Chapter II
History of Migration in Japan and Case Studies of Sikh Migrants

This chapter starts with an explanation about the historical background of migrants in Japan to understand the context of Sikh diaspora in Japan. Following the description of the general history of migrants in Japan, Indian and Sikh migrants are focused on, which is then followed by some case studies of those Sikhs in Japan who formed part of our study.

Migrants in Japan
From 1850s to 1945

To locate and characterize Sikh migrants in Japan, it is necessary to see the historical process of migration in Japan. Migrants in modern Japan originated as a consequence of the commercial treaties of Japan with the United States, the Netherlands, Russia, Britain and France in 1858 by Tokugawa government (1603 to 1867). Because of the treaties, ports were opened in Kanagawa (Yokohama), Nagasaki and Hakodate in 1859. Hyogo (Kobe) and Niigata were also opened as ports in 1867 and 1868, respectively. Foreign merchants settled and engaged in trade in designated areas of these ports (Yamawaki, 2003).

From 1859, when foreign settlements were established, to the end of the Second World War, there were three major groups of foreigners in Japan. The first were the Westerners, such as British and Americans, who stayed in Japan as traders and professionals. They were employed by the Japanese government. Second, there were Chinese, who remained the biggest foreign group until the annexation of Korea in 1910. Third, there were Koreans, who surpassed the Chinese to become the biggest group around 1917 (Yamawaki, 2003). Thus, the early foreigners in
Japan were Westerners, mainly British and Americans, and Chinese. Many of the
Western merchants came from China as agents of firms already trading in the
Chinese ports. Among those traders, there were Indians including Sikhs, who
settled in Yokohama till the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923 and then shifted to
Kobe. Most of the Chinese were brought to Japan by those Western merchants as
compradors, cooks, servants, and longshoremen. Although the Chinese were not
officially allowed to reside in the settlements, their existence was overlooked by
the Japanese authorities because they were employed by the Westerners
(Yamawaki, 2003). After conclusion of a treaty with China in 1871 (effective in
1873) by Meiji government, the Chinese were officially allowed to reside in the
settlements. In 1876 a treaty was concluded between Korea and Japan. Koreans
were also allowed to live and work in Japan. Before and during the Second World
War, Chinese and Korean workers had entered Japan. The annexation of Taiwan in
1895 and Korea in 1910 gave a certain degree of occupational and residential
mobility within Japan proper (Weiner, 2003).

In Taiwan and Korea economic deprivation and political marginalization on
account of their being colonial peripheries prompted the decision of many
Taiwanese and Koreans to migrate to Japan. Between 1915 and 1945, the demand
for cheap industrial labor remained more or less constant, and migration from the
colonial periphery was the self-perpetuating response to labor market conditions in
Japan. Active recruitment of colonial labor was initially stimulated by the
industrial boom which accompanied Japan’s entry into the First World War.
Migrants of Korean and Chinese origin were unrestricted at that time. Population
flowed from southern Korea, in particular, to the major centers of capital and
industrial accumulation in the Kanto and Kansai region and to the coalfields of
north Kyushu and Hokkaido. They worked with low wages and in inhuman
conditions. In addition, it was regarded that their racial and cultural characteristics could be a potential threat to the integrity of the Japanese polity. Hence, restrictions on the entry of Korean laborers were introduced in 1925. However, they were poorly conceived and had little impact on population movement into Japan (Weiner, 2003).

Till 1945, the Korean population in Japan continued to increase. Their number in 1918 was 18,690 and became 881,347 in 1938 and 2,100,000 in 1945. Manchurian Chinese were also subject to labor conscription from 1942. As in Korea, recruitment quotas were only rarely filled on a voluntary basis and the authorities in Manchukuo regularly turned to conscripted labor from North China. Between 1943 and 1945, approximately 42,000 Chinese were transported to Japan, of whom only 31,000 survived the war (Weiner, 2003).

From 1945 to Late 1980s

After 1945 the vast majority of Chinese left Japan, leaving behind only an estimated 30,000 by 1949 (Lee, 2001). Two-third of Koreans in Japan also returned to the Korean peninsula after 1945. However, the repatriation effort faced difficulty in international politics and political confusion in Korea. The rest of Koreans decided to eke out a living in postwar Japan (Lee, 2001).

In the postwar decades international labor flows to Japan remained minimal, despite rapid growth in labor demand. During the mid to late 1960s, rapid growth in labor demand was largely satisfied through annual increases in the number of school graduates entering the job market and internal migration. In the 1960s, rural-urban migration totaled an estimated ten million persons and Japan was able to use rural migrants as its pool of low-wage labor. And the migration and subsequent settlement of Koreans, and to a lesser extent Chinese as foreign labor,
declined substantially during this period as compared to the pre-1945 period (Weiner, 2003).

However, the situation was changing. By mid 1970s villages in Japan had been decimated, and the share of national population residing in urban places had increased from a little over one-third in 1950 to more than three-quarters by this time. With incomes and wages rising, the stage was being set for foreign migration into urban Japan. These began to be acted out in the 1980s when labor scarcities combined with the rising value of the yen against the dollar.

Japanese employers, especially those in small to medium size manufacturing and construction industries, were confronted with severe problems of reducing costs to compete in foreign as well as domestic markets. Although from the 1970s Japanese women (especially married women past child-bearing age) in increasing numbers began to fill low wages jobs as so-called “part-time” workers in manufacturing and services, they were not sufficient to meet the demand. As a result, the use of foreign migrant labor became Japan’s next source of low-cost workers in the 1980s (Douglass and Roberts, 2003).

The beginning of foreign labor’s influx in Japan was seen in the recruitment of Asian women, chiefly from the Philippines and Thailand for sex industry in the 1970s. By the 1990s, well over 50,000 women were coming to Japan annually as sex workers. While the vast majority of them came under short-term six-month visas, in 1992 alone 90,000 foreign women were classified as visa overstayers, with an estimated 90 percent of them coming from sex industry. Thus, Japan’s labor migration initially consisted overwhelmingly of women (Douglass and Roberts, 2003).

