
UNIT 16 INDIANS IN AUSTRALIA

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16.1 INTRODUCTION

Australia is one of the multicultural nation-states that recognise or profess the co-existence of a plurality of ethnic cultures within their political space. In recent years, with the unfolding of the forces of globalisation, the issue of ethnic/cultural identity has become an intense site of academic concern and debate among social scientists as well as policy makers. It is in this context that multiculturalism and its efficacy has become quite a controversial issue. A critical question of concern, therefore, is how cultural identities in all its manifestations are adequately accommodated or allowed to co-exist within such nation-states.

Theoretically, at least two functional models are identified. One model rests on the "non-discrimination principle" which underlines that identity should neither be supported nor penalised by public policy. Rather, expression and perpetuation of cultural identities should be left to the private/individual sphere and, therefore, are not the concern of the state except for ensuring needed safeguards against discrimination. The second model, by contrast, involves public measures aimed at not only protecting but also promoting ethno-cultural identity. These measures, among others, importantly include guaranteed ethno-cultural representation and expression. Basic to this model is that the state identifies these ethno-cultural identities and assigns and determines the limits within which such identities are exercised. Implicitly, at least both models suggest that there exists an overarching national identity within which all these ethno-cultural diversities are subsumed.

By most accounts, Australia, as a multicultural nation-state, fits in with the second model. Unlike other modern multicultural nation-states, such as the United States, where there has been a "bottom up" evolutionary process towards multiculturalism, in Australia it is a "top-down" political strategy formally adopted by the state and gradually implemented in recent decades. Whereas in the US the multiculturalist policy programmes have been advanced by the erstwhile "excluded" ethnic minority groups, such as the Blacks, Hispanics and Asian Americans, in Australia, multiculturalism is a centre-piece of official government policy implemented by those in power precisely to advance the "inclusion" of ethnic minorities within its evolving national mainstream culture. Such that, both the US and Australia, despite sharing a common historical experience of British colonialism and immigration, seem to have adopted different trajectories in evolving the multicultural nation-state.

The scope of this unit is not to go into a comparative analysis of the national connotations of the term multiculturalism and its structural differences in various historical and contemporary contexts. Instead, an attempt is made here to trace the historical context in which Australia constructed "from above" its multiculturalism and against that background examine its efficacy. Towards this objective, the unit attempts to measure the "space" that Australian multiculturalism offers for the Indian diaspora in the country.

Divided into three broad sections, the unit in the first section offers a brief sketch of the evolution of Australia's multiculturalism from its antecedents as a predominant Anglo-Celtic country. The second section will trace the history of Asian-Indian immigration to Australia, and the third section attempts to examine some of the issues relating to the Indian diasporic community's efforts at negotiating its identity in the contemporary multicultural ambience of Australia.

16.2 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the evolution of Australia's multiculturalism;
- trace the history of Asian-Indian immigration to Australia;
- describe the anatomy of Indian diaspora in Australia; and
- understand the ethno-cultural identity of the Indian community in Australia.

16.3 EVOLUTION OF AUSTRALIAN MULTICULTURALISM

One of the persistent myths is that Australia, since the time of British colonisation, has remained a homogenous Anglo-Celtic country. It is estimated that, until the Second World War, the non-British-born population of Australia amounted to no more than 5 per cent. Aside from Aboriginal people, such estimation ignores both the waves of immigrants who came from all over the world under many different circumstances and who were absorbed into the mainstream population during more than one and a half centuries of British colonisation. According to recent studies, in the very "First Fleet" that anchored off Sydney Cove on 26 January 1788, there were a dozen different ethnic groups represented among the sailors, soldiers and convicts who established the first colony in Australia. The convicts even included black West Indians. In subsequent years, those consigned to life sentences by the British colonial government were trans-shipped from Mauritius, Réunion, Mozambique and Madagascar. And it was by way of Mauritius that the first Asiatics-Indians and Chinese - came to Australia between 1820 and 1840. Among the Indians were the first Muslims to settle in Australia.

