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POSTCARDS FROM TRISHANKUS

Images of India and Australia in South Asian-Australian Short Stories

Submitted by

AMIT SARWAL

*Dissertation Submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

Supervisors

Prof. Santosh K. Sareen

Prof. Makarand Paranjape



Centre for English Studies

School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies

Jawaharlal Nehru University

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DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

Date: 23 May 2006

I, Amit Sarwal, hereby declare that this submission entitled, **Postcards from Trishankus: Images of India and Australia in South Asian-Australian Short Stories**, in partial fulfillment for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy is my own work and to the best of my knowledge it contains no material previously published or written by another person, nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree at Centre for English Studies, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi or any other educational institution, except where the acknowledgement is made in the dissertation.



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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation titled "**Postcards from Trishankus: Images of India and Australia in South Asian-Australian Short Stories**" submitted by **Amit Sarwal** to the Centre for English Studies, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University or Institution.

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POSTCARDS FROM TRISHANKUS

**IMAGES OF INDIA AND AUSTRALIA IN
SOUTH ASIAN-AUSTRALIAN SHORT STORIES**

AMIT SARWAL

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CHAPTER ONE

1-31

Introduction

- A Note on the Title – “Postcards from Trishankus”
- Crossing the Sea: Cultural and Academic Traffic
- “India” in Australian Imagination
- Australia in South Asian Imagination
- Postcards: Why Short Stories?

CHAPTER TWO

32-49

Trishankus: Diaspora, Transnationalism and Multiculturalism

A Brief Survey

CHAPTER THREE

50-60

Looking Back: Imagining Home

CHAPTER FOUR

61-71

Present and Future: Imagining Australia

CHAPTER FIVE

72-83

Conclusion

APPENDICES

Appendix I – Top Ten Countries of Birth for the Overseas-Born

Population at Selected Censuses

84-89

- Table 1 – 1901 Census
- Table 2 – 1921 Census
- Table 3 – 1947 Census

- Table 4 – 1961 Census
- Table 5 – 1981 Census
- Table 6 – 2001 Census

Appendix II – India-Born Population of Australia, 1901-1996 **90**

- Table – 1901-2001 Censuses

Appendix III – Sri Lanka-Born Population of Australia, 1901-1996 **91**

- Table – 1901-1996 Censuses

Appendix IV – Comparing Migrant Stock: The Five Largest Foreign-Born Groups in Australia, Canada, and the United States **92-97**

- Figure 1 – Australia
- Figure 2 – Canada
- Figure 3 – United States of America
- Table – Comparing Migrant Stock

WORKS CITED **98-110**

ILLUSTRATION AND TABLES

CHAPTER ONE

Figure – People or Perish	13
---------------------------	----

CHAPTER TWO

Table – Stages of Cultural Consciousness	39
Figure 1 – Four Ps Step Process	40
Figure 2 – Circular Model of Settling in Another Country	41

CHAPTER FIVE

Figure – Two Way Model of Diasporan Interactions	76
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“the earth is full of Indians, you know that, we get everywhere, we become tinkers in Australia [. . .]. Columbus was right, maybe; the world’s made up of Indies, East, West, North. Damn it, you should be proud of us, our enterprise, the way we push against frontiers. [. . .]. You better get used to us [. . .].”

– (Rushdie 1988, 54)

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

I

A NOTE ON THE TITLE – “POSTCARDS FROM TRISHANKUS”

To me or for me
 Who was born under two laws and bound
 To a third? I was

Picked up again by one
 Who frowned on cross-breeding black and white
 But not the miscegenation of cultures
 White and brown.
 And what shall I do now, [. . .],
 And what?
 Shall I hang myself in the sky
 As Trishanku did of old?

– (Parameswaran 15)

The presence of people from the Indian subcontinent in various parts of the world has given rise, in literary and cultural studies, to the critical reading and understanding of the “borderline *figure* of the exile,” that is, “caught in a historical limbo between home and the world” (Gandhi 132). This “borderline figure” of the diasporan has helped in opening up borders between cultures and has inspired various critics and scholars to theorize the diasporic condition in relation to its historical, social, political, economical, cultural and personal contexts.

Uma Parameswaran in her Poet's invocation in the chapter titled "Trishanku: A Cycle of Voices" (*Trishankus and Other Writings*, 1990) has proposed the mythical figure of Trishanku from the Indian epic Ramayana as the embodiment of the dilemma of being a diasporic individual. According to the Ramayana, king Trishanku's strange desire to ascend to heaven in his bodily form earned him the punishment of being iced up in empty space, far away from both heaven and earth. On his plea, sage Vishvamitra created a new set of constellations around this "hanging man" from Earth so that Trishanku settled safely and comfortably midway between Earth and Paradise. This condition, according to critics, is akin to the diasporic situation with respect to the notions of "home" (country of origin) and "hostland" (country of adoption / refuge) in the context of global space. The myth of Trishanku is one of eternal desire to achieve the impossible and the highly ambiguous outcome of this desire. Through their journeys the new Trishankus, i.e. diasporans, show will, determination and a sense of rising above others by setting in motion what nobody else has achieved around them.

For the critics from homeland, the diasporic condition and the diasporic author are in a suspect situation because of the notion of having forsaken the homeland for greener pastures or having run away from its problems / political turmoil in favour of a more comfortable and / or safe haven. For several people, as pointed out by Vijay Mishra (2002), "the space occupied by the new diaspora – the space of the West – is also the desired space of wealth and luxury" (237). This relation to the "space" that diasporans occupy can also be seen in Indo-Australian author Manik Datar's short story "Point of No Return" (1995), where one of the narrator's uncle's migration, "brain drain," to the distant shores of Australia is seen as his desertion and "the family lore" describes him for years as,

unpatriotic for leaving our own country, dishonourable for not returning, and irreligious for not attending his father's death anniversary ceremony. (84)

Yet, there is always a lingering pride in their achievements and the diasporan success is often seen as an "example" set for the citizens of the homeland. The narrator in the same story points out:

Twenty-five years later when this uncle offered to sponsor me to Australia the same family said:

‘Chittababu’s son is in Chicago, even Lalji’s nephew has gone to Leeds. Of course you must go. (“Point of No Return” 84)

It is clear that sponsorship from the so called “unpatriotic,” “dishonourable” and “irreligious” diasporan is more than welcome. Nor is the issue of “brain-drain” an objection for the narrator’s “desertion” of the homeland. If a person gets the opportunity to have a sponsor he / she must leave for that foreign shore as soon as possible or risk being called a fool. Further, there is a strong presumption that everyone who settles abroad is rich and has an easy life. While problems of raising up children born in a different culture are conceded to, these are seen as a minor price to pay for the “gifts” given by the hostland.

The perception of the people of the hostland in relation to the diasporans, on the other hand, remains in constant flux because of the incoming stream of migrants from a variety of cultures. The already “settled” believe that the new migrants should, if they really want to be part of Australia and wish to be at an equal footing with them, get involved in things which they have come to perceive as “Australian” in order to be “prove” their allegiance to the Australian national spirit. And this continues to be, even after the adoption of the multicultural policy, the “dominant vision” in Australia which is, to a larger extent, an Anglo-Celtic one. The migrants search for the things lost, and their efforts to rediscover, cherish and bond with their past and culture alike seems to be, to the dominant majority, a certain tactics of enclosure on the part of the new migrants. As was noted, almost half-a-decade ago, by John O’Grady (a.k.a. “Nino Culotta”) in his famous novel, *They’re a Weird Mob* (1957):

There are far too many New Australians in this country who are still mentally living in their homelands, who mix with people of their own nationality, and try to retain their own language and customs . . . Cut it out. There is no better way of life in the world than that of the Australian. (qtd. in White 160)

This highly ambiguous Australian “way of life” that O’Grady is talking about here was used initially as the line of attack by the Anglo-Celtic Australian public to “discriminate against migrants” (White 160). However, it can be seen that this same concept of an “Australian way of life” as different from others was glorified on the basis of its pluralistic, tolerant and multi-cultural nature. Diasporans, in turn, see attempts – both on the individual as well as governmental levels – to initiate migrants

into the culture and policies of the hostland as a ploy by the politically and linguistically dominant group to categorize them in some way or the other in the context of assimilation and multicultural policies. And sometimes, as well pointed out by Janis Wilton in the case of Australia, the process of recognition of the “otherness” as now part of the “Australianness” can be slow (24). Wilton notes that Anglo-Australians have taken a lot of time to “recognise the richness and complexity of the experiences and traditions which have been brought to and re-created in Australia” (24) by the migrants. And when the migrants are viewed through the lens of literature or other representative mediums, they just emerge out as stereotypical, complex, exotic, marginal, eccentric bunch of characters and highly un-Australian because of their racial and other differences. These archetypal viewpoints and prejudices are largely due to ignorance and lack of knowledge on the part of the dominant culture about the culture(s) of the incoming migrants. This leaves the diasporans in a Trishanku-like situation of neither retaining their nationality of origin and being, at best, not-so-Australian Australians.

