‘Like an overflowing container, Indians have spilled all over the world’, said a Canberra-based humourist some years ago, adding that ‘this spilling has been by and large to the benefit of the world’. He continued:

From Australia to Alaska and Britain to Bahrain, we are proudly carrying the flag of Indian culture and civilisation along with idlis, dosas and chicken curry. They say that when Hillary and Tenzing reached the peak of Mt Everest, they were served hot parathas and cold lassi at Bhappe da Dhaba. Hillary was so enthralled by these that he climbed Mt Everest twice. It is rumoured that the pathfinder on Mars found the thousand year relics of Patel the Motel among the rocks. You can find a Fiji Indian running an Indian grocery shop on the North Pole selling spices, rice, atta and dhal, along with copies of Hindi movies boldly labelled ‘Pirated’.

It is true that the Indian diasporas, at more than 30 million strong, are visibly increasing in size, influence and importance, especially in western countries, though whether their presence there is beneficial or baleful for the host societies could be a matter of some jocular debate. But it is certainly debatable whether a Patel from East Africa, a Punjabi from Canada or a peasant from Fiji are all peas in the same pod. The Indian diasporas are the product of many causes and countless crossings, and it is divided and divergent in its aspirations and assumptions in so many crucial ways that would make the use of the word ‘diaspora’ in the ‘singular’ problematic. There are some points of convergence (in food, faith, festivals, fashion) which people of Indian origin share in common whatever their nationality, but there are many points of divergence as well where the particularities of class, nation, region, are accentuated. The enormous diversity of ‘the Indian diaspora’ should therefore be constantly borne in mind.
The growth of, as well as the notion of, a large Indian diaspora is a phenomenon of the late twentieth century, and the very fact that it exists at all would be a source of bemused puzzlement to an observer from the previous century. The Hindu had little migratory instinct, wrote William Crooke in 1897, ‘and all his prejudices tend to keep him at home’. He had his custom-bound routine and rituals and ceremonies to observe, deities to propitiate. There was no forgiveness for those who died in exile as they would then have no proper funeral oblations by the trusted family priest ‘and would wander through the ages a starving, suffering, malignant ghost, because his obsequies have not been duly performed’ (Crooke 1897: 326). There would similarly be no redemption for those who crossed the dreaded ‘kala pani’, the pollution-producing dark ocean. But the actual reality of the human experience in India is decidedly different. From time immemorial, people have moved about in search of adventure and opportunity. In medieval times, peasants left to escape the persecution and depredations of landlords. In other places, people left for foreign lands in search of trade and commerce, as historical relics in Southeast Asia show. Across the length and breadth of the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal and around the Coromandel Coast, Indian traders plied their trade. Research is not clear about the movement of people across time and space in pre-European Asia. But whatever may have been the situation in the past, migration is now an accomplished fact of life in India, and a foreign passport or permanent residence a cherished symbol of success and achievement.

Indian migration and settlement in foreign lands is longstanding, but a developed consciousness of a diasporic community with a shared cultural heritage, variously connected and inter-connected, is a recent phenomenon. A generation ago, except for the passionate cricket-loving crowd in India who knew the exploits of Rohan Kanhai or Ron Ramdin, the islands in the Caribbean were places completely unknown, rumoured to be exotic but beyond comprehension. And most people even in those remote communities knew next to nothing about communities in other parts of the world who shared a history of servitude with them. No more. Travel and technology have revolutionised our notion of time and space. Breaking news of events in one part of the world reach another instantaneously. Organisations – Global Organisations of People of Indian Origin, for instance – facilitate exchange and communication in the broader diasporic community. V.S. Naipaul, Rohinton Mistry, M.G. Vassanji, Hanief Kuraishi, Salman Rushdie, to name just a few of the galaxy of Indian writers, are read right across the world. The diasporic experience is no longer on the margins of serious literary exploration. And the remotest villager in Suriname, or Guyana or Fiji or Uttar Pradesh has most probably seen ‘Bend It Like Beckham’ and ‘Monsoon Wedding’.