However, from the latter half of the 1980s, migration of foreign women working Japanese sex industry began to be matched by the migration of men into
low-wage jobs often described as “the three Ks” (kitanai, kiken, kitshui - in English “the three Ds”, dirty, dangerous and difficult). This was caused by domestic labor shortages in Japan and yen revaluation (Douglass and Roberts 2003).

1990s onwards

In the late 1980s Japan had been in the period of the bubble economy. Huge amounts of capital were coming from the domestic land and stock markets and the function of Tokyo as a money-supplying world city was expanded. Due to capital accumulation by some industries, such as, automobile, electric and electronics manufacturing, this economic process was accelerated. Under these conditions, labor shortages become highly acute in both service and manufacturing industries. As a result a larger number of foreign workers were selectively brought into both growing and declining industrial sectors (Machimura, 2003). In addition to foreign male workers, many women were also coming to Japan as their spouses. The rising numbers of both men and women also brought about an increasing likelihood of family and community formation, and of children being born to immigrant households (Douglass and Roberts, 2003).

In the early 1990s, two events made a profound impact on migration to Japan. The first was the revision of immigration laws which began in 1989 and was further refined in subsequent years with the intention simultaneously to open the doors to large-scale immigration of workers of Japanese descendants (called Nikkei), predominantly from Latin America. At the same time, the law revision aimed to close the doors on all other would-be migrants seeking low-wage work in Japan. The second event was the bursting of Japan’s bubble economy, which sent Japan into a deep recession that was caught up in the finance and economic in Asia (Douglass and Roberts, 2003).
This opening of immigration to persons of Japanese descent quickly resulted in more than 200,000 migrants from Latin America coming to Japan. Yet, closing of legal channels for immigration from other countries has been more complex. The number of migrants from some countries that had been in position for easy access previously, such as Bangladesh, Iran and Pakistan, showed drops as the Japanese government temporarily abolished bilateral visa waiver agreements in 1989, 1992 and 1989 respectively. On the other hand, the numbers of migrants from China and Korea, as well as women from the Philippines, have continued to increase. Thus, the effects of the recession had slowed down the growth of immigration from some groups, but overall migration still continued at a historically very high level. The principal impact of the restrictive policy of the government seemed to have been to make foreign workers more vulnerable in terms of job security and hours paid for work, rather than simply to curtail migration (Douglass and Roberts, 2003).

However, apart from Japanese descendents, there were unskilled workers hired by Japanese companies with legal permission called trainee system, a practice that continues to exist even today. The trainee system was put into place in 1993, ostensibly as a system to offer technical transfer to people from developing countries. In practice the system is used principally as a mechanism to recruit foreign labor at below-market wages for firms in sectors officially categorized as suffering from severe labor shortage. Japanese government allowed and continues to allow increasing numbers of companies to hire them as “trainees” to keep the pretense of no migration of non-Nikkei workers into the country. The majority of the trainees are from China, followed by the Philippines and Indonesia. These workers are not protected by labor standards. And they receive “allowances” that are significantly lower than the wages for even indirectly hired authorized foreign
workers. Like the authorized workers, they too have found their waged cut back due to a series of deductions unilaterally imposed by employers (Douglass and Roberts, 2003).

In the recession of the 1990s labor demand leveled off. Nonetheless, migrant workers still have come from abroad. In addition to Japanese descendants, many of them came from other Asian countries to work. By the late 1990s, there were approximately 300,000 visa overstayers. More than three times of this number is the legal migrants with work permits estimated to be in Japan (Douglass and Roberts, 2003). And migrants in Japan have diversity in their nationalities, visa statuses, resident places, occupations, age, sex and periods of staying. Among these migrants are Sikh migrants in and around Tokyo that this study focuses on along with those in Kobe.

**History of Indian Migrants in Japan**

*Indian Migrants in Kobe*

As we mentioned briefly, there is difference between Indians in Kobe and Tokyo which has been caused by variation of historical background in each place. This section provides an overview of Indians in Kobe which began with the India-Japan trading relations which started Indian migration to Japan. We start the description of Indians in Kobe with an explanation about two cities, Yokohama and Kobe, because the starting point of the history of Indians in Kobe relates to India-Japan trading at the port of both Kobe and Yokohama.

*Community building in Yokohama and Kobe (1854-1939)*

Though Japan opened the ports for some foreign countries in 1854, we can find the
first mention of India-Japan trading in the statistics of around 1878. In 1893 Bombay route was opened by NYK (Nippon Yusen Kaisha, Japanese shipping company) and the route made the trading expand and increased the amount of trading. Following the route, Calcutta route (1910) and Madras route (1936) were launched.

The first Indian merchants were seen in Yokohama around 1894. In Yokohama silk export to India flourished through Indian trading companies which were operated by Parsis and Sindhis. In 1921 Indian Merchant Association of Yokohama was set up. There were 60 mercantile establishments in Yokohama. However, the great Kanto earthquake hit the Tokyo metropolitan area including Yokohama in 1923 and 23 Indians out of 170 became its victims. Indians shifted for residing temporarily from Yokohama to Kobe, where their kith and kin had lived. In the next year, 24 Indian merchants came back to Yokohama chartering a ship from NYK. Though Yokohama City enticed Indian merchants to the city for reconstruction of silk trading, many of them kept staying in Kobe. Since this movement from Yokohama to Kobe, Kobe had been the major center of Indian population till the middle of 1970s.

