Chapter IV

Social and Cultural Practices: Continuity and Change

In the previous chapter, we discussed the difficulties in the life of the Sikhs in Japan along with the methods used by them to cope with these. Many of the problems faced by them were related to the social and cultural practices. In this chapter we will take up those social and cultural practices of Sikh diaspora in Japan with the purpose of examining the continuity and change in them. In order to do so, we will put them against the backdrop of the practices that are prevalent in their places of origin, namely, their native villages. For this however, we had to limit our focus mainly to the Sikhs living in Tokyo area since due to financial and time related constraints, we were unable to examine the Sikhs in Kobe in terms of their places of origin because they originally came from various places like Pakistan, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, etc. However, we will dwell briefly upon Kobe Sikhs also to provide a comparison between the Sikhs living in Kobe and Tokyo.

The examination of their social and cultural practices will be in terms of the notion of *habitus* given by Mauss (2006) and expanded by Bourdieu (1977). Habitus is the set of acquired physical and mental property and the inclination created through activities and experiences related to thought, behaviour and taste of everyday life. In other words, it implies a set of socially learnt temperaments, skills and ways of acting, often taken for granted, which are acquired through the activities and experiences of everyday life. The concept of habitus admits a significance of cultural aspect of human habits and routines in considering social structure. Therefore, the concept of habitus permits us to focus on cultural experiences and practices as the elements of society. Mauss describes ‘techniques of the body’ as highly developed body actions.
that embody aspects of a given culture. Bourdieu developed this idea further in
habitus, the non-discursive aspects of culture which includes unspoken habits and
patterns of behavior as well as styles and skill in body techniques that bind people
into groups.

In fact, Bourdieu (1977) discussed the relation between habitus and practice. He
noted that practice is governed by habitus, which generates all the thoughts, all the
perceptions, and all the actions consistent with those conditions. Further, Bourdieu
(1977) explained about the relation of structure, habitus and practices by saying that
practices can be accounted for only by relating the objective structure defining the
social conditions of the production of the habitus, which brought about the conditions
in which this habitus is operating. In other word, practices signify cultural and social
contexts by mediation of habitus which is reflected in the features of particular
conditions in society. It means that diversity of practices is caused by difference in
social and cultural contexts which gives rise to practices and the diversity depends
upon the distinction of belonging to groups whose member have common habitus.

Then, to study social and cultural practices, it can be important to consider how
habitus promotes practices for people in each different aspects of their life. In addition,
Bourdieu describes habitus as something historically patterned (element of structure)
yet open to adjustment (adaptive in nature) in relation to the changing conditions of
the social field. It is a concept useful for both discussing the structure and for
approaching the subject of agency in diasporic cultural practice and reproduction
(Vertovec, 1999). We will see habitus of Sikh diaspora in Japan when we look at their
practices.

To discuss the practices of Sikh diaspora in Japan, we examined their life from
the social and cultural angles discussing their habitus and community. Difference of
practices which we will see in this chapter between Sikhs in Tokyo and those in their
native villages in India and also between Sikhs in Tokyo and Kobe is caused by
distinction of community to which they belong because if their community is not the
same, their habitus which produces practices is also not same. The following
description depicts the cultural and social life of Sikhs in the villages in India, Tokyo
and Kobe. The description will help us analyze practices of the Sikh diaspora in Japan
in the light of the practices in the native villages, which affect their social and cultural
context in terms of community and habitus.

The following description of the social and cultural practices of Sikhs is written
based on our research in India and Japan. In India we gathered our data from the two
villages which had sent a large number of Sikh migrants to Tokyo region. In Japan,
we relied on the information collected from the Sikhs living in Tokyo and Kobe. The
researcher paid multiple visits to the two selected villages in India and spent more
than a year living there, observing and participating in the everyday life of the
inhabitants. One village is in Uttarakhand state and is called Pratappur. The journey to
the village from Chandigarh where the researcher was based, takes around 14 hours
by bus bound for a city on the Nepal-India border called Tanakpur. This bus passes
Ambala and Haridwar in order to reach the Terai region where the village is located.
Punjabi Sikhs migrated to the Terai region from Pakistan after partition and
established this village. They cultivated the jungles and transformed them into
flourishing fields with their hard work. Almost all Sikh villagers have their own
farms.

The other village called Simbal Camp is in Jammu district in the state of Jammu
and Kashmir. Many families in this village have relatives living in Pratappur. To visit
the village one has to take the bus which goes to Jammu city. After around 8 hours
from Chandigarh, the bus reaches a junction before Jammu city. From the junction one road goes towards Jammu city while another leads to India-Pakistan border close to Sialkot and this is the road one has to take in order to reach Simbal Camp village. Partition brought many refugees to this area also and some refugee camps were built. This was one such camp which was later converted into a village.

Our research in these Indian villages made us realize that although they are geographically far from each other, they have many common social and cultural practices. Hence findings from both are discussed together.

Social and Cultural Practices of Sikhs Diaspora

Food

Food is one of the most important elements which reflect people’s taste, which Bourdieu noted as part of habitus. Through our research we tried to see what the food related practices of Sikhs were and how these have been affected by their migration to Japan.

Pratappur and Simbal Camp

Eating food was a simple affair in both the villages. All meals were made by females of the family three times a day. Breakfast mostly consisted of prantha (pan fried Indian bread) and dahi (yogurt), bread with jam or chapatti (Indian flatbread) and sabji (cooked vegetable). Menu for lunch and dinner could be rice, chapatti, sabji, dal (lentils), raita (Indian side dish of yogurt), etc. When they cook sabji and dal, they blended masala (spices) according to each family’s tastes. Food was served by the females to the male members of the family.
Although eggs were cooked often, even in the non-vegetarian families, meat dishes were prepared only when they had special guests. Non-vegetarian food like chicken and mutton were seldom cooked at home. The opportunity to eat meat dishes was when they attended special functions like marriage and celebration of children’s birthday. One day in Pratappur, the researcher was invited by one villager who had stayed in Japan around seven years and his wife cooked fried fish and served it. When asked “Fish?! Is it available here? I’ve never seen any around here! Did you arrange specially for me?” the host answered “There are many varieties of fish from the rivers near here, as you know. However, in this village they don’t eat fish normally. But I love fish since I stayed in Japan and am missing Japanese food, especially sashimi (Japanese raw fish dish).”

In Pratappur rice and atta (wheat or corn flour) were their own products from the fields and they didn’t need to buy these. They ate rice more often than the Sikhs living in the villages in Punjab. Each house has at least one cow to obtain milk for daily use and some milk products like butter, cream and yogurt were made by them. Their cows provided enough milk to make almost all milk products for every meal of a family and a certain amount of milk was sold almost every day outside the village. Seasonal vegetables were also available from their own cultivation at their backyard or fields. Apart from the food, tea and milk were the main drinks taken by them. They had chai (Indian style mixed tea) at least three times a day, morning, afternoon and evening with biscuits or namkin (salted snacks).