Political boost to the notion of an India diaspora came from India itself. The impetus for this came in part from China’s example of courting overseas Chinese funds, mostly those in Southeast Asia. Money was remitted to China along with investment in the development of infrastructure in places from where the original migrants had come. Large Southeast Asian Chinese companies, such as the Chorean Pokphand Group of Thailand, became significant investors in China (Skeldon 2010). If China could mobilise and harness the resources of the overseas Chinese for its development purposes, why could India not do the same, especially at a time when the Indian economy was opening up? There was deep realisation in the Indian policy circles ‘that India needed to reinvent itself economically for it badly needed investment in infrastructure, which neither the Indian state nor private business had the capacity to mobilise’ (Kudaisya 2006: 87).

An active engagement with the Non-Resident Indian (NRI) community would help. To that end, the Government of India set up a High Level Committee, chaired by the
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Hon. L.M. Singhvi, member of the Rajya Sabha, India’s Upper House, and former Indian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, to gain a deeper understanding of the aspirations, attitudes, strengths and weaknesses of the Indian diaspora and their expectations of India and to ‘recommend a broad but flexible policy framework and country-specific plans for forging a mutually beneficial relationship with the PIOs and NRIs and for facilitating their interaction with India and their participation in India’s economic development’ (National Informatics Centre n.d.). The Indian diaspora it was said was ‘well situated to play a pivotal role in energising and augmenting bilateral trade, investment, transfer of technology and tourism with more countries’ (National Informatics Centre n.d.). Accordingly, a number of practical steps were recommended for greater engagement. Travel restrictions and impediments for PIOs were eased, and bureaucratic impediments around investment and repatriation of capital were reduced. The NRI could repatriate in foreign currency their earnings in India. Among the most symbolic celebrations of the diaspora was the convening of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas on 9 January each year, the date commemorating Mahatma Gandhi’s return to his native land after twenty-five years in South Africa. Luminaries from the Indian diaspora were invited to attend the event and were honoured for their distinguished and varied contributions to their respective countries. The word ‘NRI’ entered the Indian lexicon along with its partner ‘diaspora’ rendered in various pronunciations. The fanfare’s initial appeal, its novelty value, has faded somewhat in recent years but not before creating an awareness of a larger community about which little was known in India before.

The celebrations in India gave concrete shape to a phenomenon already underway. Modern travel enabled people to transgress boundaries with unprecedented frequency. Technology (Skype, emails, Facebook, Twitter) facilitated regular communication through the mysteries and marvels of the cyberspace. The death of the ideology of assimilation in many western countries, the celebration of diversity and difference, encouraged multiple identifications. Identity was no longer a binary of either or. Fatima Meer, the distinguished South African writer and activist, could call herself a proud daughter of India without having her loyalty to her land of birth, South Africa, being called into question. Lord Dholakia embraced his cultural roots in Gujarat while being a member of the House of Lords. In far-flung former sugar colonies, descendants of indentured labourers sought to trace their roots in India, making regular pilgrimages to their ancestral villages. Dedicated internet sites promoted ‘roots and routes’ tourism. A broadening awareness of a large scattered community of people across the globe seized the imagination. The Nobel Prize for Literature awarded to V.S. Naipaul, the Trinidad-born writer, became a matter of intense pride to all Indians, at home and abroad, his earlier dark views about the subcontinent forgotten or forgiven.

There is now in the Indian diaspora itself a more realistic appreciation of difference and diversity among themselves. The PIOs and the NRIs differed from each other in their expectations, needs and aspirations. The NRIs generally maintained a keen and close link with India through regular visits and family networks while others, from further afar, with greater social and emotional distance from India, had a vicarious experience of a land from where their ancestors came. In the diaspora itself, the social circles of the different Indian diasporic communities intersected less and less; and sometimes there was muted antagonism between NRIs and PIOs born of mutual ignorance and prejudice. Within the overarching rubric of diaspora, then, are found many communities formed by different historical and social experiences with their own distinctive interests, assumptions and expectations.
Dispersals

The creation of Indian communities across the globe has taken place across vast stretches of time and in distinct phases, and it is to these that we now turn. Southeast Asia was a known destination for Indian traders in spices, precious stones and textiles. Chettiers, or Indian moneylenders, were known to have plied their trade in Burma, Malaya, Thailand and Indonesia. Mappilas and Paravas also ventured across the borders of India. Across the Arabian Sea, Indian traders established their foothold on the east coast of Africa, in places such as Zanzibar, competing with Arab traders. Indian caravan trade reached the heart of central Asia (Bukhara, Samarkand and Tashkent) and Iran (Qazvin and Kashan) in the seventeenth century. Indian gypsies found their way to Europe in such places as Romania and Hungary. Testimony to the entrepreneurial spirit of the ‘landlubbing’ Indians, the accounts of the earliest journeys lie buried in the archives of deep time.

