Chapter 2

Understanding the Context and the Key Concepts

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we did layout the main theme of the doctoral research, where some of the key concepts have been introduced. Having introduced the basic tenour of the argument and the focus of our study, it is important at this point to bring out a discussion on some of the key terms and concepts that one seem to bandy about; concepts such as globalisation, transnational space, community, consumption and rituals. This chapter is devoted to a discussion on these key concepts, as a clarification on these concepts is important, as it has bearing on the stance one adopts, and the context in which the lived experiences of the transnational diasporic are articulated. By doing this exercise, it is hoped that a greater clarification on how we use these concepts for our study is also brought about. We begin with the concept of globalisation, a process that is much talked about and which forms the backdrop to any discussion on transnational space.

2.2 Globalisation

There is no escaping the word global or globalisation, not just as a mere word that circulates in academia, but as a word used to explain several things that are spanning the globe. Global warming, for instance, is one such globe spanning phenomenon, which has now moved from speculation to reality, making people realise how connected the world is. There are a number of events, instances and images that are explained by the term globalisation:
Mushrooming ethnic foods making their way into different parts of the globe, for instance. Food chains that undermine the local and indigenous eating habits, but at the same time bend down to cater to local tastes, are explained through the convenient term of globalisation.

Globalisation is also about the Muslim cab driver in New York, listening to taped speeches of the imamas – the Islamic clergy – the traveling intellectuals and workers, who go back and forth between, nations and cultures. The Indian parents living half of the year with their sons and daughters in the US and introducing the grandchildren to aspects of Hinduism are part of that global experience. The NRI funding of Sangh Parivar organisations, the globalisation of Islamic fundamentalism and Christian evangelism and the causes leading to it are also part of globalisation. The simultaneous beaming of images, release of movies, music videos, circulation of religious music, videos, books etc., are all part of a global interconnected world. The protest against World Trade Organisation (WTO) at Seattle, the politics of trade and state regulations on immigrations are also as much a part of the restrictive politics of globalisation.

Globalisation is one of the major buzzwords of our time: as a concept and process it has spawned a corpus of writing in an attempt to capture the shifts, changes and flux witnessed at the turn of the century. When exploring globalisation one is faced with an exploding array of contested concepts. In the general melee of writings on globalisation, what one commentator (J. Abu Lughold, 1991) called the “global babble”, there are some essential themes that seem to have emerged, however. While there are endless debates on these

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themes, of which we are not going to discuss in detail, we will, however, attempt a synoptic overview of some of the central arguments.

It is pertinent that we separate some of the strands of globalisation, as definitions and certain understanding of globalisation defines the way we interpret the transnational space under consideration. The condition of transnationalism, as we shall argue, is an essential offshoot of global forces. Transnational connections form the backdrop in which we have explored consumption patterns of our diasporic actors, which in turn have a huge bearing on the identity of actors involved in the transnational social space.

2.2.1 Debates on Globalisation

As we already mentioned there are endless debates on definition, history, causes, characteristics, extent, and consequences of globalisation. Some feel that globalisation is not a new phenomenon and therefore equate it with internationalism, which already existed with the birth of nation-states. Some look at the extent of globalisation as all pervasive, overriding even the sovereign nation-states and making them redundant. Some see globalisation as deterritoriality that is transforming our lives. Others argue that globalisation is predominantly a capitalist system that further divides the haves and have-nots. Several scholars have tried to sort these debates to get a sense of an overview (Held and Mc Grew, 2000; Applebaum and Robinson, 2005; Cohen and Kennedy, 2000; Lechner and Boli, 2000; Robertson and White, 2003). We will address different issues on globalisation within three broad schools of

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8 Internationalism, is said to be based on the existence of sovereign nations. Yet it encourages multilateralism (world leadership not held by any single country) and creation of some formal and informal interdependence between countries, with some limited supranational powers given to international organizations controlled by those nations via intergovernmental treaties and institutions (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internationalism)
thought that explain the phenomenon – the hyperglobalist, skeptics and transformationist\(^9\).

Within these three schools there are differing ideological stances, for instance the Marxist as well as neo-liberal ideas can be both found to be subscribing to a hyperglobalist position. The approaches that we are going to be discussing will not go into different individual positions, but will summarise the mainstay of the arguments, in each of the schools. We will be, but of course, gleaning strands, which will serve as our understanding and position on globalisation and which in turn, will serve as the backdrop to further exploration of our research idea.

**The Hyperglobalist:** For scholars such as Ohmae and others (Ohmae, 1995, Wriston, 1992; Guéhenno, 1995), globalisation is a completely new phenomenon that heralds a different and new epoch in history. According to Ohmae; in the age of globalisation, ‘traditional nation-states have become unnatural, even impossible business units’ (Ohmae, 1995: 5). For the hyperglobalist the way the economy is moving, with its transnational networks of production, trade and finance, it makes the nation-states redundant, or at best as conduits for transmission of global operations. Since the national economy is increasingly a site of transnational and global flows, as opposed to the primary container of national socio-economic activity, the authority and legitimacy of the nation-state are challenged: national governments become increasingly unable to control what transpires within their own borders.

\(^9\) Held, D. and D. Mc Grew (1999). In their book *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture*, have come up with these three typologies or categories. We follow their distinctions so as to make the exercise of unraveling the different strands easier.
They further argue that nation-states are also supplanted by non-state actors at regional and local levels that question the authority previously vested in the state. As institutions of global and regional governance acquire a bigger role, the sovereignty and autonomy of the state are further eroded. On the other hand, the conditions facilitating transnational cooperation between peoples, given global infrastructures of communication and increasing awareness of many common interests, have never been so propitious. In this regard, there is evidence of an emerging 'global civil society'.

In this hyperglobalist account, the rise of the global economy, the emergence of institutions of global governance, and the global diffusion and hybridisation of cultures are interpreted as evidence of a radically new world order, an order which prefigures the demise of the nation-state (Luard, 1990; Ohmae, 1995; Albrow, 1996). Within the hyperglobalist camp there are differences between the neo-liberal school and the Marxist school.