They enjoyed snacks like tikki, golegappe, pakora, etc. only when they attended weddings or visited Punjab because these items are not available around the village. When one family came to Amritsar to organize an akhand path (non-stop recitation from the holy book from beginning to end) in Harimandir Sahib, the famous Golden

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Temple, the researcher also stayed there with them. Besides attending the path, they were keen to eat jalebee, golegappe, kulcha, etc. and went to the stalls selling these items near the temple. However, they made it clear that eating out and taking readymade food from outside are not frequent practices in their life. As one person said “Usually we prefer to eat ghar ka khana (home cooked food) as it is hygienic and good for health and of course tasty”. Even if they have opportunity to eat out, which is a rare occasion, mostly they chose fast food restaurants and ordered pao bhaji, momos, burgers, etc. instead of proper Punjabi meals.

Alcohol was served only in the marriages and was consumed by a few males only. The researcher was amused to see that the special area arranged for the “drinkers” in the village weddings was much smaller than similar places arranged in the weddings which the researcher attended in Punjab villages. In fact, even for the same number of persons, the bottles of whiskey opened were much less in number as compared to the weddings in Punjab and no villager got drunk. The only persons who appeared drunk were always visitors from Chandigarh or Punjab. The researcher who herself was from Chandigarh was often warned by the villagers “They came from Chandigarh. But don’t go to the drinking area. They are drinking a lot as always. So be careful and don’t go or talk to them.”

Thus, overall it appeared that the villagers ate very simple food and were mostly vegetarians and non drinkers.

Tokyo
Many of the Sikhs living in Tokyo without their families cook Indian food themselves. They usually take a cup of chai only in the morning because they stay at the work site in the afternoon and evening. Sometimes even morning tea was missed because of
shortage of time. Inside their refrigerators, the bottled Japanese black tea which is a popular substitute for water in Japan was stocked besides coke, milk for making chai and yogurt for raita.

Their love for chapattis is so great that although the kitchen utensils like tava (griddle) are not available, they have made those items themselves because they could get the necessary things to make them like iron boards, wood, welding equipment, etc at their work sites. It was easy to find ingredients for Indian dishes like atta, dal, masala, ghee, etc. in Pakistani shops. They prefer to cook chicken because packed fresh chicken is cheap and easy to prepare. Many of them brought tiffins prepared by themselves to their place of work to save money at lunch. Otherwise, they bought bento (Japanese style tiffin) at convenience stores as other Japanese colleagues did. In the case of persons who had Japanese wives they ate mainly Japanese dishes and many of them brought bento prepared by their wives.

Interestingly, they preferred the sticky type Japanese rice although Indian basmati was available in Pakistani shops. “Japanese rice is best. This rice has taste of rice. We can enjoy rice only without any other dish.” This surprised the researcher because this was a phrase typically used by the Japanese to exhibit their preference for their own cuisine and one could not imagine that foreigners, especially Indians who are familiar with different type of rice loved Japanese rice.

When they didn’t have time to cook, they enjoyed eating out mainly in fast food restaurants like McDonalds and KFC. They also liked the Japanese soup as well as pork dishes served at the noodle stalls which they often visited with Japanese colleagues. Many Sikhs in Tokyo said “One of the best Japanese foods is ramen (Japanese soup noodle). We often go for lunch or after work at night.” When asked “Do you like the meat on the top of the bowl? That meat is...”, they all said “We know,
it’s buta (meaning pork in Japanese). We don’t eat pork in India, as you know. But here, buta is delicious. We love any type of pork dish here.” However, they clarified that they did not eat beef at all but were consuming pork because it was one item that could not be avoided while eating out in Japan.

Most of them had hardly taken alcohol when they were in India. However, in Japan most of them indulged in moderate drinking and when the researcher asked them why they had not taken alcohol in India, their answer was always the same: “In India when people drink, they misbehave because of too much drinking. So drinking is just bad there. But here everyone controls oneself without misbehaving. Drinking like this is ok, so we do it too.”

Some Japanese employers of the Sikhs in Tokyo had home parties on holidays and invited the Sikh employees. They enjoyed Japanese popular snacks like gyoza (Japanese dumpling), winner (pork sausage), edamame (green soybean), etc. with beer. The Sikhs in Tokyo learned what kind of snacks and alcohols Japanese prefer and when they were invited the next time, they brought these items as gifts. The Sikhs in Tokyo enjoyed typical Japanese food like sashimi and unagi (broiled eel) although at first they were not comfortable with their taste. On the other hand, they sometimes offered Indian food like biryani and chicken curry cooked by them with less masala and oil to their Japanese colleagues and friends.

Kobe

In Kobe the practices related to food seemed different from Tokyo because of the affluent economic status of the Sikhs living there. We could find various kinds of dishes on the dining tables at the houses of Sikhs in Kobe. However, Indian dishes in these homes meant not only Punjabi but also Gujarati and Sindhi food. Not only this,
but they also prepared Japanese, Thai, and European dishes at home. It is safe to say that this variety in their cuisine is due to their background of migration from different areas and the circumstances of their life in Kobe where Gujarati and Sindhi have lived as neighbors.

The second-generation Sikhs who grew up in Kobe prefer to eat Japanese dishes. This applies especially to the women who have shifted to other countries after their marriage and love eating Japanese food when they visit their homes in Kobe. Since their childhood they have been used to the taste of food prepared with Japanese seasoning like shoyu (soy sauce), mirin (sweet cooking rice wine), miso (bean paste), dashi (Japanese soup stock), etc. For them it is difficult to get these tastes in the places where they live now. Mr. J (Case 2) lives in Kobe while his sisters live in other countries and he said “They (his sisters) are very keen to eat Japanese food in almost every meal because they can’t eat it in their husband’s homes.”

Some Sikhs in Kobe go to supermarket which is crowded with Japanese local people to buy daily groceries. They are interested in Japanese vegetables, seasonings and ingredients used to cook Japanese dishes. They want to add Japanese dishes and the Japanese way of cooking to the repertoire of their every day menus because Japanese dishes are healthy and, of course, it was easy to find those ingredients in local shops.

They also enjoy eating out a lot at the restaurants recommended by their Indian friends. The Kobe Sikhs along with other Indian migrants share the information about cooking, ingredients, restaurants, etc. related with foods which are available in Kobe and they like discussing these topics whenever they meet. They also enjoy various types of alcohol depending on the situation although some families did not consume alcohol. When they eat Italian dishes, they preferred wine. In Japanese restaurants
they ordered beer and Japanese *shochu* (distilled spirit). Thus, the Sikhs in Kobe dine in typical cosmopolitan style and love to eat out in expensive restaurants a lot.