In the mid-19th Century, when the convict system was abolished, and following the discovery of traces of gold deposits in New South Wales in the 1850s, the so-called advent of the Gold Rush era brought to Australian shores fortune-seekers and prospectors from the world over opening up a new chapter in its history of immigration viz. the free settlement. Of no less than a million who entered as immigrants between 1852-1861, most of whom were from Europe and America, the "Golden era" also gave Australia its first experience of large-scale Asian immigration. Largely concentrated in Victoria, the Chinese population, working as mine workers, reached a near 50,000 by the late 1850s. Alongside, as indentured immigrant labour began arriving from Japan, India and Ceylon, restrictive laws were passed curtailing Asian labour immigration to Australia.

Yet, the demand for labour on the sugar and rice plantations of Queensland and other colonies was, however, met by importing South Pacific islanders.

For most of the 19th Century, Australia thus remained as a cluster of a transplanted immigrant colonial society with no evidence of a distinctively Australian identity. It may, however, be added that, towards the turn of the Century, a sense of national distinctiveness grew stronger and assumed an apparent overt racial character. It was only in 1901, when the six British colonies finally resolved their differences and established a federation, that the first major legislation was adopted under the Immigrant Restriction Act prohibiting immigration of people of "non-European" origins or the "coloured races" into Australia. Patterned on the Natal Act of South Africa, the new law imposed certain "educational" requirements, importantly skills in European languages. Although the 1901 law was subject to criticism for its implicit "exclusionary" clause, its motivation, as has been argued, was not primarily negative in the sense of being directed against people other than that of European origin. Furthermore, the social reality throughout the colonies, as they federated in 1901, was much more culturally diverse than was officially recognised. Therefore, as some Australian scholars observe.

[T]he policy was implemented at a critical moment in the positive development of a distinctive national identity. If... the settler societies began their struggle for a separate identity with the new material of the national culture brought by the settlers, then we can understand that the... policy was, in the first instance, a nationalist policy, reflecting the new nation-state's search for a national identity. (David Bennett, 1998, pp.148-49).

Implicit in this line of argument is that it was the imperative of forging a nation-state that led to the policy of the exclusion of non-European races. The logic seems to be that the homogeneity of a nation-state could be achieved through a state policy, which equated race and not ethnicity with culture. Rather than using the "reductive category of race" and instead ethnicity, the Australians, in the second half of the 20th Century were able to embark with ease on a trajectory towards a multicultural society based on the more culturally oriented discourse of ethnicity.

Given its historical evolution as a settler society and given the geo-political ground realities, Australia, before long, realised that for its economic development and national security, it had to depend on sustained immigration. Efforts at attracting European immigrants through various assisted settlement schemes were not encouraging. So much so, at the end of the Second World War, new policy initiatives had to be undertaken urgently to encourage immigration in order to enhance its demographic density. In these circumstances, "populate or perish" became the new slogan under which efforts were made to liberalise its immigration policy allowing the entry of different European nationalities. At the same time, significantly enough, some concessions were also made to encourage the non-European settlers. Such concessions included temporary residences of non-Europeans for business purposes; the legal eligibility of non-Europeans for naturalisation; and the admission of "distinguished and highly qualified non-Europeans" and persons of mixed descent-all of which led to new legislation (Migration Act of 1958), which replaced entirely the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901.

These policy initiatives admittedly introduced an element of diversity. It was, however, believed that through an orchestrated process of assimilation, Australia could evolve a distinct national identity. To the extent the Australian national identity had remained thus far undetermined either by ideology or culture. It was said to provide "the symbolic space for the Australian nation-state to develop and implement an official policy of multiculturalism as the foundation for a reconstruction of national self-perception". (David Bennett, 1998, p.153).

