. Similarly, devotees walk on hot coals as an act of purification and as an ordeal to prove their innocence before God. It is believed that those with a strong faith will emerge from the fire unharmed. Devotees often enter a state of trance, and believe that they are possessed by a deity who bestows extraordinary powers upon them.



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## UNIT 71 GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES AND CHANGES

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- 71.1 Learning Objectives
- 71.2 Introduction
- 71.3 Cultural Interaction and Diaspora
- 71.4 Inter-Generational Changes Among the Sais
- 71.5 Government of India's Initiatives to Attract her Diaspora
- 71.6 Conclusion
- 71.7 References

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### 71.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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After studying this Unit you will be able to:

- Learn how the Indian community has intermixed with the host country culture and still maintained its unique 'Indianness'
- Understand how culture evolves in Indian diaspora over time
- Study how various aspects of culture have been transformed through generations.

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### 71.2 INTRODUCTION

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Generational changes are natural to any society. Often broader societal changes occur within a generation's life cycle as a result of technological changes, new political and ideological formations, through intermarriage, schooling etc. It is very difficult to map out the entire spectrum of changes in the socio-cultural field. Many countries are experiencing unprecedented diversity as a result of immigration and hence there is greater generational gap in their socio-cultural and political life. Many western countries have increasing immigrant population, especially people from Asian, African and Latin American countries that resulted in political participation and gender empowerment in many areas. This unit will discuss about the generational difference with specific cases of the Indian diaspora in South Africa.

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### 71.3 CULTURAL INTERACTION AND DIASPORA

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It is tempting to think of diaspora peoples as migrant peoples, and indeed many living in diasporas certainly are. However, generational differences are important. Children born to migrant peoples in Britain may automatically qualify for a British passport, but their sense of identity borne from living in a diaspora community will be influenced by the 'past migration history' of their parents or grandparents. These generational differences are not absolute. Migrants can share both similarities and differences with their descendents, and the relationship between generations can be complex and overlapping,

rather than forming a neat contrast (Dar 2018: 383). In order to understand the nature of cultural interaction in diasporic contexts and the issues related to it, it is important to outline certain theoretical concepts. When two or more cultures come into contact with one another, the cultural interplay is often understood using four broad concepts – integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization. Professor John W. Berry, an eminent scholar in the field of culture and immigration studies, explains the concepts as follows:

Assimilation (meaning: to become similar) occurs when a minority culture does not wish to maintain their cultural identity while interacting with a majority culture. Immigrant communities often cease to differ culturally and socially from their host society as they melt into the country of settlement. Assimilation is thus a one-way process wherein the minority community suffers a loss of self-identity and culture as they become an indistinguishable part of the majority. Some critics view this process as an opportunity for a better life for minority groups; whereas others see it as an unwarranted loss of native culture (Berry, 1997: 9).

Integration is the process by which minority groups establish good relations with the host community and partake in diverse aspects of their culture, while simultaneously retaining their own national, cultural and individual integrity. Integration requires some assistance from the host culture and state – the state helps immigrants become a part of society, and the majority culture facilitates this inclusion. Many theorists consider integration as the most desirable mode of ‘entry’ into the host society as it helps retain at least some aspects of native culture (Berry, 1997: 9-10).

### 71.3.1 Multiculturalism

Integration is considered the hallmark of multicultural societies. In some multicultural societies, cultural differences are more pronounced – such as between Whites and aborigines in Australia. In others, like the Tamils and the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, differences are less prominent. Certain minority communities are less open, whereas others interact and try to integrate aspects of the majority culture into their own. Some immigrant groups are territorially concentrated while others are dispersed; some are recent arrivals whereas others have lived in their host countries for centuries (as in the case of Indians in South Africa) (Parekh, 1999). Multiculturalism grew in the late 19th and early 20th century due to increased globalization. In today’s world, the most apt option for multicultural societies is thus to “manage and build on the creative potential of [their] diversity” (Parekh, 2000: 171).

Over the past decades, Britain’s ethnic minorities have successfully established themselves in a multicultural society. In particular, Indian – Hindu communities generally improved their social and economic situation. In this context, the third generation of British Indians is now growing up. In contrast to the previous generation of the Indian diaspora, these children grow up in an established ethnic community, which learned to retain its religion, traditions and culture in a foreign environment. At the same time, these children are part of the multicultural British society. The second generation of immigrated ethnic community youth often suffered from cultural differences, racism and discrimination and therefore rejected aspects of their culture of origin. The loss of culture of origin further

increases in the third generation. It is believed that the preference of western culture influences the personal, ethnic and cultural identity of young people. This leads to the rejection of traditional bonds. Particularly, the link to India plays a decisive role; the subcontinent is referred to as an abstract homeland, especially by the first generation. While the grandparents strongly adhere to their Indian culture and Hindu religion, the second generation already generated cultural change. In this process various cultural values of the Indian ethnic community have been questioned and modified. Further, the second generation pushed for integration into British society by giving up the dependence on the ethnic network. Particularly, in the younger generation – though dependent on a number of social and structural factors - cultural change and mixture happen; in this process new ethnicities and identities evolve. Young people have great interest in their culture of origin and that they aim to maintain this culture in the diaspora. They identify as Indian and are proud of their cultural differences. In this, they differ from the second generation. In contrast to the generation of their grandparents, the Indian identity of the third generation is not based on nostalgic memories. They confirm and emphasize their post diasporic difference in a western multicultural society (Frübing 2010).

### Check Your Progress 1

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

1. What is Assimilation and how does it impact the diaspora?

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2. What is Multiculturalism?

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## 71.4 INTER-GENERATIONAL CHANGES: THE CASE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN INDIANS

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With respect to the Indian diaspora in South Africa too, one can theorize that the first generation is directly related to the homeland and thus re-live the native culture in the host country in the best possible manner by means of the construction of what Salman Rushdie terms “imaginary homelands”. The second generation, on the other hand, forms an image of the native culture based on the transmission of information by the first generation, thereby possessing a weaker affinity towards native land than the first generation. The second generation spends more effort into assimilation into the host culture and society. Second-generation immigrants develop a number of ties with the host society that make their experience of their ethnic identity very different from that of their parents. Memory and sense of longing are acute in the first generation, thus their failure to belong to the host culture and the retention of their nativity. The second

generation personifies in their daily life the malleability and fusion of cultures; whereas the subsequent generations assimilate more and more into the host culture (Verma and Lhamo 2020).