In Kobe first India-Japan trading was held around 1885. Although Yokohama was central port for silk trading, Kobe developed cotton trading. In 1900s import of cotton and Rangoon rice made great strides in India-Japan trading and by 1930s cotton trading between India and Japan became vigorous. Japan found Indian markets as destination for cotton textile export instead of Chinese markets for Japan which had shrunk due to the anti-Japan movement after the Manchurian Incident (1931), in which Japanese militarists staged an explosion in order to provide a pretext for war against China. In statistics firstly 30 Indians are shown in 1900. The number of Indians surpassed 100 in 1917. Indians in Kobe established the Orient Club to promote their amity in 1904 and the Club later
became The India Club built in 1913. The number of Indian trading companies owned by Indians was 120-130 in 1925, 163 in 1937 and more than 200 in 1939, when Indian population in Kobe became over 600. During this period, they founded the Silk Merchant Association (latter The Indian Social Society) in the early 1930s, and The Indian Chamber of Commerce Japan in 1937. At the south of central town in Kobe, more than 130 Indians consisting of merchants and their families had lived. That area was called “Bombay Town” because many of Indian residents in the area were from Western India.

*World War II Period (1939-1945)*

With the launching of the Pacific War in 1941, regular ships/liners between Japan and India were stopped. Most Indians closed their trading companies in Japan, and left Japan for Bangkok, Singapore and Rangoon and the Indian population in Japan shrunk to around 40 within a few years. In 1942 Indian National Association was set up. Indians who had stayed in Japan in this period had related to Indian independence movement. Japanese government supported the movement leaded by R. B. Bose and S. C. Bose. In the history of Indians in Japan, it could be said that this time is unique because most Indians engaged in not commercial but political activity, though in the other periods mainly they consisted of merchants, who pursued their trading business. After the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty, Indian merchants came to Japan again and started their work actively.

*Post World War II (WW2) Period: Re-building of Indian Community (1945-1979)*

In 1948, Japan-India trading was re-opened due to cotton purchase by Japan. As was found during the pre-war period, Japan imported mainly cotton from India and exported fabrics to India. However, this arrangement was changing according to the
demand of the market. Indian merchants in Japan targeted not only Japan-India trading but also global market accessible by their family network all over the world. After WW2 Jain pearl traders launched their business in Kobe, which was the important place for pearl trading as the center of processing and distribution, though Indian merchants in Japan had not gotten into the market before WW2. Beside pearls, the other categories of business from groceries to hardware were dealt by Indian merchants.

Because of Special procurements of Korean War in 1950, Indian trading companies penetrated Kobe. In 1950, 60 Indian trading companies were found in Kobe, 6 in Osaka, 1 in Yokohama, and 20 in Tokyo. However, the central place for commercial activity by Indians shifted from Kobe to Osaka. This occurred because the telecommunication system in Kobe did not give proper service and the offices of Indians in Kobe did not get direct phone lines to Japanese trading companies in Osaka which they needed for contacting. Because of this uncomfortable situation for Indian merchants, many of them changed the location of their offices from Kobe to Osaka. In 1953, the number of Indian trading companies in Osaka surpassed the number in Kobe. Although the city of Kobe planned to re-build “Bombay Town” in 1954, Indian trading companies which had begun to operate in Osaka did not come back to Kobe. The Indian Chamber of Commerce which re-opened in 1949 in Kobe shifted to Osaka in 1957. However, although Osaka became the center of Indian commerce, they maintained their residences in Kobe.

Yokohama prepared some buildings to invite Indian merchants to the city and the City of Yokohama sold the buildings with very cheap prices to Indians. Nevertheless, many Indians preferred to run their businesses from Osaka. In 1958 there were 150 Indian trading companies in Osaka, while there were only 20 in Yokohama.
Since 1953 Indian community has been seen in Okinawa too, which has been governed by the U.S. Forces. A Sindhi firm opened a clothing store as Post Exchange, which is operated inside U.S. base. Till the beginning of 1960s another three firms started their business. All these firms were based in Hong Kong and were run by Sindhis. The staffs of these firms came to Okinawa via Hong Kong. Some of them began to create their own business apart from those firms since 1960s. In 1961 Indian Social Association was established for the purpose of improving the lives of Indians in Okinawa. After reversion of Okinawa to Japan, 1972, there was almost no Indian newcomer because it became difficult to get resident visas. The Yamaguchi prefecture also attracted a certain number of Indian residents. The reason for this could be that Yamaguchi also had a U.S. base, and like Okinawa, there were Indians who run their business through Post Exchange contract.

*Nationwide Spread of Indian Population: 1980-onwards*

Since the 1980s, India has liberalized its economy gradually. A comprehensive economic liberalization took place in the 1990s. As a consequence, some Japanese enterprises built their factories in India. The automobile corporations like Suzuki not only constructed their plants, but also sent Indians to Japan for technical training. In addition to them, unskilled Indian workers have also come and lived around Tokyo. These new types of flow have been seen mainly since the end of 1980s.

Since 1980s the location of Indian residents has spread to other parts of country besides the cities mentioned above and Indian population has kept increasing. Though Indian community in Kobe sustained the scale, the number of Indians in Hyogo prefecture, which includes Kobe city was surpassed by Tokyo in 1990. Since 1990s Indians tend to stay mainly in Kanto area, which consists of Tokyo and its vicinity. There are varieties in their occupations – trading, travel agent, restaurant
management, factory labor, office worker, IT engineer, cook, construction section worker, grocery shop keeper etc. In Tokyo and its vicinity, there is no formal organization like Kobe’s that the Indians can join, though we can find some groups and the gathering based on ethnicity, company, area of residence, and so on. Indians in Yokohama, Okinawa and Yamaguchi have kept their business, although their numbers remain inconstant.

Sikhs in Japan

It’s difficult to identify the first Sikh who came to Japan, and the time when the person came. Additionally, one cannot specify how many Sikhs are included in Indian population in Japan because there are no statistics available based on religion. Further, one cannot find any historical record about Sikhs in Japan because the available historical records also show only the number of people and their nationality without mentioning their religion and name. However, this much is clear that most of the Sikh population in Japan is found clustered in Kobe and Greater Tokyo. Though Sikh merchants had stayed in Kobe before World War Two, it seems that their number was not large enough in the pre World War Two period to be included in any record books as was the case with Sindhi merchants. Also, while the Sindhi merchants established their community center before World War Two, the Sikh temple as a community center for Sikhs was built in 1952. Hence, we can say that the Sikh community came into its own after the establishment of the gurdwara in Kobe after World War Two.