Although the end of the "exclusionary" immigration policy and the induction of a policy initiative towards multiculturalism have often been attributed to the advent of the Labor Party under Gough Whitlam in 1972, the dilution or the dismantling of the so-called "White Australia" exclusionary policy was evident even before. Mention has been made earlier of the passing of the Migration Act of 1958. In the 1960s, further legal relaxation for the entry of non-Europeans was put in place. As a consequence, nearly 5 million new immigrants had arrived in the country reaching a peak of nearly 200,000 in 1969-1970 alone; some among them were admitted on the basis of assisted settlement schemes for non-European people.

Seen against these developments, the official proclamation of state-sponsored multiculturalism in the early 1970s, as some critics have argued, was neither on account of the failure of the earlier "ethic of assimilation" nor a pragmatic response to the problems encountered in the absorption of the new non-European immigrants. Instead, it was a recognition of the evolving Australian national identity. In a report made in 1982, the Australian Council on Population and Ethnic Affairs, *Multiculturalism for All Australians: Our Developing Nationhood* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1982), thus stated:

Multiculturalism... is much more than the provision of special services to minority ethnic groups. It is a way of looking at Australian society, and involves living together with an awareness of cultural diversity. We accept our differences and appreciate a variety of lifestyles rather than expect everyone to fit into a standard pattern. Most of all, multiculturalism requires us to recognise that we, each can be a 'real Australian' without necessarily being 'a typical Australian'.

In that sense, Australian multiculturalism must be understood as a conscious effort to reconstruct the definition of Australian national identity. Seen thus, it is at best a response to a crisis that is real and not imagined in any post-colonial immigrant society. And in this effort, the state- as the sponsoring agent of multiculturalism has taken on a new role as "the guarantor" of the historical continuity and as an "institutional container" of instruments to the encouragement and management of cultural diversity.

Critiques on state-sponsored Australian multiculturalism are aplenty. Yet mention may be made of a few. First, the problem with official or state-proclaimed multiculturalism is that it tends to freeze the fluidity of the ethnic identity by the very fact that it is concerned with synthesising unpredictable cultural identities and differences into a harmonious 'unity-in-diversity' mould. Second, since official multiculturalism operates by (pre)-fixing culture in ethnic boxes, the proliferation of cultural differences in the practice of everyday life can never be completely contained in a static/statist 'unity-in-diversity' model. Evidence of this is already apparent in the so-called politics of Aboriginality in Australia; namely whether to treat Aboriginal people as a race or as an ethnic community. Be that as it may, perhaps, it is the increasing Asian immigration into Australia in recent decades that may put official multiculturalism to the crucible.

Transformative economic and political changes taking place in Asia following the Vietnam War have been a catalyst for the return to large scale Asian immigration into Australia for the first time in nearly a hundred years. Between 1975 and the early 1980s, 150,000 Vietnamese, the so called "boat people" arrived. By the 1980s, Asians were arriving in Australia in increasing numbers so that, by 1983-84, Asia replaced the United Kingdom and Europe as Australia's main source of migrants, with Asians as the fastest growing overseas-born population ethnic group in Australia in recent decades. In 1990, eight out of the ten top source countries of Australia's migrants were Asian countries. By 1991, Asia-born Australians comprised 4.3 per cent of the total Australian population, excluding West Asians. Of this, 2.2 per cent were from Southeast Asia (Brunei,

Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam); another 1.2 per cent were born in North Asia (China, Hong Kong, Japan, North and South Korea, Macau, Mongolia and Taiwan) and the remaining were born in South Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka).

