Chapter I

Introduction

In the past decade or so the notion of diaspora has taken over the imagination of a variety of groups be they academics, social scientists, policy makers and even members of minority ethnic groups in different countries who see themselves as diaspora. As a result there has been an explosion of writings on the diaspora phenomenon with social scientists outlining countless features of diaspora. It is now a term being used to describe nearly any group which is considered ‘deterritorialized’ or ‘transnational’, or which has roots in a land other than which it currently resides, and whose social, economic and political networks traverse the borders of nations and span the globe (Vertovec, 1999). One such group is the Sikhs who have become the subject of many a diasporic analysis. This research too is an attempt to study the Sikh diaspora. However, unlike the previous works on the same subject, we shall focus on the Sikh diaspora in a setting which has not received enough attention thus far, namely, Japan.

For a long time the term diaspora was used in connection mainly with the Jews who are dispersed all over the world after being driven away from their place of ethnic origin. However, in its new avatar the term is used to denote any migrants who live in the place which is different from their birth place (Gilroy, 1993). The largest amount of diaspora studies have dealt with migrants in Europe and North America (e.g., Schiller and Fouron, 2001; Levitt, 2001; Shukla, 2003; Kearny 2004) probably because those area have various and large migrant communities and have tried to manage harmonious coexistence for both local people and migrants. On the other hand, diaspora studies on other regions like Asia, South America, and Oceania are
relative y less though these areas also have received a large number of migrants and have faced the necessity of making policies for accommodating different ethnic groups who have migrated to these lands and are trying to co-exist with the local population.

When we look at studies on Sikh migrants, we can find works which see Sikhs as diaspora (Cohen, 1997, 2008; Tatla, 1999; Shani, 2008). However, as has been the trend in diaspora studies, these also focus on Sikhs settled in UK, USA and Canada where the number of Sikh migrants is concentrated. The few studies of Sikh diaspora in Oceania and Asian countries do not go beyond short articles (Sandu and Mani, 2006, 2008; McLeod, 2007).

In Japan there has been increase in the number of migrants consisting of various ethnic origins for last three decades. It has been seen that diaspora groups are incorporated in Japanese society, though it’s difficult to say that they are considered sufficiently as members of Japanese society. Sikhs in Japan on whom this research will focus are one of the migrant groups whose study will hopefully throw some light on the social and cultural practices of diaspora in general and the Sikh diaspora in particular.

**Diaspora**

The word diaspora is derived from the Greek preposition *dia* (across or over) and the verb *speireo* (to sow or scatter seeds). Originally, diaspora was used to describe the Jews living in exile from the homeland of Palestine. In other words, diaspora suggested a dislocation from the nation-state or geographical location of origin and relocation in one or more nation-states, territories, or countries. Not only for Jews but also for Africans, Palestinians and Armenians, being a diaspora had involved their
collective trauma and banishment, where they dreamt of home but lived in exile (Cohen, 1997; Braziel and Mannur, 2003). As Braziel and Mannur (2003) put it, diaspora can be seen as a naming of the ‘other’ which has historically referred to displaced communities of people who have been dislocated from their native homeland through the movements of migration, immigration, or exile. Since the 1990s, theorizations of diaspora have emerged in various fields like literature, Sociology, Anthropology, area studies, ethnic studies, etc. It is often used as a catch-all phrase to speak of and for all movements, and for all dislocations, even symbolic ones (Braziel and Mannur, 2003) and we can find plenty of discussion on the context of the recent usage of diaspora and the various perspectives on it.

For long the term diaspora has been associated with the concepts of suffering, victimization and isolation due to its biblical origins. However, in the past decade, the connotation of the word has changed to include the processes of empowerment, enrichment and expansion. As Ang (2007) explains it, now the flows of people, cultures, and politics are very much associated with the rising significance of transnational migration. This is the consequence of the heightened process of globalization in the closing decades of the twentieth century. In this context, the term of diaspora has increasingly lost its paradigmatic association with the notion of exile from home and the myth of return and has become much more widely used to describe the condition and experience of dispersion which may not necessarily involve trauma and marginalization.

The understanding of the term began from defining it as the scattering of the Jews to countries outside of Palestine after the Babylonian captivity. However, it went on to get new meanings subsequently. For instance, it is seen as a dispersion of something that was originally localized (as a people or language or culture), or as
spreading of people originally belonging to one nation or having a common culture to other places. This involves the movement, migration, or scattering of a people away from an established or ancestral homeland, implying people settled far from their ancestral homelands or simply put, any group migration or flight from a country or region. A common theme is the ambivalent relationship that many diasporic peoples have both to their host country and their homeland. The homeland is often remembered with fondness or longing, and the ‘hostland’ is often seen as intolerant or alienating; but also people may see opportunity in the new country and choose not to return to their homeland even when they are able to do so. The host country, after all, becomes home in a way, and exerts a lot of influence on people even as they retain allegiance to their older, ancestral home (Cohen, 1997).

Parrenas and Siu (2007) define diaspora as ongoing and contested process of subject formation embedded in a set of cultural and social relations that are sustained simultaneously with the “homeland” (real or imagined), place of residence, and compatriots or co-ethnics dispersed elsewhere. They explain that diaspora entails displacement from the homeland under the nexus of an unequal global political and economic system, the simultaneous experience of alienation and the maintenance of affiliation to both the country of residence and the homeland and the sense of collective consciousness and connectivity with other people displaced from the homeland across the diasporic terrain. These are simultaneous relations and seen in everyday practices of sociality, collective memory, economic exchange, and the work of cultural imagination and production.

Goh (2004) focuses on the features of diasporic space and time. Space and time intersect in multiple and complex ways in the logic of postcolonial cultures which cause identification of definitive moments of social influence and transformation. For
instance, the production of a specific spatial trope; the church, the public square or
garden, the town hall, the ghetto, the red-light district; is not confined to the period of
actual physical construction, but incorporates the entire span of cultural influence and
cultural production. This is historical cultural influence of a broad variety which
recent diasporas have. He adds that these diasporic space and time cannot be regarded
as isolated phenomena, but must be seen as an interactive space where the speed,
volume, diachronicity, and diversity of subjective transactions and interventions
constant relate and renegotiate the social sphere and its significance.