The neo-liberal school looks at globalisation as an all pervasive logic of competitive economy. For many neo-liberals, globalisation is considered as the harbinger of the first truly global civilization, while for many radicals it represents the first global 'market civilization' (Greider, 1997). The champions of laissez-faire economy argue that free trade leads to a more efficient allocation of resources, with all countries involved in the trade benefiting. In general, this leads to lower prices, more employment and higher output. They say that greater degrees of political and economic freedom in the form of democracy and free borderless economy in the developed world are both ends in themselves and also produce higher levels of material wealth. They see globalisation as the beneficial spread of liberty and capitalism.
The Marxists see globalisation as essentially the spread of capitalist economy in an ever-oppressive form, which takes away the role of state in regulating the nation economies (Ohmae, 1995). Instead they argue that it is the global regulatory bodies, such as International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and WTO that dictate the terms and conditions of economy and trade – structural adjustment, deregulation, and flexibility of labor market and withdrawal of state from welfare oriented policies. This neo-liberal prescriptions, the Marxist argue are highly damaging to human welfare in general, as they further divide the already existing inequalities, not only between North-South but between the rich and poor. These two positions, in a very general sense, look at the sweeping changes of globalisation from an economic point of view.

We will briefly touch upon another variant of hyperglobalist position, which argues that globalisation brings about cultural colonisation of the West, in particular Americanisation. They look at globalisation as a process that essentially spreads structures of modernity – rationalism, capitalism, industrialism and bureaucratism – destroying local structures and cultures. Some argue that Western imperialism is seen in the spread of McDonalds, American television and Hollywood cinema (Spybey, 1996; Schiller 1991).

**The Skeptics:** As against this overarching account of globalisation, the skeptics feel that globalisation is not unprecedented, but an extension of internationalism. Authors Hirst and Thompson (1996) argue that the integration of the market that hyperglobalist talk about is no different from the period of gold standardisation in late nineteenth century. Compared to great world empires, the skeptic argue, the globe is less in reach and it is the national economies which are the key players. In this respect, the skeptics consider the hyperglobalist thesis as fundamentally flawed and also politically
naive since it underestimates the enduring power of national governments to regulate international economic activity. Rather than being out of control, the forces of internationalisation themselves depend on the regulatory power of national governments to ensure continuing economic liberalisation.

Skeptics tend also to discount the presumption that internationalisation prefigures the emergence of a new, less state-centric world order. Far from considering national governments as becoming immobilised by international imperatives, they point to their growing centrality in the regulation and active promotion of cross-border economic activity. Governments are not the passive victims of internationalisation but, on the contrary, its primary architects. Indeed, Gilpin considers internationalisation largely a by-product of the US-initiated multilateral economic order which, in the aftermath of the Second World War, created the impetus for the liberalisation of national economies (Gilpin, 1987).

The skeptics also argue that if anything the current economy is going through is regionalisation and not integration. According to them, the present economic system is moving in the direction of three major financial and trading blocs, that is, Europe, Asia-Pacific and North America (Ruigrok and Tulder, 1995; Boyer and Drache, 1996; Hirst and Thompson, 1996b). They contend that the Third World states are marginalised as trade investment flows are mainly from the North, which excludes much of the globe. Krugman questions the belief that multinationals are exporting jobs to the South, as there is deindustrialisation in the North. Another myth that the skeptics like to question is the transnationalness of the big corporations. They believe that these multinational corporation are primarily home based and that their global trade is concentrated between advanced capitalist countries of the North (Ruigrok and Tulder, 1995). Accordingly, the skeptical thesis is
generally dismissive of the notion that globalisation is bringing about a profound or even significant restructuring of global economic relations. In this respect, the skeptical position is an acknowledgement of the deeply rooted patterns of inequality and hierarchy in the world economy, which in structural terms have changed only marginally over the last century.

The inequalities between nations that existed before, and which have got further acerbated have driven wedges between nations that get articulated in different forms. Such inequality, in the view of many skeptics, contributes to the advance of both fundamentalism and aggressive nationalism such that rather than the emergence of a global civilisation, as the hyperglobalisers predict, the world is fragmenting into civilisation blocs and cultural and ethnic enclaves (Huntington, 1996). These divides make it difficult to subscribe to the notion that the world is moving towards a global homogenised culture. Global governance is also a myth, they argue, that is perpetuated by Western powers that have their own agenda of imposing an order conceived by them. Some argue that globalisation, more often than not, reflects a politically convenient rationale for implementing unpopular orthodox neo-liberal economic strategies (Hirst, 1997). The ground realities of real politics and international politics show the deep cleavages between the West and the other.

The skeptics make their arguments based on available data, mainly of the economy, to question the notions of hyperglobalist. For instance, they say that available evidence shows no convergence of macro-economics and welfare policies across the globe. While international economic conditions may constrain what governments can do, governments are by no means immobilised. The internationalisation of capital may, as Weiss argues, 'not merely restrict policy choices, but expand them as well' (Weiss, 1998:184). Rather than the world becoming more interdependent, as the hyperglobalisers
assume, the skeptics seek to expose the myths that sustain the globalisation thesis.

The Transformationalists: The explanation offered by transformationalists essentially looks at globalisation as the driving force behind social, cultural, political, ecological and economic changes that are reshaping the societies the world over. Globalisation is conceived as a powerful transformative force which is responsible for a 'massive shake-out' of societies, economies, institutions of governance and world order (Giddens, 1996). The transformationalists do not talk about the direction or source of these changes and the massive shake-outs, for they say that the globalisation process is replete with contradictions. Unlike the skeptics and hyperglobalists the transformationalists do not offer an account of where exactly globalisation is headed. Their conception of globalisation is generally more open ended that examines the dynamics of changes witnessed in recent history. They do however acknowledge the fact that the changes touch all societies implicating them in the processes of globalisation.

As Nierop puts it, 'virtually all countries in the world, if not all parts of their territory and all segments of their society, are now functionally part of that larger [global] system in one or more respects' (Nierop, 1994:171). But the existence of a single global system is not taken as evidence of global convergence or of the arrival of single world society. On the contrary, for the transformationalists, globalisation is associated with new patterns of global stratification in which some states, societies and communities are becoming increasingly enmeshed in the global order while others are becoming increasingly marginalised. A new configuration of global power relations is held to be crystallising as the North-South division rapidly gives way to a new international division of labour such that the 'familiar pyramid of the core–
periphery hierarchy is no longer a geographic, but a social division of the world economy' (Hoogvelt, 1997: xii). According to some, there are no clear lines between the international and the external, the internal and the domestic (Roseneau, 1990; Sassen 1996). The new hierarchies, they argue, cut across all societies. The three tier hierarchy – the elite, the mobile and the increasing masses are found not just in the Third World but the First World as well. The First, the Second and Third World nestle together in the same space in the major, big, cities of the world. This notion of the three tier hierarchy is particularly pertinent to our research project as we explore the life worlds and social fields of the mobile middle class professional from global cities of Delhi\(^{10}\) and Chicago, especially in they way they consume and articulate their identities. It will be interesting to affirm and conclude, basing on our ethnographic observations whether the mobile middle class is indeed united across space and geography.

