CHAPTER-II

Social Movements, Diaspora and Transnational Networks: Conceptual Background

Social movement constitutes an important part of social change/social transformation, as it generally emerges out of social issues and demands in any society. The sociological definitions of movement generally stress on qualities like collective and innovative behaviour, extra-institutionality, their network character and multicenteredness, the shifting and fluid boundaries of movement membership, and the willingness of members to disrupt order and so on (Gerlach and Hine 1970).

The concept of social movement refers to collective mobilisation by a group of people who have certain common ideology to achieve certain goals. It may aim at reform in one or another aspect of social life, or oriented at bringing about changes in superordinate and subordinate relationships (Rao 2000: 3). T.K. Oommen (1990: 146) defines the concept as a “…conscious collective action informed of an ideology, aided by an organisational weapon and initiated by a core person/group to bring change in any direction (past/future) using any means (violent/non-violent).” Hence, social movements are deliberately initiated and guided collective mobilizations to and bring about relatively rapid social transformation.

Defining Social Movements

There is no precise definition of the concept “social movement,” as different scholars interpret it in different contexts. Some scholars use the term to mean a historical trend or tendency such as renaissance, analytic movement, empiricist movement etc., whereas others use the term interchangeably with organisation or union. Although the term was employed during the early nineteenth century in
Europe, it was only after 1950s that scholars have attempted to provide thoroughgoing definition of the term. Rocher (1972: 441) defines social movement as “…clearly structured and identifiable organisation, which has explicit goals of grouping members with a view to the defence or promotion of certain precise objectives, generally with a social connotation.”

Goodwin and Jasper (2003) define social movement as “…collective, organized, and noninstitutional challenge to authorities, powerholders or cultural beliefs and practices.” According to Paul Wilkinson (1971: 27):

1. Social movements are clearly different from historical movements, tendencies and trends. Such tendencies and trends, and the influence of the unconscious or irrational factors in human behaviour, is of crucial importance in illuminating the problems of interpreting and explaining social movement.

2. A social movement must evince a minimal degree of organisation, though this may range from a loose, informal or partial level of organisation to the highly institutionalised and bureaucratised movement and the corporate group.

3. Social movement’s commitment to change and the raison d’etre of its organisation are founded upon the conscious, volition, and normative commitment to the movement’s followers or members.

For Wilson (1973) social movement is a “…conscious, collective, organised attempt to bring about or resist large-scale change in the social order by non-institutionalised means.” Social movements are held together by “…shared beliefs and solidarity among their members. A shared set of beliefs and a sense of belonging is necessary to be considered as a social movement; this is what creates new collective identities and value systems, and what holds up the movement even when activity is low” (Della Porta and Diani 1999: 14-15). Examples of social movements can be environmental movement, peace movement, nationalist
movement, workers movement, women’s movement, human rights movement, religious movement and racist/fascist movement.

**Characteristics of Social Movement**

All social movements have certain common features. For instance, all social movements are goal oriented. In order to reach the goal it needs collective action, a social mobilisation. For social mobilisation, social movement needs to depend on some kind of organisation to provide leadership and direction. For this, the leadership needs some kind of ideology to explain a situation convincingly which he wants to change through mobilisation. With the help of ideology, the leadership justifies the existence and continuity of the movement. In a nutshell, it can be said that, a social movement could not be possible without some goals, social mobilisation, organisation, leadership and ideology. These are the foundations on which the edifice of the movement stands; the stronger the foundation, the stronger the movement and its impact on society and history. Out of the characteristics discussed above, M.S.A. Rao (2000: viii) has emphasised on ideology, which according to him constitute the most “…important component of social movement, as it distinguishes from the general category of movements involving collective mobilisation and orientation towards change.” According to Alain Touraine (1981: 98) a movement produces an ideology, i.e., a representation of its social relations; it also produces a utopia, by means of which it becomes identified with the stakes of the struggle and with historicity itself.

The important components of any given social movement according to Shah (2002: 17) are: objectives, ideologies, programmes, leaderships and organisation. They are interdependent and influence each other. The objectives of a social movement, according to Shah, may change from narrow particular social issues to broad aims for social transformation. Sometimes there is also possibility of a movement that starts with broad objectives, may cut down to one or two specific issues in due course. Ideology also undergoes change in the process. It provides
direction for evolving strategies and programmes; and also keeps the participants together by developing “we-feeling.” Leadership, that initiates or emerges in the course of the growth of the movement, plays crucial role in articulating ideology and objectives, evolving strategies and programmes and maintaining the spirit of the participants. However Shah argues that neither of these components are priori and static. They evolve; they get changed in the course of the movement. They are in a rudimentary form in some movements and fairly well developed in others.

**New Social Movements**

New social movement as a perspective in social sciences emerged in Europe to challenge the limits of Marxian approach, which stressed economic or class-based movements as important, than other movements. In contrast, the new social movements, instead of focussing on the old social movements based on “classes,” examine collective action based on other identities such as gender, sexuality, religion, and ethnicity. Some examples of such movements are environmental movement, feminist movement, civil rights movement, labour/democratic movements, religious movements, ethnic or nationalist movements, gay and lesbian rights movements and so on.

These movements are called “new” in the sense that they have new characteristic features. Claus Offe (1987: 12) lists the following features:

- critical towards ideology of modernism and progress;
- decentralised and participatory organisational structures;
- interpersonal solidarity vs. traditional bureaucracy;
- fighting for autonomous space vs. material advantage;
- open, fluid organisation;
- inclusive and non-ideological participation, and
- “social” more important than “economic”.

Offe explains this rise of new movements within the context of the crisis of legitimation resulting from the new relationship between state and society in late capitalist societies.

According to Luke (1989) one of the characteristics of new social movements today is that, “…it takes place in, and is triggered by, the rapid technological, organisational, political, cultural and transnational changes, which characterised the late 20th century.” In other words, it can be said that “transnational” is one of the characteristics of the new social movements following the recent revolution in transportation and communication technology.

Cohen and Rai (2000: 8) claim that social movements have changed significantly since the 1960s. The mobilisation of capital on a global scale has forced social movements to start confrontation on the global platform rather than on local or national level. The new social movements along with the interactive computer technology offers two analytical perspectives in the discussion of social movement practice: 1) the deterministic influence of objective structural relationships in society (functionalism and structuralism); and 2) the primacy of individual subjective societal interpretation (phenomenology and much of existential theory). This approach largely based on the “West-Europe-centric” as pointed out by different scholars.