Bathia and Ram (2001) note that the age of transnational migrations, border
crossing and diaspora should be examined in terms of how individuals living with
hybridized and hyphenated identities in borderland cultures and diasporic
communities coordinate their incompatible and often conflicting cultural and personal
positions. Gupta and Ferguson (1992) write that “in a world of diaspora, transnational
culture flows, and mass movements of populations, old-fashioned attempts to map the
globe as a set of culture regions or homelands are bewildered by dazzling array of
postcolonial simulacra, doublings and redoubling as India and Pakistan apparently
reappear in postcolonial simulation in London....” (p.10). The writings stress the
deterritorialized aspects of culture and boundaries and hold that fixed locales like
society, community and nation cannot be the frame of culture. Further they explain
that the concept and the boundary of “culture” itself have a possibility to give
essential comprehension of “culture” and conclude that the end result of migrations is
hybridity of culture. From their discussion we can consider deterritorialization and
hybridity as the main features of diaspora.

In commonsense terms deterritorialization may mean taking the control and
order away from a land or place (territory) that is already established. Another general
meaning describes it as any process that decontextualizes a set of relations, rendering them virtual and preparing them for more distant actualizations. Anthropologically, when referring to culture the term is used to refer to a weakening of ties between culture and place. This means the removal of cultural subjects and objects from a certain location in space and time. It implies that certain cultural aspects tend to transcend specific territorial boundaries in a world that consists of things fundamentally in motion. On the other hand, hybridity means a thing derived from heterogeneous sources. Owing to the apparent lack of an essentialized or fixed identity, the hybrid stands as the perfect means for the understanding of pluralism, ambivalence and nonfixity. Because of its neither-nor nature, its intrinsic opposition to fixed binaries lets it remain in a perpetual state of flux. In the context of diaspora it involves the notion of re-creation of new meanings, practices, symbols etc. Both the terms deterritorialization and hybridity are attractive for those interested in questions of identity and the constitution of subjectivity.

Mentioning that ‘diaspora’ is the term often used today to describe practically any population which is considered ‘deterritorialized’ or ‘transnational’, and whose social, economic and political networks traverse the borders of nation-states, Vertovec (2000) reveals three meaning of ‘diaspora’: 1) diaspora as social form, 2) diaspora as type of consciousness and 3) diaspora as mode of cultural production.

Diaspora as social form are characterized by a relationship between (a) globally dispersed yet collectively self-identified ethnic group; (b) the territorial states and contexts where such groups reside; and (c) the homeland states and contexts whence they or their forebears came (Vertovec, 2000:144). Diaspora as type of consciousness is a particular kind of awareness, which is characterized by duality, paradox and multi-locality. It includes, on the one hand, a sense of discrimination and isolation and
on the other, also a positive sense of belonging to a particular identity. It is seen in current literature of diaspora among contemporary transnational communities that puts greater emphasis on features concomitant with a variety of experience, a state of mind and a sense of identity (Vertovec, 2000:146-147). Diaspora as mode of cultural production means the world-wide flow of cultural objects, images and meanings resulting in variegated processes of creolization, back-and-forth transferences, mutual influences, new contestations, negotiations and constant transformation (Vertovec, 2000:153). This is similar to the example given by Stuart Hall (1990) who talks about diaspora identities as those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference. Further, Vertovec believes that to grasp the myriad changes among diasporic communities, we need to take account of (a) facets of historically conditioned structure or context and (b) the processes of conscious intervention of social actors through mediation, negotiation, and contestation within and between self-defined social groups (2000).

**Typology of Diasporas**

When considering the most prevalent concept of diaspora, the Jews have usually been selected to illustrate the argument. However, Cohen (1997, 2008) gives credible meanings of diaspora, and proposes a typology of diaspora. He sees a common element in all forms of diaspora; these are people who live outside their “natal (or imagined natal) territories” and recognize that their traditional homelands are reflected deeply in the languages they speak, religions they adopt, and the cultures they produce (1997). Cohen categorizes diasporas into 1) victim diasporas, 2) labor diasporas 3) imperial diasporas, 4) trade and business diasporas, and 5) cultural or deterritorialized diasporas (1997, 2008). A victim diaspora is meant in the sense of
dispersal following a traumatic event in the homeland, to two or more foreign destinations. A labor diaspora indicates indentured workers employed in the colonial possessions and furthermore, people who shifted to other countries in order to get the opportunity for jobs including those that occur after colonial era. An imperial diaspora includes migrants from imperial countries to the colonies for furthering their imperialistic plans of expansion. A trade and business diaspora implies merchants who migrated to other countries to expand their trading business. A cultural or deterritorialized diaspora is characterized by four features: evidence of cultural retention of original culture; symbolic interest in retaining links to original countries; cultural artifacts and products showing shared concern between old and new countries and behaving ways consistent with the idea of deterritorialized diaspora. Cohen uses one or two particular groups as exemplary cases for each type. Africans and Armenians are shown to be analogous victim diaspora while the Indians are shown as examples of a labor diaspora. The trade diaspora have been typified by the Chinese and Lebanese, the British have been represented as an imperial diaspora, and the peoples of the Caribbean abroad are characterized as a deterritorialized diaspora. However, it must be remembered that these are overlapping categories and some groups take dual or multiple forms while others change their character over time.

For Cohen, religions generally do not constitute diasporas in and of themselves, though Judaism and Sikhism are obvious exceptions. Because religions usually span more than one ethnic group and, in the case of faiths that have come to be widely spread around the globe, religions normally do not seek to return to, or to recreate, a homeland. Among Sikhs also there are some persons who converted to Sikhism under the new religious movement in the U.S., U.K. and Canada since 1960s (Coney, 2000) though they don’t have ethnic origin in Punjab. However, in this thesis we will not
discuss the details of these 'gora' Sikhs. With broad agreement with Cohen, Vertovec (2000) suggests that Hindus too represent a kind of special case akin to Judaism and Sikhism.