The spread of European capital across the globe in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries spurred the acquisition of cheap Indian labour through mostly foul means. Indian men and women were sold as slaves for employment in European factories and plantations by the Dutch in Ceylon and by the French in the Indian Ocean. They were accompanied by small streams of free migrants. The establishment of convict penal settlements in Bencoolen (1787–1825), the Andaman Islands (1793–1796 and 1858–1945), Penang (1790–1860), Melaka and Singapore (1825–1873), and in Burma and Mauritius saw further enforced migration of Indians. After the Mutiny of 1857, the Andaman Islands became a major destination, crossing the kala pani (‘black waters’) with the resulting loss of caste purity being thought as a particularly severe punishment (Anderson 2006: 44–45).

This practice of enforced migration paled before the advent of the indenture system in 1834 to meet the shortage of labour on the colonial plantations upon the abolition of African slavery in the British Empire in 1833 (Tinker 1974). What began as a tentative experiment became highly regulated by the latter half of the nineteenth century. Mauritius led the way, and by the time indentured emigration ended in 1916, over 1 million Indian indentured immigrants had been shipped to the principal ‘King Sugar’ colonies of Trinidad, Guyana, Suriname, Fiji and Natal. Their contracts provided for a return passage back to India at the end of their service, but fewer than 21 per cent returned. Enticed by new opportunities, dreading a long sea voyage back, fearful of the reception they might receive among their family and village friends, the majority stayed on. Their descendants constitute a large and visible part of the multicultural mosaic of their countries.

The largest numbers of Indian labourers, over 3 million, left under the kangani system to countries in Southeast Asia: Malaya, Ceylon and Burma. The kangani workers, recruited by middlemen, were principally from southern India just as the bulk of the indentured labourers (except to Natal since 1860) were from North India, until the 1870s mostly from the Bihar region and in the latter half of the nineteenth century from the eastern districts of the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh). The pattern of recruitment influenced the shape and content of Indian culture in the colonies. Where northerners predominated, north Indian cultural forms and practices gained ascendancy, and in places of southern dominance, as in Southeast Asia, south Indian cultural festivals and rituals shaped the overall pattern.

Everywhere, indentured emigration involved rupture and recuperation, but the pattern and the extent of disruption varied from place to place, depending upon the timing of the migration, the physical proximity to and frequency of contact with India, the size of the immigrant population and, importantly, the policy of the host society towards its immigrant population (Jayawardena 1968). Smaller numbers intensified the pressure to assimilate, as
in some of the smaller West Indian islands (Mahabir 2009). The opportunity and facility for cultural reproduction was influential: the bigger the critical mass, the better the prospect for cultural reproduction. In some places, such as Guyana and other Caribbean islands, there was ‘open market’ for cultural exchange among the different communities, but in others, such as Fiji, the barriers to cultural interaction were reinforced by the state. In some places, the Christian missions made much headway, as in the Caribbean, whereas in some places, their influence was minimal, as in Fiji.

Overall, the societies that emerged in the former indentured colonies were essentially egalitarian and self-made, shorn of the hierarchies and protocols of their original homeland. Caste could not survive the crossing and the rigorous demands of plantation labour. The rupture was not abrupt as people continued to play at caste for a while, but it was effectively drained of life. What Hallup writes about Mauritius would apply equally to other places as well. ‘Caste identity does not constitute a major constraint for upward social mobility among most Hindus: education, occupation, income, wealth and personal achievements are much more important status criteria’ (1994: 315). Need and necessity rather than rituals and protocols governed matrimonial matters and social relationships. The disparity in sex ratio in the immigrant population forced cross-caste and even cross-religious marriages unimaginable in India. Enforced intermingling and freer social and sexual transaction was the order of the day within the regimented confines of the plantation regime. A semblance of normalcy returned a generation later as sex ratio in the community improved.