The contributions of the classical and the neo-classical traditions to the development of the new social movement studies cannot be ignored. Jean Cohen (1985: 671-72) while summing up the classical and the neo-classical traditions identifies six general characteristic assumptions - mainly Smelserian functionalist assumptions - preparing the ground for contemporary studies on new social movements.

1. There are two kinds of action: the institutional-conventional and non-institutional collective behaviour.
2. The non-institutional collective behaviour is the type of action that is not guided by the existing social norms, but if formed to meet undefined situations.

3. These undefined situations are understood in terms of social breakdown, either of the agencies of social control, or in the inadequacy of the normative integration of society due to structural changes.

4. The resulting social strains, discontent, frustration and aggression push the individual to resort to collective behaviour.

5. Non-institutional collective behaviour has a life cycle, open to causal analysis, which grows from spontaneous crowd action to the formation of public and social movements.

6. The birth and maturation of social movements, in this life cycle, pass through the processes of communication: contagion, rumour, circular-reaction, diffusion, etc.

An excellent approach on “new social movement” developed by Andre Gunder Frank and Marta Fuentes (1987: 1503) in their analysis of “Nine Theses on Social Movements.” They are such as:

1. The new social movements are not new, even if they have some new features, and the “classical” ones are relatively new and perhaps temporary. They argue that the peasant, localist community, ethnic/nationalist, religious and even feminist/women’s movements which are now commonly called “new” have existed for centuries and even millennia in many parts of the world. According to them only the ecological/green movement(s) and the peace movements more legitimately be termed “new,” and that is because they respond to social needs which have been more recently generated by world development.

2. Social movements display much variety and changeability, but have in common individual mobilisation through a sense of morality and
(in)justice, and social power through social mobilisation against deprivation and for survival and identity.

3. The strength and importance of social movements is cyclical and related to long political, economic and (perhaps associated) ideological cycles. When the conditions that give rise to movements change (through the actions of the movements themselves and/or more usually due to changing circumstances), the movements tend to disappear.

4. It is important to distinguish the class composition of social movements, which is mostly middle class in the West, popular working class in the South, and some of both in the East.

5. There are different kinds of social movements. The majority seek more autonomy rather than state power, and those, which seek state power, tend to negate themselves as social movements.

6. Although most social movements are more defensive than offensive and tend to be temporary, they are important (today and tomorrow perhaps the most important) agents of social transformation.

7. Social movements appear as the agents and re-interpreters of “delinking” from contemporary capitalism and “transition to socialism.”

8. Some social movements are likely to overlap in membership or be more compatible and permit coalition with others, and others are likely to conflict and compete with others. It may be useful to inquire into these relations.

9. Since social movements, like street theatre, write their own scripts as they go along, any prescription of agenda or strategies, let alone tactic, by outsiders – not to mention intellectuals – is likely to be irrelevant at best and counterproductive at worst.

Robin Cohen (1998) identifies seven elements, which are “new” in the contemporary social movements. They are:
1. A shift away from a primary concern with issues relating to inequalities in power, ownership and income between classes, towards a growing focus on the construction of cultural and personal identities.

2. Contemporary social movements are far less interested in gaining direct control over state power than previously. However, they seek to defend “culture and civil society against the technological state.” They thereby hope to extend personal and citizen control over social life.

3. Non-material needs concerning the quality of life have moved to centre-stage, displacing the satisfaction of economic needs alone.

4. Increasingly informed citizens have endeavoured to open up to wholesale public scrutiny and democratisation the decision-making processes going on in economic, political, military and scientific institutions from which ordinary citizens were previously excluded. At the same time, individuals have assumed much greater responsibility for, and autonomy over, their personal lives.

5. Recent social movements consist of dispersed and diverse networks of individuals whose engagement in collective action “is nourished by the daily production of alternative frameworks of meaning.” Because “the potential for resistance or opposition is sewn into the very fabric of daily life” the actions undertaken by the members of social movements take many forms in addition to obvious, outward signs of protest.

6. Demands for racial equality and against the exclusion of other social groups (whether these be women, the disabled, refugees, gay people or older citizens) have grown alongside movements based more purely on class categories, though these have not been superseded.

7. When social movements engage in mobilizing protests that require sustained activity they may utilize more democratic and participatory forms than those characteristic of earlier movements.

Alain Touraine (1981: 97) talks about the cultural perspectives of new social movements. According to him:
New social movements are those which, like all critical actions, struggle against crisis and seek to re-establish values. The cultural models of the past are left floating in our society, without ever finding direct social expression. They may be latched onto by nostalgic groups hoping to rediscover the core of a lost civilization, whether it be the idea of God or that of progress; these past cultural models are most often reinterpreted by the new social movements and particularly by critical actions desirous of rediscovering a principle to replace the void created by crisis.

Singh (2001: 216-17) points out that, new social movements takes the form of religious and sectarian fundamentalism, violent and chauvinistic ethnic subnationalism and tend to mark the retreat of the human to the darker phases of history. As mentioned earlier, religion constitutes the important part of social movements, so also it is important within the new social movements, which characterise “religion” as an important and emerging phenomenon in the debate over new religious movements.

**Religion: Old and New**

Religion in one form or another is found in all human societies. The archaeological evidence shows that even the earliest societies have religious symbols and ceremonies. Like other social institutions, religion constitutes an important part of the function of social system, as religion represents the social expression of attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to the supernatural. The origin of religion and religious ideas, traced back to the work of Emile Durkheim who maintains that, “…religion began at that point when man found he was able to picture a supernatural being, and the first supernatural being thus imagined was a spirit…to ward off the effect of their malevolence and ensure their protection, he seeks to propitiate them by means of offerings and sacrifices, and later by
prayers. It is in this way that the cult of spirits, the initial form of every religion was founded” (cited in Pickering 1975: 13-4).