Lee (2004) discusses three types of diaspora communities based on three types of psychological states, or forms of consciousness, which are; 1) idealization of homeland (nostalgia), 2) multicultural manifestation, and 3) transitional/transformational identity politics. These three types are used not to limit the diasporic experience strictly, but rather, to better understand the diasporic condition. In the conceptualization of idealization of homeland, the diaspora is defined largely in terms of distance from its homeland, with all the attendant implications of removal or exclusion and geographical, cultural, and psychical dislocation. This homeland idealism posits the homeland myth as a powerful and effective motivator of diasporic experiences (Lee, 2004:54). In the diaspora in multicultural manifestation, with cultural pluralism fast becoming the norm for most societies, diasporic/ethnic minorities play up the fact of their difference, highlighting their visibility, to gain recognition and some kind of acceptance into the host society (Lee, 2004:54-55). The conceptualization in a transitional or transformational state represents diaspora as integrating in an informed way with their host societies. The implications for diasporas are that, firstly, they are still evolving rather than being fully fledged entities, and secondly, theorizations about their diasporic condition are works in progress that have to be constantly revised (Lee, 2004:55).

Riggs (2000) describes three types of diaspora on the basis of the status of their homelands. The first are the state-oriented diaspora where people usually retain their citizenship while living abroad and many may even have a formal status as employees of an organization located in their home state. State-oriented diasporans are normally
patriotic and, like the Israelis, support their homeland government and can be called 
patriate diaspora but as one can see in the Cuban case, they may also be activist 
diaspora when they oppose the regime in power while remaining attached to their 
home country. The second type are ethnonational diaspora who relate to non-state 
nations whose homeland is usually located in a region within one state, like the ethnic 
Albanians in Kosovo, or crosses state boundaries, like the Kurds whose homeland is 
divided between four states. Ethnonational diasporas tend to settle within the state 
where their homeland is located - indigenous Americans in the U.S., Chechens in 
Russia, Scots in the UK, aboriginals in Australia, Maories in New Zealand, etc. and 
being in diaspora does not require crossing state boundaries for them. The third 
category is includes ideological movements, entrepreneurs whose members support 
each other in different countries but retain an ethnic identity, as do some Chinese, 
Indian, Lebanese and Armenian merchants and religious communities who retain 
contacts among members in different countries, like the Amish or the Baha’i, but lack 
a homeland that would justify references to them as a diaspora.

Alain Medam (1993) has proposed a typology based on the degree of 
cohesiveness (homogeneity) and the dynamism of the diasporic organization. Medam 
discusses two types of diaspora - crystallized diaspora and fluid diaspora – the former 
includes some dynamic diasporas characterized by the efficiency of their transnational 
networks. For example, the Chinese diaspora, while the latter include the very 
amorphous groups with weak networks. For Michel Bruneau (1995), the typology 
must be based on the diasporic organization. He defined three major types of 
diasporas. namely, the entrepreneurial diasporas like the Chinese or Libanese, the 
religious diasporas, e.g., the Jews and the political diasporas, such as the Palestinians,
Tibetans etc.
These typologies especially that by Cohen, help to understand that diaspora should be examined from several aspects (social, cultural, economic, political and historical). Cohen (2008) also states that a typology as a heuristic device will help to delineate, analyze and compare many diasporic phenomena. However, he also adds that “in looking at any example, there is no need to force reality to conform in every respect to given ideal types. A creative imagination is always preferable to a dogged application of a formula.” (p.161). In this thesis we will not focus on categorizing Sikhs in Japan as one type of diaspora but at grasping the features of Sikhs in Japan as diaspora from various viewpoints which are given by these typologies.

Thus, as discussed above, the concept of ‘diaspora’ is employed for explaining multiple and complex situation of people in the context of political, economic, social and cultural globalization. In the background of the world of diaspora, we see diversity, deterritorialization and hybridity of global society which are brought by transnational migrants. We can say that the Sikh diaspora in Japan on which this research focuses can be included in the category of transnational migrants. The following chapters will study the deterritorialized, multiple and complex situations in life of Sikhs in Japan, and the re-creation of their culture. This thesis, while examining Sikh migrants in Japan will use the word “migration” or “migrant” while focusing on the fact related to their shifting and moving. But when we will consider their cultural and social life from the aspect of cultural and social deterritorialization, we will term them “diaspora”.

**Diaspora and Migration Studies**

When people move to somewhere as migrants from their place of origin, they experience cultural, economic and social differences like food, climate, language,
salary, status etc. Migrants struggle with them through their customary practices related to eating, wearing, sleeping, talking, resting and working in their life. At times they may allow certain alterations and modifications in these practices, and at the same time, preserve their customs. This process of losing old practices and accumulating new ones forms an integral part of the cultural life of these migrants and will thus also form significant part of our study.

Many sociological and anthropological studies about migrants have been conducted. Theories like assimilation and adaptation were discussed in immigrant society of the U.S. and “melting pot” and “salad bowl” were used as words that explain immigrant society, especially about the U.S. Yet, in recent societies that are more global, post-modern and post-colonial, these theories are not enough to explain migrants’ society, culture and identity. As stated in studies by L Schiller and Fouron (2001), Levitt (2001) and Kearny (2004), those analyses are far from relevant.

Schiller and Fouron (2001) have described the continuous relationship and networks between Haitian migrants in the U.S. and their home society of Haiti. They describe in detail the relationships that individuals are surrounded by in networks of family and relatives. Levitt (2001) studied the Dominican migrants in the U.S. Explaining historical and political background of their migration, he showed that politics in home of the migrants cannot develop without connection with migrants in the U.S. Kearny (2004) examined the community of Mexican migrants in California in the U.S. and found that this community, which he calls the transnational community, continues to interact with their home community in Mexico, despite living in California. All these studies show how society of both migrants and their home, keep in touch with each other and may even affect each other economically, politically and culturally.


Studies on Diaspora in Japan

There have been a number of studies about migrants in Japan, although most of them originated after 1980. In the beginning of modern Japan, i.e., the end of nineteenth century, migrants from Western countries, China and Korea lived in Japan (for history of migrants in Japan, see Chapter II). However, they were not seen as migrants or migrant community because till the end of the Second World War, Chinese and Koreans were considered “Japanese” by colonial rulers and most of those who stayed on after the war in Japan went unnoticed due to the myth of Japanese society being ethnically homogeneous (Lee, 2001). Nevertheless, with a rise in the number of studies about migrants in Japan since 1980s, the situation now is that Chinese and Korean residents are re-recognized as immigrants in Japan (Lee, 2001; Douglass and Roberts, 2003) though many of the studies focus on return-migration of Japanese descendants from Latin America.