Unlike the hyperglobalists or the skeptics, the transformationlists feel that there is reorganisation of economic process which is a result of 'deterritorialisation', this essentially means that the economic activity is no longer confined to any one space but spread across the globe. A transnational corporation may have its trade and finance related operations situated in one place and production in another place. Castells\(^{11}\) and Ruggie, among others, argue that a process of economic globalisation is reorganising economy such that national economic space no longer coincides with national territorial

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\(^{10}\) Delhi being considered a global city might be on overstatement for many, but clearly the way the city is transforming, building and touting itself as 'global city' is an indication of how transnational connections get established in certain nodes.

\(^{11}\) Castells’ triology – Information Age (1996-1998) explains how networks constitute the new social morphology of our societies. The diffusion of a networking logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in processes of production, experience, power, and culture. This has serious implications in the way capitalist economy is reorganised from vertical to horizontal levels of nodes and hubs. For Castells, networks have become the basic units of modern society.
borders (Castells, 1996, 2000). In this globalising economy, systems of transnational production, exchange and finance weave together ever more tightly the fortunes of communities and households on different continents. According to Manuel Castells, the core activities of economy—“production, consumption and circulation—as well as their components (capital, labour, raw material, information, technology, and markets) are organised on a global scale, directly through a network of linkages between economic agents” (Castells, 2000:77). The political arena is implicated in the new system of networks, according to many, in the transformationalist camp.

The traditional notion of state, as an absolute sovereign, a source of public power, and territorially exclusive (emphasis mine), is far more complex and problematic than before, according to the transformationalists (Held, 1991). They argue that it is not as though territoriality and sovereignty do not have any significance (especially symbolic) but new ‘sovereign regimes’ have to contend with emergence of powerful new non-territorial forms of economic and political organisations in the global domain, such as multinational corporations, transnational social movements, international regulatory agencies, etc. In this sense, world order can no longer be conceived as purely state-centric or even primarily state governed, as authority has become increasingly diffused among public and private agencies at the local, national, regional and global levels. Nation-states are no longer the sole centres or the principal forms of governance or authority in the world (Rosenau, 1997). The power of national governments is not necessarily diminished, according to Rosenau, but reconstituted and restructured to deal with growing complexity of governance in an interconnected world.

The above transformationists’ view covers the economy and polity but it also indicates the various social structures that are implicated in the dynamic
process of globalisation. The transformationalists' main thesis, in contrast to the hyperglobalists' and the skeptics', looks at globalisation primarily in sociological terms examining the social implications of the process. The primary concepts that have been put forward are 'time space compression' (Giddens, 1990), 'time space distanciation' and the resulting 'compression of the world', and the concomitant 'global consciousness' (Robertson, 1992). Harvey, Giddens, Robertson and Castells examine the ontological concepts of time and space in different but somewhat similar ways. We will examine these related concepts a little more in detail.

Three centuries ago, the speed of horse drawn carriage was 10mph, the coming of locomotives raised the speed to 65mph, while the latest jet engine driven aircrafts have increased the speed to a phenomenal 500 to 700mph (Harvey, 1989). This is as far as literal travel distance is considered. If we add the speed of travel through electronic media then we encounter a leap in flow of things. Information and Telecommunication Technologies with 'their wired networks' makes it possible for disembodied services like designs, operations, services, images, ideas etc., to be transported and transferred over the globe. Along with it are flows such as images of war, earthquakes, fashion, soap operas, commercials.... among a host of others, which enter the minds of people, simultaneously, across the globe. The shrinking of the globe in this fashion virtually annihilates space through time. Giddens (1989) thinks that globalisation can be seen as the intensification of world wide social relations, which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa. Robertson calls this shrinking of the globe as 'compression of the globe'.

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12 Since my doctoral thesis is essentially sociological and anthropological in orientation, I feel it is necessary to be expansive on the transformationalist account of social aspects of globalisation.
Compression of the world is the real experience of the way that interdependencies are being created in the economies of the world, to such an extent that the way people live their lives now on one side of the globe has immediate consequences for people on the other side. Shifts in preference of consumption in Europe and America, for example, affect jobs deeply in the Far East. Industrial processes of development and growth in one country can have an environmental and ecological impact in neighbouring countries. Big dam projects in India cause flooding in Bangladesh; and the forest-burning practice of Indonesian farmers results in air pollution in Singapore and Malaysia (Hoogvelt, 2001).

According to Robertson, the world compression has been going on for a long time but has intensified more with ‘global consciousness’. Global consciousness is expressed in the way people all over the world, in a discourse unified through media, commerce and technology speak of issues that are global in nature – ecology, trade, terrorism, world peace, human rights and so on.

Following the works of the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, David Harvey (who is a social geographer) argues that symbolic orderings of space and time provide people a framework for experience. The organisation of space defines relationships, not only between activities, things and concepts, but also between people. The organisation of space defines social relations. Space is a consideration for the capitalist who can move their capital to different parts of the globe. It is an equal consideration for people who can migrate and those who cannot because of the passports they carry or not carry.
As much as space is important for the capitalist looking for greener pastures, so is time, after all ‘time is money'\textsuperscript{13} Time, argues Harvey, also defines the value of money itself. In capitalist economies, accountants calculate interest rates as ‘the time value of money'. The time of production together with the time of circulation of exchange are referred to as the turnover time of capital (ibid). The way global corporations operate now, this is nothing but a reality. Many corporations who have operations across the globe seem to work 24 hours a day. It is quite common to find workers (not just call-center workers but corporate managers) working at an odd hour as it coincides with working hours elsewhere.