The following sections discuss the changes and differences that characterize the different generations of SAIs. They analyze various cultural markers such as food, clothing, religion, language and , Bollywood/television to understand how, and to what extent, Indian culture has evolved (retained or changed) inter-generationally within the diaspora. This follows from the previous Unit which also discussed these dimensions of culture, traditions, practices and changes.

### **1. Food:**

Indian cuisine was introduced to South Africa when the first Indians came to the country as slaves in 1684. Later, the indentured Indians also brought their native cuisine to the country. They preferred cooking in their traditional style despite the limited availability of many Indian ingredients, such as spices. However, they were creative in sourcing and growing Indian food staples, and alongside incorporated African ingredients into Indian cooking.

The Indian curry was one of the first dishes to achieve widespread acceptance and popularity in the local food culture. It was a cheap option that could be served with rice, bread or pap (maize porridge – a South African staple). Indian women also found it easy to prepare curry in large quantities and preserve over a period of time (Doctor, 2010a).

The iconic fusion dish ‘Bunny Chow’\* – a hollowed out loaf of bread filled with curry in the centre – was invented during the Apartheid period. Africans were prohibited from eating at restaurants that also served the White populace. This prompted the Gujarati ‘Banias’ (traders or merchants) to introduce an affordable and filling takeaway dish which has now become a signature dish of South Africa (Chavan and Mahi, 2012). Indian samosas with various fillings are also a popular snack in South Africa – generally served as starters before braais (South African barbecue).

As mentioned in the previous Unit, local SA people have gradually developed a palette for Indian spices such as coriander, cumin, turmeric etc., which are used in South African dishes like Chakalaka (a spicy relish). Indian breads like naan, roti and poori (different types of flatbreads) are also widely consumed throughout the country. The Bombay Crush (an Indian drink originally known as Falooda) – is a popular street drink in the Cape (Chavan and Mahi, 2012: 10).

Over the past century and a half, Indian cuisine has adapted itself well to South African flavours. For example, maize flour (mielie-meal in South Africa) was used as a substitute for rice by the first-generation SAIs since rice was not cultivated in SA and was thus not easily available. Rice is still not cultivated at full capacity in SA due to lack of adequate climate conditions. It is the second largest imported commodity in the country after wheat – with an estimated 1,053,717 tonnes imported every year (FAOSTAT, 2017). The new generation SAIs have developed a taste for mielie-rice, having grown up with the African

\* The word ‘Bunny’ is a corruption of the Gujarati word ‘bania’- the original inventors of the fusion dish.

staple. They have even created new fusion dishes like mealie with dahi, mealie biryani etc. The Gujarati community that cooks with grains such as jowar and bajra (millets), now make mealie-rotlis (Indian flatbread). The South Indian group prepares mealie pancakes as a substitute for dosas (rice flour pancake) (Doctor, 2010b).

In recent years, due to modernization, there has been a shift from the traditional home cooked diet to a more convenient fast food culture. The new generation of SAIs are also influenced by this transition and prefer the South African street food staples like 'kota' (a meaty sandwich) and 'chips and vetkoek' (fried bread filled with mincemeat), over traditional Indian meals. Traditional Indian meals are reserved for weekends, festivals or cultural get-togethers (Pradeilles et al., 2016).



'Kota' (a corruption of the word 'quarter')

Photo courtesy: Local Guides Connect (2019)

## 2. Clothing

Dressing style is a strong cultural marker firmly rooted in religious and ethnic beliefs. It is indicative of a community's understanding of modesty, beauty and creativity. Changes in these notions due to interactions with new cultures often result in modified clothing patterns and fusion fashion (Lewis, 2003: 173).

The SAI community has managed to preserve their traditional clothing styles even after 160 years. The first generation of Indian immigrants wore their traditional clothing as a symbol of their native identity. However, over successive generations, the Indian has adapted and modified their clothing choices to better integrate into their host culture, while at the same keeping their roots intact. Exposure to western media has also affected the dressing sense of the new generation SAIs, who now have three major fashion influences – Indian, African and Western. They blend these styles together to create unique fusion outfits. Today, Western clothing (like jeans and shirts) and Indian kurtis (a long, knee-length top) are commonly worn at work or as daily wear (Reddy,

2009). Traditional Indian dresses such as heavy embroidered sarees, lehengas and sherwanis are usually worn on special occasions like religious festivals, weddings, or cultural events as a symbolic expression of 'Indianness' and conformity to Indian values (Collison, 2017).

Traditional African clothing like head wraps, long skirts with geometrical patterns, and the 'Madiba shirt'\* are also worn by the Indian community for African festivals and national days. They signify solidarity and cultural integration into the host society (Grant and Gaontebale, 2009: 362). Thus, the hyphenated identities of young SAIs are uniquely expressed through their hybrid fashion choices whether at work, at home or in public. Their sartorial sensibilities are the natural outcome of the long standing contact between two distinctive cultures (Reddy, 2009: 18).

### 3. Language

Culture is manifested through the behaviours of individuals, one of which is the use of the language. This cultural dimension is often thought of as a conflictual site, where the primary way of individuals' expression, which was learnt almost subconsciously, is questioned to make way for a new language, whose learning is instead the result of an intentional and more difficult process, involving motivation, access, skills and costs issues. This process is presented and encouraged as inevitable by the integration policies of the receiving country. Nevertheless, migrants still use the language(s) of their country of origin in daily life, in particular at home within family interactions. Other languages are mostly used in public interactions, the country of origin language is often associated with the domestic sphere of existence. This can also be the case for second or third generation migrants, for whom using the language of the country where their parents or grandparents were born, becomes a way to affirm one of their multiple belongings. Without being an obstacle to integration, mastering this language (in addition to that of the country where they live) lets young second generation migrants dispose of a plurality of repertoires of shared practices that can be mobilized when useful for interpersonal exchanges. Furthermore, cultures can be multiple in the very same country of origin, where belongings can be defined at the national level but also at the regional one. For example in Morocco, the official languages are both Arabic and Tamazigh, corresponding to cultures that take various shapes in different regional contexts (Gsir and Mescoli 2015: 15).

Countries of origin may be multicultural due to the existence of ethnic minorities; these countries are sites where internal migration occurs and they also constitute the destinations of international flows. Keeping in mind these dynamics, it is important to state here that the use of one of the languages of the country of origin by migrants or their descendants, is not neutral in interactions; i.e. when it occurs it reaffirms closeness (even if not exclusively) to a given culture. Mostly in the case of first generation migrants, these exchanges can also appear outside the domestic walls: at the workplace (in particular when migrants work in the import/export domain or in diplomatic missions); in other kinds of public places, such as shops, leisure places, religious institutions, or in schools (particularly in areas or neighbourhoods with an important concentration of co-

\* A loose-fitting silk shirt, also known as a 'Madelia shirt' because it was popularized by the founding president of South Africa – Nelson Mandela.

ethnics (Gsir and Mescoli 2015: 15).