Berger’s theory of religion and of secularisation proposes that, with the emergence of the modern world religions, religion compelled to adapt to two new environmental realities. First, in its peculiarly modern form, religion has become a matter of choice; religious orientations no longer reflect the legitimating requirements of society so much as the preferences of individuals or of nuclear families. Religion has undergone “privatisation.” In the modern world, as Berger remarks “…religion manifests itself as public rhetoric and private virtue. In other words, in so far as religion is common it lacks ‘reality’, and in so far as it is ‘real’ it lacks commonality.” Second, religions must also cope with the new reality of “pluralism.” In Berger’s word religious institutions have become marketing agencies and the religious traditions become consumer commodities (Berger 1967: 133-138).

Defining Religion

The word “religion” derives from the Latin word ligare, meaning “to join,” or “link,” Thus religion is classically understood to mean the reconnection of human and divine. It is defined as a system of beliefs based on humanity’s attempt to explain the universe and natural phenomena, often involving one or more deities or other supernatural forces. Two identifying features of most religions are: a) they all require faith, and b) they seek to organise and influence the thoughts and actions of their adherents. Sociological approach to the study of religion is redundant when it comes to provide a clear-cut definition of religion. As Max Weber in his pioneering work The Sociology of Religion (1965: 1) points out “…a definition of religion can be attempted, if at all, only at the conclusion of the study.” Despite the fact that it is difficult to give clear-cut definitions, many scholars have addressed the issue of religion and offered various definitions.
Emile Durkheim gives one of the important definitions of religion that has been widely acclaimed in the social science discipline. In his book *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1965: 62), Durkheim defines religion as “…a unified set of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things…beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church all those who adhere to them.”

*Rreligion vs. Spirituality*

There exist a rigid distinction between the mundane, earthly aspects of religion and the spiritual dimension as many people get these two ideas mixed up and often used interchangeably. Both are obviously related, except the one is more the “external aspect” (religion) and the other is “internal” (spiritual). Being spiritual is about experience; whereas, being religious is about abiding by rules. Religion is made more complicated by involving two or more people; usually a group - large or small - whereas, spirituality is a personal, involving essentially the individual. Spirituality is a loosely defined word today. Many scholars, especially Westerners, prefer to use the term spirituality rather than religion to describe their form of belief. In the East, however, spirituality is viewed as inseparable from religion. The Indic religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism have always had incorporated into their very framework, primary focuses on spirituality. Thus, spirituality for them is an expression of religion and religious ideas.

**New Religious Movement**

A new movement is based on new beliefs and ideologies that differ from the old and other earlier movements. The new religious movement (hereafter NRM) is an important aspect of New Social Movements that have emerged during 1950s and 1960s. As Barker points out, the term NRM is used to cover a disparate kinds of collective mobilisation, most of which have emerged in their present form since
the 1950s, and offer some answers to questions of religious, spiritual or philosophical nature (1989: 9). The term NRM is often attached to South Asian religious and spiritual groups that have emerged in the West since 1945, and have succeeded in attracting large number of Western audiences. The teachings and practices of such groups are generally perceived as innovative or unorthodox in some way.

While analysing the emergence of NRMs it is important to know the process through which the offshoots of world religions such as cults, sects or denominations are formed. Roy Wallis (1984) identifies three major forms of NRMs in terms of their relationship to the outside world. They are:

1. **World-rejecting movements**: this can be identified by a clearly defined concept of God, a morally ascribed set of often puritanical beliefs, a theology which is critical of and in conflict with the world that it actively seeks to change, millenarian outlooks, strict separation of members from the world, strong charismatic leadership, and sometimes a communal lifestyles.

2. **World-accommodating movements**: it neither totally embraces nor rejects the world. It might display some elitist attitudes and seek to restore the purity of a religious tradition.

3. **World-affirming movements**: it hardly constitute religions at all...by definition world-affirming NRMs tend to affirm the world as it is, are included to be congruent with the dominant values of Western society and are extremely liberal in their attitude towards other faiths... More often than not, adherents to world-affirming movements do not constitute a membership at all, but are customers who are buying a “service” such as healing or realizing personal potential.
The Concept: Cult

A proper definition of the term cult is difficult to provide, as the term is applied to a wide range of groups. A sociological definition will differ from a religious one, and a Christian definition will differ from the Islamic. The word *cult* is derived from the French term *culte*, and the Latin word *cultus*, meaning “care” and “adoration.” The word was used in a sense to worship or give reverence to a deity. According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2004) the term “cult” has five important connotations, such as: 1) formal religious veneration; 2) a system of religious beliefs and rituals; 3) a religion regarded as unorthodox or spurious; 4) a system for the cure of disease based on dogma set forth by its promulgator; and 5) great devotion to a person, idea, object, movement, or work. Thus the term cult can be applied to any group of religious believers: Hindus, Christians or Muslims.

According to the definition of CIC (Cult Information Centre, UK, 1996), a cult is defined as a group having five of the following characteristics:

1. It uses psychological coercion to recruit, indoctrinate and retain its members;
2. It forms an elitist totalitarian society;
3. Its founder leader is self-appointed, dogmatic, messianic, not accountable and has charisma;
4. It believes “the end justifies the means” in order to solicit funds, recruit people;
5. Its wealth does not benefit its members or society.

Stark and Bainbridge (1987) have provided three general models from which cults emerge. They are such as: a) the Psychopathology Model, b) the Entrepreneur Model, and c) the Subcultural Evolution Model.
**The psychopathology model**

The authors state that novel religious ideas many times come about due to the “mental illness” of a leader, which they define as “the imputed condition of any human mind that repeatedly fails to conform to the propositions of the prevailing theory of human action.” A New Religious Movement is said to arise during times of social crisis, when a prospective leader is experiencing personal and social turmoil, and may become preoccupied and withdraw from social life. This individual may also experience self-initiated sensory deprivation and/or supernatural visions, which can result in a new religious movement if his or her novel visions are shared with others.

**The entrepreneurial model**

The model suggests that cults are like businesses established by individuals with flair and talent. The authors state that cult leaders can be considered entrepreneurs who manufacture and sell their novel compensators and ideas. Often, the cult leaders may have had previous involvement in one or more cult. This provides him/her with the skills and knowledge needed to establish and continue a successful cult to which they may add elements of beliefs of their earlier cults. They may even tag on fresh teachings and thus create a totally new synthesis of doctrine.