Nevertheless, post multiculturalism there can be seen a greater sense of integration within the cultures of the hostland due to the now openly and even vehemently exhibited tolerance (which it can be argued was always present in various forms other than “multiculturalism”) so as to discredit the label of racism. There is obviously a challenging situation ahead for both the old and the new Australians, with or without hyphenated identities.

At the same time, it is these hyphenated identities that help the diasporans to often act effectively as a mediating force between the home and hostland, thus also marketing successfully and profitably their “cultural otherness” in a body of works now called the Diaspora Literature – which, in my view, always remains on the margins of the mainstream literature of both the hostland and the homeland however well acclaimed it may be. Diasporic literature thus remains a provider of “footnotes” to the mainstream in the form of anthropological information and the most oft repeated accusation against it is one of misrepresentation of the homeland – both in the use of its myths and history as well as the depiction of its present.

It cannot be denied, however, that the diasporic authors, through their writings, make us think critically about their characters’ dynamic and un / privileged condition. Their insistence on commemoration for their resilience, which is present throughout their writings, is based on tackling hardships – prejudices based on

economical successes and xenophobia – both in homeland and hostland. Also, the way they speak from a variety of perspectives openly and boldly not only about the diasporic condition but also about controversial political, social, regional, religious and environmental issues of the homeland makes it clear that a safe distance from the homeland on the one hand, and a position outside the mainstream milieu in the hostland on the other, enables them to critique both the cultures.

Thus far I have discussed the term “Trishankus” in the title of this dissertation; I now move on to why I have employed the word “Postcards” to refer to the short stories written by South Asian diasporic authors in Australia (also see section V – “Postcards: Why Short Stories?”). The postcard as a means of communication was, till very recently, one of the most common and cheapest form of conveying messages. It was an emphatically expressive mode of personal communication in its brevity, whether informing of a near one’s well being, marriage or death.

For the diasporic author, the short story is not just a creative mode of expression but it fulfils his / her need to constantly explain his / her position to fellow countrymen of both the homeland and the hostland. It is also a means of showing solidarity with other diasporans around the globe. In this sense, the short story becomes a message, a postcard informing about how they are faring in the new country, sent across the seas by say, an Indian-Australian to Indians in India, to Indians with varyingly hyphenated nationalities living in all parts of the world, and also to fellow Australians. According to Bruce Bennett (2002), “stories of a culture can be thought of also in a popular image of bottles from the past washed up on the shore” (1) and for the South Asian reader, these diasporic “bottles” literally contain messages or postcards that are washed up on the sub-continental shores.

Moreover, for the diasporic author struggling to find space in the literary world, the genre of short story is the best stepping stone to be noticed and it is no wonder that the first literature produced by South Asians in Australia consists of short stories published in newspapers and magazines. At the same time it is easier for the reader to access a different kind of literature (here South Asian-Australian diasporic literature) through this “protean genre” (Bennett 2002, ix). Conversely, Santosh K. Sareen (2001) observes, “this form, being an enormously flexible and varied narrative form, is the most accessible for initiating [the Indian reader] into Australian literature” (vii). The short story, contrary to common belief, “is not merely a story told short it is a particular kind of literary construction” (Prescott 13) which is universal in nature.

Things or incidents mentioned in a short story are succinct and bind the readers to its immediate effect and therein lies its significance. Further, its being less descriptive than a novel provides the readers a “window” to open up their own imagination by touching, as Vance Palmer observed, “a myriad intimate nerve” of the reader (qtd. in Bennett 2002, 4).

Like the derelict postcard, the short story which used to be one of the most prominent forms of narrative culture in Australia, is unfortunately the most “neglected genre” in Australia now (Bennett 2002, 8). However, it is these stories or messages or postcards or “cross-cultural conversations,” according to Bruce Bennett, that “can teach us about ourselves as well as about others” (2001, v). Because it is only “literature [that] becomes a mode of personal knowledge and understanding of others” (Bennett 2001, vi). The short story is making learning and understanding of the diasporan culture of the Indian subcontinent and its outstanding contribution towards the cultures of both the home and the hostland vis-à-vis the Diaspora Cultures of the World more interesting and vibrant. Making it obviously positive to celebrate the achievements of the South Asian-Australians and others in their involvement in various forms to the process of building a liberal World.

II

CROSSING THE SEA: CULTURAL AND ACADEMIC TRAFFIC

“Those who cross the sea change the sky above them, but not their souls.”

– Horace¹

The South Asian diaspora in Australia is continually growing and flourishing as one of the most prosperous communities, with an ever-increasing role and responsibility in all areas of society – law, engineering, the medical profession, literature, performing arts (music, dance, art, theatre, and films), economics, philosophy, sociology, history and other fields. This is largely due to the migration of people from South Asia to Australia and the exchange of ideas taking place on large scale through cultural traffic – festivals, art exhibitions, film screenings etc. – as well as “academic traffic” – exchange of students, research scholars and faculty members through various exchange programmes, seminars, MoU’s, academic associations, personal

visits, awards and scholarships, writers in residence programmes, joint publications etc. These two trends – cultural traffic and academic traffic – have also resulted in producing an awareness or a common knowledge base about South Asia, which though known to Australia for centuries was consciously overlooked as it belonged to the group of countries pathetically called “the third world.”

Many Australians had and still have mixed feelings about South Asia and the inward bound streams of migrants (refugees and asylum seekers included) from this part of the continent. It is, however, an undeniable fact that Australia has been built upon migration (See Appendix I) from “a range of cultures based on some [more than] 140 community languages” (Grundy 107). And migrants from South Asia, the most populous region in the world, have not only contributed enormously to the rich cultural life and diversity of Australia at both local and national level by adding to its cultural mix but also continue to enhance progressively the nation’s economic and political landscape through involvement and achievements in businesses, literature, educational and other related activities.

In the field of literature, our diaspora authors, wherever they are present, are our very own world travellers, who have set foot in every region of the earth. And their journeys and experiences have generated bridges and influenced the historical, cultural, social and academic perceptions of the ever-changing world society. Diasporans, who connect the Indian subcontinent and Australia, are of special relevance to both the countries – to India, which has a centuries old multi-cultural existence and continuous interaction / interconnection with its neighbouring (SAARC) countries combined with its plethora of languages, customs, discordant history and religious and regional diversity; and to Australia, which with its own rich and distinctive culture, provides space for the contribution of various successive immigrants and gives them political and economic stability.

The exchange of ideas, particularly through academic traffic, both for South Asia and Australia has resulted in a valuable discourse on post-colonialism, diaspora, and other issues between the academia of the two regions. It has also resulted in making the scholars refigure and rethink about the important connecting themes in the context of socio-cultural, historical and political significances present in Australian, South Asian and now South Asian diaspora literature produced from Australia.

There are, as a fact, very few known South Asian-Australian writers. This is not because of any lack of writing but promotional strategies employed by publishers.

Moreover, some of the writers are most often first time or amateur authors, who are only able to contribute a story here and there as a result of their busy lifestyle and work. Amongst others, who have published widely, only a few like Shalini Akhil and Subhash Jaireth have generated interest through their writings and are now well known internationally. These authors, collectively, have certainly made an outstanding contribution to the literature of the South Asian diaspora and Australia on the whole by producing alternative accounts and images of both the regions. Here, I have analysed narratives produced in a specific genre – short stories, which “apart from positioning [. . .] all these writers in relation to Australian society,” have also helped to “engage the imagination in their own right, leading to insights, questions, and curiosity about human feelings and behaviour” (Bennett 2001, vi).