When we take into consideration the eating practices of Sikhs in Japan as also in the villages in India, some interesting points emerge. In Pratappur and Simbal Camp Sikhs preferred to eat food at home and they ate out only on special occasions. The daily food was cooked by the females and consisted of simple vegetarian dishes. Necessary everyday items like *atta*, rice, milk and yogurt were provided from their own field and cows. And they rarely drink alcohol. That was why they did not need to spend much money on food. On the other hand, the Sikhs in Tokyo area had mostly to cook for themselves. They also preferred to eat at home because not only they could enjoy Indian food but also save money. They bought the important ingredients for Indian food like *atta*, *dal*, and *masala*, etc. from Pakistani shops. However, when they did not have time to prepare the food and were with Japanese colleagues and friends, they ate out mainly in the cheap restaurants and enjoyed Japanese food. And most of them followed Japanese habit of drinking. Thus, although the Tokyo Sikhs still stuck to many of the practices which they had followed in the villages in India, yet, and at the same time, they did change their eating habits to some extent in order to fit into the Japanese society. For instance, they enjoyed more frequent occasion of eating out and Japanese food with alcohol and they also became primarily non-vegetarian. The Sikhs in Kobe had different practices because of their economic affluence. They ate out often in their preferred multi-cuisine restaurants. The other difference was in the variety of food that they consumed. The Kobe Sikhs enjoyed dishes from various countries and regions in India because of their networking with other ethnic Indians in Kobe and relatives living in many other countries.
Clothes and General Appearance

Clothing is another element of culture that forms part of habitus. For Bourdieu clothing is an indicator of class distinctions as well as a mode of self presentation. Our research thus, also took into account the aspects of clothing and general appearance of the Sikhs.

Pratappur and Simbal Camp

As was the case with food, the clothing choices of the Sikhs living in the two selected villages were also quite simple and traditional. Unlike the villages in Punjab where many of Sikhs had cut their hair and shaved their beards, in the villages of Uttarakhand and Jammu, there was no clean shaven Sikh male. Boys wore patkas (small piece of cloth wrapped around the head) and adults dressed in turbans when they went out. Females including young girls never have their hair cut. A girl told us, “I really like short hair like you. I want to have it, but we can’t as you know.” Many of males often wear the Indian dress kurta pajama and when they go out they chose western shirts and trousers although the females always wear salwar kamiz stitched by tailors from the village itself. Adult women do not ever dress in western clothes and say that they wore western trousers and shirts only when they went for their honeymoon decades ago. In both villages the women villagers often asked the researcher who had always worn trousers “Are you wearing this type of jeans every day in Chandigarh?” and found my reply “Yes, because for me handling dupatta (scarf) is difficult.” quite funny. However, they enjoyed talking about women’s clothes in other areas as well as their own style. “How about other girls in your university, Chandigarh? Here even young girls in college don’t wear western clothes. Always salwar kamiz. May be some girls in Jammu city, they do. But around here no
one.” Just as was the case with food, even where clothes were concerned, we found that in both the villages the Sikh population dressed simply and conservatively.

Tokyo

Although many Sikhs in Tokyo and Greater Tokyo had worn turbans and kept uncut hair and beard in India before coming to Japan, they did not wear the turban in Japan so as to avoid the visible appearance of being a foreigner. Some retained their hair and beard and wore a cap instead of a turban. Some shaved their beards only and kept uncut hair. Other had their hair cut and shaved their beards too although losing their hair and beard was very uncomfortable for them. Mr. Y told us; “When I had my hair cut, I cried terribly. I was so sad.” Mr. V said; “When I looked at my face in a mirror after cutting my hair, I felt the face was someone else’s and I was so depressed.” Some, mainly IT engineers, continued to wear turbans as they had done in India. They did not need to worry about their visibility because they have been staying in Japan with proper visa as residents. The overstayers told us “People who came for IT job, they have visa. So it is no problem for them to be visible and so they stay in the town with turban and beard. If we do like that, we would be caught and sent back to India.” However, once they decided to return to India, they stopped shaving their beards and grew their hair. That was the important preparation to go back to the village, along with buying souvenir gifts for family. “I can’t return to my village in this appearance. I don’t want to meet my parents without beard and hair. It’s so shameful.” Understandably, the Sikh migrants from Pratappur and Simbal Camp were more sensitive about their beard and hair than the Sikhs from Punjab who had been clean shaven when they were in India as well.
When the Sikhs women in Tokyo go to functions where mostly there was a gathering of Indians like *sat sang* (gathering for spiritual discourse) in the *gurdwara*, birthday parties, *paths* (prayers) held in someone’s house, etc., they wear the *salwar kamiz* brought from India although their daily clothes are trousers and western style blouses. The males wear mainly trousers and western shirts both as daily wear and also in religious, social or cultural functions. Except for a couple of persons, most of the males did not wear Indian clothes like *kurta pajama* even for attending *sat sang*. The few people who wear the *kurta pajama* sometimes at *sat sang* were IT engineers and they also wore turbans.

Thus in terms of clothes and appearance, the Sikhs in Tokyo have undergone a great amount of change. This is so because their ethnic clothes like Punjabi suits and ethnic appearance with turban and beard would make them very conspicuous in Japan because the local people wear western clothes and the men are usually clean shaven.

*Kobe*

The Kobe Sikhs unlike their Tokyo counterparts maintained their ethnic persona by keeping long beards and wearing turbans. They did not face the difficulty related to visibility because of their beards and turbans in the Japanese society. Rather they, especially their women, were very particular about the opinion of other Indians on their clothes. We met women who were attired in Punjabi suits in the *gurdwara*. Although they wear western clothes in daily life, all chose Punjabi suits when they attended the *sat sang* held every Sunday. This selection of clothes depending on the occasion was quite similar to the women in Tokyo. However, the difference was in the quality and styling of the clothing and other things. We saw the women in Kobe wearing luxurious jewellery and accessories when they visited the *gurdwara* while
such a trend was not seen in Tokyo. In Kobe the women dressed to make a good impression on others. As one of them said, “It is difficult to select what to wear to the gurdwara. Some things seem too simple, others too decorative (pointing to spangles and beads). Going to sat sang over-dressed does not look good.” Most of the males wore western shirts and trousers to the office and also to the gurdwara or the club. They did not visit the gurdwara in kurta pajamas but wore casual clothing for sat sang like T-shirts and jeans.

All Sikh males we came across in Kobe have uncut beards and hair and wear turbans. Females also do not cut their hair. Just as it is easy to place who is a Sikh in Kobe on the basis of whether the males wear turban or not, in case of females also one can recognize a Sikh lady on the basis of whether she keeps her hair long or not. “We can know from our appearance who is a Sikh. Whether wearing turban or not, having uncut long hair or not is one way to distinguish the Sikhs from the others.” One day the young daughter-in-law of Mr. H who grew up in Thailand and came to Kobe after her marriage surprised the researcher with the question “Tell me one thing. Why we Sikhs cannot cut our hair? You may know the answer because you are studying about Sikhism...” At that time the researcher could not understand the reason for her outburst. However, later on we came to know that she was denied entry into the in-laws’ house in Kobe after she came back from Thailand because she had gone to a hair salon and cut her hair there. Apparently Sikh women in Thailand do not face any restrictions regarding visiting hair salons for cutting and styling their hair. But she had to learn the habitus of Kobe Sikhs through these experiences. Thus, it is obvious that for the Sikh migrants in Kobe, the choice of appearance is an issue related to their identification as Sikhs. Our research made it clear that many of the Sikhs in Kobe attach a high value to their habit of keeping their hair uncut.
In terms of clothing and appearance the male Sikhs in Pratappur and Simbal Camp were traditional Punjabi Sikhs who did not shave their beards and wore turbans while the women too did not cut their hair and wore only salwar kameez. In other words, from the small children to the eldest generation, no one had their hair cut. However, many Sikhs in Tokyo region cut their hair and shaved their beards in order to avoid being visible in the Japanese society. Although the changing of their appearance was uncomfortable for them, they took the practical decision, sometimes with a great deal of mental agony, to give up their physical identity as Sikhs which they had acquired in India. The Sikh females in Tokyo wore western clothes daily both for the sake of comfort and in order to blend in with the local Japanese society. They enjoyed wearing Indian clothes only when they visited the gurdwara and the homes of their Asian friends. Hence, we found different clothes and appearance between the Sikhs in the villages and Tokyo area, although both chose simple clothes to wear. On the other hand, the Sikhs in Kobe wore luxurious clothes and accessories and the women wore salwar kameez while visiting the gurdwara, as was the case in Tokyo as well. Another thing that stood out was that the Sikhs in Kobe were very strict about not cutting their hair as per the Sikh tenets. They felt that long unshorn hair, beards and turbans were a necessary part of their appearance because these practices were integral to their identity as the Sikhs in Kobe.