**The sub-culture / evolution model**

This model draws on the sociological work on deviant subcultures. In this model the most important aspect is the role of the group in the development of a new religion. Stark and Bainbridge
emphasize the importance of rewards and compensators in group interaction and state that as this exchange becomes more intense, the group becomes socially encapsulated and experiences a social implosion, which “results in a cohesive, closed group broken away from the rest of society.” Once this separation takes place, the group is free to evolve into a novel culture.

Distinctions are made between different types of cults. Enroth (1982: 22-25) offers the following classifications in order to categorise the term cults.

- **Eastern Mystical**: groups related to Hinduism, Buddhism and other pantheistic Eastern religions; examples in this category are Hare Krishnas and Self-Realization Fellowship.
- **Aberrant Christian**: groups that claim to be Bible-based but which deviate in practice or belief, such as The Way International, the Boston Church of Christ and the Shepherding Movement.
- **Psychospiritual or Self-Improvement**: groups offering seminars or workshops providing self-improvement or personal transformation (a growing cultic trend) includes Transcendental Meditation, Lifespring and The Forum.
- **Eclectic/Syncretistic**: a combination of several religious traditions includes the Unification Church (“Moonies”) and the Church Universal and Triumphant.
- **Psychic/Occult/Astral**: these groups offer “secret wisdom” and “lost truths”; examples include UFO cults and Edgar Cayce’s Association for Research and Enlightenment.
- **Established Cults**: Bible-based, cultic religious movements which have achieved mainstream status; this would include Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses and Christian Science.
• Extremist/Political/Social Movements: groups cultic in the psychological or social sense which include the Aryan Nation, White Aryan Resistance and the Ku Klux Klan.

The Concept: Sect

A sect is a small religious group that has branched off of a larger established religion. Sects have many beliefs and practices in common with the religion that they have broken off from, but are differentiated by a number of doctrinal differences. It is sometimes used instead of the term “cult” and is similarly ambiguous. The term has derived from the Latin word sequi, which means, “to follow,” and is used of “way of life,” or “class of persons.” According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2004), a sect can be referred to: a) a religious denomination; b) a dissenting religious group, formed as the result of schism; c) a group adhering to a distinctive doctrine or leader; d) a dissenting or schismatic religious body; and e) a religious denomination.

Any discussions on the concept “sect” directly or indirectly take into consideration the work of Troeltsch (1931) who differentiated sect from churches on the basis of eight important characteristics.

• Sects are fairly small and well integrated in terms of membership.
• Rather than drawing members from all sections of society and being closely connected with the state, sects are associated with the lowest social strata.
• Sects reject the world and the values of mainstream society.
• Sect members are expected to withdraw from the outside world.
• Sect members are expected to be deeply committed to beliefs and demonstrate that commitment.
• Sect members join voluntarily as adults rather than being socialized into the sect.
• Sects believe that they have a monopoly of the truth.
• Sects have hierarchy of paid officials or priesthood.

The New Age Movement

The new religious movement is often referred to as an alternative term for the New Age Movement, but in reality, both the concepts are different. Within the new religious movement, there is distinction between “new religion” and “religious movements.” Unlike most formal religions, the new age movement has no holy text, central organisation, membership, formal clergy, geographic centre, dogma, creed, etc. The New Age is in fact a free-flowing spiritual movement; a network of believers and practitioners who share somewhat similar beliefs and practices, which they add on to whichever formal religion they follow (Robinson 2002). It also refers to a wave of religious enthusiasm that emerged in the 1970s as a reaction to the failure of Christianity and the failure of secular Humanism to provide spiritual and ethical guidance for the future. Its roots are traceable to many sources: Astrology, Hinduism, Gnostic traditions, Spiritualism, Taoism, Theosophy, and other Neo-pagan traditions. The movement started in England in the 1960’s where many of these elements were well established.

There are number of fundamental beliefs, which are held by many New Age followers. Robinson (2002) has summarised these as follows:

• Monism: according to these believers, all that exists is derived from a single source of divine energy.
• Pantheism: the belief that all that exists is God and God is all that exists. This leads naturally to the concept of the divinity of the individual. The believers do not seek God as revealed in a sacred text or as exists in a remote heaven; they seek God within the self and throughout the entire universe.
• **Reincarnation**: according to this belief, after death, human beings are reborn and live another life as a human, and, this cycle repeats itself many times. This belief is similar to the concept of transmigration of the soul in Hinduism.

• **Karma**: according to this belief, the good and bad deed that we do adds and subtracts from our accumulated record, our karma. At the end of our life, we are rewarded or punished according to our karma by being reincarnated into either a painful or good new life. This belief is linked to that of reincarnation and is also derived from Hinduism.

Further, according to Robinson there are different **methods** that the New Agers followed in the respective movements. They are such as:

• **Meditation**: A process, which controls the mind to release oneself from conscious thinking. Repetitive chanting of a mantra, or focusing on an object often aids this.

• **Music**: A gentle, melodic, inspirational music form involving the human voice, harp, lute, flute, etc. the purpose of this music is to aid in healing, massage therapy and general relaxation.

• **Astrology**: The belief that the orientation of the planets at the time of one’s birth, and the location of that birth predicts the individual’s future and personality. Belief in astrology is common amongst New Agers.

• **Human Potential Movement**: This is a collection of therapeutic methods involving both individualized and group working, using both mental and physical techniques. The goal is to help individuals to advance spiritually. Examples are Esalen Growth Centre programs, EST, Gestalt Therapy, Primal Scream Therapy, Transactional Analysis, Transcendental Meditation and Yoga.

The above discussion of religion, cult, sect and New Age makes it evident that there is no straightforward way of defining which organisations and spiritual
movements fall within the category “NRM” and which do not. Therefore, a discussion of religion and new religious movements need to be discussed in a broader context.

**Diaspora: The Concept**

The etymological meaning of “diaspora” is made up of the fragments from the Greek words, “dia,” means through, and “speiro,” means scatter. The word was specifically used to describe the experience of the Jews exile to Babylon after Nebuchadnezzar’s conquest over Jerusalem in 587 BCE (http://www.science.co.il/Israel-history.asp). A typical example of diaspora is given by the New Webster’s Dictionary and Thesaurus of English language: “the dispersed Jews after the Babylonian captivity; their dispersion” (1993: 264).