The Indian community in South Africa speaks at least five different Indian languages – Tamil, Telugu, Gujarati, Hindi and Urdu. However, there has been a dilution of these traditional languages over successive generations as they mix with English and other South African dialects like Zulu, Xhosa and Afrikaans.

**History of language development in South Africa:** English and Dutch were the official languages of the state in 1909 (Reagan, 1988: pp.10-11). In 1925, the Official Languages of the Union Act, included Afrikaans as a variety of the Dutch language and made it one of the official languages of the Union (Rose et al., 1936: 682). Indigenous and Indian languages received little or no official support from the colonial and Union governments (Mesthrie, 2002: 164). The new constitution of democratic South Africa (1996) recognized 11 official languages \* and called for the advancement of historically neglected indigenous languages (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996: 4).

**Inter-generational differences in language use:** Children of the earlier generations of the Indian diaspora spoke in their mother tongue at home. In the domestic sphere, certain types of communication – especially humour, anger, affection, and gossip – were primarily expressed through the mother tongue, as a way of maintaining their identity. The new generations of SAIs, however, are bi-lingual or tri-lingual. They speak their mother tongue, English, and other South African languages like Zulu, Xhosa or Afrikaans. Code-switching and code-mixing—i.e., switching between two or more languages while speaking—are common in everyday conversations amongst Indians and native South Africans (McCormick, 2002: pp.218-219). Traditional Indian languages are mainly spoken at home with parents and elders and used for prayers or religious festivals.

English has been gradually replacing Indian languages as the lingua franca of the younger generations. In fact, most young SAIs now use English at school/work and at home. As a result of westernization, new generations of the diaspora have lost touch with their mother tongues (Alexander, 2018). Linguistic and cultural organizations like the Hindi Shiksha Sangh (HSS) (estb. 1948) and the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre (SVCC) (estb. 1993) help promote Indian languages in South Africa. The HSS propagates Indian culture through music, dance, drama, arts etc. and holds regular Hindi classes in South African schools (HSS, 2017). The SVCC is a cultural centre at the Indian Council for Cultural Relations of India (ICCR). It promotes bilateral cultural linkages between India and South Africa by organizing cultural programmes, seminars, workshops, Yoga trainings, and Sanskrit/Hindi/Tamil language classes with the help of local community teachers. It also celebrates the Hindi Diwas on the 14th of September every year (ICCR, 2020).

#### 4 Religion

Religion forms a very important part of diasporic identity. The Indian community in South Africa is a heterogeneous mix of several religious groups; Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Zoroastrian, Jain, agnostic and atheists (for details

\* These are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu

see section 3.3, module no.71).

As of 2016, Christians constitute 78% of the total population in South Africa. The Traditional African religion forms the second largest group in the country with 4.5% of the population following it. Islam (2%) and Hinduism (1%) form the third and fourth largest religions in South Africa, respectively. Other religions like Buddhism, Bahaism, Judaism, Atheism and Agnosticism makeup smaller minorities (Lehohla, 2016: 42).

The first generation of the Indian diaspora in South Africa brought their sacred idols, scriptures and beliefs with them. Religious sentiments were strong among this community because faith was their strongest link to a lost homeland. Religion and festivals also brought the fragmented Indian community together. This fostered a sense of 'Indianness' and built an 'Indian identity' that has lasted over 160 years in South Africa. However, successive generations have lost their connections to religion. As a result of education and western influences, the younger generations of South African Indians are more scientific and rational. They are less keen to blindly follow ancient religious customs and have only a symbolic connection to their religion and homeland (Dickinson, 2015).

The 'Born Free' Generation: The young generation in South Africa is known as the 'Born Free' generation. They have grown up in the climate of equality in the 'rainbow nation'. Where the preceding generation was often seen as the 'lost generation' (having experienced firsthand the trauma of Apartheid); the 'Born Frees' live relatively peaceful lives. Their experience of the legacy of Apartheid is limited through second hand narratives from elders or through education (Mattes, 2011). This democratic political and social climate has influenced their religious beliefs and ideas of marriage and community. Young SAIs are more modernized and struggle to maintain a balance between traditional religious customs and modern cultural practices within their diasporic contexts (Brittian et al., 2013). Inter-racial and inter-religious marriages, even if very few, are acceptable to the 'Born Frees' as they expand their choices for marriage outside ethnic and religious groupings. However, at times, they do face a backlash from their parents and elders who continue to be much more conservative (for details see subsection 2.2, module no. 71).

## 5 Television and Cinema

Today, Indian TV and Bollywood are considered a part of mainstream media in South Africa. However, this has not always been the case. From the 1950s-1970s, cinema halls in Durban's Central Business District played a number of Indian films for diverse South African and Indian audiences. Cinema outings were family/community events. Indians from all religious and ethnic backgrounds dressed up in their finest outfits to watch on celluloid, stars like Dilip Kumar, Dev Anand and Meena Kumari (Looch, 2020).

This vibrant cultural life was affected when Apartheid legislations prohibited mixed public gatherings and placed restrictions on the film industry. The Avalon Group's cinema empire – the oldest and largest Indian-owned cinema chain in South Africa – was reduced to just one cinema hall in Durban in the 1980s. However, post 1994, relations between India and South Africa improved. Restrictions on the film industry were gradually lifted as a result of the dismantlement of Apartheid and the democratization of South Africa (Stead,



2010). However, the effects of Apartheid were long lasting and many cinemas were hesitant to screen Bollywood movies for several years after Apartheid. It was not until 1998 when *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* – a romantic comedy drama featuring Shah Rukh Khan – was the first post-Apartheid film to be screened in SA. This was followed by the hugely successful Oscar nominated film *Lagaan* (2002). Both films were well received by South African and Indian audiences. Local broadcasters took the opportunity to capitalise on this Bollywood boom and introduced Indian TV channels in South Africa in the early 2000s (Ebrahim, 2008: 67).