Hence, the Sikh men both in Tokyo and Kobe wore western clothes quite similar to those being worn by men in India, while the women shifted to wearing western dresses which is not a practice found in the villages of India. But the major difference lay in the Kobe Sikhs sticking to their Sikh identity through their appearance and the Tokyo Sikhs changing it to a large extent to escape detection.
Marriage

Practices related to marriage are given importance in the life of Sikh migrants. But we will find there are different purposes and meanings of marriage for the Sikhs living in the Indian villages and for those in Japan according to the different situation of their life.

Pratappur and Simbal Camp

The villagers by and large follow traditional rules of marriage as they are prevalent in India. They follow the custom of caste endogamy and tend to marry within their caste group. Also, all decisions pertaining to marriage including selection of mate, marriage date, location and ceremonies etc. are taken by the family. However, it was interesting to see that they did not believe in the concept of village exogamy and we found many cases of marriages where both partners belonged to the same village. As one villager justified the preference of choosing marriage partner from the same village by saying, “In the case of couples from within the village, they can keep in touch with both the families. And when some problem happens, the relatives living near can come and help”.

A few cases of love marriage were also seen although these have happened only recently. The decision of selecting a partner was a big issue for family and it was difficult to have individual initiative for the decision. Not only the partner’s character but also his or her family background was considered to be very important. In the case of love marriage, even if marriage was within the same caste, the family background was discussed very carefully and it was this issue that ultimately determined the decision regarding whether the marriage would be allowed or not. Sometimes it was not easy to get the approval of all relatives and when such a marriage took place, it affected the relationships among family and relatives adversely.
Usually the wedding ceremonies in the villages are carried on for three days. Several days before marriage, neighborhood women gather at the bride’s house in the evening for musical evenings with dholki and sangeet. In the evening of the first day, mehndi (henna) is applied on the hands and feet of the bride. Neighbors and relatives gather together and snacks and dinner are served. After that photo session starts and the relatives and friends get photographed with the bride or groom by turns. In the early morning of the next day vatna (chickpea flour paste) is applied to both the bride and groom. In the girl’s case the ghardoli ceremony involving collection of water either from the gurdwara or a neighbor’s home is done. The bride wears choora (special bangles indicating newly married status) soaked in milk and the groom wears the turban, the sehra, climbs on to a mare and has surma (kohl) put in his eyes by his brother’s wife as part of the varna ceremony. Weddings do not take place in the household of the girl as used to be the practice earlier but in other places usually known as the “marriage palaces”. On the morning of the wedding the bride’s family shifts to these marriage palaces and makes preparations to receive the groom’s marriage party or the baraat. After welcoming the groom’s relatives with the milni ceremony, breakfast is served and bride and groom shift to the gurdwara with close relatives and friends for anand karaj, the actual religious wedding ceremony. After the ceremony is over, they move to the marriage palace again and the new couple again gets photographed with visitors. After that the marriage parties from both sides have lunch together and finally the bride leaves with the groom and his family in the doli. On the third day the groom’s side organizes a reception party in the afternoon and again photo session with visitors is arranged and lunch is served.

One thing that the researcher noticed was that unlike the Sikhs living in Punjab, those in Pratappur and Simbal Camp did not favor dowry system although some gifts were given to the couple at the time of the wedding.
The Sikhs in Tokyo have not been staying in Japan for long and their average duration is about 6-10 years. Most of them are the first generation migrants and the second generations are still studying in schools. Some who were married before coming to Japan, have either left their family in India and stay in Japan alone or have brought their wives and children to Japan. Some, who were single when they came to Japan, and have a valid visa, went to India to get married in typical Indian style. Also, there were some cases where the overstayers staying illegally in Japan got engaged to Indian girls without meeting them. The engagements were arranged by their families who were in India and often the function or ceremony for engagement was held without the groom himself. In Japan the researcher watched the DVDs containing the engagement ceremony sent from India by the relatives to the respondents. One prospective groom in Japan showed the DVD to his friends and asked them “Isn’t she beautiful? Does she look ok?” and was very happy when they replied “Yes, Punjabi women are so beautiful. Japanese are not like us. Their eyes are very small and thin. But how did you decide your marriage? You have been living in Japan only last few years.” “She is also in Pratappur and my parents and her parents decided. I have known her since childhood while I hardly talked to her.”

Finally, there were those Sikhs in Tokyo who decided to marry Japanese women or the other foreigners so that they could stay on in Japan. Usually these marriages take place in the Immigration Office. However, the marriages between the Sikhs and Japanese women are full of difficulties due to cultural differences. We heard the story from one Japanese wife “If I am born again, I will never marry an Indian. He is a domineering husband and never cooks. Of course, some of Japanese also do that, but not like him. He rarely helps in domestic work. He doesn’t even bring his plate to the
kitchen after eating. He seldom takes us (her and their children) to eat out. Even when we come back late and tired, I have to prepare the dinner. At least in that situation, I want to eat out. But he doesn’t. So on and so forth. I can talk about this topic endlessly.” The point is that Japanese women usually regret marrying Indians and recommend others not to marry them. We also came across some cases where divorce took place, but the man was able to retain the visa after divorce. In these cases the Sikh respondents even married a second time, this time Sikh women in India and then called their wives to Japan.

Kobe

The Sikhs in Kobe prefer arranged marriages and love marriages are rare among them. The marriage partner is found not from among Sikhs in Kobe but from Sikhs in other countries, usually those where the respondent originally came from or has some relatives, mostly from Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia etc. The groom who lives in Kobe brings the bride to Japan after marriage as we saw in many cases in previous chapters. It was interesting to note that Sikh families in Kobe prefer not to bring the girls from U.S. or U.K. or even India for their sons because they find them too forward and opt instead for girls from the south-eastern countries where the girls have received a traditional upbringing as per Sikh tenets. On the other hand, the brides who grew up in Kobe move to other countries like U.K., U.S., Indonesia, Singapore, U.A.E., etc. where their husbands live. We could find only three or four cases of love marriages between the Sikh males and Japanese females although the Sikhs have been living in Kobe for many decades. And in the case, too, the Japanese women were required to follow the Sikh way of life in Kobe.
As far as the actual wedding is concerned, it is usually a lavish event befitting the economic status of the Sikh families in Kobe. The location for the wedding ceremony is decided on the basis of the cost of the wedding and the convenience of the guests coming from different parts of the world to attend the wedding. Many times they have the wedding in Southeast Asian countries where most of the relatives of the Sikhs in Kobe live. Although sometimes a function like the reception is held in Japan, Japan is rarely selected as the place for marriage ceremony because of the high expense of the venue, food, accommodation, etc. Some even go to India to purchase necessary things for the wedding at a low cost. When a marriage of the Sikh family in Kobe is held, many people including the Japanese friends and business associates from Kobe are invited for the reception party. They have anand karaj in the gurdwara and then luxurious parties in five star hotels. Mr. T told us about his grandson’s marriage attended by around 800 people “Contents of wedding are same, religious things. Decoration and those kinds of things are different. First the family had a ceremony and langar in the gurdwara and then the younger generation went to a hotel and had a big party which cost a lot of money.”