16.4 ANTECEDENTS AND ANATOMY OF INDIAN DIASPORA IN AUSTRALIA

Mention has already been made of the first Indians to emigrate to Australia closely on the heels of Arthur Phillip's "First Fleet" bringing ashore the pioneering settlers. Although some anthropologists suggest prehistoric connections between the Aboriginal people of Australia with the people of peninsular India, recorded instances of Indian immigration had begun only after European settlement in Australia. Between 1787 and 1823 there were a few Indians serving their British masters and a few as convicts and labourers had landed, as shown in the muster rolls of the convicts. Ever since, at least three periods of Indian immigration can be identified:

- i) Upto the 1850s, the number was very insignificant. During this period, as the hinterlands opened up, the demand for labour led to submissions from colonial entrepreneurs seeking recruitment of Indian labourers. According to some historians, John Mackay, an ex-British planter from India advised and acted as a conduit for the export of Indian labour. They also point out that, in the recruitment of Indian labourers, preference was given to Hindus as against Muslims, for they were not "addicted to opium, wine and spirit". It appears that, in the recruitment of Indian labourers in the late 1830s, preference was given to dhangar tribals from the Chotanagpur region because they maintained quite different habits and practices from those of Hindus and Muslims. At the same time, the recruitment of Indian labourers was discouraged because the abundance of cheap Indian labour might pose a threat to imported British labour. To avoid scrutiny, many of the recruiting agents therefore dispatched shiploads of Indians to Australia as domestic servants.
- ii) The discovery of gold in New South Wales and Victoria in the 1850s led to a second wave of Indian emigration to Australia. Despite anti-Asian sentiment, especially against the Chinese, and, despite the Indian Immigration Act of 1859, which put a virtual stop to Australian employers inducting Indian labour, Indian immigrants increased, especially the Punjabi Sikhs, Punjabi Muslims and Afghans between 1880 and 1890. Most had come to Australia for pastoral work and camel rearing and driving, although some were free settlers. Studies also show that some of these immigrants became peddlers and hawkers in small rural outposts in Victoria and New South Wales, some worked on sugarcane fields of northern New South Wales and Queensland and others went as far as Western Australia, where they were employed in the primary production and transport industries. With increasing resistance to imported labour, Indian immigration began to decline towards the turn of the Century and there are reported instances of Indian immigrants either being repatriated or returned on their own to their original homeland. What is perhaps noticeable in the 1890s is that much against the anti-immigration legislation, a merchant company based in Hyderabad opened branches in Melbourne by 1896 and about 30 Sindhi merchants were settled there two years later (M de Lepervanche, p.25). The actual number of Indians settled in Australia rose from 300 in 1857 to 2000 in 1871 and reached 3000 by the end of 1880, and by the turn of the Century rose to 4500.

With the passing of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, migration to Australia from India decreased considerably. The introduction of European language proficiency Dictation

Tests and related "educational" requirements made it almost impossible for anyone other than a handful of students, travellers and merchants with British passports to obtain temporary permits to visit Australia. An average of 5 visitors a year came to Australia from South Asia between 1905 to 1923. In other words, immigration from India virtually ceased to exist except for one single large inflow of nearly 400 Punjabi Sikhs from Jalandhar district to work as labourers in the sugar plantations in Woolgoolga in New South Wales.

- iii) It was not until the end of the Second World War that Asian Indians emigrated to Australia. Some among them had obtained certificates of domicile and re-entered Australia after visits to India. With the enactment of the Migration Act of 1958, significant numbers of Anglo-Indians were given permanent residence. A new category of extended residence for highly qualified Asians was also introduced, offering lucrative opportunities to Asian Indians. With the abolition of the "Dictation Test" in 1958, immigration concessions for non-Europeans with professional and technical skills saw the arrival of Asian-Indians, especially after 1966. While these changes reflected gradual liberalisation of the immigration policy, the reversal of the 'exclusionary' principle did not occur until after the state proclaimed the policy of multiculturalism in 1973. The introduction of the policy of multiculturalism followed by the Racial Discrimination Act of 1975 had important implications for Asian-Indian immigrants to Australia. Increasing numbers of Indian professional people entered the country from many parts of India. From a total of about 7000 in 1947, numbers increased to 11,995 in 1954, and, following the proclamation of the policy of multiculturalism, the number of Indians increased to around 30,000. Ever since, there has been a steady growth in the number of Indian immigrants to Australia. Available figures show that there were 43,700 Indians in 1981; 66,200 in 1991; and 190,000 in 2001.