The Indian television network Star TV launched four major channels in South Africa in 2010 – Star Plus (a Hindi general entertainment channel), Star Gold (a Bollywood movie channel), Vijay (a Tamil general entertainment channel) and Channel V (a music channel) (Casbaa, 2010). In the past decade, leading television providers like DStv and StarSat have launched dedicated Indian TV packages which include channels like Zee TV, SET Asia, B4U Movies, SunTV, SET Max Asia, Colors, NDTV and Zee Cinema. Two Indian channels, Zee World and Glow (Hindi dubbed into English), were launched in 2015; whereas Star Life (an English-language Indian channel) was launched in 2018 (Chunikhah, 2016).

The relationship between Bollywood and South Africa is two way. South Africa has become a popular locale for shooting Bollywood films. Thus, Bollywood has now become mainstream and integrated well with South African culture. It is screened on national television; in cinema halls, at major shopping malls and through live Bollywood concerts/performances. Popular culture – cinema and television – has been a major medium of familiarizing the young SAIs with Indian political, cultural and social and tourist places of the country. The government of India has also taken several policy initiatives to draw its ‘old diaspora’ to their homeland.

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## 71.5 GOVERNMENT OF INDIA’S INITIATIVES TO ATTRACT DIASPORA

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In general, countries of origin are keen to promote their culture abroad. They organize national or religious celebrations, cultural events or encounters including exhibitions, various artistic performances, seminars and discussions. For example, in 2013, the Germany China Tibetan Culture Week was a cultural event co-organized by Germany and China in Berlin and Munich. Such cultural actions can directly target the diaspora and can thus be seen as part of cultural diaspora policies. They can also be oriented to a wider audience and consist of external cultural policy, also called ‘cultural diplomacy’ (Gsir and Mescoli 2015: 19).

The Government of India’s (GoI’s) dynamic policies for leveraging its diaspora began in the mid-1970s. These included the the setting up of the High level Committee on the Indian Diaspora (HLCID) in January 2002; the People of Indian Origin (PIO) card scheme and the Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) card schemes introduced to reconnect with the Indian diaspora. Furthermore, the PravasiBharatiya Divas (PBD; trans. ‘Overseas Indian’s Day’) was launched in 2003 to acknowledge the contribution made by Overseas Indians and to strengthen the bond between diasporas and their homeland. It is celebrated on

the 9th of January every year – to commemorate the day Mahatma Gandhi returned from South Africa to India in 1915 (MEAA, n.d.). The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), GoI, also organizes regional ‘mini PBDs’ to engage the vast majority of the diaspora who are unable to travel to attend the main event in India.

The United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government that came to power in 2004, set up a dedicated Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA). However, almost 12 years after it was set up, the MOIA was merged with the MEA in 2016, keeping in line with the GoI’s overall objective of ‘minimising government and maximising governance’ (PTI, 2016). The MEA is now the apex body on diaspora affairs and seeks to connect the widespread Indian diaspora with its native land through specific initiatives such as:

The ‘Know India Programme’ (KIP) – It is a flagship initiative started by the GoI in 2004. It aims to familiarize Indian-origin youth (aged 18-30 years) with their native heritage through a three-week orientation programme in India. Six KIPs are organised every year with a maximum of 40 participants. They are provided complete hospitality in India and 90% of the total cost of international airfare is also paid by the Ministry. The programme includes, inter alia – presentations about India’s political processes and developments, interaction with faculty/students at Indian universities, meetings with NGOs, yoga sessions, visit to an Indian village, and visits to two Indian states. As of 2020, over 2000 OCI youths have participated in the KIP programme, of which about 5 percent were South African (KIP, n.d.).

‘Tracing the Roots’ programme: This scheme has been devised to help OCIs, mainly the ‘old diasporas’, to trace their roots in India. An application can be filled through the Indian Mission/Post in the respective country of residence along with a fee of Rs.30,000 and any relevant information/documents. The application is forwarded to the MEA, who in turn tries to trace their historical linkages and provide details of the applicants roots in India – i.e. name of close surviving relative(s), details of forefathers’ origins (paternal and maternal) and a possible family tree (MEAb, n.d.).

Such government sponsored initiatives act as excellent outreach methods to enable the new generation of OCIs to connect with and discover their motherland – an opportunity that was not available to the earlier generations of the PIOs.



Photo courtesy: Know India Programme (KIP) official website <<https://kip.gov.in/home/photoGallery/61>>

**Furthering Indian culture through diplomatic missions:** The younger generation of the SAI have also gained exposure to their Indian traditions and culture such as Yoga and religious festivals and Indian languages, through the High Commission of India (HCI) in their respective countries. In 1994, the HCI and the Consulate General of India (CGI) were established in Pretoria and Durban, respectively. In the same year, South Africa established its High Commission in Delhi and a Consulate General in Mumbai (HCI Pretoria, 2019). These missions support the Indian community and help facilitate stronger ties between India and South Africa. They provide consular services and also celebrate Indian National Days, Hindi Diwas and Gandhi Jayanti, on a regular basis. One of the most successful cultural events celebrated every year by the Indian missions in South Africa is the International Day of Yoga. Since its inception in 2015, Yoga Day has been celebrated annually around the world on the 21st of June (CGI Durban, 2019).



The 4th International day of Yoga celebrated by CGI Durban, in association with the Sivananda World Peace Foundation

Photo courtesy: Consulate General of India (CGI) Durban Facebook page (2018). Available at <<https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=1742652899123502&set=pcb.1742653415790117>>

### Check Your Progress 2

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

1. What is Know India Programme (KIP) how does it connect the new generation of Indian diaspora?

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2. How does the Bollywood impact the culture in Diaspora?

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## 71.6 LET US SUM UP

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This Unit discussed how inter-generational changes in the cultural practices, observances and value systems are observed in diasporic communities. To understand these processes better, the example of the Indian diaspora in South Africa was taken up for discussion. Indian culture has integrated well into the socio-political landscape of South Africa over a period of 160 years. Although there has been a significant loss of traditional Indian culture over the past 5-6 generations of the SAI diaspora, the unique ‘Indianness’ is still alive in major areas like Durban, which has a high concentration of Indians. The first few generations of Indians struggled to practice and retain their culture in South Africa due to the indentured system and the Apartheid regime. Their cultural development was affected as they struggled for survival under oppressive practices and legislations.