Since 1980s the Indian population in Kobe has remained around one thousand. In a research held in 1989 (Tominaga, 1994) it was estimated that out of the 285 Indian families, there were around 25 Sikh families in Kobe. It means that of the total number of Indians living in Kobe, approximately 10% would be Sikhs,
which is the smallest ratio among the groups of Indian origin living in Japan consisting of Sindhis, Punjabi Hindus, Jains and Sikhs. Like other Indians, most Sikhs in Kobe are merchants dealing with electronic, automobile parts, textiles, sundries etc.

On the other hand, in Kanto region consisting of Tokyo and Greater Tokyo, since 1990s the number of Indians living there has surpassed Kansai region including Kobe. As mentioned earlier, Kobe and Tokyo are two central regions where Sikhs live. Sikhs of both places migrated to Japan for economic reasons. Sikh merchants have been seen since 1950s in Kobe. They came to run their own trading company or promote their business which already built by themselves depending upon networks of their family-based company and their clients. Meanwhile, Sikhs who have worked as unskilled labor began to be seen mainly since 1990s in Greater Tokyo. They came to Japan in search of jobs and good incomes relying on their friends and relatives who had already worked in Japan. Though Sikhs migrated to Japan with an economic motive, their activities could be divided into two types, namely, those operating their own companies and those employed as unskilled labor. The former type is found mainly in Kobe since 1950s and the latter type has been seen in Tokyo and its vicinity, mainly since 1990s. The different social and cultural circumstances that prompted Sikhs to migrate to Japan are shown clearly in the case studies discussed below.

**Historical Causes and Motives of Migration: Case Studies of Sikh Migrants**

Based on the general information about Sikhs in Japan mentioned above, we would like to examine the historical causes and motives of their migration to Japan. As different situations are seen between Sikhs in Kobe and Tokyo, their reasons for
coming to and staying in Japan cannot be explained as simple ones. From the following case studies, we can determine the circumstances which prompted the Sikh families to migrate to Japan. Seven cases from Kobe are described below focusing on the conditions of the migration of these families. In four of the cases the information has been provided to us by the person who migrated to Japan himself, while in three cases we have obtained the information from some family members of the person who migrated to Japan, since he is now deceased.

Sikhs in Kobe

Case 1: (Mrs. and Mr. S)

Mr. S was originally staying in Quetta, Pakistan in the pre-partition period. Due to partition of the Indian sub-continent, he and his family moved to the Indian side Punjab. He finished his B.A. at a college in Ambala and started working for a company. A few years and a few jobs later he moved to Pune where his family lived and began to work at an automobile shop run by his brother’s friend. The shop was dealing with imported auto parts from U.S. and Japan. While working there Mr. S got some experience and knowledge about auto parts and he opened his own office at Bombay.

He got an import license and had trade with customers who required the imported goods. However, there existed an uncertainty regarding the arrival of the imported auto parts in India. To avoid the risk of him and his customers not getting the goods, one customer suggested that Mr. S should go to Japan to work from there so as to ensure the effective operation of their trade.

It was big decision to come to Japan because if he could not do well, he would definitely lose the trust of his customers and would not be able to work in Bombay again. After thinking for a few days and spending sleepless nights, finally he decided

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to come to Japan. Even after his decision he remained very anxious but he could do nothing except pray that his venture will be successful. Although he did not even have an idea of how to get a passport and visa, luckily he could find some persons who had connections with Japan and with their help he was able to prepare all the documents needed to go to Japan.

Mr. S arrived at Tokyo via Singapore in 1959. He stayed at a Japanese style hotel and for the first time was exposed to Japanese customs like sleeping on floor, food, services at the hotel and so on. He spent his time full of fear because he did not know anything about them. From Tokyo he went to Osaka to meet his contacts. Staying in one of the cheapest hotel and saving money, he finished his work and got the money sent from India by his customer. Slowly, building on the trust which he had developed since starting his business in Japan, he built his office in Kobe and called his wife and children from India after one year.

Mr. S’s wife, Mrs. S was born near Peshawar, Pakistan and had stayed there till her elementary school. She learnt Punjabi and English there. Because of partition her family moved to Pune where her father was working in the military. She went to the University in Pune and studied Urdu and Hindi. While she was still studying, she got married to Mr. S when she was 19 years old. Mrs. and Mr. S had their wedding in Pune and went on to have two children while in India.

In 1960 when she was 24 years old, she moved to Japan with her son and daughter. In 1959, one year before her moving to Japan, her husband had started his business. When she went to Japan she didn’t have any tension about staying in Japan “because I was quite young. I was full of excitement, moving to new place, going abroad by air plane...” Both Mr. and Mrs. S. have been living in Kobe for 52 years. They have a daughter settled in U.S. and two sons who help Mr. S in his business.
Case 2: (Mrs. and Mr. T)

Mr. T was born and grew up in Thailand. He was a medical student at the University, but in the middle of his course he joined his father’s firm and married Mrs. T “I was studying at the medical school. But I had to help my father in his work and had to give up my dream of becoming a doctor.” Then, his father decided to open a branch of their firm in Japan. It was decided that Mr. T would be the one who would shift to Japan to build and run the office.

Mrs. T was born and grew up in Gujranwala, Pakistan. Due to partition, her family migrated to Thailand when she was 14 years old. She remembers travelling first to Calcutta by train from Gujranwala taking several days and then from Calcutta taking a KLM flight to Thailand. In 1951 she got married to Mr. T at the age of 19. Mrs. and Mr. T had their wedding in Bangkok. They married with the premise that they would move to Japan and settle there. After their marriage first Mr. T went to Japan alone and after some time Mrs. T joined him. Mr. and Mrs. T have been in Kobe for 60 years. They are leading a retired life as their son has taken over Mr. T’s trading business and is now expanding it to other countries like China.