In terms of gender distribution, given the nature of recruitment of Indian immigrants to Australia, India-born immigrants remained predominantly male until the end of the Second World War.

The inclusion of wives and children has been quite recent, only after the 1960s. Since then, arranged marriages among Sikhs have contributed to the entry of many brides and grooms from India. As a result, some kind of parity between the genders has emerged.

Among the Asians emigrating to Australia, Asian-Indians constituted nearly a fifth during the period 1965-1970. Now, with a steady increase in the arrivals of non-Indian Asian immigrants, in percentage terms, although the Indian immigrants constitute only 6 to 7 per cent of the total Asian immigrants, yet numerically there has been a marked increase in their arrivals. From a number of 3,480 persons of Indian origin out of a total of 24,750 Asians in 1959-65 representing 14.1 per cent, persons of Indian origin went up to 13,850 but represented only 5.4 per cent of the total Asia-born settlers. Looking at the distribution of the recent Indian immigrants to Australia by the eligibility criteria, skilled migration as against that of family migration has been steadily on the increase, evidencing the fresh arrivals moving more into the professional class.

Again, the available data show that the annual individual income of nearly one-half of the Indians is in the range of Australian \$ 16,000 to \$ 40,000 and a tenth of them are in higher income brackets. Largely constituting the professional class engaged in industry and manufactures, the highest concentration of Indians is in the industrially advanced states such as New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Census of the Commonwealth of Australia 1991). The Indians in Australia, in that sense, are highly urbanised with two-thirds of them residing in metropolitan centres such as Sydney, Melbourne and Perth.

16.5 ETHNO-CULTURAL IDENTITY OF THE INDIAN DIASPORA

In this section, an attempt is made to examine the issue of cultural identity and distinctiveness of the Indian diaspora in the evolving multicultural milieu of Australia. While considering the aspirations and anxieties regarding ethno-cultural reproduction and retention of identity, one must differentiate the multiple components of the Indian diaspora. Broadly speaking, they may be classified into four categories: one, the 'old immigrants'; two, the 'new immigrants'; three, the 'geographically indirect' Indian immigrants; and four, the second generation Australia-born Indians.

The Sikh Punjabis and Muslims who are mostly of rural origin performing agricultural and unskilled work represent the 'old immigrants'. Their distinctive dress, symbols and behaviour set them apart from the wider community. The 'new immigrants' are unlike their peasant counterparts in that they are drawn from different parts of India, are well-educated, technically skilled, hold white collar jobs and belong to the middle and upper socio-economic levels of Australian society. Between the two, there is little interaction and therefore they remain socially distant. The 'geographically indirect' Indian immigrants are those whose ethnic origin is Indian, yet their country of previous residence is different from their country of ethnic origin. These are the people of Indian origin who had emigrated to Australia from Fiji, Sri Lanka, Singapore and parts of East Africa and whose socio-cultural moorings differ sharply from their counterparts who came directly from India. The second-generation Indians are those born in Australia of Indian parentage.

Of these four distinct categories of Indian diaspora, one common thread that binds them all is their primary motivation to emigrate to Australia, viz., the desire to enhance their socio-economic status. What, however, differentiates them is the varying degree of concern regarding the preservation and perpetuation of their ethnic identity. In this regard, the 'old immigrants' and the 'geographically indirect' immigrants evidence greater concern towards drawing "ethnic boundaries" around themselves than the 'new immigrants' and the second generation Indians of Australia.