Women played an integral role in the formation and transformation of the broader social structures of the old Indian diaspora. They raised families in difficult circumstances, often without a helping hand, and facilitated the ‘transmission and practice of folk religion and of tradition-based sanctions. In Guyana, writes Jeremy Poynting, women were the ‘main preservers of Indian domestic culture’ which was the ‘principal means whereby Indians maintained their identity’ (1987: 232). There is a debate whether the possibilities of emancipation offered by migration and indenture were thwarted by men who confined them back to patriarchal structures or whether women participated actively in the creation of a new society which restored some of the older values. Devarakshnam Govinden (2008) argues that in South Africa women were ‘as much preservers of their race’ as men, while for Fiji, Ahmed Ali suggests that many women ‘preferred the security of a partnership with a male of another religion to the risks of physical and moral violence endemic in the girmit lines, and sometimes the cruel fate of a single unattached female’ (2004: 99).

Religion survived the crossing in a simpler form around the Ramayana and to a less extent the Bhagavadgita. The indentured labourers were the carriers of Milton Singer’s ‘Little Tradition’ of folk religion. Tulsidas’ Ramayana became a religious, social and emotional anchor for the early indentured workers amidst an alien and often hostile environment, writes Sherry-Ann Singh of the situation in Trinidad (2012). The story of Lord Rama, exiled from the kingdom of Ayodhya for no fault of his own but who returned triumphant after fourteen years of exile, resonated in the experience of the indentured labourers. They saw in Rama’s story a rendition of their own predicament. They, too, had been exiled from their homeland for no fault of their own, and their banishment would end one day. The text in the Awadhi language obviated the need for priestly intervention, was not recited individually or privately but collectively to the accompaniment of elementary music, so that its reading provided both enlightenment as well as entertainment in ‘such a manner that despite and due to the lack of active sermonising, the philosophy hits home’ (Singh 2012: 68): the philosophy of the importance of righteous conduct, duty to one’s family and community, quest for truth and justice. Islam, too, survived the crossing. ‘They held
together more’, wrote C.F. Andrew of the situation in Fiji, ‘and even though they did not observe, to any great extent, the stated hours of prayer, they were Musulmans, and this gave them a dignity of their own’ (quoted in Ali 2004: 105).

While the descendants of the indentured labourers made a success of themselves in the fields of agriculture, commerce and the professions, through sacrifice and frugality, their experience in politics was different. Everywhere, they encountered resistance to their demand for equality (Lal 2012). The colonial as well as the post-colonial angle of vision excluded or severely marginalised Indians from the national narrative. In Trinidad, writes Bridget Brereton, the Afro-Creole narrative was privileged ‘as the core group in the national story’, and their cultural forms as the origins of the new national culture. The message was that ‘all other ethnic groups must suppress their unique cultures in the interest of nation-building’ (Brereton 2013: 146). Forbes Burnham’s Guyana followed a similar path. In Fiji, the indigenous Fijians claimed a pride of place in the nation’s affairs and threatened retribution if their hold on power was challenged. In Mauritius, the creole plantocracy asserted its demands for a privileged position, while in South Africa, the apartheid regime ruled the roost. Much later, in Uganda and other countries, the Africanisation policies of independent governments forced Indians either to leave or fend for themselves. In recent years, things have improved, with the impact of globalisation and the acceptance of pluralism in national discourse, and several countries have Indian-supported parties in power. But the long history of marginalisation and exclusion has left deep scars on the lives of many Indian communities in different parts of the world.

The relationship of the indentured diaspora to India is a complex one, and there is some quiet dismay that India’s current policy towards its diaspora seems to be underpinned by economic considerations. Brij Maharaj’s observation that India was primarily interested in those with dollars, pounds and euros to invest will ring true to many along with the contention that there ‘was no interest in the descendants of indentured labourers in countries like Malaysia, Fiji, Trinidad, Suriname, Mauritius and South Africa’ (Maharaj 2008: 33). In most places, remnants of Indian culture and traditions survive to varying degrees, and the interest in India of the Indian communities in the old diaspora is cultural and emotional rather than economic or political. There has been no rush to acquire dual Indian citizenship, for instance, and there is not likely to be one in the foreseeable future.

**Free migrants**

The same, though, cannot be said of Indian diasporic communities derived from free migration. There will be exceptions, of course, due to the time, nature and purpose of migration, but the free migrants from India maintain closer links with their homeland through marriage and social networks and frequent visits. Countless websites proliferate spreading information and misinformation about political developments in the subcontinent and cyberspace is replete with vigorous debates and discourses about culture, religion and politics. The bulk of these communities are found in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and, to a lesser extent, Europe.