Case 3: (Mr. and Mrs. H)

Mr. H was born and grew up in Malaysia. He went to India for his higher education in 1972 and stayed in Amritsar for two years. After that he shifted to Mysore to study dentistry at the university for four years. Finishing his study he went back to Malaysia. Though he worked as a dentist for a few years, he decided to join to the family business dealing with trading. His family firm had offices mainly in Southeast Asian countries. Besides them they planned to launch a new office in Japan and Mr. H was given the responsibility for the project. He came to Japan in 1980 and starting his business.
Mrs. H. was born and grew up in Singapore. After marriage with Mr. H she moved to Japan where her husband was going to manage his office. They started their life in the new place where they were total strangers. Mr. H launched his firm in Osaka and built a house in Kobe. He became very successful in his business and went on to become one of the chief members of Indian Chamber of Commerce, Japan. Mr. and Mrs. H have lived in Kobe more than 30 years and continue to be important members of the Indian community in Kobe.

Case 4: (Mr. P.)

Mr. P’s case is different from the others. He was born in Sialkot, Pakistan. After graduating from high school he came to Japan in 1936 to work with his uncle who had managed his business in Japan since 1932. His uncle left Japan in 1937 due to World War Two and Mr. P also left Japan and shifted to Bangkok in 1940. However, he came back to Japan in 1951 but could not establish his business to his satisfaction and hence returned to Bangkok next year. After rebuilding his economic base in Bangkok, he moved to Kobe once again in 1953 to start his own business, where he has been staying since many decades.

Case 5 (Mr. and Mrs. R)

The story of Mr. R was narrated to us by Mrs. R who herself was born in Teheran, Iran where her father shifted his business from Rawalpindi, Pakistan. When she was 12 years old, her family went back to Rawalpindi for children’s education. After two years of shifting to Rawalpindi, they migrated to New Delhi because of the partition. When she was 16 years old, she married to Mr. R whose family was running a transportation business in Uttar Pradesh in the city of Lucknow.
Mr. R was working in his family business but was however, not happy with being part of the transport business. He wanted to be independent and was searching for a chance to start a new business. With this in mind, he came to Japan with his friend in 1952 when Japan was seen as a good place to earn money. He began his business of exporting automobile parts to India in Osaka. Though his friend returned to India after staying in Japan for a few months, Mr. R decided to stay on in Kobe for his business and called Mrs. R to Japan. She came to Japan alone without any idea about Japan in 1985. Mr. R suffered from kidney disease and despite the best treatment he expired in 1994. His ashes were flown to India to be immersed in a river in Punjab. Meanwhile, his business was taken over by his son. Mrs. R has lived in Kobe with her son’s family for nearly 60 years.

Case 6: (Mr. and Mrs. E)

Mr. E’s story was narrated to us by his son who was born in Kobe in 1960. Mr. and Mrs. E came to Kobe in the middle of the 1950s to build their business base in Japan. Although Mr. E was helping his father’s business in India before coming to Japan, the business was financially unstable and he had to think of other ways to get money. He decided to start his business in Japan because those days Japan was considered as a good place to make money. He came to Kobe and stayed there for a few months. During his staying he tried to find opportunity for business. He decided to set his office in Osaka for trading business and called his wife from India to Kobe. While his company has gone through the process of bankruptcy and recovery many a times, he has managed to survive and re-establish himself by selling his house and other property. He has sent all his four children to the international school in Kobe. Mr. E’s sons studied at the international school till high school and after graduation from the high school he joined his father’s firm, which he continues to run even today.
They have run the company successfully. Currently, he is living with his mother (Mrs. E) and his wife.

**Case 7: (Mr. O and Mr. Q)**

The information regarding Mr. Q was also given to us by his son. Although Mr. Q’s father, Mr. O was teaching in a school in Indonesia after the World War Two, Mr. Q and his brothers and sisters were receiving their education in India. In 1946 one of their relatives who were in Japan called their father to join his business because he needed a person who could speak English for his trading business in Japan where it was quite difficult to find such persons those days. Mr. O decided to go to Japan and started the work dealing with textiles. By the year 1966 Mr. Q and his siblings finished their education in India and then left India for different countries. “After finishing our school we were scattered across countries, namely, U.S., Indonesia and Malaysia.” Mr. Q, on the other hand, was the one who came to Japan in 1966 where he joined his father’s business. He went on to marry a Japanese girl and has three children who are also working with him in his various businesses. Since no member from his family is settled in India, Mr. Q’s family has had no connection with the land of his ancestors. On the contrary, upon his death Mr. Q was buried Japanese style because he felt closer to the Japanese culture than to the Indian.

**Overview of the Migration Circumstances of Sikhs in Kobe**

A look at the case studies of Sikhs in Kobe makes it clear that all narratives of their migration are given by the males signifying their experiences because the decision of shifting to Japan was taken by males who had the objective of running their own business in Japan. From the viewpoint of females, their marriage made them migrate to Japan. Thus, almost all the female respondents came to Japan after their
In the case of the male respondents’ motivation of migrating to Japan, we find that there was a common reason that they hoped to start their own business in Japan although the actual situation of each case was different. For instance, Mr. S came to Osaka to make his already existing trading business effective. Mr. T had to build his office in Japan as a part of network of the family-based company for expanding the family-run enterprise. Although Mr. H also had connection with the market of Southeast Asian countries due to his family-based company, he started his trading business in Japan for development of Japanese market himself. Mr. P, Mr. O and Mr. Q came to Japan to join their families who were already managing their own businesses in Japan. Although Mr. P had to leave Japan during World War Two, he returned and started his own firm. Mr. O was also prompted by the situation in Indonesia and India where he could not find any hope for his future though he had worked as a principal of a school. Mr. R and E started their new businesses without any connections of a family-based company. Hence, various backgrounds of migration were seen in case studies. However, the common factor for all of them was that they came to Japan with their vision of starting and/or managing their own business. Another commonality is that in all cases their businesses have been taken over by their children.