One of the important works on migrants in Japan is by Taguchi (1983) who showed Japanese society not as homogeneous but heterogeneous, and explained the statistical situation about immigrants in the first half of 1980s. This article was published before foreign workers were seen as an issue worth studying in the Japanese society in the late 1980s. We can find the gap between the perceptions existing at the beginning and end of 1980s by comparing this article with others mentioned below.

Yamanaka (1993) describes how the Immigration Policy and Immigration Act reformed the situation after 1989 and also how the labor shortage for unskilled work lead to the coming of foreigners who engage in the jobs under the revised law. He further explained that the foreign workers include not only Japanese descendants but also Asians. His paper summarized the situation of unskilled workers and the
background which attracted foreign workers to Japan. Yamanaka (2000) also examined Nepalese labor migration and the Gurkha network in Japan. It seems that the Gurkha network helped to convey the information in Nepal that Japan was a fit place for labor migration. This article made it clear that the continuing shortage of labor in the industrial sector in Japan caused continuous migration from Nepal despite recession in 1990s.

Maher (1997) looked at the later immigrants primarily as groups of linguistic minorities in Japan. He highlighted the fact that there has been some support by government that focused on the issue of the language difficulty faced by these migrants and how it affected their education in the cities where the immigrant population was concentrated. He concludes that these approaches to support them are not sufficient for solving their problems. Tsuda (1998, 1999a, 1999b) studied different aspects of the descendants of Japanese who had shifted to Brazil and had now returned to Japan. Prejudice and discrimination against them by Japanese were examined. Interaction between ethnic identity and national identity was analyzed and it appeared that ethnic identity as “Japanese” in Brazil could be nationalized by experiences in Japanese society that casts prejudice and discrimination against Japanese Brazilians (1999a). Position and life of Japanese Brazilians embedded in economic and social structure in Japan and Brazil were explained by describing their migration process and repeat migrations (1999b). These works were conducted with analyzing discourse from interviews not only of Japanese descendants but also of Japanese, and participant observation in firms where these Japanese Brazilians worked.

Lee (2000) examined the cultural practices of the resident Koreans in Japan. Symbolic meanings in consumption of Korean food and the use of Korean language were seen as the struggle to preserve their Korean identity. It was also seen that bodily
memory through the experience of migration during colonial era and diasporic consciousness related to cultural practices as immigrant subjectivity. Friman’s study (2004) showed that there were patterns of immigrant participation in criminal activities like the illicit drug sector. However, although he mentions the cases of migrants in Germany and the U.S. indulging in such activities, he did not offer any details of the relationship between immigrants in Japan and the criminal economy. Nakamatsu (2005) wrote about immigrant women in Japan and examined the problems related to gender, race and class that “Asian brides” face in rural Japan. Prejudice and racism were seen in the context of marriage among Asian women and Japanese in rural areas. Gordon (2006) focused on the issue of the unavailability of teachers for minority and immigrant communities in Japan. Marginalized students including immigrants were not able to understand the local teachers which became a major problem in Japanese education system.

From the concise discussion of the above mentioned studies we can see that the revised Immigration Act in 1989 changed the demography of foreigners in Japan (Taguchi, 1983; Yamanaka 1993, 2003). At the same time, it is clear that social and economic context in host society affects migrants and their economic, social, cultural and political features (Tsuda, 1999; Yamanaka, 2000). Friman (2004), Nakamatsu (2005) and Gordon (2006) showed that migrant society has diverse problems in Japan. And Tsuda (1998, 1999a, 1999b), Nakamatsu (2005) and Gordon (2006) hold that there are prejudices and discrimination in Japanese society against migrants. Hence a large number of aspects pertaining to the life of the migrants in Japan have been covered by various studies. However, we see relatively fewer works focusing on the dynamics of the interrelations between the migrants’ social backgrounds and their culture (language, religion, food, clothing, etc.) in Japan, which characterize their identities and thoughts.
Studies on Indian and Sikh Diaspora

Studies of Indian migrants in general and the Sikh migrants in particular have been accumulated over time. Mostly they are researches conducted in the communities in England and North America. Since 1950s many Indian migrants have tended to move to these areas and have built their community there.

Studies on Indian Diaspora

Seth (1999) described life of Indian migrants in the U.S. by explaining their food habits, attire, cultural events, religious practices, language, occupations, education, communication, etc. Her study shows that their ethnic media assisted them in their endeavor to recreate and keep in touch with their cultural roots. She concluded that ethnicity reinforces identity which was continuously recreated and perpetuated, along with the parallel process of adaptation into the social world of the host society. And those dialectics of persistence and adaptation, of continuity and acceptability lead to the emergence of two diverse socio-cultural systems. Shukla (2003) too, examined ethnicity as ‘Indianness’ from cultural situation of Indian migrants in the U.S. and England, and explains that in her case, ‘Indianness’ implied not integrated and stable nation but a process causing diverse and unessential identities.

Vertovec (2000) argued about ‘Hinduism’ from the aspect of ‘in and outside of’ India. He concludes that in the context of Hinduism in the global diaspora especially in Caribbean area and Britain we can see three trends, namely, influences of caste, sectarian and regional features, religious nationalism by Hindutva movement, and localization of Hinduism.

Raghuram, Sahoo, Maharaj and Sangha’s (2008) edited volume contains articles that focus on the three themes of historical process of Indians’ migration,
representation by Indian diasporas and problematics in identification of Indian
diasporas. They hold that representation about identity of Indian migrants in their
plays and novels caused diasporic subjectivity both of audience and performer. This
book concludes that the diasporic subjectivity has possibility of seeing Indian
diaspora not as integrated Indian diaspora but diverse Indian diaspora. Rai and Reeves
(2009) also edited a book about transnational networks and identity of South Asian
migrants. The articles in the book analyzed the roles of transnational networks which
formulated economic and social features of diaspora communities.

Studies on Sikh Diaspora

A large volume of literature can be found focused on the Sikh diaspora. Barrier and
Dusenbery’s (1989) edited book on Sikh diaspora states that when we think about
Sikh diaspora, it is necessary to view several forms of migration and some aspects
like re-migration abroad or domestically, continuous chain migration from Punjab,
converted white Sikhs in North America, networks and communication between Sikhs
abroad and Sikhs in India, and so on. Ballard (1989) and Thandi (1996) also explained
the different dimensions in the backgrounds that Sikhs in Britain had by showing their
historical process of migration. Bhachu (1989) discussed Sikhs who shifted from East
Africa to the U.K. and their migration process. It was pointed out that Sikhs who
came directly from Punjab held a ‘myth’ of returning home, although Sikhs from East
Africa did not have it. Similarly, experiences of migrants from East Africa helped
them re-build their life in Britain, while the direct migrants from Punjab did not have
those experiences.