For Khachig Tololyan, the editor of the journal *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, the concept refers to the entire “... semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugees, guest workers, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community” (1991: 4). In a critique of such far-reaching definition, William Safran has attempted a kind of “ideal type” representation of diaspora. According to him the concept diaspora refers to as “…expatriate minority communities, dispersed from an original ‘center’ to at least two ‘peripheral’ places. They maintain a memory or myth about their original homeland; they believe they are not, and perhaps cannot, be fully accepted by their host country; and they see the ancestral home as a place of eventual return and a place to maintain or restore.” The collective identities of these diaspora communities are defined by this continuing relationship with the homeland (Safran 1991: 83). Docker (2001: vii) defines diaspora as “...a sense of belonging to more than one history, to more than one time and place, to more than one past and future.”
The most classic definition of diaspora goes to the work of Razmik Panossian (1998: 150) who defines diaspora as “…forced dispersion of a clearly identified group of people from their homeland with a distinct collective minority and a “myth of return.” The group maintains its collective identity by establishing and controlling boundaries around it, while maintaining communication with other similar communities and with the homeland.” In stark contrast to this, Walker Connor (1986) defines diaspora as that segment of people living outside the homeland. These two definitions represent two contradictory meanings of the term diaspora. The first definition implies the historic cases of Jews, the Armenians, the Greeks and the Palestinians whereas the second definition extends beyond the first and covers all people living outside their land of origin.

The Encarta World English Dictionary (2000) provided two meanings of the word diaspora: a) Capitalised diaspora, and b) Non-Capitalised diaspora. A capitalised diaspora is defined as:

- Exile of the Jews from Israel - The dispersion of the Jews from Palestine following the Babylonians conquest of the Judean Kingdom in the 6th century BC and again following the Romans' destruction of the Second Temple in AD 70.
- Jews living outside Israel - The Jewish communities living outside either the present-day state of Israel or the ancient Biblical kingdom of Israel.

A non-capitalised diaspora, on the other hand, is the scattering of language, culture and people that was formerly concentrated in one place. The first definition is exclusively used for Jewish exiles, scattered all around the world. The second definition used for people of any culture who have dispersed from a former concentration, with their own cultures and languages.

The High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora (2001), under the Chairmanship of Dr. L. M. Singhvi, M.P., employs this concept in a generic sense for
“…communities of migrants living or settled permanently in other countries, aware of its origins and identity and maintaining varying degrees of linkages with mother country.”

Stuart Hall (1995: 10) observes:

Diaspora refers to the scattering and dispersal of people who will never literally be able to return to the places from which they came; who have to make some difficult settlement with the new, often oppressive cultures with which they were forced into contact, and who have succeeded in remaking themselves and fashioning new kinds of cultural identity by, consciously or unconsciously, drawing on more than one cultural repertoire.

According to Steven Vertovec (1997: 277), the term diaspora “…used to describe practically any population that is considered ‘deterritorialized’ or ‘transnational’ that is, which has originated in a land other than that in which it currently resides, and whose social, economic and political networks cross the borders of nation states or indeed span the globe.”

Diasporic communities emerged according to Tambiah (2000: 164) through two different but interrelated sources such as:

- Voluntary migration of people carrying with them a variety of occupational skills and cultural practices, leaving their locations of origin or present residences in search of better economic opportunities and life chances, and with a view to permanent or temporary settlement; and
- Involuntary displacement caused by political turmoil and civil war or by natural disasters (floods, earthquakes, and drought) of people who are referred to as refugees and asylum seekers and are relocated in camps and safe heavens or are accepted for resettlement by willing host countries.
For Cohen (1993: 2), the central idea behind diaspora is found in the forcible scattering of peoples denoted in the book of Deuteronomy. Subsequent definitions have related to the Jewish dispersion to “Babylon.” This term has been taken up also by the African diaspora. Armenians and Greeks, along with Africans and Jews, form the traditional or classic diasporas. Cohen seeks to retain the objectivist definition found in the classical diaspora notion while showing openness to modern or global aspects arising from “…mass movements of population and the slow decline of the nation state” (1993: 14). In order to do this he lists seven criteria for allowing the term diaspora to be used by and for a group. These are: dispersal and scattering; collective trauma; cultural flowering; troubled relationship with the majority; a sense of community transcending national frontiers; promoting a return movement. He suggests that the old diasporic practice of sojourning has become a feature of the new global economy and that the static terms of migration theory with their emphasis on the binary process of “travel from” and “return to” are no longer particularly useful.

Cohen’s typology constructs five different forms of diasporic community: victim; labour; trade; imperial; and cultural. He acknowledges that some take dual or multiple forms or change their characteristics over time. His examples are drawn from the experience of Jews as the proto-typical form; Africans and Armenians as victim; Indians as Labour; British as imperial; Chinese and Lebanese as trading; and Caribbean as cultural (Cohen 1999: 178).

Meanings and Characteristics of Diaspora

The term diaspora today is widely used in the field of media and journalism as a result of increased transnational movement and settlement of populations. Besides this the concept also is frequently used in the world politics. It is often conceptualised as being limited to powerless dispersed ethnic communities. However, the contemporary experience of several diasporas suggest otherwise.
The rapid expansion of telecommunication technologies on a mass scale and the arrival of the internet and the World Wide Web in the 1990s have created opportunities for developing new forms of transnational relationships and communications. Increasingly, the term transnational community is also used as a synonym of diaspora and the two terms frequently collapse into one. Hence, the term diaspora became the catchword for the condition, experiences and the communities that were caught up in this “web of transnational relations.”