The advent of the ‘Dollar Diaspora’ of the West as opposed to the ‘Desperate Diaspora’ of the developing world is of recent, post mid-twentieth century origin. Nonetheless, small groups of free migrants were finding their way to western countries from the late nineteenth century onwards. In Canada and the Pacific Northwest, for instance, Punjabis, mostly Sikhs, began arriving in small numbers from the late 1890s, finding employment in the timber industry (Takaki 2007, Lal 1980). They were joined by students and political
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activists. The Ghadr Movement, based in San Francisco and led by Lala Hardayal and Taranath Das, demanded independence for India, by force if necessary. The immigrants encountered widespread objection to Asian migration. ‘White Canada Now, White Canada Forever’, went one slogan. In 1907, there were riots against ‘Orientals’ in Vancouver. An attempt in 1914 by a group of determined Punjabis to test Canadian immigration laws failed. The Komagata Maru, with 376 East Indians aboard, the overwhelming majority of whom were Sikhs, was refused entry into Canadian ports and turned back. Soon afterwards, anti-immigration legislative barriers in both Canada and the United States reduced migration from India to a trickle. Between 1911 and 1920, only 1,460 Indians were allowed entry into Canada while in the United States 1,782 Indians were prevented entry in the same period. Canada and the United States were not exceptions but the rule: Asian, including Indian, immigration was discouraged across all the white dominions. And the barriers would not come down until the latter half of the twentieth century.

The same pattern is more or less true of the United Kingdom. The early migrants came either as appendages of returning imperial administrators or as seamen and demobilised soldiers. The United Kingdom was also the early foreign destination of choice for the wealthy and the well-connected Indian elite. A number of the subcontinent’s future leaders, including Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Muhammad Ali Jinnah were educated there. London became the hub for nationalist agitation. Numbers of migrants increased substantially after the Second World War as ‘wartime labour shortages opened up all sorts of opportunities which had previously been closed to people of colour’ (Ballard 2007: 590). Indian migrants to the UK came directly from the subcontinent (Punjab, Gujarat, Bengal and from districts in what are now Bangladesh and Pakistan) and from East Africa as decolonisation intensified and Asians began to feel the heat of African nationalism, numbering around 200,000 by 2001 (Castles 2009). They were joined by Indian migrants from other parts of the former British Empire, principally the Caribbean. It would be a mistake though to lump all the different categories of Indian migrants under a single rubric, for there are profound differences of values and orientation among them.

The dominant narrative of Indian experience in the United Kingdom and North America is constructed around visible success and achievements. These are advertised incessantly in local community magazines and internet sites. So, in the United States, most Indians are in the high income bracket, are college-educated, occupy prominent places in the professions and government service, not to mention the IT sector (Dwivedi 2011). Indians are increasingly taking to local and national politics. Bobby Jindall, the governor of Louisiana, is held up as a role model. In the United Kingdom, the Indian visibility in the media, public service and academia is clearly evident, as it is in the political arena. Compared to many immigrant communities, Indians have done well, the preferred professions for the young being Law, Pharmacy, Accountancy and Medicine. No less than 20 per cent of the places in British medical schools are now filled by British Asians, mostly British Indians (Ballard 2007: 593). The pattern is reflected in many other developed countries as well, such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand. But what is often overlooked is that the path to success has not been easy due in no small part to subtle institutional racism and discrimination. Acceptance in many quarters has met with resentment; and in depressed, de-industrialised towns and cities (Oldham, Bradford, Leeds, Blackburn), Indians, along with other Asian minorities, continue to bear the brunt of racial discrimination (Castles 2009: 29).

The Indian presence in North America and the United Kingdom is visible but its most interesting aspect is not the economic success of the Indian communities, important
though that obviously is, but the creative ways in which its artists, writers and film makers are interpreting their multicultural experience in ways that go to the core of how they understand their complex identities and attachments. Indeed, some of the finest writings in the English language are coming from writers of Indian origin. It would be invidious to list names, but the works of M.G. Vassanji, Rohinton Mistry, Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, to name only a few of them, would rank among the great literary achievements of the twentieth century (Mishra 2007, Nelson 2010). And movies such as ‘Bend it Like Beckham’ have brought to audiences worldwide the pressures and expectations of growing up in the West, torn between the demands and obligations of two or more competing worlds and unable, in the end, to belong completely to any one of them.