Some of the authors whose works are beyond the scope of this study but who form a very important part of the South Asian diaspora literature in Australia, and who in their works have persistently raised similar concerns and issues in relation to the diasporic individual and identity in Australia are the following:

- **Indian-Australian** – Shalini Akhil (*The Bollywood Beauty*, 2005), Suneeta Peres Da Costa (*Homework*, 2000), Subhash Jaireth (*Yashodhara: Six Seasons without You*, 2003; *Unfinished Poems for Your Violin*, 1996; *Before the Bullet Hit Me*, 1994), Manorama Mathai (*Mulligatawny Soup*, 1993);
- **Sri Lankan-Australian** – Chandani Lokuge (*Turtle Nest*, 2003; *If the Moon Smiled*, 2000; *Moth and Other Stories*, 1992), Chitra Fernando (*Between Worlds*, 1988; *The Golden Bird and Other Stories*, 1987; *Kundalini and Other Tales*, 1986; *Three Women*, 1984; *Women There and Here: Progressions in Six Stories*, 1994), Christine Mangala (*The Firewalkers*, 1991), Raja Ratnam “Arasa” (*Destiny Will Out*, 1997), Ernest MacIntyre;
- **Bangladeshi-Australian** – Adib Khan (*Homecoming*, 2003; *The Storyteller*, 2000; *Solitude of Illusions*, 1996; *Seasonal Adjustments*, 1994);
- **Pakistani-Australian** – Hima Raza (*Memory Stains*, 2002; *Left Hand Speak*, 2002); and

The works of Anglo-Indian and Burgher writers too, with many others who might be writing in their mother tongue like Punjabi, Urdu, Bangla, Sinhala, Tamil or any other South Asian language, are still waiting to be researched.

This study – “Postcards from Trishankus” – takes a special interest in images of India and Australia as created by the South Asian-Australian writers in their short stories and investigates the ways in which they have added to Australia’s cultural and literary life. As the immigrants and their descendents are absorbed into the hostland, they also change the host culture with their music, dance, food and religions which form the most visible part of the impact of the Indian subcontinent in the composite global culture. The aim of this study is to analyse the metaphysical and poetical notions of “crossing the sea,” “change of skies” and “souls,” as mentioned in the above quotation from Horace and reflected in various forms in the stories. Most of the South Asians abroad (moving on to different places / countries) have realized that it might be the mind and heart that matter but the country where one lives from day to day, constantly engaging and negotiating with its complexities – local and global – does affect the mind and heart. I also aim, here, to provide resourceful “background” information – historical and sociological – a knowledge of which provides indispensable aid in analysing the various images of India and Australia that materialize from the South Asian-Australian diasporan short stories presenting the rich subcontinental cultural heritage. Here my framework of analysis is not concerned with the writers’ personal history and biographical details but with the characters and situations that enliven their stories. This approach also leads towards an exploration of the “otherness” created for the readers in their fiction both in terms of people / characters and geography / living spaces.

Forced displacement from the place of origin / homeland or dissatisfaction with it due to combinations of a variety of reasons are the two causes that have led to migration. Also, there are some well-recognised historical and thematic issues associated with being a migrant, such as crossing borders (geographical and psychological), self-representation, negotiation and interaction with the dominant culture, and transforming identities in relation to the diasporic experience of a “cultural mix.” However, the narratives that this migration has resulted in are a source of education and enjoyment shared by all. It is the working of the internal dynamics of each individual narrative or story produced under this process that lies at the heart of a

reader's pleasure and enjoyment in short fiction (Bennett 2002, 10). This point is also observed by Roland Barthes, who says,

All classes, all human groups, have their narratives, enjoyment of which is very often shared by men with different even opposing, cultural backgrounds. Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself. (qtd. by Turner 1)

Similarly, we see in these “international” and “transcultural” narratives a “voice” which speaks for those who cannot express their feelings through writing. The authors taken up here for study have originated from different countries (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and as a special category the triple hyphenated Indian-Fijian-Australian) of the Indian subcontinent and are employed in various jobs in Australia. Their works can surely be traced thematically with “other” migrant writing produced from Australia in a comparative framework. As these narratives are “alternative interpretations of the “homeland,” the “locality” and the migratory experience” (Cohen 17) which they try to negotiate with other migrant groups as well as other people from homeland in the hostland.

People from the Indian subcontinent are, in the words of ex-High Commissioner of Australia to India, Ms Penny Wensley AO,

now the second largest source of independent skilled migrants to Australia and this, together with the thousands choosing to study in Australia creates an Indian diaspora in Australia of growing importance, with obvious implications for the future of Australia and of Australia-India relations.²

Similarly, the South Asian-Australian writers, like other diaspora writers, have played an important role in the spreading of new ideas and thoughts. I have here chosen only those diaspora authors who have written short stories in English in the hostland or the country of their adoption. But, as proposed earlier, there are other writers (early immigrants) too who wrote and are still writing in their mother tongue, producing literature primarily for a reading public within the diaspora community. In both the cases, the distance from the country of origin often encourages writers to tread new ground, exploring and experimenting with new themes and forms, breaking free of taboos prevailing in their home countries and developing new ideas that challenge the literary canon and help to rebuild it with their creative works.

I would also like to analyse various definitions, theories and models of the now much-contested concepts of diaspora and multiculturalism, as also a new and fast emerging notion in a globalized world that is equally important in relation to the South Asian diaspora, known as “Transnationalism.” “Transnational beings,” as Makarand Paranjape believes, are an important reason behind the

astonishing cultural continuity [that is seen] when one crosses boundaries these days – one never has to leave India, so to speak, even as one leaves its shores. The same, or at least similar, music, food, clothes and people haunt one not just on the plane and through the transit points, but also at the final destination, whether it is America, Canada, Britain, or Australia. (Preface vi)

Truly this phenomenon, which Vijay Mishra calls “hypermobile communities” (68), has become an everyday experience in our contemporary society in relation to cultural markers and intercultural negotiations taking place between individuals and nations.

III

“INDIA” IN AUSTRALIAN IMAGINATION

Migration has helped in building the much needed bridges within the various communities and has at the same time facilitated the enriching of the daily cultural interchange between various cultures in Australia. It can be clearly noted that the earlier policy of immigration was governed by only one perception and that was of keeping Australia “White,” commonly called the White Australia Policy (Immigration Restriction Act – 1901). The result of this policy was that not many Australians knew about their closest neighbours, i.e., the South Asians comprising of peoples of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar. As Jamie Mackie points out,

only a handful of Australians had much experience or knowledge of Asian countries and their languages and cultures, apart from a few former British army officers or planters from India, or other outposts of the British empire [. . .] . Above all the prevalent stereotype of “Asia” meant coolie labour or the threat of “Asian hordes” pouring in to threaten our living standards or racial purity in the days of the White Australia Policy. (vi)

This fear of “Asia” or mass generalizations about the “idea” which is Asia and of “Asian hordes” is noted by David Walker in his in-depth and critical study titled *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia 1850-1939* (1999). I now go on to summarize Walker’s observations regarding the perception of Asia in the Australian imagination. He begins by noting that the vision which governed Australians was “a vision of drowned cities, lost kingdoms and defeated races” (4) because of the “rising tide” or “flood” that the East was. He refers to Alex M. Nicols’ address in 1909 where the speaker prophesied (quite incorrectly) that though Australia will become a “global force in world trade” with “prosperous rural industries” and “advanced skills and technologies,” the “populous of Australia of 1960, with its efficient trains, busy shipping lines and remarkable prosperity, is Asian” (6), thus revealing an unfounded fear of “Asianisation” of Australia. Here we see once again how “Asia” was used in the rhetoric to incite white Australians to “defend their continent” and make it a “secure nation” (7). Walker further draws attention towards the “cultural response invoked by “Asia”” (8), clearly illustrated in a cartoon that appeared in the *Millions Magazine* (Vol. II, No. 10. Oct. 15th 1923), a magazine that was proclaimed to be “The Official Organ of the Millions Club of N.S.W.” as can be seen written on the cover page. Walker observes:

In this cartoon, India, Java, Indo-China, China and Japan are represented by glowering men of colour, population figures for their crowded countries written at their feet. Each stares down at the map of Australia, in the center of which lies a lone male figure, propped against a tree. He is asleep in the sun, hat over the eyes and legs folded, without a worry in the world. This indolent figure seems quite unaware of the resentment his behaviour arouses among the figures to his North. The cartoon suggests that proximity to Asia required Australians to work and behave differently from other European peoples. To do otherwise was to put Australia at risk since Australia was a country monitored and shadowed by Asia. The cartoon’s corollary was that those who put Australia first would be those most aware of Asia’s proximity. (8-9)