Robin Cohen (1999) points out that, neither “minority status” nor mere “physical dispersion” is the ipso facto for labelling a community as diaspora. Rather there has to be more, such as acute memory, image or contact with the homeland. For him, the individuals who have been dispersed to various lands whether voluntarily or not, one finds a continuum of attitudes and forms a vague expressive identification with the homeland and single-minded involvement with its affairs. This continuum is as follows:

- Vague family tradition of origin, eclipsed by full social, cultural and political integration into the host nation.
- An acute awareness of origins going no further than a sympathetic curiosity about them.
- A personal identity significantly affected by that awareness.
- An active interest in the general fate and in important specific events of the homeland.
- The perpetuation of significant aspects of the culture (e.g., language) of the homeland.
- Regular communication with kin in the homeland, including the sending of remittances to the homeland on a regular basis.
- Influencing a host land government to pursue policies favourable to the homeland.
- Voting in homeland election.
- Going off to fight for the homeland preparing to return to the homeland.
James Clifford (1994: 304-5) has listed five criteria for any given diaspora. They are such as: (1) a group is displaced from a “homeland” and has (2) not been assimilated into their host country. The group has (3) a collective identity which is influenced by their (4) support for the homeland, and (5) a wish to return there.

Cheran (2003) argues if diaspora can be mapped by looking at the conditions of leaving, it can identify the following as characteristics of a diaspora:

- **Forced migration**: members of the diaspora or their ancestors have been forced to leave their homelands to several countries/places.
- **Collective memory/memory loss**: members retain a collective memory—often a memory of pain, dispossession and trauma. From their collective memory they create/articulate a vision of and for their homeland. These visions are not singular. Simultaneously, there is and will be memory loss down the generations. The generational and cultural tensions that can emerge in remembering and forgetting will be an important dimension in diasporic identities.
- **Alienation and insulation**: members believe that they cannot be fully absorbed/accepted by host countries and therefore feel partly alienated and partly insulated. This means that they can never be in a dominant position in the host country.
- **Deterritorialization / re-territorialization**: This alienation is also an alienation from their nation. This is mainly the result of de-territorialization. De-territorialization becomes a resource of new imagination for diasporic nations. The concept of nation has long been linked to a singular state and territory. The formation of Diasporas has clearly challenged the mono-dimensional and territorially bound ideas of nation. De-territorialization and re-territorialization could create an exaggerated form of attachment and/or intensified sense of criticism.
Projects of investment: Members believe that they should collectively be committed to the maintenance, preservation and/or restoration of their homelands.

Diasporic consciousness: Members continue to relate personally to that homeland and maintain a unique ethno-national or ethno-cultural consciousness, which can be termed as diasporic consciousness. How this consciousness changes, transforms or mutates across generations, across genders, across caste is an important element in the study of diasporic identities, gender and class.

The concept of and desire to return: Segments of the diasporic population sustain hope of returning to the homeland once peace returns.

Laguerre (1998: 9) has classified diasporas into three categories such as the dominant, the dominated and the active diaspora. According to him the existence of the British elite in the Hong Kong can be categorized under the heading of dominant diaspora, and the immigrants in the US under the dominated category. For Laguerre the active diaspora are those whose relations with the homeland are real and are not just symbolic in nature and content.

Emergence of Transnational Community

The term “transnational” generally implies migration of people across the borders of one or more nations. It also refers to the deterritorialization of population along with their material and non-material cultural commodities (Bhat and Sahoo 2003: 145). The term came into prominent use for the first time in the study of international relations in the context of international organisations, relations between non-governmental bodies in particular (cited in Vertovec 1999: xx). In fact, the terms “transnational communities,” “transnational network,” and “diaspora” are often used interchangeably in many of the contemporary studies. Transnational communities, according to Margaret Byron (1999) refer to “…migrant communities whose existence is based on a variety of sustained links
Transnational communities emerge on the basis of solidarity ties, which reach beyond narrow kinship systems. Transnational communities through reciprocity and solidarity achieve high degree of social cohesion and a “common repertoire of symbolic and collective representation” (Faist 1999: 9). According to Thomas Faist, transnational communities can emerge on two levels of aggregation. The most fundamental are village communities in emigration and immigration countries that connect through extensive forms of solidarity over longer periods of time. Transnational communities also consist of larger aggregates, primarily held together by symbolic ties of common ethnicity or even nationhood. According to Gustavo Lins Ribeiro (1994) there are six clusters of conditions that create the constraints through which transnationality exist. They are historical, economic, technological, ideological-symbolical, social and ritual conditions.

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

Formation of transnational community according to Peggy Levitt (1999) is dependent on four broad factors such as:

1. Geographic- as a result of the technological revolution, the distances between the sending and receiving countries become closed. There is also the flow of remittances between the sending and receiving country.
2. Socio-economic- the high levels of social parity and income made it easier for members of a community to stay attached to one another and to sustain ties with the non-migrants.

3. The role of state- the government plays an important role in institutionalising the means to sustain dual involvement (right to vote, to run Govt. office etc.) and to extend those to the second generation.

4. Institutional- the political, religious and community organizations created transnational structures and conduct their activities transnationally, thereby encouraging members to participate in both settings.

Global computer network is one of the significant factors that created space for the emergence of transnational community as it facilitates distinct relationship through its own culture and space, which are frequently, but not exclusively, designated as cyber culture and cyberspace. Other factors, such as deterritorialization, fragmentation, the loss of effectiveness of forms of representing the relationship between territory and socio-political and cultural membership, are important consideration for the emergence of transnational community.

One of the important characteristics of transnational community today is their “networks” that span across borders. There are several factors, which contribute for the easy networks of transnational communities. The forces of globalisation, advancement in technologies of travel, transport and communication play key role in the formation of transnational networks. For instance, aero planes, telephones, televisions, electronic mail and the most versatile Internet with online interaction, compress space and time in a magnitude never ever anticipated, has brought a sense of sustained connectedness among the diasporic communities. Castells (1996) observes that new technologies are central to transnational networks and reinforce them.
Peggy Levitt (1999: 4) has examined the significance of several factors that lead to the emergence of the transnational networks. These include a) easy travel and communication; b) the increasing role immigrants play in the countries of their origin to legitimise themselves by providing service to migrants and their children; c) the increased importance of the receiving country states in the economic and political futures of sending countries; d) the society and political marginalisation of migrants in their host countries; and e) migration takes place within an ideological climate that favours pluralism over the melting pot.

According to Tambiah (2000: 170), any given diaspora under emergence participate in three kinds of networks of relationships and experience three forms of consciousness regarding their existential circumstances. The vertical networks concern the relations and negotiations through which immigrants attempt to secure their existence in host societies. On the other hand, the lateral networks focus on two kinds of linkages that the immigrant develops. The first is concerned with maintaining, reinforcing, and extending relationships with immigrant’s communities of origin and the second type of lateral networks which Tambiah refers as “transnational global networks” that emerge due to dispersal of diaspora members to multiple locations and therefore “…transcends the borders of both the countries and states of origin and resettlement.”