The targeted labour migration of Indian workers to the Gulf region in the late twentieth century has led to the creation of a kind of society that cannot properly be called diasporic, for these are Indian citizens migrating temporarily for employment and returning to their home states after the expiry of their contracts, but their contribution to the Indian economy is substantial and underpins India’s diasporic policy. The main recipient countries are Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain. The total number of Indian migrants to the Gulf States in 2001 was estimated at 3,318,000, with Saudi Arabia (1,500,000) and United Arab Emirates (950,000) leading the way (Khadria 2009: 33). About 70 per cent of the migrants are semi-skilled or unskilled (masons, cooks, carpenters, drivers, electricians and the like). The money the migrants remit to India plays a significant part in many parts of the country. Indeed, in 2010, India received $53.1 billion in remittances while China received $51.3 billion, though per capita, China edged India (Gupta and Choudhury 2012). Concern is sometimes expressed about the imbalances this causes in the local economy and society, and some foreign policy experts have expressed the fear of terrorists entering the country through the back door, by which they mean the indoctrination of migrant workers who upon returning to India joined terrorist networks in the country. This problem, if it is a problem, is in its embryonic stages, far outweighing the advantages conferred by the remittances.

There is another kind of Indian diasporic community which emerged in the late twentieth century about which little has been written. This is the community of the ‘Twice Migrants’ or the ‘Twice Banished’. They are people from the old, plantation diaspora from the Caribbean, Fiji, Mauritius, Southeast Asia, Africa who have, for a variety of reasons migrated to Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe, Australia and New Zealand. Their numbers are small but increasing and in some places they form a significant part of the settled Indian communities. Their conception of homeland is multiple and multifaceted. India for them is largely ‘an abstract, spiritual homeland’, little more. They are detached from the political, cultural and economic developments and controversies of the Indian subcontinent though for no lack of trying on the part of organisations such as the Vishva Hindu Parishad, the Sangh Parivar and others like them which seek to elicit sympathy and support for their causes and values. They get a welcome reception among many members of the Indian diaspora, but not among the Twice Migrants. And finally, there is another as yet indefinable diasporic community emerging for whom questions of home and homeland are even more confusing. These are migrants who have moved at least twice in their lifetimes. They could be Fijian migrants in Australia or New Zealand who migrate to the United States of Canada for family or economic reasons, or migrants from India to the United Kingdom who leave for the United States for similar reasons. They do not feature much on the Indian radar.
The role of religion and the diversity of the Indian diasporas

The Indian diaspora is an extremely diverse and plural phenomenon. It is divided not only into old and new, once and twice migrant diaspora communities, and a large number of regional and linguistic cultures, but also into a number of different religious traditions and identities as well. As Indians who have settled abroad assume new national identities worldwide, adopt new mother tongues and intermarry in their new countries, the diaspora will become further differentiated, also in terms of religion, as new ideas and practices blend with old ones.

Religion has been important for the preservation of personal dignity as well as identities and traditions in the diaspora, especially for the first generation. Religion has also been a main resource for transferring the diasporic project of the migrants to their children, to the ‘second generation’. Temples were dominated by diaspora consciousness and the need to preserve Indian traditions in a foreign country and the transference of these traditions to the children. Temples were established as ‘little Indias’ (or ‘little Punjabs’, ‘little Gujarats’ and so on) with Indian languages, Indian dress and Indian food. Religion in India is a matter of socialisation as people have mostly inherited religious identities. The fear that the children would lose their Indian culture by not being provided with proper socialisation was an important motivation for establishing temples. To many countries, the free migrant males typically arrived first and wives and children a few years later when the men had established themselves with a secure income. Religious ritual life was often engaged in only after the wives and children had arrived and not to a small degree motivated by the wish to transfer the temple experience and ritual knowledge to the children.

While the first generation was eager to transfer their own diaspora consciousness to their children, the second generation, on the other hand, typically experienced a tension between their parents’ diaspora consciousness and their own experience. They grew up in-between cultures and experienced not only the clash of values between generations but also the clash between the Indian (regional) culture and the culture of the new country. Those born in the new country were not Indian in the same way as their parents, but felt at home in the new country in which they were born. They were often treated as foreigners when visiting India, and to what degree they should be thought of as living in a diaspora depends on the discourse. From the point of view of the Indian diaspora discourse they are to be included in the Indian diaspora, but from the point of view of the new country they are British, Norwegian, Swedish and so on and at home in the new country.