The other point on which we can find similarity among Sikh migrants in Kobe is the period of coming to Japan. Most of them shifted to Japan before 1960 and have been living in Kobe for many decades. Even in the latest case of Mr. H who came to Japan in 1980, he and his family have lived in Japan for more than thirty years. From these case studies we can see that Sikhs in Kobe have come to Japan many decades ago although their conditions before shifting to Japan were different in each case. Some came from India including the area of present Pakistan while most others came...
from Southeast Asian countries. Some of them had seen economic affluence in their life before migrating to Japan, while others came from more humble backgrounds. Furthermore, according to the time and place, their migrations had been affected by various political situations like World War Two, the partition of India and Pakistan, and the Independence Movement in Southeast Asian countries.

Besides the above seven case studies we talked to many other families in Kobe and from our interaction with them we can say that these seven cases represent the other Sikhs in Kobe. These case studies let us understand that Sikhs in Kobe came to Japan mainly for financial reasons though each case had a different narrative of migration and they have lived in Kobe for many decades. Their businesses have been taken over by their sons and their family-based businesses and other collaborative ventures also have been inherited by the following generations.

**Sikhs in Tokyo**

Next we look at some cases of the Sikh migrants living in the Greater Tokyo area. As mentioned earlier, we met most of them in the Tokyo gurdwara.

**Case 8: (Mr. L)**

In 1998 Mr. L came to Japan alone from Delhi where his wife and children lived. He had worked at a manufacturing plant in Delhi. His brother-in-law who lives in Uttarakhand had worked in Japan and built his new house in India with the money which he earned in Japan. Mr. L also wanted to construct a new house like his brother-in-law, which is why he hoped to go to Japan and planned to stay in Japan for three or four years. He has worked as a construction worker in Kanagawa prefecture for seven years and visited India in 2005 to see his son for the first time since the son was born after he left for Japan.
Case 9: (Mr. G)

Mr. G came to Japan in 1999 from a village in the state of Jammu & Kashmir. He was a truck driver who delivered apples and other fruits from Kashmir to all over India. However, the work became less because of the troubled situation in Kashmir. As he told us, “There are many apple orchards in Kashmir. I have driven to Delhi, Mumbai, and Calcutta, everywhere to transport the apples. But now Kashmir became dangerous and the work has reduced under these conditions.” That was the background from which he came to Japan to find job and earn money staying for a while. When he reached Japan, his brother was already in Kanagawa, greater Tokyo. Mr. G joined a company for which his brother had worked. Though his brother went back to India, he kept working for the company.

Case 10: (Mr. X)

Mr. X was born and grew up in Delhi. In 1980 he visited Japan as a trainee and studied electricity for one year. After that he went back to India and worked as a tourist guide for the Japanese tourists for five years. He continued to have interest in Japan because his brother began his business in Japan and the Japanese economy was good condition at that time. In 1986 he came to Japan again, but found it difficult to settle in Japan because of his visa status. It took him three years to get a visa for long-term stay. During these three years he kept shunting between India and Japan with his wife. Today he runs a travel agency in Tokyo.

Case 11: (Mr. and Mrs. B)

Both Mr. B and his wife, Mrs. B are amritdhari Sikhs from Hoshiarpur, India. Mr. B got the degree of giani (Sikh priest) and was very dedicated to the Sikh faith. During the era of militancy in Punjab he became a supporter of the Khalistan movement due
to which he faced harassment from the security forces and found it difficult to stay in India. Finally, in 1999 Mr. and Mrs. B left India as political refugees and came to Japan via Hong Kong. The Japanese immigration law allows people to enter Japan as political refugees but does not permit them to work there or provide any social aid to refugee visa holders. As a result, Mrs. and Mr. B have been living in Kanto for 12 years with their three children who were born in Japan, earning their living in an illegal manner.

Case 12: (Mr. I)
Mr. I was born and raised in Kapurthala, Punjab. He studied at the Industrial Training Institute and attended a two-year training program. After passing his exam, he got a job selling agro-chemicals. At the same time, he kept taking care of his family’s agricultural fields where he grew wheat, rice, spinach, radish and coriander. In 2000 his eldest brother let him work as an electrician at a company which has offices in Malaysia and Singapore. He worked there for one and half months and then got visa through the company for visiting Japan to participate in an electrical event held in Saitama prefecture. Although his visa was for a temporary stay, he overstayed in Japan instead of going back to his job in Malaysia and Singapore. In order to get a Japanese citizenship he married a Japanese lady and has since been living in Tokyo.

Case 13: (Mr. U)
Mr. U was born and raised in Jalandhar. He had heard how attractive overseas are from Mr. Z, his younger brother who left India at the age of 14 to work in Hong Kong in a bar and restaurant which their maternal aunt’s family was running. After working there Mr. Z, the younger brother shifted to Japan to find other opportunities
for a job. Mr. U too, wanted to go abroad like his younger brother. So he decided to leave India although he was in the middle of his college course. He too came to Japan in 1998 via Hong Kong. He married a Japanese lady and had two children and brought them to India to live with his parents. Interestingly, he has been staying in Japan for 13 years and visits India at least once a year to meet his Japanese wife and children who continue to live in Jalandhar and go to Japan during the summer vacation of children’s school.