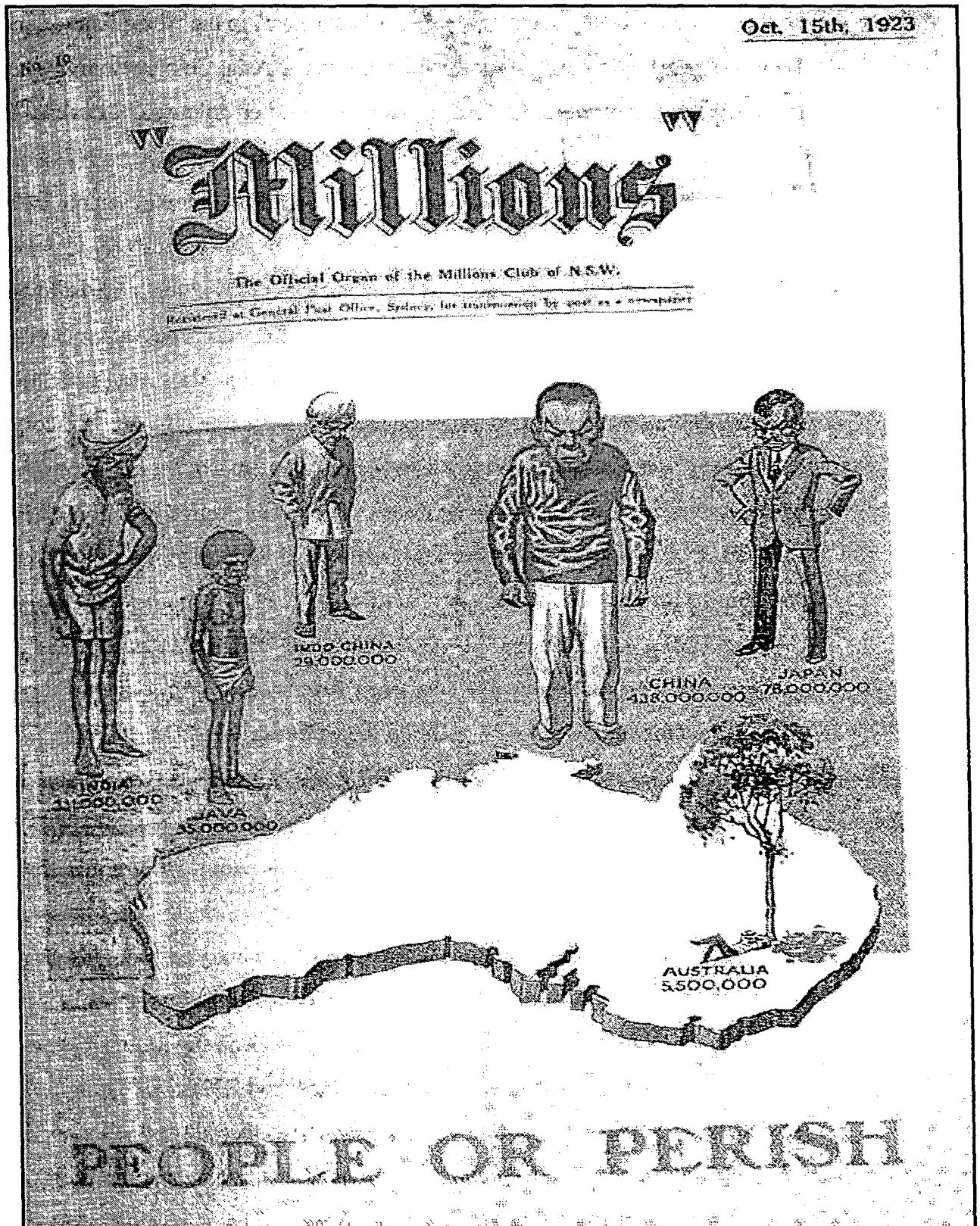


Figure. People or Perish, *Millions Magazine*, 2.10 (15 Oct. 1923) Cover: rpt. in David Walker, *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia 1850-1939* (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1999) 145.

There was a stark difference in the Australians' perspective of China and India (which includes the entire "Indian subcontinent" in the Australian vocabulary), two of the most populous and powerful countries of Asia. Chinese migrants arrived in Australia (as part of the Gold Rush) around 1850s when gold was discovered in Victoria and New South Wales. But they were soon represented as

a vast mass of humanity as indistinguishable from each other "as the grains of yellow sand on the seashore." (Walker 36)

The lack of sufficient knowledge was responsible for the anxiety of Australians. Chinese were seen as a "flood" because of their immigration and settlement pattern and were also seen as a potential future threat to Australia. They (along with the Japanese) were soon presented in Australian literature as the "Asiatic" stereotype,

as a person of bright intelligence, adept at abstract reasoning and in anticipating the thoughts of those he dealt with. (Walker 127)

So, apart from the cartoons and articles published in the *Bulletin*, the theme of the evil Chinese (or Japanese) emerged in novels like T. R. Roydhouse's *The Coloured Conquest* (1903), Ambrose Pratt's *The Judgment of Orient* (1916), and many other works written with the stereotypical character like that of the famous Dr. Fu Manchu, a Chinese doctor who sought to overthrow the white world in Sax Rohmer's *The Mystery of Dr. Fu Manchu* or *The Insidious Dr. Fu Manchu* who was presented as the "living embodiment of yellow peril" (Walker 176).

The anxiety presented through these works was mainly of race mixing or "mongrelization" and the

repeated messages about Australia's proximity to populous Asia made Australia vulnerable to "racial panics" over the imagined impacts that the Asian world and its mysterious European supporters and go-between might have on its future. (Walker 229)

If the image of China and Japan was purely negative as that of the "yellow peril" in Australia, India and Ceylon were familiar in a more positive way to Australia, not in terms of culture or literature, but as

a *lifeline* [emphasis added] for the new settlement. Many trading and shipping connections then developed creating an increasing flow of administrators, merchants, army personnel, clergy and tourists between the Indian subcontinent and Australia. Australians constantly heard

about the conditions of life in India along with its scenic marvels, architecture, philosophies, mysteries and climate. (Walker 13)

This connection was essentially because of the British Empire or the British Raj and was sustained by trade and imported goods like textiles and culinary items such as herbs, spices, pickles, chutneys, curry powders, tea etc. Even for the Australian settlers, Walker observes,

without family or trade links, India was a country of great interest. India was seen as the glittering jewel in the imperial crown, a country of great strategic importance and one that also magnificently exhibited the benefits of British rule. (16)

India was not represented as an “enemy” in the way that China was in Australian literature and press. India’s stories, legends and mythologies were appreciated for their in-depth human and spiritual knowledge and for opinion makers like Alfred Deakin, “India always remained one of the “impressive” words in his vocabulary” (Walker 20). Deakin visited India and wrote two books – *Irrigated India* and *Temple and Tomb in India* – both published in 1893. Apart from this, as Walker points, he also wrote about Indian architecture, history, religions and stories (21) for the Australian public. It was only later that many different facets of India – fakirs, sadhus, godmen, conmen, caste system, crowded cities, villages, temples, chaos, diseases, poverty etc. found place in Australian stories, poems, novels and travel writing.

The Australian short stories, novels and other writings produced during the times of the British Raj set in India or making mention of India were narratives of travel in this “antique land” carrying “pseudo-British” or imperialist perceptions. Other important and much explored themes of these narratives were military life, historical romance tales, comical adventures, straightforward adventure, exotic and extravagant tales, life of the Maharajahs and their retinues, life in Indian bazaars etc. as pointed out by Bruce Bennett.³ Prominent Australian writers using these various themes in their works were John Lang (*The Wetherbys; Father and Son; or, Sundry Chapters of Indian Experience*, 1853 and *Wanderings in India and Other Sketches of Life in Hindoostan*, 1859), whom C. D. Narasimhaiah described as “the first Australian born novelist in Indian soil” (sic), James Hingston (*Australian Abroad*, 1880), Molly Skinner (*Tucker Sees India*, 1937), Ethel Anderson (*Indian Tales*, 1948 and *Little Ghosts*, 1959), and Christopher Koch (*Across the Sea Wall*, 1965). Apart

from these novels were published short stories about India by various other authors in prominent journals and magazines like *The Australian Town and Country Journal*, *Bulletin* and *The Lone Hand*, reflecting the aforementioned themes.

Today, because of globalisation, trade, tourism, academic contacts and collaborations, and through various other organisations Australia has come close to India like never before. And the most important role in this coming closer has been played by the South Asian diaspora in Australia – carrying with it a new global Indian identity, which has integrated things both Australian and Indian – by presenting a “new” image of Indian culture, economics and politics. The diasporans have, according to me, played a major role in doing away with the negative stereotypes of the past about the peoples of the Indian subcontinent.