Not only do the Indian diaspora populations belong to many different religions such as Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity, but none of these religions are monolithic traditions. Quite the reverse, each of them is divided into a number of schools, teachings and traditions. The Indian diaspora is sometimes mistakenly thought of as Hindu, but the diversity is immense. In fact, in many countries of Europe such as Italy, Spain, Greece, Norway and Denmark, the largest groups of Indians are, or were, for a long time, Sikhs. Many of the Sikhs, particularly in New Delhi, identify themselves primarily with a Punjabi diaspora and only secondary to an Indian diaspora, especially after the 1984 massacres of Sikhs, first under Operation Blue Star in Amritsar and then after the killing of Indira Gandhi by two of her Sikh bodyguards. Furthermore, the largest group of Hindus in many European countries such as Switzerland, Germany, Norway and Denmark, is the Tamils from Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan Tamils are not Indian or part of the Indian diaspora, nor do many of them consider themselves to be part of the Sri Lankan diaspora. They constitute a separate Tamil Eelam diaspora. So, the Indian diaspora is not always mainly Hindu and nor is the Hindu diaspora only Indian.
Establishment of temples and gurdwaras has been the most important act in the process of institutionalising religion in a new country of settlement. An enormous number of Hindu temples and Sikh gurdwaras in particular have been established worldwide, but also Jain temples. Indian Buddhists have established their own institutions, especially statues and paintings of their sacred symbol, Ambedkar, and organised annual Ambedkar events and celebrations. Indian Christians have mostly joined established churches, but may have often been given separate timeslots in the churches as well as South Asian priests in order to reproduce Indian Christian experiences and ritual patterns (see Jacobsen and Raj 2008). Establishment of new religious institutions often depends on significant economic support from the community and on individuals with particular organisational skills. These institutions have given opportunities for persons seeking leadership positions in the community and conflicts about leadership are not uncommon (see Singh and Tatla 2006). Ritual servants such as priests (Brahmans) for the temples and *ragi jatha* (a ragi group consists of three people: one playing the tabla, another playing the harmonium, and a third playing a stringed instrument, harmonium or cymbals) and *granthis* (readers of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib) for the gurdwaras have often continued to be recruited from India and this has strengthened the connection between the country of origin and country of settlement (Jacobsen 2012). Often, such ritual professionals from India are considered more authentic and authoritative than those raised in the diaspora. Religion in India is frequently the norm to which diaspora religions are measured against.

The first temples often try to be inclusive of large parts of the community, or they may be exclusive and represent family or local traditions, but when the Indian communities grow, new temples usually become established based on separate regional and linguistic traditions. Some temples may also be community or caste specific (Waghorne 2004). A recent phenomenon reveals an opposite trend, the building of large and prestigious ‘display temples’ and ‘display gurdwaras’ in Europe and North America that aim to be inclusive of large parts of the population. These temples and gurdwaras function to display the economic success and ambitions of the diaspora groups in the new country and their pride in the tradition. Good examples are the many Hindu display temples in the United States, the Swaminarayan temples and the Sikh gurdwaras in England. The Hindu ‘display temples’ may also be expressions of long-distance Hindu nationalism and the ‘display gurdwaras’ of long-distance Punjabi regionalism.

Preservation of religious identity and transfer of this identity to the children have been dominant motivations for the founding of religious institutions in the diaspora. However, for the second and third generations, religion raises a number of issues different from the concerns of the first generation. For the first generation, religion was about the preservation of Indian culture. For the second and third generations there is a tension between Indian culture and the culture of the country in which they live. They problematise concepts such as ‘cultural’ Sikh, Hindu and Jain and ‘religious’ Sikh, Hindu and Jain. They explore how being British Sikh or Norwegian Sikh is different from being Punjabi Sikh, and how being British Hindu or Norwegian Hindu is different from being Gujarati Hindu, Tamil Hindu and so on. Transformations are taking place rapidly. For the second and third generations the task has often been to try to differentiate Indian cultural identity from religious identity. Some of the second and third generation gravitate towards stronger religious identity in order to solve the problem of their in-between identities; others become secular. Autobiographies are good sources for investigating how those who have grown up outside of India try to solve the dilemmas and how they move away from Punjabi or Indian culture (see Jacobsen 2015). For some, moving away from culture means also moving away from religion, but for others
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an adoption of their religious tradition is instead a way to embed values in a universal system rather than in parochial culture.