Buchignani and Indra (1989) wrote about Sikhs in Canada. They noted that
there was a discriminatory situation for Sikhs and they did not have any institutional
measures to counter it. The authors claimed that Sikhs were a minority group in Canada and it was difficult to find the features of Sikh diaspora as a global dynamic community. *Sikh Identity* an edited volume by Singh and Barrier (2001) includes discussions about Sikh migrants, mainly about Sikhs in Britain, East Africa and in the U.S. Sharma (2001) explained that Sikh migrants in East Africa had relations with Punjabi Hindus, Punjabi Muslims, Gujarati Muslims and Gujarati Hindus. The article made it clear that their cultural identity was not hindered by religious differences but they could establish community ties based on their common region of origin. Thus, these studies showed the complex context of Sikhs in East Africa. Kalsi (2001) focused on Ramgarhia caste and the institutions run by them in U.K. From his article we can earn that Ramgarhia identity of the migrants in U.K. is recognized and established on occasions of marriage and due to the activities of the institute. Nesbitt (2001) described the text book for religious education which was used in England. He found that students and teachers had common recognition that ‘real Sikhs’ or ‘ideal Sikhs’ called *keshdari* have the 5Ks (five articles of faith; *kesh, kangha, kara, kacchar, kirpan* - uncut hair, wooden comb, metal bracelet, special style of cotton underwear, strapped curved sword). Leonard (2001) discussed the recent situation about Sikhs in the U.S. There exist different perspectives and thoughts about their faith not only between first and second generation but also between the same generation. And converted white Sikhs have their own faith and practice influenced by Yogi Bhajan. Ballantyne (2006) discussed the cultural situation of Sikhs migrants analyzing the Sikhs’ representation and their identity in context of their diaspora in terms of *Bhangra* making.

McLeod (1986, 2007) studied Sikhs in New Zealand. He focused mainly from 1980 to 1940 and described the history of migrants from central Punjab (including
Hindus and Muslims). His book indicates that it is difficult to show the religious boundaries especially between Sikhs and Hindus (1986). In a later work (2007) he explained the recent situation that like the Chinese and Gujaratis, Sikhs were recognized pakeha, who were not maoli, and accepted as social member in New Zealand. In the book Sociology of Diaspora edited by Sahoo and Mahajan (2007), there are articles on the Sikh diaspora by Barrier, Takaki, Sangha and Dusenbery. Barrier (2007) explains institutional networks of Sikh with newspapers and organizations from the end of nineteenth century to the beginning of twentieth century. It appears that those networks are still vigorous between Punjab and Canada. And there is also a mention of retaining relationships in the contemporary times through their networks in cyber space.

Takaki (2007) writes about Sikhs who moved to California in last part of nineteenth century to the beginning of twentieth century. He describes their settlement process, marriage relations with females from Mexico and relations with migrants from Japan who had also worked in farms. From the description we can know about the relationships among migrants, and the hybrid culture produced by them. Sangha (2007) also explains about Sikhs in Canada in the beginning of twentieth century. The article shows the role that the gurdwaras (Sikh Temple) played in attracting Sikhs to Canada, in organizing protests against the government policy based on racism and how those activities led to human right movement and struggle for independence.

Dusenbery (2007) casts doubt on discourse or expression of ‘Sikh migrants’ or ‘Sikh diaspora’ as an integrated group. He critiqued Sikhs’ ethno-territorialism by arguing about the diversity and hybridity of society in Punjab. In another article (Dusenbery, 2008), he examines Sikh Diaspora, comparing political situations among Sikhs in Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Canada, the U.S. and Australia. It appears
that because of different policy in Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia, Sikh migrants faced different situations politically. A similar explanation was shown through a comparison between Sikhs in Canada, the US and Australia. He described how the Sikhs in Australia consist of people who had different backgrounds – farmers’ community, ‘new’ immigrants living in urban city, skilled-labors and unskilled-labors – and discussed how among them only people who had cosmopolitan life style can express demands for Sikhs and responsibility as Sikh.

The issues of Sikh diaspora and the Khalistan movement have also been discussed by Singh and Barrier (1996). Singh claimed that ‘Sikh diaspora’ as territorial recognition was retrospective and the Khalistan movement had been seen as Sikhs’ separatism and treated in political terms. Similarly, Tatla (1999) provides a summary of the history of Sikh migrants. Their identity politics in North America and Britain are described by explaining their struggle to gain their right to wear religious symbols in public space. He concludes that Sikh migrants are diaspora that requires territorial origin for their own nation. In his later book Tatla (1999) explained that Khalistan movement and Sikh territorialism were indicators of Sikh nationalism. Shani (2008) also focused on Sikh diaspora and in his book Sikh diaspora were examined as people who show possibility of new nation-state that is not based on the Westphalian territorial nation-state treaty.

Coward, Hinnells and Williams (2000) edited a book which examined religions of South Asia including Sikhism in England and North America. In the book, there are articles about Sikhs in Britain by Ballard, Canada by O’Connell and the U.S. by Mann. Ballard (2000) concludes about Sikhs in Britain that there are no indications of losing their sense of distinctiveness, they form a less comprehensively united community than outsiders commonly suppose, and while popular and democratic aspects of the
Sikh heritage are having a far-reaching impact on trajectories of adaptation, these outcome should be regarded as a British phenomenon. O’Connell (2000) provides the study of Sikhs in Canada explaining their history, identity, institutions and education mentioning that there are possibilities for dramatic new development in the Canadian Sikh religio-ethnic experience if Sikh women educated in Canada direct their energies toward Sikh community affairs. Mann (2000) explains the history and religious life of Sikhs in the US, and categorizes issues that confront them as religious, political and ethnic relationship with Punjab, their relationship with mainstream American society and the internal dynamics of the Sikh community and its future aspirations. He concludes that children of immigrants reared in the U.S. will normally move into roles of leadership, and will make changes suited to their own needs.