IV

AUSTRALIA IN SOUTH ASIAN IMAGINATION

The South Asian perception about Australia was based on myths, and they never had real stories to tell about this vast land. As the narrator in Manik Datar’s short story reveals:

relations and neighbours and acquaintances began supplying her family with tales of life abroad. Evidently there were no stories on Australia. From this it was construed that Australia did not rate highly as a foreign destination. (“Point of No Return” 84-85)

This “lack” of stories – of and about Australia – from the Australian shores by the diasporans made people in South Asia regard it as “Kangaroo land,” laid back, famous, but only for wineries, farm and dairy products, while history students here only knew about it as a (in)famous penal colony – a place where many convicts were put in solitary confinement and hardship. Social and human activists only concerned themselves with the issues of Aboriginality, refugees and other war related help that Australia provided to England and the USA.

The images of Australia, as seen in the phrases used to describe it, is often contradictory everywhere in the world. It presents itself as

a multicultural nation, a British nation, an Aboriginal nation, an “American” nation, an Asia Pacific nation, a sporting nation, a nation of slobs, a Christian society, a secular society, an egalitarian society, a

racist or sexist society, the land of the outback, the land of the suburbia, a workingman's paradise, a banana republic [. . .]. (Whitlock and Carter 1)

A “multicultural” background is often appropriated politically to help create the image of an Australia that has a diverse yet cohesive national cultural identity. But most often its image is of a homogeneous society, having monocultural attitudes or of an outpost of white racism (Jayasuriya 1). This is largely because of its being a British colony which shared most of the cultural and racial discourse of Europe. This Eurocentric attitude or tendency was because of the power play and the dominant groups' view i.e. British imperial ideology and perception towards other minority groups that came to Australia during the later phases of migration.

If we look at Australian history, its earliest inhabitants the Aborigines arrived from the Asian continent via the islands of the Malay Archipelago 40, 000 years ago. Throughout its history, “immigration” can be considered a dominant feature of Australia. Be it the arrival of Capt. James Cook in 1788 or later the coming of free settlers, voluntary migrants, indentured workers and so on. The earlier groups apart from the British were Irish, Germans, Scandinavians, Poles, Hungarians, European Jews, Greeks, Italians, Lebanese, Latin Americans, Dutch, Yugoslavs and Turkish. Most of these “groups” were running away from religious persecution, or were in search of better living standards, or were free settlers, or businessmen attracted towards the Gold Rush, mining, railways, vast “virgin” untilled lands and other Australian industries, and a large number came from over-populated or troubled (war related) countries as “displaced persons.” Also, the coming or intake of indentured workers from South Asia and China began at the same time (Jayasuriya 49-60).

As pointed above, Australians were present in Asia as advisers, technicians, teachers, diplomats, journalists, but most of all as soldiers / seamen for the Empire. They engaged with their neighbours – the South Asians – through travel, study, art and literature (Macintyre 207-208). But South Asia too had certain perceptions and knowledge about Australia. As Richard White observes in *Inventing Australia* (1981),

Centuries before Europeans first set foot on the continent we now call Australia, the Greeks, the Arabs, the Chinese and the Indians had elaborate ideas about a land somewhere to the South of Java. These ideas were the product of imagination rather than experience. (1)

And this country Australia's "primitive" inhabitants, the Aborigines, are "our [Indians] common ancestors" (Narasimhaiah 24). So they may be considered the first South Asian immigrants or South Asian diaspora. However, the term "diaspora" is loaded in meaning and carries with it, now, multiple references (that I discuss later in the second chapter). But other than the Aborigines, the more recent immigration history of South Asians and more particularly Indians in Australia with accurate statistics, data and evidences is still to be written.

In relation to the South Asian movement in Australia, which was in some ways the result of a desperate shortage of labour, Adrian Mitchell observes that, Australia-India connection

begins of course with the First Settlement, with the transport of ships heading off to India when once the convicts had been off-loaded; and soon after that the foundling colony was sending off to India for grain, both to feed the colony and for grain seed. By the 1890s there was a small informal immigration programme under way – which is to say politely that India was supplying cheap labour to private individuals. Indians were working as builder's labourers in Albany as early as 1835-36. A number of British who had been in India settled in Australia and brought the household retinue with them [. . .] the physical presence of Indians developed throughout nineteenth-century Australia, and we find the evidence of that here and there – growing maize in Gippsland or as hawkers throughout the rural districts, confused by indiscriminating Australians with the Afghanistani camel-drivers. (19-20)

It is said that the first Indian had come to Australia as part of Capt. Cook's ship. Later, Indians were brought to Australia between 1800 and 1860 initially to work as labourers – on agricultural lands and in the gold fields, as domestics and hawkers. And then many Indians came to Australia to run the now famous "Camel trains." These Indians, part of the first wave of migration to Australia, were important in keeping the communication and supply line open between Melbourne and Central Australia. They would transport goods and mail on Camel backs in the desert. Many of the earliest Punjabis (chiefly from the North-Western Punjab region) came around 1890s and also took part in the rush for gold in Victoria. Later, Punjabis comprising of more enterprising Sikhs, came to work on the Banana plantations in Southern

Queensland. Today, the descendents of these migrants have their own Banana plantations / farms and are quite rich. The establishment of the Sikh community would not have been possible without the welcome, tolerance and encouragement of the Australian community.⁴

A large number, the second wave of migrants, came around the World Wars – I and II respectively. Indian soldiers were present in Gallipoli (1915) fighting for the British armed forces alongside the Australians. Soon after India's Independence from Britain in 1947 the Anglo-Indians or India-born British citizens arrived on the scene as "British subjects" making the choice to settle permanently in Australia. The term "Anglo-Indian" which now "signifies a world minority" was first used by Warren Hastings in the 18th century to describe both the British in India and their Indian-born children. The gallant exploits and work of Anglo-Indians in India and other parts of the British Empire – as officers in the British Armed Forces, as employees in Schools, Colleges, Hospitals, Railways, Custom, Police, Ports and as participants in Sports – was not mentioned in the historical documents because most of the times their "Anglo-Indian identity" was not adequately disclosed. They were accepted and rejected as a community on the whims of the British policies – while their religion, dress, customs and manners were identified with the British, the part in them that was Indian made them live on the periphery as a minority within the majority. After immigration to various countries Anglo-Indians felt that their name was disappearing rapidly. And therefore to protect it from vanishing completely a number of associations have been formed in many countries. In Australia the Anglo-Indians have formed associations in order to trace both their Indian and British origins and to preserve their cherished values and culinary lifestyles that are a result of their mixed heritage and provide them with a social and cultural bond with this heritage. A few examples⁵ of such associations are The Anglo Indian Guild of Victoria, The Anglo-Indian Association of Victoria, Anglo Indian Institute of Western Australia, The Anglo-Indian Association of NSW, The Australian Anglo-Indian Association.

The third wave of migrants arrived in Australia immediately after the Whites Only policy (Immigration Restriction Act – 1901) was abandoned. Australia's political, economic and social stability proved magnetic for these new migrants, who saw Australia as a land of opportunity (See Appendix II). They consisted mostly of teachers, doctors, engineers, businessmen, software and hardware professionals, the

Fiji-Indians, who came in large numbers to Australia after the two coups in Fiji⁶ and finally, the relatives of already settled Indians.

An independent Australian filmmaker of the Indian diaspora Surinder Jain recently traced the antiquity of the South Asian diaspora in Australia. He made a documentary (2005) tracing the “places of spirituality and places of pilgrimage in Australia” and in the process, he discovered a cave that looked like an ancient place of worship most probably used by Indian labourers. He says about the experience:

I was wandering in the hills of Ex-Mouth when I was stopped in my tracks by a snake. An eagle (Garuda) came to my rescue and led me to a cave. I went into a state of trance when I entered the cave and noticed God Vishnu and Goddess Laxmi along with Ganesh in its central chamber [. . .]. I noticed a face on the side of the hill. It was also perhaps a natural formation of stones but looked like a Dwaarpal (temple guard) of the temple that I had just visited.⁷

This amazing discovery of an old Cave Temple, on the 9th of August 2005, in the remote hills of Western Australia inspires us to trace the antiquity of South Asian diaspora in Australia. Jain is not sure till date if what he “saw was an ancient temple in ruins or just a natural rock formations with a spiritual force”⁸ but this discovery does hint towards the antiquity of the Indian presence in Australia – the labourers or some earlier Indian or other South Asian (Sri Lankan) immigrants.