These visible "ethnic boundaries" are apparent in their residence patterns, relations with the wider Australian society, concept of identity, social networks and political behaviour. The 'old immigrants', largely the Punjabi Sikhs, are concentrated in the Woolgoolga/Cotts Harbour, which is predominantly an agricultural region. Fiji Indians and Sri Lankan Tamils are also less dispersed and live in concentrated neighbourhoods of metropolitan/urban centres.

Also, there is a high degree of socio-cultural distance that separates the 'old immigrants' and the 'geographically indirect' Indian immigrants from the wider Australian society. Such social distance is maintained due to the past discriminating practices perpetrated against them by the dominant community, which has led them to adopt a more insular and inward-looking cultural identity. This is in sharp contrast to the attitude of the 'new immigrants', who, although adhering to Indian culture, do not do so in the manner exhibited by the former. For, given their primary motivation to rise in their profession, the 'new immigrants' seek to "melt into" the mainstream Australian society in contrast to their counterparts. So much so, the concept of ethno-Indian identity and symbols of cultural identity are strong among the former. This, in turn, explains the intense concern evidenced by the 'old immigrants' and the 'geographically indirect' Indian immigrants in communal networking leading them to replicate their inherited religious practices and rites in Australia. In this connection, mention may be made of the pioneering efforts taken by the 'old immigrants' and 'geographically indirect' Indian immigrants to construct public places of worship such as gurdwaras and Hindu temples in different parts of Australia. Also, going by the dispensation of grants under the state

multicultural commissions, Victoria and New South Wales, where these categories of Indian immigrants are concentrated, have granted the highest proportion of funds under the categories of organisational support, religious festivals, cultural events and community building for Indian residents.

With the policy of multiculturalism taking root in Australia, the Indian diasporic community has taken considerable advantage and has since been engaged in a flurry of activities to retain and reproduce their cultural distinctiveness. For instance, it was only in the early 1960s that a community of Sikhs living in Woolgoolga established the first gurdwara in Australia. Before the establishment of this gurdwara the Sikhs had used private houses as places of worship. In 1969, another gurdwara was built architecturally on the pattern of the gurdwaras in India. And, as of today, there are 20-25 gurdwaras, with at least two in every major Australian city.

Similarly, the first traditional Hindu temple of Sri Venkateswara in Australia was formally inaugurated on 30 June 1985 in Sydney after protracted discussions and disputes among diverse Indian groups. There have been other places of worship and prayer in cities like Melbourne and Perth, but the one in Sydney is the first of its kind patronised by Hindus from South India and Sri Lanka. A grand temple dedication ceremony of the Sri Vakrathunda Vinayar Temple in Victoria was held in October 1992 and regular prayers and celebrations take place there. The Hindu Society of Victoria completed constructing the temple by mid-1994 and it is considered to be one of the leading ecumenical Hindu temples. By May 1997, the temple was completed and two large rajagopurams consecrated.

Another development has been the increase in the number of gurus, yogis, babas, swamis, spiritual mothers, and tantrik advocates visiting Australia. In the 1960s and 1970s, gurus with a universalist outlook began to reach Australia in large numbers seeking converts. This is considered as part of the 'counter-cultural' movement with a larger following of the youth. Important among them is Swami Ranganathananda of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Mission who came first in 1964. Later he founded the Vedanta Society of New South Wales. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi too gained a wide following. The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) or the Hare Krishna movement came in 1969. Among others who visited are Baba Muktananda who founded the Siddha Yoga syndicate in 1970, Guru Maharaji in the 1960s, Swami Venkatesananda, Yogananda Paramahansa, and Swami Chinmayananda.

Concomitant with and as a consequence of the proliferation of such religio-cultural activities, some groups of the Indian community began voicing their concern over the undue emphasis given to ritual practices and, to that extent, insufficient attention given to the more critical needs, such as educating the Indian youth in Australia in vernacular languages on cultural values and the mores and customs of traditional Indian society.