Mrs. H was very nervous when her eldest son married. “His is the first wedding for us. So all Sikhs in Kobe are looking at us – how we arrange the marriage, how we organize the ceremony and party, etc. It is a terrible headache and so much tension for me. If we were in Thailand or Singapore, we would not have been nervous like this because the Sikh community there is big and no one looks at such details of others’ marriages. But here the community is so small and everyone is looking at us. I couldn’t visit the gurdwara last week because of this tension.” In fact the researcher noticed that a lot of the conversation in the gurdwara was about marriage issues especially before and after the weddings between grooms from Kobe and the brides from abroad. We often heard, “From where will she (the bride) come?” “She is from
Singapore and can play harmonium and is good at playing and singing for kirtan (religious hymns).” “How old is she?” “She is twenty. But she is very mature, reliable, and has a solid family background. We have known her since she was around fifteen.” “Where will you have ceremony and party? In which hotel?” “When will she come to Kobe and where will they live in Kobe?” Such questions were asked from concerned persons every Sunday while attending the sat sang in the gurdwara. Thus, although the main ceremony and party were held in the other countries, the procedure of the marriage including choosing the partner, preparation of marriage etc. were conducted very carefully because it was one of the biggest issues related to the reputation of the family among Sikhs in Kobe.

While observing the institution of marriage among the Sikhs both in India and Japan, we found that in Pratappur and Simbal Camp traditions rule the ceremonies of Punjabi marriage. The partner and the family background were considered very carefully by the family while selecting a spouse for the individual because the marriage was an important occasion to expand family networks and strengthen the family. Dowry system was not favored. The same system was followed by the Sikhs in Tokyo, since most of them got married in their native villages only. However, those Sikhs in Tokyo who married Japanese women or foreigners in order to obtain permanent stay visa got married in the Immigration Office and observed no traditional ceremonies, either Indian or Japanese. In this case, Sikhs took practical decision to continue to stay in Japan and they gave more priority to making money in Japan than to the family izzat (honor). For the Sikhs in Kobe, not only did they follow the traditional methods of mate selection, marriage arrangements and marriage ceremonies, for them marriage was one of the occasions to flaunt and enhance their family status and reputation.
Language

Practices in terms of language are inevitable hurdles for migrants and important for their smooth adjustment to new society. For Bourdieu language is not just a method of communication, but also a symbol of power. According to him the language one uses is designated by one's relational position in a field or social space and the linguistic communication is a demonstration of a person’s position in the social space. In Japan they had to pick up Japanese because it was difficult to communicate in even broken English.

Pratappur and Simbal Camp

As one is aware, in the villages in Punjab state, Punjabi is spoken everywhere and almost all road signs are written in gurmukhi (Punjabi script). People who grew up in this area are comfortable writing and reading gurmukhi. For them Punjabi is the language for daily use in almost all situations. On our way to Pratappur, we did not hear Punjabi and see gurmukhi script till our arrival at the village. Similarly, when we travelled to Simbal Camp, after passing Pathankot the letters of sign boards changed from gurmukhi to devanagari (Hindi script) and again we did not hear the Punjabi language till we reached the village. Although in both villages people spoke Punjabi, once they went out from the villages they entered the world of Hindi.

For the villagers Punjabi was their spoken language. People who shifted to the village as the first generation migrants from Pakistan or POK (Pakistan Occupied Kashmir) because of partition and Indo-Pakistan war had a complex background because they got education before migration and got accustomed to reading and writing in Urdu. On the other hand, the generations of people who were raised in the villages and went to public schools in and around the villages were not taught Punjabi
in schools. So, while some of them learnt gurmukhi at home from a family member, others learned it at the gurdwara which arranged the class for the children. Hence although all Sikhs in both the villages speak Punjabi most of them have gotten used to writing and reading devanagari. In fact, some belonging to the younger generation were more comfortable speaking Hindi than Punjabi. Jestingly one lady told us “This girl (her daughter in her early twenties) doesn’t know Punjabi. She talks in Hindi. You can teach her Punjabi. Even you, a foreigner, have learnt Punjabi. But this girl....” To which her daughter said, “Mummy, how can I master Punjabi here? There is no school to learn Punjabi in UP” (They were still calling their state UP although the name was changed to Uttarakhand in the year 2000).

This also explained why many Sikhs in Tokyo are using devanagari instead of gurmukhi, a fact which the researcher found baffling before her visit to the two villages in India. And English was hardly heard in both the villages. Only in the beginning of the research, some villagers tried to use broken English to talk to the researcher. However, since the researcher did have knowledge of Hindi and Punjabi, these were the languages used to communicate with them and English was not used in any conversation.

**Tokyo**

For the Sikhs in Tokyo Punjabi was the language of communication among them. Even in the Tokyo gurdwara we could see posters written in gurmukhi by people who have engaged in sewa for every sat sang while many of them who came from outside Punjab state could not read the gurmukhi. Sikh children in Tokyo learned Punjabi as their mother tongue because most of their Sikh parents talked them in Punjabi. But when these children start going to the nursery schools, they begin to learn Japanese
and pick up the language quickly. Some parents told us happily “Our children have started talking in Japanese at home because now they are going to the nursery. One even said, “My wife sometimes can’t understand our daughter’s Japanese. But she can be a Japanese teacher for her mother.” However, in the cases of marriages between Sikhs and Japanese, the Japanese language was used in their home which helped them improve their Japanese.

Additionally, the Sikhs in Tokyo work with Japanese colleagues and employers who usually do not understand even English. So, knowledge of Japanese is compulsory for these Sikh migrants. However, whether they pick up Japanese well or only a few limited words, depended on the situation of their job and life. The Sikhs working at construction sites with Japanese colleagues picked up Japanese through conversation with Japanese in their work and could understand and speak Japanese better than those who worked at the factories where mainly foreign laborers work with them on the conveyor belt. One of our interviewees explained this situation by telling us about one of his friends – “S is working in the factory mainly in the night shift. So his colleagues are mostly foreigners and there is almost no conversation during the job hours. They are just dealing with plastic parts moving on the belt automatically. Then, how can he pick up Japanese, right? Most of us working in construction sites or factories with Japanese can speak Japanese well, as you know. Otherwise we can’t work.”

The Tokyo Sikhs also used Hindi, Urdu, and Punjabi for communication with South Asians from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Even if they came across some unfamiliar words in these languages, they could still understand it better than while communicating in Japanese or English. They felt cultural closeness by using those languages and formed networks to get necessary information to stay and
work in Japan. The similarity in these languages and the widespread popularity of Hindi movies in South Asian countries became helpful to making this network among South Asians in Tokyo area.