Recently books about Indian migrants in Asia have been published which contain some material on the Sikh diaspora. Sandhu and Mani (2006) edited a book about Indians in Southeast Asia. It included chapters mentioning Sikhs in Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia. About Philippine, Rye (2006) mentioned that though Sikhs and Sindhis built the *gurdwara* together, yet in view of the difference in religious practices among the two, the Sindhis made their own temple later. He also discussed the issue of child education and found that Sikh children who were educated in Catholic schools knew more about the contents of Bible than the holy book of the Sikhs, namely, *Guru Granth* and they were accustomed to behaving according to each different situation, for example, when they were with their Filipino friends, they would behave in a certain manner and when they were with family or when they visited the *gurdwara*, their conduct would be very different.

In Mani’s papers (2006a, 2006b, 2006c) we can find description about Sikhs in Indonesia and Thailand. In north Sumatra, Indonesia, depending on vision about child
education, the Sikh migrants were divided into two groups. One is the group which supports an Indonesian language medium school operated by the gurdwara. Another is the group which claims that English should be used as the medium of instruction. They always face the dilemma about becoming fully Indonesian as against remaining Indian (Mani, 2006a). Among Sikhs in Jakarta there were divisions among them based on the period of migration, place of origin and areas of settlement. It was rare to see their relation beyond those differences. On the other hand, there were relationships including marriage with Tamil Hindus who had similar position economically, and similar experience as migrants (Mani, 2006b). Sikhs living in Thailand provided a different picture. They had difference in their religious practice and faith. There were Sikhs not from Punjab but Sind and Peshawar. However, organizations for social services like education and health care were managed mainly by gurdwara beyond religious difference (Mani, 2006c). Sandhu (2006) also showed that Sikhs in Malaysia did not have integrated institutions and it was difficult to have a collective identity as Sikhs in Malaysia.

Kesavapany, Mani and Ramasamy (2008) edited a volume about Indians in East Asia that contains papers describing Sikhs settled in the Philippines, Hong Kong, Kobe and Tokyo in Japan. From the paper by Salazar (2008), we could know that the number of Punjabi Sikhs in Philippines had increased recently. Most of them worked in the financial sector. Usually when Filipinos start their small businesses, they often used Sikhs’ financial services. Keezhangatte (2008) focuses on the gurdwara in Hong Kong. He found that it was visited not only by Sikhs but also Hindus and local Chinese. The gurdwara issued and distributed English and Chinese pamphlets about Sikhism to visitors including students who visit it.
Studies on Sikhs in Japan

Studies on Indians and Sikhs in Japan can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Sawa and Minamino (2003) described the history and society of Indian migrants in Japan. They discussed the old community in Kobe which consists of Gujarati Jain, Sindhi and Punjabi. Recent increase in the Indian population, including those of Sikhs, mainly in Tokyo was also mentioned. Tsubakitani and Tanaka (2008) studied the Indian community including Sikhs in Kobe, Japan. They found that one could find diasporic features in their identity and networks. An earlier study done by the researcher herself (Azuma, 2008) also focused on Indian migrants including Sikhs in and around Tokyo. In her research she emphasized the role of the gurdwara as their gathering place and its activities were explained as devices for forming their networks.

Sikh Migrants as Diaspora

Many studies have described the history of Sikhs’ migration, discussed the process of community building and delineated the problems that migrants are facing in their new adopted societies. Most have beginning of their diasporic history around the turn of twentieth century under the British colonial rule. Explanations of community and gurdwara building are mainly centered on U.K. and North America after 1960s when the population of Indian migrants was in flux in these regions.

In literature about Indian diaspora, it is apparent that seeing Indian migrant as an integrated group of ‘Indian diaspora’ is difficult because of their diverse backgrounds. From the existing studies we can find differences of Indian migrants in terms of their places of origin, ethnicity, religions, languages, period of migration, castes and occupations. Yet, despite these differences, Indian migrants are called
Indian ‘Diaspora’ and treated like a homogenous group. Shukla (2003) argues mainly this point as problem of framework of nation-state and identity. A similar approach can be taken when discussing the Sikh migrants. Some scholars like Dusenbery (2007) and Singh (1996) discuss the contradiction of ‘Sikh Diaspora’ and they showed problems caused by recognition of Sikh migrants as integrated ‘Sikh Diaspora’. Others like Tatla (1999) explain “Sikh Diaspora” as being based on territorial nationalism that hoped for building a nation-state for Sikhs in Punjab, a viewpoint not shared by Dusenbery and Singh. In all their studies, however, there was an overlap of description about identity politics of Sikh migrants as a problem that they faced in their respective host societies. Thus, although the position of the authors is not the same, a common theme of identity politics resulting in discussions about the global network of Sikhs as diaspora can be witnessed.

Identity politics of Sikh migrants is related to the problem of wearing religious symbols mainly their turban and kirpan. It showed us that their identities were practiced through “wearing” religious symbols individually and collectively, practices that clashed with the different cultural codes in host society resulting in a situation of conflict among the two groups – locals and the migrants. Struggle for gaining their right to put on religious symbols in public space was seen as part of the settlement process of Sikh migrants.

In the books discussing the South Asian migrants, various aspects of their social and cultural life have been covered. Some like Hinnells (2000) focus upon the signification of themes such as, distinctive histories of migration in the different countries; consequences of life in the new world for religious practice in sacred space, institutional, public, and private worship; the effects of public policy in the various countries on the minorities; strategies of adaptation; the place of women in the
religions in the West etc. From the description by Jacobsen (2008) we can know that problematics of religion and migration relate to generational differences and reinforcement of religious identities, religious rivalry, and religious boundaries.

Although the articles in the various books show transnational and diasporic features of migrants’ culture including religion, very few examine how their cultural practices formed and characterized migrants’ life. These topics have especially not been discussed in the previous studies on migrants in Japan, but this holds true for the Sikhs in Japan as well, particularly those living in Tokyo and its vicinity. Even the researcher’s article (Azuma, 2008) which has mentioned Sikhs in and around Tokyo, shows the Sikhs as one example of Indians in Japan rather than being studied as a specific community and as a result their life and social background are not discussed sufficiently. This research is done in the belief that the study of Sikhs in Japan can give us some space to consider the important problematics related to migrants’ culture that features their life.