Castells tries to comprehend, in one unified conceptual frame, the meaningful connections between a huge number of contemporary changes: economic, social, cultural and political (Hoogvelt, 2000: 226). He tries to arrive at comprehensive totality of explanation by looking at the dominant logic. This logic is of informationalism. Informationalism in Castells’ theory is not a new mode of production, it is merely a new mode of development of the capitalist mode of production. Informationalism not only intensifies the competition between capitalists in economic life, but also shapes the overall social structure of society, for it creates perpetually changing networks of social interaction (including cross-border networks), producing new social relationships and social norms in contrast to previous times, Like others, Castells' point of departure is time/space compression. He describes a formal structure of an emerging network society based on the space of flows and on timeless time. Space was prescribed by physical contiguity; space is now

\textsuperscript{13} Not so incidentally, the dictum ‘time is money' is attributed to Benjamin Franklin, one of the founding fathers of America (see Weber, Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism) This dictum in some way still captures how time/money is accounted for in North America. But for those who are on the other end, but connected to the corporations, time is money too, ask any call center worker or a managerial staff who work for American or European corporations.
articulated through the circuitry of electronic impulses (microelectronics, telecommunications, computer processing, broadcasting systems and so on). This space is fundamentally as borderless as it is timeless. At the co-ordinates of this circuitry there emerge ‘nodes’ and ‘hubs’ which are, indeed, specific places, with well-defined social, cultural and functional characteristics, as well as physical locality. Between the nodes and hubs traverse the flows of capital, of knowledge and information, of technological designs and controls, of other organisational interactions, and of images, sounds and symbols.

2.3 The Interconnected World

Our research endeavour has been to explore the transnational space where the home and abroad crisscross and intersect. We are specifically interested in the way middle class diasporic or in this case the transnational middle class Indian is situated in this space. Our fieldwork is centred around examining the social space occupied by the Indian, therefore the issues that are most pertinent to the topic of exploration under consideration is the social processes of globalisation, which of course are tied up with the political economy. What is of interest to us here is the dynamic forces of globalisation that are changing the social landscape of our world. It is the transformationalist who have a more comprehensive account of how certain distinct aspects have come to surface in the recent past that have changed the way we look at, what once used to be taken for granted, categories such as time and space. It is the transformationalist peg that we like to hang our orientation and explanations on. This is not to deny the long history and multi-causal logic of globalisation, but it is the reconfiguration of the globe into a single social space that makes the same institutions and processes take off to a new ground. As Hoogvelt puts it succinctly “If, previously, global integration is seen in the sense of a growing unification and interpenetration of the human condition was driven
by the economic logic of capital accumulation, at present it is the unification of the human condition that drives the logic of further capital accumulation". Scholars such as Giddens, Castells, and Harvey among others have brought out this aspect of human condition and how the time/space compression and flow of things between both real and virtual have altered the landscape of the globe.

Despite the several interpretations of globalisation, a consensual aspect that comes forth strongly in globalisation debates is that the world is ever more connected. And that there is a flow of people, capital, goods, ideas and images that is unprecedented. These flows have made it possible for persistent interaction and exchanges across distance and time.

Ulf Hannerz (1992, 1996) likes to capture the multi-centrality of connections with the metaphor of flow. He uses the word flow as a way of referring to 'things not staying in their place', to mobility and expansion of many kinds. Scott Lash and John Urry, social theorist, suggest that the late 20th century is experiencing disorganised capitalism, where the society is characterised by flows of capital, labour, commodities, information and images. In a similar vein, Appadurai (-1990, 1996) terms these multi-dimensional interconnections as: ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes and ideoscapes.

The word "global" for a large part had spatial connotation but now there is shared symbolic connotation that Robertson talks of and a shared social space which is surpassed by space and time. Such a concept challenges the notions of social interaction within a neighbourhood, and within one's "cultural" group. On the contrary, the compressed world has fragmented and reconstituted community. There are some who are excluded from this as they are not part of the flow, as Castells points out. But for others like the Indian
community, themselves an intricate part of the global flow of labour, living in the bay area of San Francisco can connect to ‘home’ in simultaneous time by means of new technologies of communication and media.

In the globalisation literature these interconnections are increasingly referred as the transnational flows or transnational connections. The related term transnationalism is said to capture “a condition in which despite great distances and not withstanding the presence of international borders (and all the laws, regulations and national narratives they represent) certain kinds of relationships have been globally intensified and now take place paradoxically in a planet-spanning yet common-however virtual-arena of activity” (Vertovec, 1999; 448).

As can be seen transnational connections cover variegated phenomena that deal with a host of exchanges. An area which is eliciting a great deal of attention among scholars, witnessed by the proliferation of academic articles, university seminars and conferences, is that of transnational communities. The contact zones and interconnections between, nation’s cultures and people has given rise to descriptive and interpretative terms such as borders, travel, creolisation, hybridisation, tamsculturation and diaspora. A few journals have sprung up like Diaspora and Public Culture, and the more recent journal Global Networks which are trying to understand the process and production of transnational cultures. We tum our attention to this term which is increasingly in circulation.

2.4 Understanding the Transnational Phenomenon

There is still a great deal of confusion as to exactly what constitutes transnational. In the literature on globalisation a lot of terms have emerged
which in different ways are trying to capture the interconnected world. Portes’ distinctions in the special issue of journal *Global Networks*, cuts through the thick web of terminologies. According to him, ‘...international pertains to activities and programmes of nation-states, multinational refer to large-scale institutions such as corporations or religions whose activities take place in multiple countries. And by transnational he means activities initiated and sustained by non-institutional actors, be they organized groups or networks of individuals across borders (Portes, 2001a).

In his paper-*Globalization from Below: The Rise of Transnational Communities*, Alejandro Portes, analysing the economic origins of transnational communities concludes that the cumulative result of initial economic venture is the transformation of immigrants in to transnational communities. As we already mentioned earlier. He further states that these distinct interactions between migrant communities are unlike their previous mechanism of adaptation. He believes that transnational phenomenon is fuelled by the dynamics of globalisation.

Drawing on his research on the linked Mexican communities of Aguililla (Michoachan) and Redwood City (California) Rouse argues as follows:

It has become difficult to see Aguilillian migration as movement between distinct communities, understood as the loci of distinct sets of social relationships. Today Aguilillans find that their most important kin and friends are likely to be living hundreds and thousands of miles away as immediately around them. More significantly, they are often able to maintain these spatially extended relationships as actively and effectively as ties that link them to their neighbours. In this regard growing access to the telephone has been particularly significant, allowing people not just to keep in touch
periodically but to contribute to decision making and participate in familial events from a considerable distance (Rouse 1991:13)

Separate places become effectively a single community through continuous circulation of people, money, goods and information. "Transnational migrant circuits"14 as Rouse calls them, exemplify the kind of complex cultural formation that current social scientists are describing and theorising. A group of social anthropologist who initiated an analysis of this process, in their attempt to make sense of this say that ... “many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural and political borders”. They however add that they “are still groping for a language to describe these social locations” (Bash, Glick Schiller and Blanc Szanton, 1994:6)

Steven Vertovec says there many transnational activities that cover a range of cross border activities, NGO networks, activism, global corporations, and network of migration, cyber communities, transnational crime and terrorism and so on15. All these aspects and activities are analysed, explored and studied from various disciplinary slants. Faist on the other hands contends there are several activities that are subsumed under the various terms that explain transnationalism. He contends that there are many terms such as transnationalism transnational communities, transnational social space and

14 Similar circuits have been explored in multi-locale ethnographic texts by Grassmuck and Pressar, 1991; also Brown, 1991; Fischer and Abedi 1990.