The networks that emerge between the members of a diasporic community spread across nations are essentially transnational. As a result, the attachment that the diasporic community lost in the initial years of its migration and settlement is now regained further. As Pal Kolsto (1999: 608) points out, there are two dimensions of attachment that a diasporic community maintains with the homeland. According to Kolsto:

A member of a diaspora community may feel attached to his or her new-or old- homeland both culturally and politically. The cultural connection to a ‘historical fatherland’ may be held at the same time
as political allegiance is attached to one’s present country of residence … cultural reorientations may represent a continuum of positions stretching from minimal change towards complete cultural re-identification with numerous intervening gradations and intermediate types. The political dimension, on the other hand, represents more of a discontinuous set of choices. While political loyalties may be vague and blurred, the individual may have to select one to which he desires to pledge his allegiance from among the political entities available to him.

Transnational networks are increasingly dense web of social contacts between places of origin and destinations spawned by migrant’s spatial displacement that are sustained on the basis of social and kin relationship (Portes et al., 1999). These networks enable immigrants to maintain simultaneous connection with two or more nation-states. Further these networks are intensified as a result of globalisation, deterritorialisation, and continuous circulation of people, money, and information across the countries. Such intensified transnational networks constitute a single community with global spread.

Scholars on transnational migration today discuss and analyse various aspects of migrants’ settlement in host society and their transnational networks - social, cultural, economic and political. Of the several cultural premises through which the diasporic community attach themselves with the homeland and the wider diasporic community, religion constitutes the significant one, which binds the diasporic community not only with the homeland but also helps in maintaining ethnic identity in the host society.

**Diaspora and Transnationalism**

Transnationalism is not a new phenomenon, but over the last two decades it has become an important topic for discussion in the disciplines of social science, and
defined with multidimensionality in the areas of economy, culture, religion etc. A number of scholars have addressed the concept of transnationalism. Green (1997) for instance, points out that, transnationalism is a process whereby “…transmigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that connect their societies of origin with the societies of settlement.” Consequently, they build social fields that enable them to maintain multiple relationships; familial, economic, organisational, religious, and political that spans across borders. For Thomas Faist (1999: 2), transnationalism refers to “…sustained ties of persons, networks and organizations across the borders of multiple nation-states ranging from weakly to strongly institutionalised forms.”

Portes et al., (1999: 4) makes three points in his analysis of transnationalism:

- That the emergence of transnational communities is tied to the logic of capitalism itself. They are brought to play by the interests and needs of investors and employers in the advanced countries.
- That these communities represent a distinct phenomenon at variance with traditional patterns of immigrant adaptation.
- That because the phenomenon is fuelled by the dynamics of globalisation itself, it has greater potential.

Scholars have differentiated between two types of transnationalism i.e., core transnationalism and expanded transnationalism (Portes et al. 1999; Guarnizo 2000). Core transnationalism as those activities that form an integral part of the individual’s habitual life, are undertaken on a regular basis, and are patterned and therefore somewhat predictable on the other hand expanded transnationalism includes migrants who engage in occasional transnational practices, such as responses to political crises or natural disasters.

The conditions of diaspora or transnationalism has today creates new types of “imaginary coherence” and new kinds of identities. Moreover, a diaspora, be it a
family or a larger community held together or re-created through the mind, cultural artefacts and a shared imagination. Transnationalism not only presents with “new subjectivities in the global arena” (Ong and Nonini 1997) but also with new modes of cultural reproduction and the production of hybrid cultural phenomena manifesting “new ethnicities” (Hall 1991). There are two key dimensions that differentiate between transnationalism and diaspora.

1. All diasporas are transnational but not all transnationals are diasporas. In other words, if transnationalism is a condition of living, diaspora is about a condition of leaving. Diasporas are the result of forced migration whereas transnational communities are the result of voluntary migration.

2. There are communities that are simultaneously constructed as transnational and diasporic.

Braziel and Mannur (2003: 8) in their work Theorizing Diaspora make a distinction between the two terms that often used synonymously in cultural, ethnic and migration studies.

Diaspora refers specifically to the movement - forced or voluntary – of people from one or more nation-states to another. Transnationalism speaks to larger, more impersonal forces – specifically, those of globalisation and global capitalism. Where diaspora addresses the migrations and displacements of subjects, transnationalism also includes the movements of information through cybernetics, as well as the traffic in goods, products, and capital across geopolitical terrains through multinational corporations. While diaspora may be regarded as concomitant with transnationalism, or even in some cases consequent of transnationalist forces, it may not be reduce to such macroeconomic and technological flows. It remains above all, a human phenomenon – lived and experienced.
Religion, Diaspora and Transnational Networks

What is the importance of studying religion in diasporic context? How do diaspora influence home and host-country religious life? Does religion create and perpetuate identity among the diasporic communities? Ninian Smart offers three basic reasons why it is important to study the connection between religion and diaspora. Firstly, the study of diasporas and their modes of adaptation can give us insights into general patterns of religious transformation. Secondly, diasporas may themselves affect the development of religion in the homeland: the wealth, education and exposure to foreign influences transferred from diaspora may have significant effects on organization, practice and even belief. Finally, because of the great incidence of diasporas in the modern world, “multiethnicity is now commonplace” (Smart 1999: 421).

Religion is not a fixed set of elements but a dynamic web of shared meanings used in different ways in different contexts (Levitt 2001). Most of the scholars identified “religion” as the single most factors that identify any diaspora to their homeland (Ramsoedh and Bloemberg 2001; Vertovec 2000). But Robin Cohen (1999:189) argues “…religion generally do not constitute diasporas in and of themselves. It is as a posing phenomenon ‘cognate’ to diasporas because religions usually span more than one ethnic group and, in the case of faiths that have come to be widely spread across the globe, religion normally do not seek to return to, or to recreate a homeland.” Of course Cohen agreed that religion could be represented as additional cement to bind diasporic community by forming “diasporic consciousness.” Other scholars who pointed out that religion and religious traditions exist outside of one’s homeland but in a subjugated form are Smart (1999), and ter Hear (1998). For instance, John Hinnells (1997a: 686) defines diaspora religion as “…the religion of any people who have a sense of living away from the land of the religion, or away from ‘the old country’; he even extends the term to cover situations in which a religion represents a minority...
phenomenon.” Gerrie ter Haar (1998) connects religion and diaspora through the assumption that migration means diaspora, migrants practice religion, and therefore diaspora implicates religion.