**Kobe**

The first generation Sikh migrants to Japan had a background which made them proficient in various languages. They could speak not only their mother tongue Punjabi, and English, but also languages which are spoken in the areas where they had lived like Thai, Malay, Indonesian, Urdu, Persian, etc. For the second generation Sikhs, although English is still the required language for their education and business, Punjabi became optional and whether they mastered Punjabi or not depended on their parents and family. The son of Mr. and Mrs. J is a third generation Sikh and learned Punjabi staying with his grandparents who always spoke to him in Punjabi. He does not have any problem speaking or understanding Punjabi. For this family, Punjabi is considered as their mother tongue which is necessary for their Sikh identity. On the other hand, while the second generation Mr. A can understand the language, he is not comfortable speaking Punjabi. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. H realize that Punjabi should be taught to children while they are still young because they do not learn it after a certain age. Because of the experience with their sons, they have realized the importance of talking to children in Punjabi and they have tried to communicate with their grandchildren in Punjabi. “*That was our mistake. We raised our sons without any conscious efforts to make them learn Punjabi. Regarding our sons, it’s too late. But for grandchildren, we will make every effort to teach them Punjabi.*”

Children who study in the international schools do not have the opportunity to learn Japanese in a formal manner. If they need to master Japanese for their job, they
have to learn themselves. It is a notable thing that even the second generation and third generation Sikhs born and bred in Kobe have acquired Japanese with their own efforts. Mr. A learnt Japanese seriously and had worked in a Japanese company before he joined his father’s business and his language skill of Japanese has been helpful for his work. While working in the Japanese firm his Japanese colleague complimented him on his knowledge of the Japanese language to which he replied, “You say my Japanese is perfect and may think it’s because I was born and grew up in Japan. Of course, it is. But without any efforts it was impossible to master this language. I tried to study Japanese myself by reading Japanese comics. So you also should study English consciously to learn it.”

We found that the Sikhs in Pratappur and Simbal Camp spoke Punjabi in the villages. However, they could not learn gurmukhi script officially because Hindi was main language outside of the villages and the schools did not provide the teaching of Punjabi language. This linguistic situation made it clear that the Sikhs were in a culturally marginal position in the regions they lived. In Tokyo area, the Sikhs had to pick up Japanese language and even among the Sikh couples, the longer they spent time in Japan the more conversations in Japanese they had in their house. Although they had opportunity to speak Punjabi and Hindi when they visited the gurdwara and Pakistani shops, these were not daily routine and they mostly spoke Japanese in their everyday life in Tokyo region. Their daily usage of Japanese language helped them build close relationships with Japanese and made the Sikhs in Tokyo get involved in Japanese society as we have discussed in the previous chapter. On the other hand, the Sikhs in Kobe speak English in most situations. Mastering English was more important for them than learning Japanese while they made efforts to pick up Japanese and could communicate in Japanese whenever required. This situation in
Kobe meant that the Sikhs kept their own linguistic space of English which was shared with other Indians. The social distance between the Kobe Sikhs and Japanese which we discussed in the previous chapter was caused largely by this separation of linguistic space in their daily life. One thing, nevertheless, is undeniable that both in Tokyo and Kobe, the practice of speaking Punjabi has declined due to the requirements of the circumstances. But it is notable that the Sikhs in Tokyo continue to retain their knowledge of Punjabi since they need it as they have all their relatives in India. However, the Sikhs in Kobe, despite the fact that they need not have any knowledge of Punjabi since they do not need to use it at all, tend to preserve it as part of their cultural identity as Sikhs.

Recreation and Festivals

Recreation is one of the important practices related to the cultural preference of any group which can be part of their habitus as is celebration of festivals which is an occasion for recreation and at the same time, provides the opportunities for people to have cultural practices collectively in society.

Pratappur and Simbal Camp

Every house of the Sikhs in Pratappur and Simbal Camp has television sets with satellite connections. The females especially enjoy television drama series in the evening. Children were fond of watching cartoon programs. Bollywood films were favored and often watched on television while they sometimes went to theaters also. On the special occasions like wedding and celebration of a birth, they had a lot of fun by playing bhangra music and dancing with sound systems of CD players and big speakers. When some children turned on the music at a loud volume and started...
dancing, the adults around me explained “Punjabi music and dance always make us have so much fun. This is Punjabi culture, as you already know. This is one of the ways to enjoy our life.” and took the researcher’s hand and entered the circle of the dance.

The other recreation was travelling by train or car, both for pilgrimage and for visiting their relatives who lived in far off places. The researcher sometimes got phone calls in the middle of this type of trip. “Hello, we are on our way from Pratappur to Jammu. Now we have arrived at Ponta Sahib gurdwara and will stay here tonight. Tomorrow morning we will leave here and stop at Chandigarh to meet you.” They traveled for pilgrimage also and visited not only Sikh holy places but also large Hindu temples like Vaishnu Devi in Katra, Jammu. They also preferred going to hill stations like Nainital in Uttarakhand. However, they did not stay in hotels overnight and came back the same day.

Apart from Sikh religious festivals, they celebrate Diwali, Lohri, and Holi. On the day of Diwali, the villagers of Pratappur favored to visit the Nanak Mata gurdwara which organized special light decoration on the gurdwara. They went there for worship and enjoyed the amusement ground and many stalls specially set up in front of the gurdwara for the cerebration. Children enjoyed the fireworks and lighting of candles. Lohri and Holi are celebrated by mainly families which have children. In the Lohri festival, they make a bonfire and eat special snacks like peanuts, popcorn, and gachak. For Holi celebrations, children have a lot of fun with color powder. Although they enjoy these festivals, they did not purchase many goods for the festivals as the people living in the city. Thus, they did not spend much money for their recreation and they enjoyed the leisure time simply.
Tokyo

The Sikhs in Tokyo also enjoyed watching television programs and Bollywood films as the villagers did. However, these contents were provided by DVDs rented from Pakistani shops. Nevertheless, they seemed to miss the practice of playing loud Punjabi music and dancing to it. As one person told us, “Although there are some DVD containing Punjabi songs, it is difficult to dance to the songs being played at a loud volume because of consideration for our Japanese neighbors. We often danced with Punjabi songs in the village. It was really fun gathering many friends, relatives and neighbors. But here there is no dance at all. The Japanese do not dance or sing like us while we do it all the time. We really miss those days.”

The occasions to eat out were another way of having fun for the Sikhs in Tokyo. They enjoyed different types of food which they had never eaten in India, especially the Japanese style bar and fast food restaurants were favored because of the economical price. The Tokyo Sikhs could not take trips to other places due to their status as overstayers and also because of the high cost of such trips. Many of them said, “We wish we could visit places such as Okinawa, Hiroshima, Nagasaki and some other famous places for tourism.”

The Sikhs who live with their families in Tokyo area celebrate Diwali. However, many Sikhs in Tokyo did not celebrate any Indian festivals. Mr. V told us, “Here we are not using Indian calendar any more. So I do not know the dates of Indian festivals. I called my parents a few days ago and learned last week they had Diwali festival.” Instead of Indian festivals they enjoyed celebration of Christmas and New Year as the Japanese do.