15 Vertovec says (quoting Hannerz) we also could include; tourism, charter flight hajj and other modern pilgrimages, invisible colleges in science, exchange students, au pair girls, foreign pen pals as part of growing up, transcontinental families, international aid bureaucracies, summer beach parties of backpacking Interrail-pass-holders from all over, and among voluntary associations everything from Amnesty International to the European Association of Social Anthropologists. It is these dispersed institutions and communities, groupings of people regularly coming together and moving apart, short-term relationships or patterns of fleeting encounter, which offer the contexts in which globalization occurs as the personal experience of a great many people in networks where extremely varied meanings flow. These networks are indeed denser in some parts of the world than in others, but they are hardly now a feature only of Western industrial society. (Hannerz 1992: 46-7)
field, transnational circuits, which are sometimes used simultaneously and interchangeably, which add to the confusion. He proposes that one must separate the categories. For instance he points out that the term transnational social space and transnational communities are used simultaneously “as if ‘transnational community’ (Portes, 1996) was the only form or type of transnational social space. He feels that there is a need to conceptualise more clearly the different types of phenomena subsumed under the heading of transnational social spaces; towards this he attempts a typology of transnational social spaces. He starts by examining the defining features of transnationalism as:

Transnational social spaces are combinations of ties, positions in networks and organizations, and networks of organizations that reach across the borders of multiple states. These spaces denote dynamic social processes, not static notions of ties and positions. Cultural, political and economic processes in transnational social spaces involve the accumulation, use and effects of various sorts of capital, their volume and convertibility: economic capital, human capital (such as educational credentials, skills and know-how) and social capital, mainly resources inherent in or transmitted through social and symbolic ties (Faist, 2003:2).

Faist identifies “three types of resources within social and symbolic ties that allow individuals to cooperate in networks, groups and organisations. They also serve to connect individuals to networks and organisations through affiliations” (ibid). These three resources are as follows:

(1) Social exchange in the form of mutual obligations and expectations of the actors,
(2) Reciprocity as a social norm: what one party receives from the other requires some return
(3) Solidarity with others in a group who share similar positions -- such as kinship or local community membership -- or who can be reached only via symbolic bonds -- for example, membership in otherwise anonymous national collectives.

The reciprocity and exchange of various resources, both material and social are circulated and exchanged at various levels of transnational social spaces such as family and communities and/or through institutional set ups, which can lead to sometimes a sense of belonging and solidarity among the groups. He presents a typology of various transnational spaces and the resources, their characteristics and examples of such spaces. We present his typology in the way he conceived, in verbatim, for an easy understanding.

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<tr>
<td>Transnational Communities</td>
<td>Solidarity: shared ideas, beliefs, evaluations and symbols: expressed in some sort of collective identity</td>
<td>Mobilization of collective representations within (abstract) symbolic ties: religion, nationality, ethnicity</td>
<td>Diaspora: e.g., Jews, Armenians, Palestinians, Kurds; border regions: e.g., Mexico-USA; Mediterranean</td>
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Figure 1 Three Types of Transnational Social Spaces Arising from International Migration and Flight
Our idea of presenting this typology of transnational spaces is not to subscribe ourselves to any one typology as much as to look at it is an ideal type that may help us identify features that we may encounter in the course of our fieldwork. As all typologies when they are examined in substantive terms we often find that there are overlapping elements, which go beyond slotting. By merely looking at the typology offered by Faist, we may at the most, at this stage, be able to say what we don’t want to include in our understanding of transnational. We will set the tone of what is transnational by differentiating it with diaspora.

2.5 From Diaspora to Transnational Community /Space

The term Diaspora, with capital D, was used to denote the specific exiled condition of Jewish community who were dispersed throughout the world. The initial association of the term diaspora has now extended to all communities who are scattered. Scholars have pointed out that the diasporic element of the scattered communities is the affinity and nostalgia and longing for home, expressed both literally, culturally and metaphorically. Often enough this need for home and connection to it is considered an important ingredient for considering a community a diaspora. But not all communities are homogenous enough to have very strong sense of consciousness as a community to begin with. Nevertheless, they still have a semblance of affiliation, however tenuous to a geographical space, which is not necessarily a nation, like the African experience for instance.

This sense of affiliation connection and longing is what makes a diaspora engage with ‘home’. This involvement as we mentioned can be imaginary or metaphorical and many times very real in terms of contacts and connections
with the country of origin. In the context of Indian diaspora, one can safely say that in the last few decades the density of contact has substantially increased between Indian diaspora and home.

Indians have been migrating to other countries for several centuries now but never has there been such massive migration of people as in the 19th and the 20th centuries and continues to be so in 21st century. Indians are the world's third largest diaspora after the Chinese and British. The people of Indian Origin (PIOs) are estimated to number around 20 million and are settled in around 75 countries (Sanghvi Report, 2001). An overwhelming majority of the Indians who have migrated are what some call as "old diaspora": The migrants who crossed shores during colonial time, mainly as indentured labour to various British colonies. Vijaya Mishra, among many other scholars on Indian diapora, distinguishes this movement and migration of Indians during British Imperialist period with that of Post Colonial migration. He says; "there is radical break between older diasporas of classical capitalism to the mid and late 20th century diasporas of advanced capitalism to the metropolitan centres of the Empire, New World, and the former settler colonies. Since these are two interlinked but historically separated diasporas, I would like to refer to them as 'old' (exclusive) and 'new' (border) Indian diasporas. I would want to argue that the old Indian diasporas were diasporas of exclusivism because they created relatively self contained 'little-Indias' in colonies" (Mishra, 1996, 421-22). It is generally seen and agreed that the new diasporas given its recent migration, are prone to greater on-going contact with their homeland.