After India the largest number of migrants who have made their presence felt are from Si Lanka. The first recorded Sri Lankan⁹ immigration to Australia was in the year 1816, with the transportation of Drum Major William O’Dean (a Malay) and his wife Eve (a Sinhalese). It was in the late 19th century, that the first Sri Lankan immigrants (1870s) came to Australia, under the category of labour migration, and were specially recruited to work on the cane plantations of northern Queensland, in the gold-mining fields in New South Wales, and as pearlers in Broome, Western Australia. By 1901, there were 609 Sri Lanka-born persons in Australia (See Appendix III). Following Sri Lanka’s independence in 1948 and the political ascendancy of the dominant ethnic group, the Sinhalese, minority groups such as the Tamils and the Burghers felt endangered and began migrating to various countries including Australia as humanitarian entrants or political refugees. During the 1960s, Burghers comprised the largest number of Sri Lanka-born migrants to Australia. By 1986, there were 22,519 Sri Lanka-born persons in Australia. Many were fleeing the

political instability because of the conflict in Sri Lanka between Tamil separatists and Sinhalese while a fairly large number of professionals were also compelled to migrate because of a stagnant Sri Lankan economy and unemployment. During the last few decades, the number of Sri Lankans entering Australia has been steadily increasing. The majority of these Sri Lankan Australians are located in Melbourne, Victoria and New South Wales. They prefer to identify themselves based on ethnicity, e.g. "Sinhalese-Australian," "Tamil-Australian" or "Burgher" rather than going for a homogeneous group identity as "Sri Lankan-Australian."

The case of the Sri Lankan "Burghers,"¹⁰ the most westernised and educated of the ethnic groups in Sri Lanka, is very interesting in the same way as that of the Anglo-Indians. They speak English along with a creole language based on Portuguese and Sinhala. They are a Eurasian ethnic group, descendents of European colonists (mostly Portuguese, Dutch and British), from the 16th to 20th centuries, with local Sinhalese and Tamils. Their culture is a colourful rich mix of East and West, thus reflecting their ancestry. They have contributed to the Sri Lankan national culture through their baila music, culinary skills and craftsmanship (particularly lace making), which they took with them to Australia as a distinctive Sri Lankan identity.

The history of migration from Pakistan¹¹ to Australia in search of opportunities begins from "India." A large number of migrants presently known as Pakistani-Australians have their origins in India, i.e., their ancestors migrated before the partition of India in 1947 into the two nations of India and Pakistan. As mentioned above, Indian immigration to Australia has a longer tradition in Australian history that goes back to around 1800 when a small number of Hindu labourers, from various northern regions, were brought into the country for contract work. However, it is only later in the mid 1860s that the Afghans or so-called "Ghans" as they came to be called, came from Karachi, Punjab and Kashmir (the parts that are now in Pakistan) in the role of the camel men. They made a very crucial contribution to the exploration, development, transport and building of the first overland telegraph line across the continent from Adelaide to Darwin and of the trans-Australian railways across Australia's isolated areas. Pakistanis have a relatively recent migration presence i.e. post-partition and a history that is largely based on pre-partition joint claims.

Pakistani nationals started going to Australia in the 1960s but a large number of them came in the late 1970s and 1980s as students, professionals and their families. But on the other hand, some scholars like Abdur Rauf believe that migration from Pakistan is



TH-13504

inseparably linked with the arrival of Muslim traders in Australia since Pakistan's port cities, especially Karachi, served as link routes to Australia from the Middle-East countries and further deduce that Pakistanis themselves must have accompanied / followed these traders into Australia. In other words, this school of thought dissociates the Pakistani migration pattern from that of pre-partition India by linking it with the migration of Muslims to Australia from around the world. According to Abdur Rauf,

The exact date when the first Muslim arrived in Australia has not been ascertained so far. However, the remains of settlements and cemeteries of the sixteenth century Macassar Muslim fishermen have been discovered in the southern coast of the continent.¹²

More concrete evidence to support the claim is yet to be found. Today, the majority of the Pakistani Australians reside in New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania and Northern Territory and are making a substantial contribution to the process of development of the Australian continent.

Australia did not consider South Asian countries like Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan to be of any strategic value in the past. But because of the recent migrations of professionals and skilled labours from South Asia the structure of Australia's population has changed dramatically. This is more so during the past 100 years with the addition of various minority groups coming with each successive wave of immigration. Australia on its part is now supporting the national governments and civil society organizations in various sectors in the South Asian region in relation to projects dealing with HIV related research, education, human resource development, water purification, environmental sanitation, institutional reforms, good governance etc.

Migration from Bangladesh¹³ to Australia began in the 1970s due to the War of Independence. By the early 1980s there were perhaps 200 migrants in Australia from Bangladesh, nearly all professionals. In the mid 1980s they were joined by some students pursuing tertiary studies. By 1991 there were about two thousand people from Bangladesh living in Australia. This number had grown to 9,077 according to the 2001 Census and it is estimated that as a consequence of recent immigration policies, particularly relating to students, this number must have now grown to about thirteen or fourteen thousand (approx). The majority of Bangladeshis live in Sydney with a smaller though significant population in Melbourne, Canberra and other

regional capitals as well. The importance of Bangladeshi-Australians in the economic development of Bangladesh plays a considerably strong and significant role because of the repatriation of foreign earnings, highlighting key business areas in which Australian entrepreneurs should be interested and by providing a platform for bilateral cooperation in other fields between the two countries.

One of the most beautiful countries of South Asia, Nepal is also making an inroad to Australia. It is mostly based on tourism, education and Australian assistance in various activities. Many Australians have visited, as tourists and foreign aid workers, the only Hindu Kingdom in the world¹⁴ and have returned home with a great fondness for the Nepali people, their culture and their cuisine. To make the bonds between the two countries stronger, there exist a few associations in Australia. Foremost among them is the Nepal Australia Friendship Association (NAFA) which was first formed in January 1989 as the Australian Nepal Friendship Association (ANFA), in Queensland. The name was later changed to NAFA in 1993. NAFA is a Brisbane based non-political, non-profit aid organisation dedicated to assist communities and individuals with projects that improve the quality of life in Nepal. Other associations such as Gorkha Nepalese Community, Sydney, Nepalese-Australian Welfare Association, Sydney and Nepalese Association of Victoria, which was established in 1997 aims to promote the interests of all people of Nepalese origin living in Victoria and also to promote Nepali culture, heritage and goodwill between Australia and Nepal. But it can be noted that as a Nepali phenomenon only the restaurants have been able to perform well and get established in various states of Australia – Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne and Brisbane – thus helping to publicize, in however limited a fashion, the kingdom's rich cultural heritage in Australia.

Because of a fair number of educational scholarships for Bhutan,¹⁵ Bhutanese students have the opportunity of visiting Australia and pursuing various professional courses. Also, associations such as Australia Bhutan Friendship Association (ABFA) are working hard to promote relations between Bhutan and Australia with a very consistent, well defined and focused programme of co-operation. Australian Government's concern for the plight of the Bhutanese refugees in Australia and financial assistance for projects like building roads, education, and providing better health care services in Bhutan has also brought the two countries together.

What is striking is the number of countries (more than 100) from which immigrants came to Australia thus giving rise to diversity – cultural, economical and

religious. Yet, Australians face an inherent difficulty in categorising Asia, further subdivided as South Asia (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Burma, Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar); East Asia (China, Japan, Korea and Hong Kong); and South East Asia (ASEAN and Indochina countries).

The South Asian diaspora is certainly not a homogeneous entity despite “shared homelands and shared history of uprooting” (Ramraj 216), which can be seen from the above historical overview. There are inherent tensions that exist within it. South Asia with its several independent nation-states has certain commonalities and continuities because of a shared culture of 4,000 years with stratifications or sub categories on the basis of region, religion, language, dialects, politics, economics, caste, class, culture etc. And South Asians have suffered, survived and prospered in various countries of their settlement. As Makarand Paranjape also observes, that

all over their areas of migration, South Asians have been mistreated and discriminated against [. . .] it is South Asians who have borne the brunt of injustice, oppression, and racism the world over. Deprived of their rights in South Africa and Canada, driven out of Burma and Uganda, upstaged in the Caribbean and Fiji, and still discriminated against in most Western countries, South Asians have nevertheless not just survived, but prospered. (Introduction 2)

It is this prosperity of South Asians that adds the most curious dimension to their study.