Post 1994, the concept of the ‘Rainbow nation’ in a democratic South Africa brought about significant change to the social and political fabric of the country. The post 1994, ‘Born Free’ generation, had the freedom to practice their traditional cultures and could interact with other cultures as well. However, the new generation of SAIs is losing touch with their traditional Indian culture as a result of western influences and rapid modernization. Increased interaction and marital affiliations among diverse ethnic and religious groups have engendered a hyphenated identity – as South African Indians (SAIs)

The Republic of South Africa and its democratic constitutional provisions aim to preserve the heterogeneity of the country. It has provided space for the integration of the Indian community into South African culture. Various

governmental and Indian cultural organizations strive to promote Indian culture through the propagation of traditional Indian food, language, clothing, festivals and popular culture such as Bollywood and television broadcasts. These help the SAI youth to keep in touch with their traditional culture. Thus Indian culture is retained and transferred across successive generations of the 'Born Free' Indian diaspora who bear hyphenated identities as both 'South African' and 'Indian'.

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## 71.8 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS - POSSIBLE ANSWERS

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1. Assimilation is one-way process wherein the minority community lose self-identity and culture as they adopt to the new majority culture in the host country. Some critics view this process as an opportunity for a better life for minority groups; whereas others see it as an unwarranted loss of native culture. Through assimilation the diaspora often loses its identity and integrate with the host society culture.
2. Multiculturalism grew in the late 19th and early 20th century due to increased globalization. In today's world, the most apt option for multicultural societies is thus to "manage and build on the creative potential of [their] diversity". In this scenario different culture co-exist without losing one's culture. One can find many countries such as Australia where several distinct cultural groups live in a society in a peaceful manner. Many countries having immigration population have the multicultural traits.

### Check Your Progress 2

1. It is a flagship initiative started by the GoI in 2004. It aims to familiarize Indian-origin youth (aged 18-30 years) with their native heritage through a three-week orientation programme in India. Six KIPs are organised every year with a maximum of 40 participants. The programme includes, inter alia – presentations about India's political processes and developments, interaction with faculty/students at Indian universities, meetings with NGOs, yoga sessions, visit to an Indian village, and visits to two Indian states. As of 2020, over 2000 OCI youths have participated in the KIP programme, of which about 5 percent were South African.
2. Bollywood is considered a part of mainstream media in many diaspora

countries. It helps connecting the new and old generation with the Indian culture through movie. Cinema outings were family/community events. Indians from all religious and ethnic backgrounds dressed up in their finest outfits to watch on celluloid. Therefore, it influences the life of Indians living in other countries in many ways such as dress, culinary and other rituals etc.



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## UNIT 72 IDENTITY, MARGINALITY AND SEXUALITY

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- 72.1 Learning Objectives
- 72.2 Introduction
- 72.3 Sexuality and gender identity
- 72.4 Queer movement and new sexual identity
- 72.5 Sexual orientation and marginality
- 72.6 Diasporic subjectivity and sexual identity
- 72.7 Nationalism, globalisation and sexuality
- 72.8 The changing dynamics of sexuality and gender
- 72.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 72.10 References and Selected Readings
- 72.11 Check Your Progress-Possible Answers

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### 72.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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We expect after you have gone through this Unit, you will be able to

- Understand the sexual and gender identity and differentiate various identities based on sexual orientations
- Understand the forces responsible for and marginalization of such identities
- Learn about the social and political movements of LGBT and Queer groups, their rights and empowerment.

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### 72.2 INTRODUCTION

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We discussed the role of identity in diasporas and migrants' lives in broader terms in earlier units. Whether it is ethnic, religious or national identity, it helps the migrants in negotiating their demands both in the home and host country. Identity is an instrument of survival and also an act of assertion and belonging for the migrants. In this unit, we will discuss the individual identity of the migrant vis-à-vis their personal aspiration, individual characteristics and preferences in terms of sexuality and its exclusion leading to their marginalisation. It should be noted that diaspora as such is already a marginalised community in their receiving countries and if they happen to exhibit differential sexual orientations like lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (collectively called LGBT), they are further relegated and marginalised at various levels of their diasporic existence. These individual traits of the diaspora members are part of sexual and gender identity, which they negotiate their way through and form the part of diasporic subjectivity. As you know, when people move from one place to another they carry with them their individual selves with their individual behaviours, customs, rituals and also their sexual orientations. Sometimes, it also becomes the reason



for their migration and exile from their place of residence. While good number of liberal democracies recognize various forms of sexual behaviour as normal and have extended to its members rights to pursue their individual choices, there are still countries where these people are either censured or are not allowed to come out openly with their sexual orientations. This unit deals with some of these issues and contradictions inherent in its conceptualization

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### **72.3 SEXUALITY AND GENDER IDENTITY**

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When looked from the male and female perspectives, sexuality assumes different dimensions both within and outside the diasporic lives. There is more associated norms related to women, which are disadvantageous to them. A large number of these norms are associated with cultural practices, which have been responsible in pushing them towards marginality vis-à-vis their male counterparts. It is an observed fact that women have been associated with secondary value creation be it agrarian economy, industrial production or in the service sector that are directly and directly related to their sexuality.

One such cultural practice has been the creation of purdah (veil) and hijab for women by men to safeguard and control female sexuality and to prevent them from male gaze. The cultural practices associated with menstruating women are yet another form of sexual surveillance unleashed by patriarchy and male-dominating societies. These are some of the mechanisms which have been common in various societies and cultures. Feminist theorists have seen them as means to subvert and marginalize women in their social, economic and political functions.

It is in the light of this social dominance that some of the gender movements, which took place in the twentieth century, could be seen and juxtaposed in contemporary times. For example, the LGBT movement occupied the mainstream gender discussion and came into existence in the 1990s. It had direct relation to migration and diaspora as many of these marginalised people began migrating to other countries to evade discrimination and social taboos. This was largely because of their gender expression, which was quite distinct from heterosexuality. The movement of people to escape discrimination based on sexuality has been called queer migration and is a distinct feature of migration and diaspora formation.

There is yet another term 'Queer' which has been in existence for quite some time and came to be closely associated with LGBT movement. Some of the popular groups under it include Queer Youth Network in the UK and Queer Cyprus Association in Cyprus. In India, Queer Azaadi Mumbai and the Delhi Queer Pride Parade have gained popularity among the groups. It was the queer studies and women's studies in 1990s that led to the emergence of post-structuralism. The works of Jasbir Puar, Lisa Duggan, Rod Ferguson and others added a new dimension to gay political movement in the twentieth century. One of the major issues of the time was church-sanctioned to monogamous gay couples. It was to conceptualizethese new trends that Jasbir Puar came out with a new term called 'homonationalism' which refers to patriarchy within the gay community and was related to White supremacy and nationalism. Likewise, in Canada Morgan Holmes, a sociologist took part in demonstration by intersex people and that is how Intersex Awareness Day came into existence. It was also contested that

the dominant LGBT community was responsible in marginalizing the weaker identities like bisexual and transgender. Nevertheless, LGBT community itself was labeled as “the last great minority” by the transgender actress Candis Cayne.