The distinction between old and new diasporas, especially with reference to their connection to homeland can be a bit of oversimplification, warn some. Shinder Thandi for instance, argues that "with the globalization of 'brand
India's, especially via Bollywood, even the "old" diaspora now feels that the cultural connection with mother India has been rekindled" (Thandi, 2006:42). However, the actual and ongoing connections, in terms of people traveling back and forth to visit families and relatives, the money transfers, the movement of goods and services, images and ideas, are perhaps far greater and denser among the new diaspora and their homelands. Also, the financial contribution in terms of remittances to India has made the Indian state look at their migrants with new eye of appreciation, especially the new migrants to the richer Western countries. The term NRI has an immediate association with the richer migrant writes Vinay Lal:

It is no accident that the term NRI (the Non-Resident Indian), which is now often cleverly passed off as a reference to any overseas Indian, only came into usage much less than two decades ago, and has acquired something of a magical resonance in the last decade when India finally became committed to the opening of its economy to foreign investments, the reduction of tariffs, and the gradual elimination of the license raj. When we consider that the United States only opened its doors to immigrants from India and other countries in 1965 with the passage of a new Immigration and Naturalization Act, and that a professional and affluent Indian elite, which in time would have both the means and the desire to support the economic liberalization of India, was first established in the 1980s, it becomes easier to understand why NRI became at the same time a term of approbation, indeed a sign of something to which the middle-class Indian could aspire. The entire destiny of the middle-class Indian consisted in effecting a transformation into the NRI - and, to be sure, the NRI was never then a category that referenced all overseas Indians, but rather only Indians in the affluent North, and most particularly those settled in the United States (Lal, 2004:5).
The overseas Indians' contribution in terms of remittances is substantial. India received US$ 21.7 billion in remittances in 2004. It was the first among the top twenty remittance-receiving countries, followed by China with US$ 21.3 billion and Mexico with US$ 18.1 billion (World Bank 2006). The huge remittance is the reason why the Indian state woke up to the presence of migrant Indian, especially the rich migrants from the Western countries. While the term NRI connoted specific status for the state. For the larger audience in India, it came to be associated with relatively wealthy mobile Indian migrant, who made regular visits to India laden with all things foreign and luxurious. These migrant professionals, skilled and unskilled labour who migrated to North America, West Europe and subsequently to the Gulf region during the oil boom, signified a better life. The migrants with their relatively better lives were reference group for their kith kin and neighbours who were left behind and who had limited access to material goods and opportunities. Especially in the days – pre-1990 opening of Indian economy – when India was seen as offering fewer opportunities and material goods and comforts were something that was associated with advanced Western countries. The oil boom in late 1970s and 80s had many skilled and unskilled workers migrate to Gulf regions but while there was monetary compensation, which was an attraction in itself, the good life was something that was associated with the West. And among the western countries, US is the leading destination for immigration.

Of all the countries of the West, US over the years have come to become the destination number one for seeking a greener pasture. Indians in the US are

\[16\] Through all my field work experience one thing which came as a constant refrain when talking about relatives and family who left for Western countries was "how good a life they had". When asked to elaborate on good life the references were almost always of material goods and comforts-big house, car(s), electronic goods...etc. Job satisfaction as one of the criteria for this 'good life' also figured.
one of the largest among groups of Indian diaspora, numbering about 2.5 million, and probably one of the most well off – their median income is 1.5 times that of the host country. They are well represented in all walks of life, particularly so in academia, information technology and medicine. Fortune magazine estimated the wealth generated by Indian entrepreneurs at around $250 billion. (www.wikipedia.org)

These upwardly mobile professionals stand at the cusp of the global interconnected world, as the consumers of all things globalisation has to offer, in their consumption, not limited to only material goods, but intangibles such as ideas and images, they are agents of globalisation, for themselves and for others who intersect their lives, like their relatives who remain back home. In the age of globalisation, where identities – traditional, hybrid and new are constantly under contestation – and informed and mediated as they are by global media, communication and consumption, it is pertinent that we explore the social field of this new diaspora.

Our analytical lens must include in an attempt to understand the transnational social field not only those who migrate but those who stay behind. Thus for the purpose of our study we explored the social fields of the upwardly mobile migrant Indian in America, specifically Chicago and the mobile professional Indian who is exposed to transnational connections in Delhi.

When we want to discuss transnational connections and spaces in the context of Indian diaspora, we have kept the essential element of transnationalism that is the ongoing dense flow of images, ideas, finances, people, capital etc., in mind. And as it is indicative, it is the new diaspora which has far denser connections with their homeland. Thus when we are talking about transnational spaces and networks we are, in some sense, moving away from
the traditional notion and the associated meanings of diaspora. The initial use of the term diaspora referred to immigrants who had tenuous, often nostalgic and sometimes imagined perceptions and links with motherland, in a general sense of dislocation and isolation. As Tololyan points out the term once implied... “meanings of exile, loss, dislocation, powerlessness and pain is being used today to describe a wide range of dispersions; the diaspora now serves as exemplary communities of the transnational moment” (Tololyan, 1991:4-5).

This added aspect of continuous association and connection with home makes the new diasporic experience different from the old diaspora who are far less connected to home. This connection to home and residence and many times permanent or even citizenship makes these diasporic communities have a feeling of belonging to two places or not belonging to neither. The old migration theories or studies on diaspora rarely talked about these transnational connections between home and abroad. To capture this multiple attachments more realistically, Basch et al argue that migrants be understood as forming part of two or more worlds dynamically in entwined worlds and migration as the “process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (Bach, 1994:6). It is this particular aspect that we refer to when we talk about transnational networks with reference to the Indian diaspora.

There are levels to this interaction that can not be easily pinned down as being non institutional or institutional, familial or non familial, so instead of trying to come to a typology of connections that we talked about earlier. Thus we like to use the term for these dense contacts and transactions as “transnational space’. We may slip in to using the term transnational communities just to differentiate it from old diaspora and to talk about the Indian diaspora who
have intricate, extensive and frequent connection with home. This is not to suggest, however, that transnational spaces occupied by new diasporas amount to a forging of a community, though it is a question worth exploring.

Whether such a diaspora can be called a community is preemptive, in some sense, we will reserve that for later. However, we would like to draw attention to how the notion of community is under scrutiny with the changed landscape of global flows.