Earlier works have indicated that for a study of diaspora it is necessary to describe not only the migrants’ life in host society but also their life in home society. However, most such studies focus mostly on transnational networks and the diasporic feature in migrants’ life (especially in social and cultural practices) in relation to their places of origin are not discussed sufficiently. It is our contention that when we discuss cultural aspect of migrants, it is necessary to examine not merely their life in host society but also their life in their home place because culture and cultural codes of migrants that affects their life have been acquired in their home place. Although, by passing the time in the host society, migrants know and gain the “ways” of the host society, however, at the same time, they have translocal connections with their home and the “ways” of home and host society interact in the life of migrants. That is why
in any study of the migrants’ social and cultural life, it is important to describe both the culture in migrants’ home and in host society. With this in mind, in order to examine the life of Sikh migrants in Japan, this thesis will focus upon the cultural and social background that they have been used to in their homes and which they might have brought from their home to Japan. At the same time, cultural and social aspects that they learn after migrating and problems that they face after migration are also issues that will be discussed by us.

**Theoretical Bases of the Study**

This study is conducted along the lines of the diaspora approach discussed by Steven Vertovec (1999, 2000). Through his various works he has indicated the importance of diaspora study by pointing out that populations of diaspora are growing in prevalence, number, and self-awareness and the diaspora can be emerging as (or have historically long been) significant players in the construction of national narratives, regional alliances or global political economies (Vertovec, 1999).

As we discussed earlier in this chapter, Vertovec defines diaspora as social form, as type of consciousness and as mode of cultural production. In the discussion of diaspora as social form, he explained that a general social category of diaspora can be compiled from a range of descriptive and theoretical works which include, 1) specific kinds of social relationships cemented by special ties to history and geography, 2) a tension of political orientations given that diasporic peoples are often confronted with divided loyalties to homelands and host countries, 3) the economic strategies of transnational groups represent an important new source and force in international finance and commerce. And it was explained by him in the contemporary period all these are characterized by relative ease of transportation and communication, namely
by (a) globally dispersed yet collectively self-identified ethnic groups, (b) the territorial states and contexts where such groups reside, and (c) the homeland states and contexts whence they or their forebears came. Diaspora as type of consciousness is shown as a particular kind of awareness said to be generated among contemporary transnational communities and is variously described as being marked by a dual or paradoxical nature which constituted negatively by experiences of discrimination and exclusion, and positively by identification with an historical heritage (such as ‘Indian civilization’) or contemporary world cultural or political forces (such as ‘Islam’). And this can include the awareness of multi-locality and links of the imagination to the place of origin. Diaspora as mode of cultural production is described as involving the production and reproduction of transnational social and cultural phenomena and this has been equated with anthropology’s now commonplace anti-essentialist, constructivist, and processual approach to ethnicity. The point being made is that cultural production of diaspora involves not only preservation of the old practices with the help of global media and communications but also re-creation of new ones.

He also notes that diaspora can be understood in terms of context and agency. Context implies the historical context of the diasporic process and corresponds with viewing diaspora as a social form. In the earlier studies on diaspora the focus has been only on structural conditions. It is stated in these accounts that social, cultural and religious transformations outside India occur due to ‘external’ structural conditions such as the demographic, political and economic circumstances. For scholars like Peel (1991) evaluating aspects of structure is a necessary step in ‘comparing histories’ of diasporic social formations. However, Vertovec feels that without additional levels of analysis, such structure-only analyses often result in portraying social groups as passive recipients of change fashioned by overpowering ‘forces’, rather than as active...
agents participating in transformational processes of many kinds. In his view, while discussing diaspora, along with the structural matters, or as Mitchell (1987) puts it ‘the constraints imposed upon these actors by the wider social order in which they are enmeshed’, we must also focus on what Holy (1987) calls ‘the social reality as constructed through actors’ practical accomplishments’ and ‘the meaning of social phenomena as resulting from actors’ construction and negotiation of their interpretations’.

Thus, diasporic phenomena need to be approached by way of both structure (historical conditions) and agency (the meanings held, and practices conducted, by social actors). Agency includes the issue of the actual lived experiences referred to as ‘bodily experience’ by Merleau-Ponty (2002). While explaining the notion of agency Roger Ballard (1994) refers to the concept of ‘adaptive strategies’ to describe how diverse South Asian groups in the U.K. follow their own distinctive dynamics. He believes that these groups can be best understood as going through the process of adaptation, and in doing so, delineating their own particular set of cultural, linguistic, religious and kinship resources to chart a better future for themselves. With the help of this process diasporas may try to become an integral part of the host society and, more importantly, do so on their own terms.

This notion disagrees with the long-standing ‘deprivationist’ view that sees diasporas as helpless and passive groups whose life courses are determined by the structural conditions of the host society. Rather, it emphasizes change in terms of the production and re-creation of the socio-cultural practices and habitus with adjustment to host society (Vertovec, 1999). This theoretical frame of diaspora by Vertovec shows that any analysis of diaspora should focus on the discussions of both the aspects of structure and agency and to cover all these different aspects required in the
study of diaspora, this approach provided by him (Vertovec, 1999; 2000) will be used in our study.

Research questions and objectives in this thesis correspond to the features of diaspora provided by Vertovec that have been discussed above where he defines diaspora as social form, type of consciousness and mode of cultural production. When we use the term ‘diaspora as social form’ we mean the historical, social and cultural circumstances of migrants and the changes and problems faced by them as a diasporic group. ‘Diaspora as type of consciousness’ implies the migrants’ experiences, memories and practices. ‘Diaspora as mode of cultural production’ includes the features of a deterritorialized group and constant transformation of images and meanings in migrants’ culture. Thus, we shall strive to examine the life and experiences of the Sikhs in Japan by making use of these concepts given by Vertovec which help us comprehend the migrants’ culture and society in a more comprehensive manner.

**Research Questions**

Although there exist a plethora of diaspora studies, some important questions remain unanswered till today. For instance, dynamic, transnational and global flows in the migrants’ life are focused upon in most studies. Previous researches show that people who have settled far away from their countries of origin continue to have networks with their home that support their continuous belief and faith. However, the following questions need for the examination:

1) What kind of diasporic features (diverse, multiple, complex, etc.) can we find in migrants’ life?

2) How do the social and cultural practices of migrants change through the
experiences as diaspora?