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## 72.4 QUEER MOVEMENT AND NEW SEXUAL IDENTITY

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It should be noted the term queer is an all-encompassing term and refers to people who are either non-heterosexual or are questioning their gender and sexual identity. It has become an inclusive term for non-cis gender group in addition to gay, lesbian and transgender. The term came into existence in the 19th century and was used pejoratively to refer to people who sought same-sex relationship. Subsequently, queer activists formed an umbrella organization called Queer Nation to press upon their cause and referred to its radical nature in term of sexual desires. The queer identities in the 21st century have led to the formation of Queer cultural groups, Queer art and queer political groups to find a place for their sexual orientation and gender identity.

It has been argued that non-normative sexual and gender identities have been there since time immemorial and in almost all societies. In Indian culture it finds mentioned in Kamasutra which recognizes same-sex relations during the ancient times. The concept of Ardhanarishvara in Indian theology affirms the duality of gender identities and the importance attached to it.

In the Western culture, we come across differential and non-heterosexual identities as early as sixteenth century in the mention of queer groups, which showed differential sexual preferences. These groups of people were not well accepted in British society and were looked down upon and discriminated. During those days, it was considered an offence against the order of nature to be non-heterosexual. There are historical records of such group of people migrating to India to evade discrimination and social taboos. At that time India was liberal to individuals' sexual orientations. But the things changed drastically with the inclusion of Section 377 in the IPC in 1860 by the British colonial rulers. They made it a natural offence for people who were homosexual and prescribed punishment up to life imprisonment for the offence. It was much later in 2018 that Indian law decriminalized homosexual activities. This was achieved after decades of struggle and fight by the LGBT community.

It was William Safran who while conceptualizing diaspora raised the question of the gendered nature of diasporic experience. The sexuality of women becomes a critical point of discussion as they are transmitters and reproducers of ethnic and national ideologies, which play pivotal roles in transmission of cultural norms. In fact, the idea, the reality and the experience of diaspora is felt differently by people based on their gender, class, age, caste and sexual orientation..

Understandably, gender and sexuality has assumed a central role within and outside the diaspora as well as in the ethnic and national projects of some of the nations. It also extends beyond the national boundaries in the formation of solidarity groups to safeguard its interest and express its sexual orientation more freely. The sexuality of men and women are interpolated at various sites of experiences including in the country of settlement, within their own self-defined diasporic communities as well as at the transnational levels. This has

led to a shift in the cultural and structural levels thus producing emancipatory and liberating experiences and in fight against gender subordination.

### Check your progress 1

Note: Answer the following questions. Check your answer with possible answers given at the end of the unit

1. Write a short not on LGBT community and the challenges faced by them.

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2. What do you understand by Queer movement as an alternate form of sexuality?

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## 72.5 SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND MARGINALITY

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The norms of sexual differences, gender identities, sexuality and sexism have also produced niche areas of economic value, which is dynamic and has become transnational. The femininity of domestic role as part of gender role has become dominant discourse in the economic value of the diaspora in some of the receiving countries. This has also been evident in the women’s labour market with rampant exclusionary, racism as well as a source of cheap family labour. In such incidences, their sexuality remains confined to their gender role of domesticity. As a result of which women are assigned social and economic roles with regard to diasporic ethnic groups, national and the demands of the globalisation.

Also, women and their sexuality are often made to symbolize nations with the concept of purity and claiming their bodies as national site which has more to do with the patriarchal society. The radicalization of sexuality has been responsible for their exclusion, which has made it disadvantageous for them. Sometimes, diasporic sexuality is left outside the discourse of national belonging. The process of hierarchy, unequal resource allocation and inferiorisation of gender roles has been the result of domination and subordination of sexuality. It is under these circumstances that inequality in identities has created political and social marginalization of non-hetrosexual group of people, both within and outside the diaspora relations.

The essentialised moulds of gender identity and sexuality at times also result in breaking the national and cultural practices and can spur political mobilization against the racialised and oppressed sexual behavior, both in the home and host countries. As the diasporas have to face challenging situations in the receiving countries, it became equally important for LGBT community to extent and

affirm their existing identity in the face of threats.

How important are institutions of family, kinship, religion and other social groups to the diaspora's sexual identity? In fact, gender and sexuality are not stand-alone individuality rather they exist and thrive in defined liberal societies. This is also because the diaspora in addition to gender and sexuality have rested their gaze on other domains of politics, nationality and ethnicity and calls for a balance between all spheres of gender and sexuality. Moreover, gender identity and sexuality are distinct attributes unlike the diaspora, which owe its existence in relation to the concept of belonging, nationality and homeland.

It has been argued that the absolute notion of belonging in the diaspora sexuality is at times missing as these groups of individuals are able to strike trans-ethnic solidarity and social mobilisation in order to achieve inclusivity and multiculturalism. Just as diaspora is not a homogenous category and they are differentiated based on class, caste, gender, nationality and ethnicity, the gender identity too is divided based on individual sexual orientation. Thus, individuals become woman, gay, and lesbian through the interplay of such differentiation.

Apparently, within feminism discourse the concept of intersectionality has been mobilised to throw light on women as a heterogeneous category. These gender rights dates back to 1832 when the first anti-slavery society was formed by a Black woman in Salem, Ohio in the USA. It eventually led to Sojourner Truth Campaign for the abolition of slavery and women's rights. It was only in 1977 when the Black Lesbian feminist organisation was formed in Boston that raised the voice against the way the group was marginalised by the White, middle-class and heterosexual counterpart. The movement was 'actively committed to struggling against racial, heterosexual and class oppression'. But while this movement was fighting for its rights, it was at the same time accused of marginalising the other sexual behaviour because of its dominance.

During the post-World War II, when these right groups were raising their voices and challenging the heteronormative practices, the *Bridge Called My Back: Writing by Radical Women of Colour*, pointed out how White lesbian feminism was sidetracking the experiences of Lesbian of colour by not accommodating them in the larger fight against racism and the prevailing prejudices.

During the 1970s a similar movement was launched in Britain by women of African, Caribbean and Asian origin who formed the Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent (OWAAD), to espouse their cause and focus on the marginalisation of their sexuality. It was argued, giving centrality to differential sexual behaviour, as to who has the power to differentiate? What is the nature of normative sexual behaviour and the processes through which differences are marked, constructed and propagated?