2.6 The Notion of Community

A point that has been raised by many is that the recent flow of people, things and meanings/ideas make it very difficult for conventional social concepts such as culture, community and space to fit as isomorphic units. In his article in *Diaspora* Stephan Helmreich points out this problematique:

In the literature of traditional anthropology, community and culture have been privileged units of analysis and have often been considered to be isomorphic, with well defined national or ethnic territories. Recent anthropological attempts to understand constitutions of community and identity in a transnational, postcolonial and global economic context questioned this easy relationship between culture, community and place and have focused on how social worlds can be webbed together across national space" (Helmreich, 1992; 244)

A recurrent theme, especially in social anthropology is about bounded communities, societies and cultures. This was evident in such conceptions as *gemeinschaft* and *geiselleschaft* — a typology of societies by Tonnies, Durkheim's societies with organic and mechanical solidarity and Redfield's
continuum of little and great traditions. The community as bounded entity got further cemented with ethnographic and relativist concerns leading to analysis that saw cultures bound in holistic patterns, a relativistic tendency as it were. “The world, at least to anthropologist seems to be made up of a myriad of...more or less local, bounded entities a sort of global mosaic” (Hannerz, 1996; 4), be it Malinowskian cultural whole or a web of situated meanings. As the study of ‘other cultures’ by the West, looking at the rest, became increasingly dubious, spurned by introspection on anthropology’s colonial connection, researchers began to look at home and at complex societies. “Yet, even then, the mosaic of small-scale, territorially anchored social and cultural units remained in place” (ibid).

The bounded aspect of societies – both in terms of place/locality and culture is being affected by the interconnected world. As people move their culture or meaningful forms, and as culture finds ways of traveling, territories really cannot contain culture. Culture is no longer homogeneously distributed and bounded in a territory (not that it ever was, in a pure sense). This as well as the fact that the actors involved in this moving and mobile situations are located in different contexts and meanings is getting to be a problematique.

The possibility that communities could be forged without a face-to-face interaction and contact and without a shared web of meanings through actual, physical participation came from Benedict Anderson. In his book Imagined Communities (1983), Anderson points out to the possibility of a community free of face-to-face communication or even of indirect communication between persons and groups. The development of print capitalism, according to him, made it possible for people to feel, read things together and develop an inclusive social space within which people could engage in a common intelligibility and thus develop a sense of “we-ness’. According to Hannerz
‘the leap out of the local was made by way of one media technology, the print technology... In combination with the market’ (ibid: 20). For Anderson the imagined communities are nations.

In the contemporary context of mobile territories, moving cultures of ideas and images and people and increasing networks and connections among them leading to de-territorialisation, there is the questioning of taken for granted assumptions of bounded communities (Thorton, 1988), Clifford (1992) and Gupta and Ferguson (1992). If the traditional boundedness of a community is taken away, how do communities produce and feel a sense ‘we-ness without homogenous shared space? This is a question that comes up again and again.

Not only is it important to grasp a sense of the social fields of these communities but more importantly the crisscrossing intersecting worlds of transnationalism. It is this that we want to capture in our research. How ‘home’ and ‘abroad’ shape each other and enter the everyday social field to become part of a habitus, (to use Bourdieu’s term, without its overarching structuration) that not only informs but allows for creative manipulation, much like the English grammar in the hands of the once colonized. We are using the term social field\(^{17}\) to denote a series of interconnecting relationships that influence each other. For instance for an Indian living in United States, not only is his relationship with the host country as much apart of his social field but his membership in an ethnic organization and his continuing contacts

\(^{17}\) "The concept of a social field has a theoretical pedigree in the Manchester School of Anthropology, however, that is rarely cited. Drawing on the ideas of Max Gluckman and other colleagues in this intellectual group, Mitchell suggested that a social field may be thought of as a series of inter-connecting relationships all of which in some way influence one another. \[E\]ach field is a segment of the social system which may be isolated in terms of the interdependency of the relationships and the activities of the people involved in it. Overlapping the fields together, therefore, comprise the total social system, though we are not sure whether the social system itself should be thought of in terms of the aggregate of social fields or whether it should be thought of as a ‘field of fields’ in which the various fields of social relationships are themselves connected” (quoted in Vertovec, 2001:24).
with home a part of series of fields which intersect and crisscross each other. It is this space of intersecting worlds which will also help us understand what community might constitute.

There are several aspects to social fields and everyday worlds of transnational communities, but an area that is increasingly drawing the interest of academics working on Indian diaspora is the role of consumption. Familiar paradigms of race and ethnic relations have been abandoned for an emphasis on patterns of cultural consumption. New and emerging transnational networks, it is suggested, have reconstructed the diaspora and its relationship with "home" around current patterns of cultural consumption based on music, art, fashion, food and the media. (especially bollywood)

It has been observed that the circulation of goods, people, ideas and images and the intersecting world of transnational worlds has given rise to near simultaneous consumption patterns across spaces; be it international branded goods, trips to exotic islands, indulgence at an ayurveda spa or use of what was once considered an esoteric art and science such as vastu$^{18}$, and vaastu inspired homes of modular kitchens and Jacuzzis, be it the suburbs of Chicago or Delhi. Consumption, in this globalised world of interconnected transnational world is getting to be part of the social field of communities that has been barely examined or analysed.

$^{18}$ It is interesting to see the number of websites devoted to vaastu and the vaastu inspired architectural firms, selling American dream houses be it in suburbs of Delhi or in the suburbs of Chicago. See sites such as www.vaastuinternational.com. www.vaastu-shastra.com.
2.7 Exploring Consumption

When a sociologist or anthropologist talk about consumption, they go beyond the economists' dimension who look at the use of goods produced and their use-value only. That commodities have mode of signification, that is, they convey more than their use-value and that the goods circulate among a system of differences—as collection of objects in their total meaning (Baudrillard 1988 b:31) is a proposition that is well understood among sociologist and anthropologist that it needs no elaboration.

When we focus our attention on consumption, we are not undermining the importance of politics of production but go with the assumption that it is implied and implicated. Focusing on consumption makes it possible to analyse how commodities circulate through their systems of meanings and significations; not just for the prestige they confer—but as a tool in the construction of collective and individual identity.

People, through their converging interactions, create a collective identity underpinned by meanings peculiar to them as a social group. In the process they raise both conceptual and interactional boundaries, which organises their experience and justifies their actions.