V

POSTCARDS: WHY SHORT STORIES ?

Yes, I do feel like a visitor,
a tourist in this world [. . .]

I walk around through battered streets,
distinctly lost,
looking for landmarks
from another, promised past.
Here, in this strange places

in a disjointed time,
 I am nothing but a space
 that someone has to fill.
 Images inside me.
 Picture postcards overlap my entire face,
 demanding to be stamped and sent.

– (Dharkar 3)

Text is the *World* and it covers in a limited space the unlimited intellectual, sociological and psychological phenomena of what is happening in the universe around us. While we cannot judge a creative writer as an “authentic presenter” by simply looking at the sort of images he or she produces, we can, by analysing these very images, see the creative and innovative “potential” a writer possesses.

The stories written from the complex position of a diasporic author are fraught with the diasporic experiences that are based mostly on the concepts of dislocation, fractured identities, sharing and adaptation or re-accommodation of social and cultural values. But their success truly depends on their reception in the new “home” (here Australia) and the “world” lost (here South Asia).

In the Australian context literature has been divided into three major categories – Mainstream, Aboriginal and Multicultural. Often the last two categories are merged and we have only Mainstream and Multicultural writing in Australia. It is my contention that the latter is neither in competition with the Mainstream writing nor imitating it, but is providing “alternative” narratives of Australia – the land, the people, culture etc.

Particularly, the migrant narratives are identified with the term Multicultural writing. These writers present the problems of cultural dislocation, alienation etc. in their creative works, mostly short stories because of the relative ease with which they can get published in various journals and literary magazines. According to one of the multicultural Australian writers, Lolo Houbein,

multicultural writers are in the best position to seek out the parallels of excellence in the cultures they know and show the relative quality contained in them for the other cultures concerned. In the process they may discover universal qualities in very diverse cultures and on these an international culture could grow. (36)

In relation to the multicultural authors, their stories and the experiences they put across Sneja Gunew, a multicultural prose writer and academician, feels that

we cannot speak [of] unmediated experience innocently. When we tell our experience we are addressing in past, all those other stories already told about us and must take issue with them [. . .]. Entering literature and history means recognising those discourses which have already produced us. (21)

Although migrants arrive singly or with their immediate family at the most, they arrange themselves in groups, circles, clubs or associations soon after. These associations provide contacts for people new to the place and help them settle, help them in arranging cultural events, provide a platform where all members gather and also make contact with similar community groups in other regions, enhance community awareness, promote and develop links with other community associations, know about government agencies which may be able to help them run programs to promote goodwill between the two countries (homeland and hostland), and provide information about many other matters related to the hostland. This amalgamation within the associations is an important part of most of the ethnic cultures. It not only provides them a sense of security and belonging but also provides infrastructural help to get published, in the case of writers, through various journals and agents. It also acts as a social forum for the mingling of writers, academics as well as the general public to share issues related to both homeland and hostland.

Various associations and social forums have played a very important role in Australia as the migrant / multicultural literature is dependent on journals and networks. So, in some ethnic groups there can be seen a literary cultural network where individual authors – writing in English or their mother-tongues – write, publish, circulate and critique each other's work. This includes not only the relationship between the ethnic communities and Australia's mainstream literary and cultural establishment, but also diaspora relationships with the country of origin (Mycak 19-30). The dynamics of this relationship with the country of origin and the hostland Australia is a focal point in my analysis of the short stories. Most often the images in the stories are of travel, longing, memory, nostalgia, history, emotional complexities, geographical spaces, cultural spaces, sense of belonging etc. A short story writer, according to H. M. Green, is "free to write as he likes, about whatever he likes, bound

only by the limitations of his own talent and of a space that varies with circumstances [. . .]” (1238).

Multicultural writings and particularly the short stories are a culture specific tool with its own political, economical, sociological and psychological issues and has developed, as Sudha Rai observes,

against the backdrop of issues relating to the movement between home country and country of immigration as geographical spaces; culture shock; attempted cultural recuperation through ethnic bonding; binary stereotyping of cultures traversed; the immigrant split-self; fantasies of return passages; and tentative stabilisations of identity. (134)

The short stories that I have selected are not just “new” but also alternative voices in Australian writing, as the meanings and significances in these short stories are generated by a referent culture i.e. of the Indian subcontinent. These writers of South Asian diaspora are important for cultural exchange, according to Alison Broinowski, as it is through

fiction about another country by someone who is steeped in two cultures is more interesting, engaging, revealing, and ultimately more satisfying, then fiction by a mono-cultural outsider looking on. (37)

I have here selected a gamut of stories produced by the South Asian-Australians, but with a special focus on their Indian connection – as most commonly people of South Asia are referred to as people of the Indian sub-continent or just “Indians.” Most of these short stories, except for a few, have been written after 1970s, the decade that marked the beginning of the “golden period” of Australian short stories, thus called because of the postmodern approach and experimental styles making Australian short stories noticed throughout the world.

Although, as I mentioned above, short story as a literary form was present even earlier in Australia, I find a difference between its “being present” then and later (post 1970s). The earlier Australian short fiction was a “bush baby,” born as it was under a non-urban economy, using traditional and colonial literary conventions, and thematically preoccupied with what was earlier an important part of Australian life and imagination – the bush. The contemporary Australian short story, on the other hand, is the “offspring” of an urban, industrial and multicultural environment of the 1970s and later, when Multiculturalism was adopted as an official state policy. This was also the decade when the literary form of short story emerged as influential in

exploring the notions of dislocation and hybridity vis-à-vis cultural and ethnic diversities. In this context Janis Wilton observes that

after the coming of multicultural policy more and more Australian writers created sympathetic and complex image of the migrant presence [. . .]. But it is only a beginning. More difficult issues remain to be confronted: how can an alternative migrant image be marketed to compete with the still dominant hold which [. . .] has over the Australian public. (31)

The short stories that I have taken up for study here have been published in various journals, anthologies and collections. I have divided the short stories into two groups. The first group contains those short stories that look at the homeland or present an image of India. This group is titled "Looking Back: Imagining Home," and consists of: Radha D'Souza's "Riding High" (1997), Neelam Maharaj's "Festivals" (2004), Sunitha's "Reminiscences" (1987), Yasmine Gooneratne's "Masterpiece" (2002) and Satendra Nandan's "The Guru" (1988). The second group which looks at the hostland or present an image of Australia, is titled "Present and Future: Imagining Australia," and includes: Mena Abdullah and Ray Mathew's "The Time of the Peacock" (1965), "Kumari" (1965) and "The Outlaws" (1965), Sujatha Fernandes's "A Pocket Full of Stories" (1999), Manik Datar's "My Sister's Mother" (1995) and "Point of No Return" (1995), K. C. Parmanandam's "Of Human Infatuation" (1956) and Rani Jhala's "Life's Key" (1999). However, it can be clearly seen while analysing the short stories of the second group that the point of reference still remains homeland i.e. India.

While reading these various postcards / short stories certain questions and relevant issues draw one's attention in relation to the situation of the Trishankus in Australia. How important is physical location for an individual? How do these Trishankus construct or imagine the past for future's sake? How do they re-read their own country (homeland), now that they have left it and has the image of India changed in these works? How does the immigrant look at India in relation to Australia? Are these diasporans at a privileged position or is their status as "Trishankus" a source of an irresolvable dilemma in relation to identity markers?

I must make it clear here that the Trishankus about whom I am talking are not the writers of these postcards but the characters. This is because, in most cases, the writers of these short stories are comparatively well settled in Australia unlike their

characters, as references, who are not allowed to “settle” down and are given an alien and hostile land and a forlorn situation. Ultimately, the strongest unifying and positive theme in these stories remains the sense of inhabiting a common land – Australia.

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CHAPTER TWO

TRISHANKUS: DIASPORA, TRANSNATIONALISM AND MULTICULTURALISM A BRIEF SURVEY

“[. . .] a sense of belonging to more than one history, to more than one time and place, more than one past and future. [. . .] belonging to both here and there, now and then. [. . .] the omnipresent weight of pain of displacement from a land or society, of being an outsider in a new one. [. . .] both lack and excess of loss and separation yet also the possibility of new adventures of identity and the continued imagining of unconquerable countries of the mind.”

– (Docker vii)

In relation to the process of both physical and emotional migration of people, Philip Martin, adopting George Orwell’s famous saying, observes that “all of us are migrants but some of us are more migrants than others” (133). It is the migrants belonging to different and varied cultures, from pioneering Settlers to penal colony convicts to Gold Rush diggers to contemporary migrants, who have, on the one hand, helped Australia in developing a unique culture of its own and also, on the other, made it share in an international world culture to which it has itself contributed from the richness that it possess today based on that very uniqueness (Grundy 107).