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## **72.6 DIASPORIC SUBJECTIVITY AND SEXUAL IDENTITY**

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It has been argued that it is the language, which is the site of formation of diaspora subjectivity and identity. The way languages are used to bring similarity and differences are the points of discussion. As Stuart Hall says, to understand

the meaning of identities one has not to look at the specifically of origin and stability but to the meaning which is constructed through differences. Sexual identities are inscribed through experiences, which are culturally constructed within social relationship. Subjectivity in that sense is our sense of ourselves and its relationship with the rest of the world. Needless to say, identity is constructed through similarity or contradictory nature of the subject and its relationship to the inside and outside world. It is therefore neither fixed nor singular but involves within itself through multiplicity of relationship. Likewise, political identity relates to specific positions and is closely related to subjectivity of the person.

But to get a better picture about negotiating sexual identity one needs to look at intersectionality within feminism. It was Kimberle Williams Crenshaw in 1989 who coined the term in relation to feminism and other sexual roles of individuals. It refers to multiple role and differentiation and discrimination. Foucault says that all relations are relations of power and need to be seen from the same perspective. It is both coercive and productive depending on its response to such relations. Within the same perspective, the radicalized female body becomes a historical archive while desiring the racial others becomes a defining feature of White imperial gaze which is available to brown bodies.

For the articulation of sexuality, histories of colonialism and racism reveal the power of eroticism. It is in this context between the White and the Black bodies that become the contesting point which was evident during the annual India Day parade in 1990s for the South Asian Lesbian and Gay Association. In Indian context, the lesbian sexuality found expression in Deepa Mehta's film "Fire" which contested its space against the dominant politics in India. It was also a realistic measure in which concepts like desire, bodies, subjectivities, culture and tradition were measured against so-called "perverse" sexualities.

The gendered and sexualized contexts of the diaspora were also influenced by the dominant 21st century phenomena, namely globalisation and nationalism. While globalisation has been responsible for the faster spread of sexuality and developing trans-solidarity across the borders, nationalism has either tried to curb such expression or has made attempt to see it through nationalistic cultural production. It is the male nationalistic ideologies that has attempted to take control or set the discourse on sexuality and its various forms.

It is through women's bodies that nations tried to form communal identity and set the borders and boundaries of nationalism. The female bodies are the site of nationalistic surveillance where culture contests their global gender order. It is under these lights that norms of heterosexuality as new normal have been defined by nationalism. It is not surprising that alternative sexualities have posed a serious threat to such patriarchal nationalism. In recent times, to overcome the emerging nationalistic challenge of sexuality, jurisprudence has taken a more liberal outlook to the LGBT demands by way of extending recognition to such groups. It has also become evident that both the home and host country of the diaspora determine and influence the female sexuality in one form or the other. There have also been incidences when homeland nationalism got translated into diasporic subjectivity.

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## 72.7 NATIONALISM, GLOBALISATION AND SEXUALITY

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Gender and sexuality of women often becomes an emblem of nationalistic morality as was evident during early years of anti-colonial nationalistic movements in which diasporic women were seen as impure and immoral in contrast to women in their home countries, which were considered pure, moral, chaste and virtuous in their disposition. The consideration of the diaspora as Other and the one at home as own was responsible in creating a bourgeois nationalism. The British colonialism and Indian nationalism both recognised women heterosexuality as the primary structures of the institution. In fact, there seems to be a similarity between diasporic nationalism and the state with regard to women's sexuality.

The women's bodies soon became both an instrument and means for constructing diaspora identity for hetero and homo sexuality. It was the gender and sexual ideologies of the late twentieth century which found a parallel in the globalisation process. It has been contested by feminist theorists that the female sexuality is a private affair of the individuals but has been globalised in the wake of emerging transnational market forces. In fact, a section of theorists have rightly pointed out that female sexuality has been framed, shaped, transformed and exploited by powerful forces of politics, society and economy.

Also, the global labour market which has been a powerful instrument of globalisation has differentiated sexuality on the basis of gender, racial and national identities. As a result, the sexuality in the diaspora has been disrupted and reinscribed by the sexual ideologies of the globalised forces. In fact, both nationalism and globalisation have deeply impacted the sexual ideologies within the diaspora.

The transnational capitalism, which set the tone for globalization and nationalism, has forced the nations to look at its diaspora solely from the angles of monetary remittances, social, political and diplomatic capital, undermining the individual characteristics of their gender, sexuality and marginality. In a way, loyalty to nationalist ideology soon became the dominant feature of identification in which heterosexuality has played a defining role, undermining the alternative sexuality. It is here that transnational capitalism has been found well aligned with nationalist ideologies, but at the same time undermining and marginalising the alternative sexuality within the diaspora. The desires, practices and subjectivity of alternate sexuality within the diaspora had been unimaginable till recently. It was beyond the traditional and conventional diasporic discourse. In the meantime, the alternate sexuality has been challenging the traditional national ideologies, thus making space for itself which is considered impure and nonproductive.

It is the close relationship between heterosexuality and nationalism that has posed a challenge to marginalised sexuality both within and outside the diaspora. It is for this reason it is said that alternative sexuality is to heterosexuality what diaspora is to the nation. Both alternative sexuality and diaspora are considered inauthentic imitation of heterosexuality and nativity in the dominant discourse. However, it has also been argued that diaspora needs alternate sexuality

in order to express its diversity and individual choices. On the other side, alternate sexuality needs a diaspora to express its flexibility and its relations with migration, race, colonialism and globalisation. This has challenged the homonormativity in some of the racialised immigrants in Europe and America and has been theorized both locally as well as transnationally.

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## 72.8 THE CHANGING DYNAMICS OF SEXUALITY AND GENDER

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The colonial narrative on sexuality in diasporic formation has a close relationship with the categorisation of gay and lesbian identity. It also includes a wide range of solidarity and dissent that works against it. There have been attempts to compare and contrast it with Euro-American sexual identities. Some of the diasporic cultural formation on sexuality was the result of inter and intra assimilation that became possible after the First World War in the global cities of London, New York, Toronto and other European cities. Like colonial capitalism, transnational and neo-colonial capitalism has produced cultural forms out of sexuality and has added new subjectivity, kinship and community formation within the diaspora and the nations. The process of globalization has further accelerated it. These cultural practices have been mapped along with universalized sexuality that has asserted that homosexuality has traditionally been encoded in the cultural norms.