Vertovec (1997) argues that religious and other socio-cultural dynamics evolve differently when migrants are characterised by minority status, when they form part of diasporas, or when they engage in transnational practices. According to him diaspora is the imagined connection between voluntary and involuntary migrants, a place of origin, and people with similar cultural origins elsewhere. By transnationalism, he refers to the actual ongoing exchanges of information, money, or resources, as well as regular travel and communication that members of a diaspora may undertake with others in the homeland or elsewhere within the globalised ethnic community (Vertovec 2000: 12). Patterns of change occurring within the context of diasporas, according to Vertovec, include identity and community, ritual practices, and the reimagining of the social and cultural spaces in which actors are embedded. Patterns of change surrounding transnationalism focus primarily on the transformation of networks.

Transnational communities are the potential building blocks of diasporas. Transnationalism is not only means the networks and exchanges of goods, but it also takes transnational religious practices, which involve the transformation of identity, community, and ritual practices. Levitt (2001b) suggested some frameworks to study transnational religion.

When the magnitude, duration, and impact of migration are sufficiently strong, transnational social fields or public spheres spanning the sending and receiving country emerge. Both the migrants and nonmigrants who live within transnational social fields are exposed to a set of social expectations, cultural values, and patterns of human interaction shaped by at least two, if not more, social, economic, and political systems. They have access to
social and institutional resources that imbue them with the potential to remain active in two worlds.

Further Levitt adds that:

Movement is not a prerequisite for transnational activism. There are those who travel regularly to carry out their routine affairs, whom some researchers call transmigrants. There are also individuals whose lives are rooted primarily in a single sending or receiving-country setting, who move infrequently, but whose lives integrally involve resources, contacts, and people who are far away and who locate themselves within a topography that crosses borders. And there are those who do not move but who live their lives within a context that has become transnationalized. They may engage in few activities that actually span borders but they too imagine themselves and express an allegiance to a group that is constituted across space. In each case, the social field these individuals locate themselves within may be constituted by ties between a single sending and receiving-country site or by connections to coethnics in multiple locations, giving rise to a sense of belonging to a broader diasporic group. Those frequent travellers, periodic movers, and individuals that stay in one place who do participate in transnational practices do so in a variety of ways.

In her work on the brotherhoods formed by Peruvian migrants in the U.S., Spain, Argentina and Japan, Paerregaard (2001) makes a similar distinction between transnational and diasporic religion. She documents how migrants brought images of the saint with them to their new homes, raised funds for ritual celebrations, and conquered host-country public space by organising annual processions.
Transnational religion is not a new phenomenon as early Christianity and Hinduism spread through trade, conquerors, and colonial administrators. For instance, Hunt (2002: 46) while talking about the Western religions and its global spread pointed out that, the global spread of Western religion especially the activity of Christian Missionaries “…have taken their gospel message across the world for centuries and often followed military conquest, colonialism or the trade routes opened by the merchants.” However, recent migration and globalisation generate new cultural contacts that have much in common with these earlier disseminations of religious life. New communication and transportation technologies permit further more frequent and intimate connections between those who move and those who remain behind. The airplane and the telephone make it easier and cheaper to remain in touch (Levitt 2002).

Ancient pilgrims travelling from one sacred landmark to another, and their contemporary counterparts, created an imaginary religious landscape bounded by these holy sites (Eickelman and Piscatori 1990). Transnational migrants also use religion to delineate an alternative cartography of belonging. Religious icons and sacred shrines, rather than national flags, proclaim these religious spaces. The moral and physical geographies that result may fall within national boundaries, transcend but coexist with them, or create an additional place that supersedes national borders.

Hunt (2002: 50) juxtapose the core globalisation issue i.e., “McDonaldization” with the religious spheres of Christian evangelical society of America and how it spreads its boundaries across the world with wide popularisation of consumer culture and consumer religion. McDonaldization, the term was first used by George Ritzer in 1996 in his influential work on the “McDonaldization of Society” to mean “…the global patterns of consumption and consumerism and is a process of rationalization exemplified by the American fast food company McDonald’s.” On a global scale, McDonald’s is a major stakeholder in the burger and French fries market, and what is produced is a fairly standard package. The
McDonald’s burger purchased in London is very likely to be the same bought in New York, Tokyo, or Moscow … it is the same all over the world – the same image and same product. Similarly, the Sathya Sai Baba and Swaminarayan religion can be compared with the McDonaldization and its spread as these religions “not only preach standard range of core doctrines” which are same throughout the world wherever their devotees are, but also at the same time organize meetings and congregations to preach the gospel of their own tenets and also spread their messages through mass-produced publications and audio and visual tapes through the world-wide communication systems.

Levitt (2001) points out that, “…transnational religious life is constituted by a variety of elements. Most concrete are its institutional manifestations. They are not static, impermeable categories.” Dispersing religious cadres, mounting missionary campaigns, operating schools, building pilgrimage shrines, and organising international encounters, the Church created a vast, interconnected network of activities throughout the world. Religious pilgrimages, processions, and rituals are one way that migrants express their continuing attachment to their home country.

Religious identification is an important aspect in forming transnational identity. For instance, Hinduism takes the function for maintaining and sustaining the identity of Hindus in the diaspora as well as in the homeland. The universalistic aspiration to the Hindu gods or aesthetic identification with the Hindu religion enables individuals to overcome social boundaries in the respective society. As Levitt (2001) points out, a religious minority is always affiliated with the construction of identity, the constitution of a unique form of otherness, which offers a means for dealing with social experience. Several movements associated with the religion such as Sathya Sai Baba, OSHO, Swaminarayan and others expands their boundaries across borders and creates such identity among the Indians. The following chapter will introduce the Sathya Sai Baba movement, its emergence and growth.