PUNJABI DIASPORA IN THE PERSIAN GULF

A STUDY OF DALIT EMIGRANTS

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Bali Bahadur

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Dedicated To

My Father

Sh. Geju Ram Ji

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Date : 10/03/2018

Bali Bahadur

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1

Punjabi Diaspora: Between Tradition and Modernity

History of the world can be seen as the history of migration. Human beings have been migrating since the very beginning of their existence. Today, human mobility has become an integral part of the global economy. Since early 1990s, the world has been witnessing a rapid process of internationalisation of capital, technology and economic activities. Global corporate activities through multinational and transnational corporations have grown rapidly. Trade and financial liberalisation are more pronounced today. The growth of mass media along with the development in transportation and communication technologies and the free flow of information is leading to a rapidly 'shrinking world'. International migration as an exchange of human capital has also played vital role. It is now an interconnected 'one world' whose economies, societies and cultures are more closely intertwined and are commonly referred as a global village.

However, until the recent study of migration demographers were dominated. In sociology, studies on emigration and diaspora have recently started. The studies that fall under this category generally focus on two aspects - the adaptation and the impact on societies, groups, communities after the emigration of the people. More often than not, what gets overlooked is interaction patterns of the migrating groups in the new society to which they have migrated and the host society's response to these groups. How emigration became the cause of structural changes in a country of origin like India, particularly the sub-altern group is largely ignored

by the scholars. This study tries to fill this gap by understanding the process and the impact of emigration of Dalits on the community and society from the villages of the Doaba region of Punjab.

Initially the concept of migration got broadened from just the physical movement of people to include the change of social and psychological setting of the people. The English word "migration" derives from the Latin word “migrare” meaning “to move from one place to another”. Eisenstadt (1954) regards migration as the physical transition of an individual or a group from one society to another. This transition usually involves abandoning one social setting and entering another and a different one. Zlinsky (1971) also considers migration as a process of simultaneous shifts in both spatial and social loci. Manglam (1968) has defined migration in terms of the change in the interaction system of migrants.

Several criteria can be used to classify migration. For example, the distance moved the points of origin and destination of migration (urban/rural), forces of migration, motivation, duration of stay, social, economic, cultural and political composition of migrants, etc. Prothero (1979) used the variables of time and space to classify migration. Space is seen in terms of urban and rural movements within or between each of these spheres. Time is considered in terms of periodicity, ranging from circulatory movements of a few hours duration to those resulting in a permanent change of residence.

The International migration is a movement of people that transcends the national boundaries. The term "emigration" is normally used to connote out-migration across the international border. Similarly, the concept of immigration means the movement into a nation’s international border. Someone who moves out of a territory is known as emigrant and one who enters in a territory is immigrant for that geographical locality.

Zachariah (1961) has classified migration on the basis of the distance of movement. Lee (1966) classified migration as permanent, i.e., never going back or semi-permanent i.e. with some chances of going back. Golini (1987) has presented a statistical typology of population movements using the criteria of distance (long or short), periodicity and duration (short term and long term),

legitimacy (illegal or legal) and cause (political, economic, social or religious).

1.1 Epistemology of the Term Diaspora

The movement of people out of their nation states led the scholars to define the concept of diaspora. Similarly, the organization of these groups across the transnational boundaries led to the concept of transnational communities.

Etymologically, the term "diaspora" is derived from the Greek word “dia” (through) and “speiro” (to scatter), literally meaning scattering or dispersion. It was originally used to refer to the dispersion of Jews after the Babylonian exile in 586 BC and to the aggregate of Jews or Jewish communities scattered in exile outside Palestine. In current parlance, the term is applied to describe any group of people who are outside the country of birth and stay in another country temporarily or permanently (Ghosh, 2004). For Tololyan (1991), this concept includes the entire ‘semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugees, guest workers, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community’. In a critique of such far-reaching definitions, Safran (1991) has attempted a kind of ‘ideal type’ representation of diaspora. According to him, the concept diaspora refers to the expatriate minority communities, dispersed from an original “centre” to at least two “peripheral” places. They maintain a memory or myth about their original homeland; they believe they are not, and perhaps cannot be fully accepted by their host country; and they see the ancestral home as a place of eventual return and a place to maintain or restore’. The collective identities of these diaspora communities are defined by this continuing relationship with the homeland.

The present study deals with another type of diaspora that is transient diaspora, the term is used for the migration which is purely temporary in nature when people migrate to the other countries for a short period and they have to come back after a limited period. The term "transitory migration" is generally used for those groups of people who plan to stay at a place for a limited period of time. In his work on Diaspora, Cohen (1997) suggested a typology of

Diaspora, that follows:

Type	Example
➢ Victim	Jews, Africans, Armenians
➢ Labour	Indians
➢ Imperial	British
➢ Trade	Chinese, Lebanese
➢ Cultural	Caribbean

As Cohen notes, these are not fixed categories. Indeed, the Jews might now just as appropriately fit under the trade label, the Chinese under labour. Thus, the African diaspora's victim label better suits those exported from Africa as slaves, the older diaspora than it does the newer or neo African Diaspora, In other words, those Africans who have emigrated in the post-World War Two period, and specifically in the latter years of the post-colonial period.

Until the late 1960s, there were extensive studies on three classical or traditional Diasporas viz., Jewish, Armenian and Greek, of which the ideal case was the first. For the last four decades, many dispersed communities, once known as minorities, ethnic groups, migrants, etc. have now been renamed as 'diasporas' either by intellectual and political leaders, or by scholars and academicians. Today, intellectuals and activists from various disciplines are increasingly using the term 'diaspora' to describe such categories as 'immigrants, guest workers, ethnic and racial minorities, refugees, expatriates and travellers' (Vertovec, 1997).

The new diaspora discourse has replaced the former interest in immigration and assimilation by an interest in transnational networks. Thus, the concept of diaspora is used today as the processes of transnationalism as well as the salience of pre-migration social networks, cultures and capital, in a wide range of communities which experience a feeling of displacement (Clifford 1994; Safran 1991; Tololyan, 1991).

1.2 World Scenario on International Migration

The phenomenon of International migration has continued in the recent times regularly in almost all parts of the world

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