**Case 14: (Mr. V)**

Mr. V was born and grew up in a village of Terai region, Uttarakhand. Although he had studied agriculture at the university, he was not happy with his studies and started a business venture with his maternal uncle. They opened a petrol pump and employed two workers. However, they had to close it down because they could not manage the employees well. As a result, he just wanted to go to some overseas destination to work. He did not care where he went and had no preferences. All that mattered to him was that he should work abroad, be it Europe, America, Australia, or any other place. He got the opportunity to come to Japan to work when one of his relatives who had worked in Japan was planning to come back to India, and Mr. V got the chance to get his job. He reached Japan in 2001 with a tourist visa for three months. In the beginning of his stay in Japan he fell sick and could not work for around six months. While his family worried about him and suggested he should come back to India, he kept living in Japan because he did not want to lose the chance of settling abroad. He has been in Japan for many years now and has worked in industrial units as a welder.
Case 15: (Mr. C)

Mr. C was born and grew up in a village near Hoshiarpur in the Punjab state. He finished plus two classes in school and had spent time without doing any job. He thought that except for going abroad, there was no way to get a job and make money. He had heard about Japan from his elder sister whose husband had worked there. His elder brother also had been staying in Japan. In 1995 when he was twenty years old, he came to Japan and joined the company in which his brother had worked, though they did not have proper visa to stay for long time and work in Japan. In 2002 Mr. C got visa for permanent stay after his marriage to a Japanese lady. Although he divorced her a few years later, he kept on living in Japan since his visa was still valid. He married a second time in India in 2007 and since then Mr. and Mrs. C have been lived in Chiba prefecture with their son who was born in Japan.

Case 16: (Mr. and Mrs. K)

Mr. K came to Japan in 1988. He was born and grew up in a village near Nawashahar in Punjab. After the Blue Star Operation and assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984, the area around his village became insecure. Because of the insecurity, he shifted to Delhi where his relatives had lived. However, in Delhi also he could not feel any safety and just spent time without work. So he started thinking about going abroad. He decided to come to Japan because the travel agency provided him with a tourist visa to Japan. He felt that although he did not have any clear vision for his future, going to Japan to work could not be worse than staying in India. “There was nothing in India. It was dangerous, no job. What to do in India? It can’t be helped. So there was no way except for going to Japan at the time.” He came to Japan and started working at the factory in Tokyo which was introduced by an acquaintance who had stayed in Japan. Currently he has been lived his wife in Tokyo.
Besides above cases we also met a few people during our research conducted from 2004 to 2006 in Japan, who had to return to India due to various reasons in the later years. Following cases are the narratives of such people.

Case 17: (Mr. M)
Mr. M was born and raised in a village of Uttarakhand. After going to the college for one year, he started working as an electrical mechanic. He had heard from people in his village how many persons went to Japan had made money, became rich and bought motor bikes, cars, etc. This tempted him to be like them and made him decide to go to Japan. He got his visa and ticket through the migration agency and arrived at Narita airport, Tokyo in 2001. He came to Kanagawa prefecture, south of Tokyo and worked at a construction site. However, he could not continue to work at the same company for long and changed his work place several times. He was sent back to India by Immigration bureau in 2005.

Case 18: (Mr. Y)
Mr. Y came to Japan in 2003 when he was 19 years old. He was from the village Simbal Camp in Jammu district where we can find many Sikhs who have worked in Japan, made some money and returned to India. In Jammu, he was working as a driver of the police vehicles. His family had economic problems because of debts incurred by them and his elder brother was already in Australia trying to earn some money to pay the debts off. Mr. Y came to Japan for the similar reason where some of his cousins from Jammu district had already stayed. Even after resolving the financial crisis in his family he hoped to live in Japan permanently because he felt that it was very difficult to make money in India. However, in 2009 he was caught by the Immigration bureau and had to go back to India.
Overview of the Migration Circumstances of Sikhs in Tokyo

The case studies of Sikhs in Kanto area make it clear that most of them were males who came to Japan alone to work and stayed for a long time without a proper visa. Based on the successful stories which they had heard before coming to Japan, they believed that they could get well paying jobs and would be able to make a lot of money in a short period. Many of them have worked as manual labor without proper visa and unlike the Sikhs in Kobe most did not have any plans to run their own business. Although we saw the case of Mr. X who has operated his travel agent in Tokyo, he also had come to Japan without any vision of his own business in Japan when he visited Japan for the first time. Most of the Sikhs in Tokyo and the Greater Tokyo had planned to return to India after their purpose of making money was achieved. That is why Mr. L and Mr. G had left their families in India. However, despite these commonalities among them their experiences in Japan have been varied. Mr. U, Mr. I, Mr. C and Mr. K married Japanese women and got visas for permanent stay in Japan. Although they divorced their wives after some years, except for Mr. U and Mr. I, they have continued to work in Japan and even got married to Indian women whom they have called to join them in Japan. Additionally, some of them have left Japan after working for a while willingly like Mr. L or forcibly like Mr. M and Mr. Y, while quite a few have been living illegally in Tokyo and the Greater Tokyo till today.

Sikhs in and around Tokyo are different from those in Kobe also in the sense that most of them have come to Japan from India and also they have come fairly recently. None of them was born before partition in 1947. They have come from various parts of India like Punjab, Uttarakhand, Jammu & Kashmir and Delhi. Besides the case studies presented above, we heard many other stories of migrants from the village in Jammu area which we visited. Furthermore, another village in
Terai region, Uttarakhand visited by us where Mr. V and Mr. M came from also had sent many migrants to Japan. Additionally, although Mr. L was from New Delhi, his brother-in-law who had stayed in Japan was also from the same village in Uttarakhand. We also found that some families have relatives in both villages in Jammu & Kashmir and Uttarakhand. Such family networks spread the success stories of Japan to both areas around the villages.

Another notable point regarding Sikhs in Tokyo is the timing of their coming to Japan. Most of Sikhs who have/had stayed as unskilled labor came to Japan in 1990s or the beginning of 2000s. Although Mr. X had come to Japan earlier than others and had tried to run his own business, he could start living in Tokyo finally in the end of 1980s because it took him a very long time to get proper visa for a long term stay. From the cases in Tokyo we know that Sikhs in Tokyo had come to Japan mainly from 1990s to the beginning of 2000. Even in the cases of Mr. X and Mr. K who has been staying in Kanto region for the longest period, the duration of their stay in Japan is less than 25 years.