3) How does re-creation of culture relate to consciousness of migrants in their everyday life through interaction of socio-cultural codes between the host society and their home?

In addition, the Sikh migrants in Japan have not been shown enough interest in any previous studies. Some articles (Sawa and Minamino, 2003; Tsubakitani and Tanaka, 2008; Azuma, 2008) mention their cultural practices and social relationship in Japan. One of the points that emerge in these descriptions is that the cultural and social activities of the migrants are influenced by those in their home villages in India, although some changes have taken place in these practices. However, one cannot know the exact nature and amount of those changes because the existing studies focus only on the migrants’ cultural and social life in Japan without comparing it to the same aspects in their home villages. Although we can refer to many previous studies about Sikhs in U.K., U.S. and Canada, we will find differences of the feature between Sikhs in Japan and Sikhs in those regions because there are distinctions in their scale of the community, the historical processes of migration and the periods of community building. Sikh migrants in Japan have uniqueness in their feature comparing to the other Sikh migrants.

To examine this problematic, study of the Sikh migrants in Japan has been attempted in this thesis. We have tried to study the Sikh migrants in Japan by focusing on their social and cultural practices in the host and home societies. For examining these issues, this thesis set the following objectives.
Objectives

Based on the research questions above, the main objectives of this study were:

1) To study the social and cultural circumstances that prompted Sikhs to migrate to Japan;

2) To compare the economic, social and cultural aspects of the Sikh diaspora’s life in Japan with those in their home villages in India. In other words, we strove to learn, firstly, whether their cultural and social practices have changed, and if changed, how and how much they have changed; and secondly, to what extent the cultural and social experiences in their home villages get transplanted to their life in Japan.

3) To study problems the Sikhs face as a diasporic group, as well as, the strategies adopted to cope with them; and

4) To examine the preservation, as well as, re-creation of the social and cultural practices by the Sikh migrants in Japan in view of their new situation.

Method of Study

To study the Sikh diaspora in Japan, it was necessary to apprehend how, when and for what they moved to Japan and what kind of experiences they have faced in their life as diaspora. Since comprehension of all these aspects is best obtained through participant observation which requires the researcher to go in for deep and intensive study of the group that is the subject of analysis, we made use of the above method as well.

The research for this thesis was conducted both in Japan and India. In Japan, the research was done in Kobe city and the Greater Tokyo region. Most of the Sikh population in Japan is found in the Kansai and Kanto regions. The Kansai region includes the city of Kobe where many of the Sikh families are located. There are two
organizations for the Indian families in Kobe, viz., the Indian Club and the Indian Social Society which serve as the meeting place for these migrants. The Indian Chamber of Commerce Japan also helps Indian migrants, who work as merchants. A look at the list of members of the Indian Chamber of Commerce Japan revealed that there were about 1000 Indians living in Kobe out of which approximately 10% are Sikhs. We were able to contact around 75 such persons for our study, the place of contact being the Kobe gurdwara (Sikh temple).

The Kanto region includes the area of Tokyo city and some outer areas surrounding it, commonly known as Greater Tokyo. There are a few organizations for Indian residents in Kanto region from where one can obtain the details about the Indians living in that area. A research by Tominaga (1994) shows that in 1990 around half of Indian residents in Tokyo and its vicinity were the members of one of those organizations, namely, Indian Community Activities, Tokyo. The members’ list showed that about 17% were Punjabis mainly engaged in commerce, management of restaurants, and working in the Indian Embassy. Another organization is Indian Community of Edogawa established in the year 2000 for Indians who live in Edogawa ward in Tokyo. The members mostly consist of IT engineers and the families. From the members’ list provided to us by these organizations we were able to estimate that roughly 2000 Sikhs were residing in this region. Despite our strong efforts, we were able to contact only around 40 Sikhs, again from the gurdwara located in Tokyo city because a large number of Sikh migrants in this area are staying there illegally and hence are difficult to contact. Thus, Kobe and Tokyo (including Greater Tokyo) are the places where this study was conducted. For study of the native areas of the Sikh migrants in Japan, in India the two villages that had sent Sikhs mainly to Greater Tokyo area were selected. One village is located in the Terai region of Uttarakhand
and the other is located near India-Pakistan border, west of Jammu city, in the state of Jammu & Kashmir. The population of each village is approximately two thousand. For the purpose of this study ten families were studied intensively in each village while we also had informal conversations with other members of both the villages in order to garner information related to the subject of this thesis.

The techniques used to gather information were semi-structured interviews, long informal conversations and participant observation, all being methods of ethnographic research to study the experiences, practices, memory, symbols and representations which characterize the culture of Sikh migrants in Japan and to realize their social and cultural situation in each place. Through participant observation which is the very source of ethnography, we were able to obtain detailed descriptions of the lives of the Sikhs in Kobe and Tokyo which helped us interpret the life of the Sikh diaspora in Japan. The participant observation in Kobe, Tokyo and the home villages in India was conducted firstly, in the gatherings at the *gurdwara* by doing *sewa* (free-voluntary service) and preparing *langar* (community meal) with the devotees and secondly, for studying cultural and social events at their homes by attending family functions, staying with some families for a steady period and doing housework together, visiting their work places and talking with their colleagues. Through having long informal conversations with the family members, neighbors and friends we examined how they created their culture in each different situations and what kind of life they have in the social and cultural context.

Thus, primarily, this study had an explanatory design and relied mainly on qualitative methods. We conducted diagnosis of data from semi-structured interview and long informal conversation and description of ethnography from participant observation. The data have been given the form of case studies from which the
conclusions have been drawn about various aspects in the following chapters.

**Chapter Scheme**

In accordance with objectives and research questions of this thesis stated in the present chapter, we have proceeded with the discussions in the following chapters. Chapter II discusses the historical background of the Sikh diaspora in Japan and the circumstances of their migration by looking at their case studies to understand the context of the Sikh diaspora in Japan. Chapter III focuses on the problems which the Sikhs in Japan have faced and the strategies used by them to cope with these, once again by discussing their case studies. In Chapter IV we have attempted to compare various aspects of the life of the Sikhs in Japan with those in their home villages in India by focusing on their social and cultural practices and type of consciousness of the Sikh diaspora in Japan. Chapter V summarizes the discussion offered in the previous chapters and offers conclusions of this study.