Kobe

The economic affluence of the Sikhs in Kobe defined their leisure activities as well,
which included travelling, eating out, shopping, etc. When their relatives visited Kobe, they took them for sightseeing trips to various tourist places in Japan by car. Even their everyday life involves shopping, eating out, etc. They bought accessories and bags in expensive department stores. The weekends were a good time for eating out at restaurants along with drinking. When the researcher visited Mr. T’s house, many relatives were gathered and they explained their schedule “Today we went to Ama no Hashidate (tourist place near Kobe). Look, we bought these key holders, so cute, aren’t they? This night we are planning to go to a Japanese restaurant. About tomorrow it is not decided yet, but we will definitely go somewhere. Now we are going to a near crepe shop for coffee and snacks.”

The other leisure activity of the Kobe Sikhs was socializing with other Indians settled in Kobe. They visited close friends including Sindhis and Gujaratis and played card games with tea, coffee, snacks and sweets. The females sometimes attended culture classes like cooking and craft with their Indian friends. The young males played futsal (a variation of football) with Indian friends during the weekends.

The Sikhs in Kobe also enjoyed many satellite TV programs like American television dramas, Indian television programs, Bollywood and Hollywood movies, etc. In addition they sometimes went to a theater to watch Hollywood movies with friends and also enjoyed a cup of coffee in a coffee shop. Hence, they could have various forms of recreation in Kobe while most their companions were Indians living in Kobe.

The Sikhs in Kobe also celebrate Diwali with other Indians and organized special programs in the Indian Club and the gurdwara. They decorated their homes with candles. For Baisakhi celebration they had akhand path in the gurdwara where they gathered and enjoyed langar. Christmas and New Year were also celebrated by them.
Thus, the common recreation for both the Sikhs in the villages in India and Tokyo was watching Indian TV programs and films and socializing with friends. Besides these, the Sikhs in Pratappur and Simbal Camp sometimes travelled to visit relatives or for pilgrimage. Although the Sikhs in Tokyo also wanted to travel and enjoy dance and music, they could not do so because of their visa status and economic situation. Instead, they enjoyed eating out which was rare in the villages. On the other hand, the Sikhs in Kobe had enough money to indulge in a variety of activities for their recreation, such as, travelling, shopping, fine dining, etc. Socializing with other Indians in Kobe was also important not only for strengthening the network among them but also as their leisure activity. Like other Sikhs in the Indian villages and Tokyo, they also enjoyed watching TV and films; however, they had more variety of the programs available to them due to the satellite connections provided to their houses. Thus, the Sikhs in the villages and Tokyo had simple practices for their recreation and those in Kobe enjoyed wealthy consumer culture. Where festivals were concerned, the Sikhs in Japan did not seem to celebrate them as frequently and as ardently as their Indian counterparts did.

**Worship**

Practices related to worship are also one of the significant cultural practices which relate to the process of the migrants’ identification. Smart (1999) offers the important points in studying religious aspects of diaspora. He says that the study of diasporas and their modes of adaptation can give us insights into general patterns of religious transformation. In other words, due to changed location and circumstances, religious practices may take on a new shape. It was this aspect that we also looked into.
We saw many devotees at the gurdwara in the morning and evening in both our research villages. The villagers could get to the nearest gurdwara from their house within five minutes by foot. Children enjoyed visiting the gurdwara almost every day and often called the researcher “Didi, let’s go to the gurdwara today, too.” They would spend just a few minutes in the gurdwara and leave. The villagers especially the women often read the gutka (small sized religious texts) in the morning or evening at home. However, some villagers could not read the gutka since they did not know gurmukhi. They simply sat in the gurdwara and listened to the gurbani (compositions of Sikh gurus) read out by giani instead of reading the gutka themselves. Every morning and evening many elder persons also sat in front of the television to watch live program brought directly via satellite from Harimandir Sahib, the Golden Temple in Amritsar.

Functions like the akhand path and bhog (observances related to the reading of the concluding part of the holy book), were held both at the gurdwara and their homes. When these were organized at their homes, they carried the guru granth from the nearest gurdwara to the house where the program was held. Sometimes they had the kirtan (devotional chanting) at the gurdwara after the bhog at home. The langar was prepared in huge pans in the yard of the house and served to all visitors. Mostly these functions were organized on special occasions like gurpurabs (celebrations based on the lives of the Sikh gurus) and occasions of birth, death, weddings or even at the time of job promotion. Many times they invited the researcher too, “We will have path for death anniversary of our grandmother in Nanak Mata (one of the Sikh pilgrimage places nearby Pratappur). Our relatives also will come from Jammu. You too should come.”
One major religious event celebrated by the villagers was the birthday of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth guru, for which a Nagar Kirtan (religious procession) was taken out which was watched by the researcher along with many Sikhs gathered on the main road of the city. After coming back to the village, they discussed it with great excitement, “Did you watch the Nagar kirtan?” “Yes, this year’s was better than last year. There were many performances by children and those were very lovely.” “Yes, we were looking at them from a balcony of a building and we could see them clearly.” Thus, the practices of the Sikh worship in the villages were part of their everyday routine, socializing and leisure in their life, as well as, part of special occasions.

Tokyo

Most of Sikhs in Tokyo did not have the guru granth in their homes. However, some of them carried the gutka which they read sometimes in their homes. Sikh gurus’ pictures about the size of a postcard were seen in their rooms and incense was burnt in front of the picture whenever they prayed. Mr. L had made a small space in his room to put the picture of Sikh gurus. He burnt incense in the morning. When he came back from his work, he prayed in front of the picture and put the coins which were inside pocket of his trousers there, which he later donated to the gurdwara in Tokyo. Mr. Y often read the gutka burning incense when he finished taking shower after his job. Many Sikhs also prayed before the Hindu goddess Vaishnu Mata whose shrine is located in the Jammu region, which has been visited by many Sikhs living in that area.

Although the gurdwara in Tokyo is the important place for the worship of Sikhs in Kanto area, some could not visit the sat sang because of their visa status. Also, there were signs of temple politics. Some Sikhs had been visiting the gurdwara, but
after some time they quit attending the *sat sang* because they were not comfortable with atmosphere of the *gurdwara*. “In the *gurdwara* I see too many Sikhs from Punjab. *Of course, everyone can come to the gurdwara. But I felt the gurdwara was managed mainly by them.*”

Mr. B is the rare one who has the *guru granth* in his house. Although the rented house is Japanese style and there is no special prayer room, he uses one room only for laying the *guru granth*. Mr. B opens the *guru granth* every morning before going to his job and closes it in the evening after coming back from his work. Mr. B and his family chant the *gurbani* and *ardas* (Sikh prayer) every day.