An important part of the religious diversity in the Indian diaspora are the religious institutions of Dalits. Caste discrimination in the diaspora is an extension of Indian society and the prejudices held against them by Hindus, Sikhs, Christians and others. Some Dalits do not want to be part of the Indian diaspora but seek to escape from the Indian environment. Rachel McDermott (2008) has shown that Dalit Christians in the United States often prefer congregations where there are no other Indians because Dalits experience that the caste structure of India is reproduced in the diaspora in the United States. However, there is also an adoption of a common Indian Dalit identity. In the diaspora of the free migrants in particular, Dalits have established new religious institutions as a way to fight prejudices. Nevertheless, Dalits were part of the Indian diaspora from the beginning. They were part both of the indentured labour and the kangani system, and in 2006 Dalits in Canada celebrated a centennial ceremony for their arrival in Canada (Kumar 2011). In Canada, Ravidas temples have become the main meeting places of Dalits, while in the United States the Ambedkar International Mission has become an important institution as well. Two of the early Dalit leaders, Mangu Ram, the leader of the Ad Dharm movement among Dalits in Punjab, and Bhimrao Ambedkar, had both lived in the United States. Mangu Ram came to California as a farm worker in 1909 and returned to India in 1915. Ambedkar enrolled at Columbia University in New York for graduate studies in 1913 and returned to India in 1916. Mangu Ram and Ambedkar illustrate that diaspora experience has had a formative power on modern India by influencing significant persons. This formative influence of the diaspora is also exemplified with Mahatma Gandhi who lived in South Africa from 1893 to 1914, and who had also lived in England as a student from 1888 to 1891. From the 1950s, a large number of Dalits and especially Chamars migrated to England. A large part of the migrants came from Punjab, and among them many Dalits, since Punjab is the state in India with the highest percentage of Dalits. Around 100,000 Dalits now live in the UK (Kumar 2011: 23). With large-scale Dalit immigration came also more systematic caste-based discrimination (V. Kumar identifies schools, marriages, factories and pubs, religion, and songs as arenas of caste discrimination, and predicts it will get worse as Indian companies start operation in the UK; see Kumar 2011: 25–27). Dalits in the UK have organised themselves on the basis of religion and a large number of religious institutions have been established especially to honour the Buddha, Ambedkar and the medieval saint Raidas (Ravidas): Buddha Viharas, Ambedkar Bhawans, Ravidassia temples. As early as 1956, Ravi Das Sabhas were established in the UK. In 1961 the Bhartiya Buddhist Cultural Association was established in order to organise the Buddhists, and in 1985 a number of organisations working in the name of the Buddha and Ambedkar for the betterment of Dalits formed the Federation of Ambedkarite and Buddhist Organisations, UK (Kumar 2011: 24). Thus religious organisations in the diaspora reflect similar efforts in India of Dalits organising themselves around religious symbols in order to attain justice. However, Dalits in the Indian diaspora have done as well economically and professionally as non-Dalits and their accomplishments likewise illustrate the success of the diaspora.

Conclusion

There is in India now a more informed awareness of the diasporas. Their achievements are celebrated with pride. In remote villages in Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh, for example, people meet Indians from distant lands in search of their roots. The reunions are often
emotional. And in many parts of the Indian diaspora there is genuine pride in India’s evolution as a global power through the usual chaotic processes of democracy (rather than military intervention or dictatorship). To see Manmohan Singh, a Sikh, whose party was headed by Italian-born Sonia Gandhi, being sworn into power as prime minister by a Muslim president, Abul Kalam, while the military remained in the barracks and the whole country applauded, is not a sight one often sees in many multi-ethnic societies of the world. As boundaries and binaries collapse and as technology revolutionises our notions of identity and citizenship, the Indian diasporas will continue to flourish.

Notes

1 The worldwide Indian diaspora is thought to number between 30 and 40 million people (Raj and Reeves 2008). V. Sinha (2011) suggests that 69 million Hindus live outside India.
2 The kangani recruitment system was primarily a personal or informal recruitment system and more flexible than the ‘indentured labour’ system. After 1910 kangani was the preferred system.
3 Many Sri Lankan Tamils do not identify with a Sri Lankan diaspora.

References

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