Yet, in spite of the similar condition in their jobs at a construction site or a factory and in their period of coming to Japan, we find different reasons in the narrative of their migration. Mr. B was part of the Khalistan movement and thus had to leave India. He first went to Hong Kong, from where he finally decided to come to Japan as a refugee. Mr. K left his village in Punjab where was felt insecure during the Khalistan movement and came to Japan eventually after staying in Delhi for a while. Mr. G could not retain his job as a truck driver to take care of his family because of the unstable situation in Kashmir where he used to deliver his loads. He quit his job and came to Japan where he could expect to find more opportunities to make money than getting a new job in India.
The case studies of Sikhs in Tokyo and Greater Tokyo show that many of them had come to Japan without visa for long term stay in Japan for financial reasons and found jobs in construction sites and factories. Although they didn’t have a clear vision about how long they would stay in Japan and what they would do after coming back to India, they had believed that going to Japan would provide them a chance to make money in a short time, a perception based on the success stories of their relatives and fellow villagers who had obtained a lot of property in the village with the money they earned in Japan. In spite of such common situations, the various circumstances of their life in Japan caused different outcomes as is clear from the narratives of their migration. Some returned to India reluctantly or willingly and others have been staying in Kanto till today.

The Comparison of Sikhs in Kobe and Tokyo

A comparative look at the stories of Sikhs living in Kobe and Tokyo who have migrated to Japan threw up some common points and many differences. The first similarity was that most of them came to Japan for financial reasons. They believed that they would be able to achieve better economic conditions than they were already living in and hence they decided to migrate to Japan. Another similarity was that many of them had the networks of family and friends in Japan who supported their migration to this country. They were provided relevant information about Japan before coming to Japan through the network and other type of support once they arrived here.

However, we also found many differences in the narratives of Sikhs in Kobe and Tokyo. Firstly, when we looked at their places of origin, it was clear that Sikhs in Tokyo and the Greater Tokyo came only from north India like Punjab, Uttarakhand, and Jammu & Kashmir, while a few Sikhs in Kobe came from India
including present Pakistan most came from other Southeast Asian countries like Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia.

Secondly, most Sikhs in Kobe run their own trading business in Japan while in Kanto area most Sikhs we met were manual laborers or worked at construction sites or in small factories. In fact, this difference in their occupations is the major determinant of their financial conditions. The Sikhs in Kobe who manage their own business successfully are much more affluent than the Sikhs in Tokyo area. Due to their better economic condition, most of the Sikhs in Kobe have their own houses (in some cases, even a number of buildings in expensive areas), drive the best of cars and have sent their children to expensive international schools. Although a few had to face some economic troubles due to problems in the management of their firms, these problems did not affect their daily life in a major way. Meanwhile, most of Sikhs in Tokyo area do not have their own accommodation and mostly live in rented places. Interestingly, the difference of the financial conditions has resulted in a difference in another aspect in the case of the Sikh women in Japan. Most of Sikh women we came across in Kobe are and have always been housewives. On the other hand, in Kanto area many of the Sikh women have had to work outside the home to supplement the family earnings.

Thirdly, as we mentioned above, the family or friends’ networks helped the migration of both the Sikhs in Kobe and Tokyo. However, the support which they could gain from the network was not equal. The Sikhs in Kobe have relatives’ networks not only in India but also mainly Southeast Asian countries and the networks have helped to develop their business globally. Their family networks and family-based business have prompted their migration to Japan and supported their life economically and socially in Kobe. In contrast, the Sikhs in Tokyo and its vicinity did not have international networks which could motivate them to manage
their own business like the Kobe Sikhs. Although they had relatives and friends who already had stayed in Japan, the support they could get from such networks was limited because the relatives and friends did not have enough money to support others and could only help in terms of providing information.

Fourthly, we also found a difference regarding the period of their arrival in Japan. Most of the Sikhs in Kobe had come to Japan many decades ago and their community includes people from first generation who migrated to Japan to fourth generation who were born and grew up in Kobe. On the other hand, most Sikhs in Tokyo region had come to Japan after 1990s. Although some have children who were born in Japan, the children are under the age of 20 and we did not meet anyone in the Greater Tokyo area who could be called third generation migrant.

A comparison of case studies in both Kobe and Tokyo made it clear that economic situation of Sikhs in Kobe is much better and more stable than that of the Sikhs in Tokyo. Besides the economic status, we also learnt that the citizenship status of Sikhs in Kobe has been more stable, while that of the Sikhs in Tokyo has been unstable because of their visa problems. This has further affected their financial and employment opportunities in both places as also their social standing.

Thus, from the case studies which are described in this chapter, we can say that the differences between the Sikhs in Kobe and Tokyo are caused by their social capital on which they can depend in Japan. The Sikhs in Kobe have improved their economic and social condition depending on the social capital of their family networks not only in India but also other countries while the family networks of the Sikhs in Tokyo have not been helpful enough for their life in Japan.

In conclusion, in this chapter, the circumstances of Sikh migrants in Japan were examined through discussing case studies. When the narratives of their migration are considered along with typology of diaspora given by Cohen (2008)
which was studied for refashioning the old idea of diaspora discussed mainly in the context of the exiled Jews, the Sikhs in Kobe can be categorized as the trade and business diaspora while the Sikhs in Tokyo fall in the labor diaspora category. However, as Cohen himself explained, several features from different types of diasporas can be contained in one such group. We also found this diversity in the diaspora group from the study of Sikhs in Japan. When we studied both the general historical background of their migration and the narratives of their case studies, it was clear that the Sikhs in Kobe display the attributes of the trade diaspora as they engaged in trading and business in the context of a global economy. Similarly, we found some cases of the trade and business diaspora also among Sikhs in Tokyo. Furthermore, all cases of Sikhs in Japan can be discussed as the deterritorialized or cultural diaspora, the different facets of which will be discussed in the following chapters.