Various forms of sexuality within and outside the diaspora has been seen with taboo and secrecy and has followed the rituals of gender inversion and cross-dressing which has assumed transnational appeal. It is for this reason that the conventional marker of sexuality has been challenged by same sex subjectivity and eroticism, which are radically different from heterosexuality. Not only this, in some cases the sexuality of a marginalised community, it has been contrasted against progress, development and liberal political ideologies. One of the ramifications of above gender discourse could be noticed in colonial constructions where Third World sexuality was considered regressive, pre-modern and full of contradictions.

It was asserted that the Third World sexuality should follow and modify itself with the sexuality norms practiced by the developed Western culture. The construction of sexuality in the prevalent transnational political practices was seen in quite contrast to nationalistic ideologies which revolved around organic heterosexuality. It was soon followed by a cross-border flow of bodies, gender, desires and sexuality along with goods, capitals and commodities. In fact, the concept of alternate sexuality has been seen to be dependent on heterosexuality, without which the concept of sexuality identity and marginality would fall flat.

The popular imagery of women as pure, unpolluted beings and her body as national boundaries for the nations and diasporas have become dominant representation of female subjectivity. The invisible subject has been recognized as visible representation in the popular imagining of diasporic and nationalist ideologies. These illegible, non-heterosexual women subjects have been relegated to the background in the dominant gendering of colonialism and nationalism and more so in the age of globalisation. Under these circumstances, gendered male is said to be doubly privileged as they are assimilated and accounted for in the heteronormative national identity. As a result, male and

female sexuality are differentially impacted at the material, psychic and social levels in the globalised world.

The history of gender mobility and migration in recent years has been widely impacted by the transnational movements because of their transgressive nature of existence. In contrast to this, it has been argued that rootless mobility has become the dominant feature of contemporary existence thereby making nations, home, family; kith and kin play a role in the migrants' sexual lives. This role could be seen to be dominating at times as it tries to control alternate sexuality and subjective desire. This was observed by Roger Rouse who said that "the cultural politics of domination always concerns the regulation of desire."

The regulation to control such subjective desires are variously manifested the way nations and societies have put various regulatory norms. But to predict a future path for gender and sexuality seems to be difficult as its conception differs from place to place and time to time. The way alternate sexuality was viewed a century back is quite different from what social and gender movements have made it possible in the 21st century. It has added an economic and labour value to migrants, which has assumed a central figure in its relationship with identity, gender and sexualisation in the globalised process. For example, sex work is now considered a mobile, gendered form of labour.

In fact, gender is considered to be a kind of labour in the production of gendered bodies. As a result, it has become a material manifestation and an instrument of reproduction thus creating new citizens for the nation in the broader production and exchange of citizens and non-citizens. It has been further argued that sexuality and gender identities are created in relation to the process and mechanism of global market forces. The articulation of identity, subjective desires and sexuality has produced a mobile diaspora across the nation which is not necessarily dependent on gender but also on its internal dynamics.

**Check your progress 2**

- Note: a) Write your answer in about 50 words.  
b) Check your answer with possible answers given at the end of the unit

1. How have women's bodies been contrasted against nationalism?

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2. What role has globalization played in relation of alternate sexuality?

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## 72.9 LET US SUM UP

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The concept of identity based on sexuality has gone through major transformation during the last 50 years, especially in the liberalized economy of post-globalised world. What was once private and individual expression of subjective desire has become public and collective expression of sexuality. The expression of alternate sexuality was accompanied with freedom of expression and rights movement. The emergence of LGBT community and their collective articulation and recognition by states has consolidated their identity at the global landscape. However, their marginalization has led to various forms of discrimination, which still exist in some of the societies. An increased pace of globalization and nationalism has further created new dynamics which has become a predominant narrative vis-à-vis diasporic gendering.

It can be safely concluded that both identity and sexuality no longer remain a monolithic structure of subjective expression. There are number of intersectionality that has emerged in recent years related to its relation with feminism, capitalism and labour market where sexuality-based identities are negotiated both at individual and collective levels. Women, as an instrument of biological reproduction, have added new dimension in furthering the cause of nationalism and meeting the demographic challenges.

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## 72.10 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

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## 72.11 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS-POSSIBLE ANSWERS

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### Check your progress 1

1. People who exhibit a differential sexual orientations apart from heterosexuality like lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (collectively called LGBT) for the part of alternate sexuality. They are relegated and marginalised at various levels of their existence. These individual traits are part of sexual and gender identity, which they negotiate their way through and form the part of subjectivity desire. The LGBT movement occupied the mainstream gender discussion and came into existence in the 1990s. It had direct relation to migration and diaspora as many of these marginalised people began migrating to other countries to evade discrimination and social taboos. This was largely because of their gender expression, which was quite distinct from heterosexuality.
2. The term queer is an all-encompassing term and refers to people who are either non-heterosexual or are questioning their gender and sexual identity. It has become an inclusive term for non-cisgender group in addition to gay, lesbian and transgender. The term came into existence in the 19th century and was used pejoratively to refer to people who sought same-sex relationship. Subsequently, queer activists formed an umbrella organization called Queer Nation to press upon their cause and referred to its radical nature in term of sexual desires. The queer identities in the 21st century have led to the formation of Queer cultural groups, Queer art and queer political groups to find a place for their sexual orientation and gender identity. Queer movement is closely associated with LGBT movement. Some of the popular groups under it include Queer Youth Network in the UK and Queer Cyprus Association in Cyprus. In India, Queer Azaadi Mumbai and the Delhi Queer Pride Parade have gained popularity among the groups.

### Check your progress 2

1. It is through women bodies is that nations tried to form communal identity and set the borders and boundaries of nationalism. The female bodies are the site of nationalistic surveillance where culture contests their global gender order. It is under these lights that norms of heterosexuality as new normal have been defined by nationalism. It is not surprising that alternative

sexualities have posed a serious threat to such patriarchal nationalism.

2. It has been contested by the feminist theorists that the female sexuality is a private affair of the individuals but has been globalised in the wake of emerging transnational market forces. In fact, a section of theorists have rightly pointed out that female sexuality has been framed, shaped, transformed and exploited by powerful forces of politics, society and economy. Also, the global labour market, which has been a powerful instrument of globalisation, has differentiated sexuality on the basis of gender, racial and national identities. As a result, the sexuality in the diaspora has been disrupted and reinscribed by the sexual ideologies of the globalised forces. In fact, both nationalism and globalisation have deeply impacted the sexual ideologies within the diaspora.



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