Be that as it may, the surge in religious and cultural activities after the proclamation of the multicultural policy in Australia seems to augur well for the renaissance of Indian culture in the Asia-Pacific region. In addition, these manifold activities have greatly contributed to forging a commonality among Indians, galvanising them into a visible cultural community and giving them, above all, the inner strength of an ethnic identity.

Of all the ethnic Asian Australians, the Indian community, notwithstanding its diverse religious, regional and linguistic variants, has thus been able to evolve into a cohesive and vibrant ethnic community. Also, as against other Asian ethnic communities in Australia, which are riven and riddled on account of Australia's somewhat strained relations with their respective 'home' countries, relatively speaking, the Indian diasporic community is better placed because of the growing

mutuality of interests between India and Australia and also because of the concerted and sustained initiatives both countries have taken to develop and deepen their bilateral relations in all dimensions in recent decades.

16.6 SUMMARY

In answer to the question of how should cultural identities be accommodated in a nation-state, two models can be identified. The first model does not support nor penalise identity by public policy and the second model involves policy measures aimed at protecting and promoting cultural identity. Australia belongs to the second model. Tracing the evolution of Australian multiculturalism it is seen that from the very first fleet that anchored off Sydney Cove in 1788 there were a dozen different ethnic groups represented. However by 1901, with the establishment of a federation, the first major legislation was adopted under the Immigrant Restriction Act prohibiting immigration of people of "non-European" origin into Australia. Given its historical evolution as a settler society and given the geo-political ground realities, Australia, before long, realised that for its economic development and national security, it had to depend on sustained immigration and efforts were made to encourage non-European settlers by the Migration Act of 1958. This led to official proclamation of state-sponsored multiculturalism in the early 1970s.

It was only after the mid nineteenth century that that number of Indian immigrants increased. In early nineteenth century they came in as labourers. The second wave came with the gold rush of the 1850s in Australia. Most had come to Australia for pastoral work and camel rearing and driving, although some were free settlers.

With the passing of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, migration to Australia from India decreased considerably. But with the enactment of the Migration Act of 1958, significant numbers of Anglo-Indians were given permanent residence. A new category of extended residence for highly qualified Asians was also introduced, offering lucrative opportunities to Asian Indians. With the abolition of the "Dictation Test" in 1958, immigration concessions for non-Europeans with professional and technical skills saw the arrival of Asian-Indians, especially after 1966. Introduction of the policy of multiculturalism followed by the Racial Discrimination Act of 1975 had important implications for Asian-Indian immigrants to Australia. Increasing numbers of Indian professional people entered the country from many parts of India.

The Indian diaspora may broadly be classified into four categories: one, the 'old immigrants'; two, the 'new immigrants'; three, the 'geographically indirect' Indian immigrants; and four, the second generation Australia-born Indians.

The Sikh Punjabis and Muslims who are mostly of rural origin performing agricultural and unskilled work represent the 'old immigrants'. The 'new immigrants' are unlike their peasant counterparts in that they are drawn from different parts of India, are well-educated, technically skilled, hold white collar jobs. The 'geographically indirect' Indian immigrants are those whose ethnic origin is Indian, yet their country of previous residence is different from their country of ethnic origin. The second-generation Indians are those born in Australia of Indian parentage. With the policy of multiculturalism taking root in Australia, the Indian diasporic community has taken considerable advantage and has since been engaged in a flurry of activities to retain and reproduce their cultural distinctiveness and notwithstanding its diverse religious, regional and linguistic variants, has thus been able to evolve into a cohesive and vibrant ethnic community.

16.7 EXERCISES

- 1) Give a brief account of the evolution of Australian multiculturalism.
- 2) Trace the birth and growth of Indian diaspora in Australia.
- 3) What are the different categories of Indian diaspora in Australia and how can one distinguish between them?
- 4) What kind of religious-cultural activities has the Indian diasporic community engaged in? Do you think this is an evidence of Australian multiculturalism?

SUGGESTED READINGS

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