In the articulation of such boundaries, objects tend to play a dominant role as potential items of consumption and elements in a lifestyle. One positions oneself e.g. as a member of the urban middle class by a certain type of house, furniture, clothing etc. In this set-up, the intrusion of a global flow of potential

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19 We largely subscribe to the position taken by transformationalist, especially Castells in his view of global capitalism and networks and the resulting time space compression. This view forms the backdrop to our understanding of how production and consumption of goods is part of this global political economy. We shall of course, expand on this subsequently.
consumption items is believed to disrupt the loosely bounded localities of meaning and identity hitherto in existence, hence the proclamations such as homogenisation, Mcdonaldisation and so on. *At first view* it may seem supposed to produce chaos and meaninglessness and a temptation towards uniformity which destroys identity. At this stage we are not getting into a discussion on whether that happens are not but point out another aspect of infusing culture with influences from everywhere mediated as they are by global technologies.

More often than not, the new objects are co-opted into pre-existing and – more typically – into new identities, within which they acquire new, localised meanings; thus their flow is no longer unimpeded, and instead of creating uniformity, brings about eddies of new identities hitherto unpredictable.

The doctoral research examined this aspect of consumption: a process of consumption which in tum is mediated through networks of transnational world; such that, choices, tastes, consumption patterns are defined by intersecting worlds of transnationalism.

In the Indian context, consumption is at it is expansive best in performative events such as weddings. With business and markets quickly latching on to the marketability of culture, traditions and festivities have come under the marketing purvey. Rituals therefore have gained an added consumptive value. Life-cycle rituals have intimate association with family events. Our attempt to study trasnationalism at its micro unfolding makes life-cycle rituals among the upwardly middle-class Indians our site for investigation.
2.8 Rituals as Sites of Consumption

Rituals are more than mere repetitive performances and are acts steeped in age-old tradition. This aspect has long been recognised in social anthropology and sociology. Seminal works of Marcel Mauss and Malinowski have pointed out to the association and circulation of objects in ritual settings. That they may seem repetitive is a misnomer, for they are imaginatively manipulated to social articulations.

Malinowski’s study of *kula*, in his book *The Argonauts of Western Pacific* (1922) brings to light the more complicated relations and meaning behind the exchange of seemingly useless objects of *kula*. In a sense what Malinowski was doing was following the trajectory and movements of goods to understand how movements are part of an integral whole. Marcel Mauss was a pioneer who brought out the multivalent value of exchange of goods or service in his book *The Gift*. The Gift for Mauss is more than an object which changes hands. It is, according to him, a “total prestation” which stands for every aspect of the society-political, economic, mythological, religious, personal and above all social.

Bourdieu looks at rituals as regulated but improvised habitus and finds in his research in Algiers among the Kabyle that the exchanges between affines are extremely strategic. Bourdieu, in his book *The Distinctions*, further elaborates the role of social capital by highlighting the role of consumption in reproducing class structures. What one consumes not only advertises social group prestige but also helps organise social groups. Bourdieu concludes that consumption is predisposed to fulfilling a social function of legitimising social differences. Bourdieu was specifically arguing about class distinction and legitimacy.
Consumption, as a cultural and identity marker, serves not only class identity but also a religious and ethnic one as well. It is this multivalent meaning which rituals encapsulate that is of interest to us. Above all, the fact that rituals, to generate meanings, must use actual goods and artifacts and other accompaniments that makes it a consumptive act and an event and a site, makes it a worthwhile study.

*Ritual always involved consumption of goods and symbolic acts but never have they been propelled by global economies as in recent past.* Not necessarily ritual per se but cultural as such have come into the marketing purview of business enterprise. Christmas and Thanksgiving in the US, for instance, are a major commercial enterprise. More than one half of all consumer goods are purchased during this season in America (Nachbar and Lause, 1992). We have our own emerging parallels in diwali sales, celebration and gift-giving, where businesses make money and people spend and consume.

The fact that there is resurgence of religion and identity consciousness makes it pertinent to explore performative acts, which are best captured by rituals, whether they are rituals of passage or calendaric rituals influenced by and based on cosmologies. What is also particularly significant is the increasing commodification in a global arena and the impact it has on identity construction. A question that comes to our mind is does increasing flows between various nodes of global networks mean increasing differentiation and sharpening of identities? Is it even more possible for similar goods to be consumed despite situated differences? Do these similarities of convergences produce a shared sentiment?
Also, what role does the media play in impelling collective imagination? We have seen how media, of recent has been privileging rituals, as spectacles. We have full-length movies in Bollywood where the main story line seems to revolve around rituals of the wedding, as in *Hum Apake Hai Kuan, Monsoon Wedding*. Soap serials have made *kadwa chauth* and *navaratri* fasting into a fashion. Weddings always had elements of conspicuous consumption, now they have become spectacles. Traditions are recreated and hybridized. Rituals are getting longer than before. A simple *upanyana* ceremony for south Indian Brahmin is an elaborate show of their upwardly mobile status, involving lavish gift giving, elaborate rituals, and large guest list and so on.

The economy is geared towards selling culture. It has global reach. It is not just the domestic markets where you find specialty goods. Markets are no longer restricted to places but follow the people as they move countries. If the Indian population is substantial in any one place, for instance in US, one is likely to find goods and services which cater to this diaspora. It is much easier now to find articles required for ritual observances in neighbourhood markets, and in ‘Little Indias’, they do not have to be procured from specific locations. Many items are prepared for ready consumption, like food for *navaratri* fasting, to packaged *havan* mixes. The best way to capture these aspects of rituals is to study them ethnographically, over spaces that truly capture the interconnected transnational social fields of the Indian community.

Our ethnographic research, as has been mentioned, is among the upwardly mobile middle-class Indian families in Delhi and Chicago. The fourth chapter

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20 Lavina Melwani writes in *Little India* (April, 2002, [www.littleindia.com](http://www.littleindia.com)) that NRI weddings are getting more elaborate than ever and every effort goes into making them as *desi* as possible. She writes “they came in a horse driven carriage to get married in an idyllic village, at beautiful little temple, surrounded by thatched huts, bullock carts. But this village was nowhere in India, it had been recreated in American Connecticut. A prominent motel owner went all out to get his daughter married transforming ten acres of land in to desi village. Oh! The ingenuity of Indians if can’t go to India, you can always bring India to America”.
moves to the sites and captures the field settings, ethnographically. At that point we will be introducing you to the family that becomes the foci of our participant observation. We will also be delineating the specific nature of upwardly middle-class Indian families we have explored for this research. But before that we would like to take a much broader and substantive review of literature on the old and the more recent transnational oriented studies on the Indian diaspora. The chapter will also glean some perspectives and concepts that may be useful for the study. We will also spell out our methodological approach and stance in our next chapter.