*Kobe*

Sikhs in Kobe who live in palatial homes have prayer rooms in their houses. The prayer room is used for their individual religious practice. Inside the rooms they lay the *guru granth* on a special rack under a canopy hung from the ceiling and pictures of Sikh *gurus* are hung on the walls, just as one may find in the home of a Sikh in India. Interestingly, these rooms are used mostly by the female members of the households. Mrs. H prays every morning and evening in the room. Mrs. S also often uses the room to pray and meditate. Many Sikhs in Kobe also watch the live satellite program from *Harimandir Sahib*. Mr. T told us “*Watching this program every morning and evening is one of our routine activities. We cannot visit the Golden Temple easily but at least through this we get darshan (beholding it) and also get peace of mind*” Of course, in the *sat sang* every Sunday in the *gurdwara* they gather to pray and sing religious hymns. However, the purpose of their joining the *sat sang* was not only for worship but also to an extent to socialize with other Sikhs in Kobe.
We looked at the religious practices of Sikhs in India and Japan through the description of their worship and activities in the gurdwara. In the Indian villages the Sikhs lived near the gurdwara and visited there as a daily routine although they did not spend much time there to sit and pray. Besides visiting the gurdwara, reading the gutka was an integral part of their daily religious practices. Managing and attending the akhand paths and bhogs were practiced both as worship and socializing and these practices were important events in their life and created the occasion to gather their relatives, friends and neighbors.

Most of Sikhs in Tokyo lived far from the gurdwara and found it difficult to visit it because of the distance as well as their status as overstayers. Instead of going to the gurdwara, they prayed in their homes although most of them were not very regular about it. The sat sang in the gurdwara was held once a month. Except for the day of sat sang, the gurdwara was closed and no one visited there. They did not have any occasion of akhand path and bhog in Tokyo area even in the gurdwara. Their religious practices were mainly individual activities. On the other hand, the Sikhs in Kobe lived near the gurdwara and easily attended the sat sang every Sunday. They had separate prayer rooms in their houses and used the room for their daily worship. The satellite TV broadcasting live program from Amritsar gave them a sense of worship and sometimes they visited Harimandir Sahib as pilgrimage. Thus, the Sikhs in Kobe had the occasion of collective worship at the sat sang, and, at the same time individual space of worship at home. The satellite program from Amritsar made their imaginary connection to Punjab and their actual pilgrimage to the Golden Temple gave them physical experiences of Sikh worship in their place of ethnic origin, both of which were not available to the Sikhs in Tokyo. Thus, the Sikhs in Tokyo area have been unable to continue their religious activities due to their circumstances while the
Kobe Sikhs are still very close to their religion, despite their not having any connection with India for a very long time. One common thing in both places is that the gurdwara is seen as a space not only for religious activities but also for making or continuing social contacts.

However, as was discussed by Smart (1999) we do see the religious transformation of Sikh diaspora through the changes in the religious practices of the Sikhs in Tokyo and Kobe. The Sikhs in Tokyo are not regular in the observance of the religious practices as they were in India to the extent that they do not even celebrate the gurpurabs which are considered the holiest days among the Sikhs. In fact, they may even be working on those days. Even where Kobe Sikhs are concerned who have by and large continued to observe the Sikh religion, we do see some changes. For instance at the Kobe gurdwara we found that although langar was served every Sunday, it was not prepared by the devotees or the gurdwara priest but by Japanese women hired for that purpose. Also, the langar was served on tables and chairs, and the langar menu included Thai dishes.

In the above description we have discussed the social and cultural practices of the Sikhs in India and Japan and found evidence of both continuity and change, in fact, in most cases they went side by side. For instance, where the food habits of the Sikhs in Japan are concerned, we found that they still cook Punjabi food at home, however, at the same time they have begun to eat out quite often in Japan, a practice that was missing when they were living in their native places. In addition, the Sikhs in Japan have learnt to enjoy other kind of dishes which are not available in India. Again, dressing habits of the women have undergone a drastic change although those of the men remain the same. Also, although the Sikhs in Kobe continue to be very rigid about not cutting their hair and beards, many Sikhs in Tokyo region have had their
hair and beards cut in order to avoid standing out among the local population. However, as they clarified to us, this is a purely pragmatic step and in the cultural sense they still remain very close to their roots. In fact, they made it clear that this act of cutting their hair and shaving their beards caused them immense mental trauma, so much so that they would grow back their hair and beards whenever they decide to return to their villages. This shows that they may have changed their appearance for practical reasons but have not change their habitus related to the clothes and appearance.

A similar scenario was found regarding the practices related to marriage. Although we found some cases of interethnic marriages among the Sikhs in Tokyo, once again these were entered into for practical reasons and the traditional aspects of the institution of marriage remained almost untouched among the Sikhs in Kobe. One thing that did show substantial change was the language aspect. From their native tongue, the Sikhs in Kobe had switched over to English while those in Tokyo became more and more accustomed to speaking Japanese. However, once again both the Sikhs in Kobe and Tokyo skill consider knowledge of Punjabi essential even if they do not use it very often. This was so in the case of the Sikhs in Kobe because it is directly related to their identity as Sikhs, which they were desperate to cling to. But for the Sikhs in Tokyo it was valued as the only way to communicate with their relatives in India.

The recreation pattern was similar both in India and Japan while in the case of celebration of festivals, we found a distinct change among the Japanese Sikhs as they celebrated fewer occasions as compared to Sikhs in India. One reason for this could be the different work pattern in both the countries. The religious practices had also changed based on the different everyday activities although they did manage to keep the habitus related to worship.
An overview of the different aspects of the lives of the Sikhs in Kobe and Tokyo makes it difficult to clearly demarcate the areas where there is cultural continuity and those where there is change in the social and cultural practices of the Sikhs in Japan. However, our discussion on the social and cultural practices prepared the space to consider the diaspora as a type of consciousness pointed by Vertovec (2000) which is seen in a variety of experience, a state of mind and a sense of identity. As we know from the life of Sikhs in Japan, they have maintained their cultural and social ties to Punjab in some form or another. Although the Sikhs in Kobe have been staying in Japan for many decades, we found their cultural practices were based on their identity as Sikhs which was constructed through their everyday life. In their life in Kobe, their connection with India was sustained by devices like satellite television programs, internet and magazines which provided information regarding their place of origin and also helped them keep in touch with their roots. The information supported their imagination of connecting with Punjab and the imagination strengthened and reinforced their Sikh identity.

On the other hand, the Sikhs in Tokyo have direct connection with India where their families live and their own bodily experiences and habitus learnt in India were based on their identity as Sikhs. However, because of unstable social status as overstayers, they faced the difficulties in their life in Tokyo area including those related to conducting same practices as those in India. In addition, they had to suffer the feeling of isolation from their familiar practices based on the habitus which created their cultural and social sense although, ironically, this situation helped their adjustment to Japanese society. On the other hand, the practical decision to bring changes in their appearance and socio-cultural practices resulted in great emotional distress putting them in a situation where they oscillated between continuity and
change. Thus, whether it was the Sikhs in Kobe whose identity was supported by an imaginary connection with India or those in Tokyo who suffered the process of changing many of their familiar practices and habitus, in both cases the core dilemma was the same as faced by any dispersed or transplanted people or diaspora: how to survive as a group.

The biggest gurdwara in Pratappur
Entrance of the gurdwara in Tokyo
The gurdwara in Kobe
Free tuition for learning *gurmkhi* in Simbal Camp
sat sang in the Tokyo gurdwara
Sat sang in Kobe gurdwara

Screens show Sikh prayer in English and Punjabi (gurmukhi)