These migrants have helped in the world academia by giving rise to notions such as Diaspora, Multiculturalism and Transnationalism. The “imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind” (10) that Salman Rushdie (1991) talks about or the “unconquerable countries of the mind” (vii) in the above quotation from John Docker (2001) are those omnipresent notions present in our mindscapes which provide possibilities for a critical overview and survey of questions related to the past and the present, identity (Indianess, Australianness or other hyphenated identities post-globalization) and other related notions popularized and problematized by the birth of

Trishankus (individuals stepping into the diasporic condition). They have created metaphors for identifying with the diasporic conditions and dilemmas of the diasporans of Indian subcontinent scattered throughout the world like sunflowers looking in one direction i.e. their eyes towards their home or the country of origin.

On the use of the word “Indianness” for the people of the Indian subcontinent, Bharti Mukherjee observes, “Indianness is now a metaphor, a particular way of comprehending the world” (3). The very use of the term “Indian” encapsulates diversity and brings into play various contradictory viewpoints, in relation to identity and cultural dimensions. The divergence of viewpoints, in fact, related to any “identity,” be it the Indian or the much larger South Asian one, can also be noted in the different ways in which the term “diaspora” has been theorised by various academics in their dialogues.

Diaspora has not just itself become a much-contested term, but has led to problematization of other terms like nationality, ethnicity and hybridity (which is really, in my view, in-between-ness or anti-belonging). The term Diaspora, be it used for the people of any nationality like Jews, Africans or now the highly upwardly mobile new Indian or South Asian diaspora, has given rise to a number of parallel and problematic dialogues and definitions mostly built upon the existing dialogues and theorisations thus endorsing a continuity. As D. Dayan observes, “diaspora” is more of an

intellectual construction tied to a given narrative. [. . .] incarnations of existing discourses, interpretants of such discourses, echoes or anticipations of historical projects. (110)

The metaphor of the living tree or the banyan tree that provides a sense of centre and rootedness has been so often used by the intellectuals for the diasporic condition that it now seems a cliché, mere decorative jargon overlooking the pain of dislocation and other aspects of migration.

In the works of major diasporan authors, “diaspora” stands more traumas and pains of human displacement. While it is sometimes “used interchangeably with “migration,” it is generally invoked as a theoretical device for the interrogation of ethnic identity and cultural nationalism” (Gandhi 131). Etymologically, this word is derived from,

the Greek term *diasperien*, from *dia-*, “across” and *-sperien*, “to sow or scatter seeds,” diaspora can perhaps be seen as naming of the other

which has historically referred to displaced communities of people who have dislocated from their native homeland through the movements of migration, immigration, or exile. First used in the *Septuagint*, the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures explicitly intended for the Hellenic Jewish communities in Alexandria (circa 3rd century BCE) to describe the Jews living in exile from the homeland of Palestine, diaspora suggests a dislocation from the nation-state or geographical location of origin and a relocation in one or more nation states, territories, or countries. The term “diaspora” then has religious significance and pervaded medieval rabbinical writings on the Jewish diaspora, to describe the plight of Jews living outside of Palestine. (Braziel and Mannur 1)

However, post 1948, when Israel became a nation for Jews, the land “promised” to them in the Biblical myth, diaspora no longer remained a term used only for the displaced Jews. A large number of Jews preferred to stay on in their countries of adoption or refuge due to the political turmoil of Israel and its relations with the neighbouring countries. As a result, diaspora as a term could no longer refer to Jews alone as in theory at least, they could “go back home.” People of African origin, with the painful history of slavery, descendents of indentured labourers, people of Chinese origin displaced through cultural revolution and many other peoples who had been transported, displaced or exiled due to the workings of the European imperialism also began to be seen in the same framework as the diaspora. Finally, voluntary migrants and their descendents / second generations were also included.

The Indian diaspora or Indians are predominantly everywhere in the world (see Appendix IV). People of the Indian subcontinent have moved to other parts of the world throughout the history and most importantly in large numbers during the 19th and 20th century. Their search for better life and new horizons has made them move and spread to various parts of the world, just like the roots of the “banyan tree” with different shapes, sizes and nature depending on the country of adoption. These movements were the result of various other factors also and has been theorised by various scholars, which I will just briefly point out.

1. Vijay Mishra in the diaspora double issue of *SPAN* offers a three-tier definition of diaspora as a corrective to the original OED (1989 ed.) related to the dispersion of the Jews.

- Relatively homogeneous, displaced communities brought to serve the Empire (slave, contract, indenture etc.) co-existing with indigenous / other races with markedly ambivalent and contradictory relationship with the Motherland(s). Hence the Indian diasporas of South Africa, Fiji, Mauritius, Guyana, Trinidad, Surinam, Malaysia; the Chinese diaspora of Malaysia, Indonesia linked to high (classical) Capitalism.
 - Emerging new diasporas based on free migration and linked to late capitalism: post-war South Asian, Chinese, Arab, Korean communities in Britain, Europe, America, Canada, Australia.
 - Any group of migrants that sees itself on the periphery of power, or excluded from sharing power. (qtd. in Paranjape, Introduction 3)
2. William Safran defined diasporas in terms of six important characteristics linked to two invariables – exile and homeland:
- Dispersal of people or their ancestors from a centre to two or more peripheries.
 - The retention of collective memory, vision, or myth about the original homeland – its physical location, history etc.
 - A feeling of non-acceptance, alienation or insulation in the host society.
 - A strong feeling that their ancestral homeland is their true, ideal home and the place to which they or their descendants would or should eventually return.
 - A responsibility for the maintenance of the homeland or its restoration.
 - A self-conscious definition of one's ethnicity in terms of the existence of homeland. (qtd. in Mishra 70-71)
3. According to Victor J. Ramraj, there are two bodies of writing that could be designated as diasporic:
- from the descendants of people uprooted from their homelands in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and transported from one region of the globe to another to serve British economic needs: Africans as slaves to the West Indies, and Indians, Chinese and Portuguese as indentured labourers to such corners of the Empire as the West Indies, Fiji, and Mauritius.

- by those English-speaking regions of the Indian subcontinent, Asia, Africa, and the diasporic communities of the West Indies and Fiji, who for economic, political, cultural, and familial or personal reasons left their homelands for England, which many, as citizens of the Empire, considered their capital, and for North America and Australia, continents that long had provided living space for peoples from over-crowded Europe; since the 1980s. (Ramraj 214)
4. The Indian diaspora has developed in distinct stages:
- **Stage I:** Pre-Colonial – trading contacts develop with, and small colonies establish themselves in, East Africa and South East Asia.
 - **Stage II:** Colonial – covers the 19th and early 20th century. Indian labourers were indentured to other parts of the British empire.
 - **Stage III:** Independence – independence of India in 1947. Several distinctive groups during this period:
 - a) Anglo Indians – many British people with Indian partners and their children emigrated to United Kingdom, Canada and Australia.
 - b) Indian Labourers – in the 1960s and 1970s, Indian labourers were imported to the United Kingdom, Germany and the Middle East.
 - c) A professional elite – emigrated mostly to the United States and the United Kingdom, with smaller numbers going to Australia, South East Asia, and the Middle East.
 - **Stage IV:** Movement in areas outside India – this movement is not one from India but from one part of the diaspora to either another or to a newer location. For example, the 1987 and 2000 coups in Fiji that forced many Indians to leave Fiji for New Zealand, Australia and India; and secondly, in 1972 Uganda’s dictator Idi Amin ordered around 75,000 Ugandan Asians out of the nation. They moved to the United Kingdom, Canada, the USA and some even back to India.
(<http://www.hi.com.au/resource/rfactory.asp?kla=13&subtopic=3589>)

Being a diasporan is a win-win situation in economic terms and is called a “privileging situation” by Makarand Paranjape, which is not any longer “an anguished state” because of possibilities of bi-culturalism (Preface vi). But still the first

generation migrants have to undergo the following stages of adjustment, as pointed out by R. C. Sarkiwal,

- I. **Pre-adjustment Process** – there are shocks and confusions at physical, social and psychological levels. The geography of the new country, modes of transportation, food, eating habits are very prominently noticed by these new coming Indians. There is a consequent sense of estrangement. During this stage, although the person has physically left India he is psychologically very much in India and endeavours to compare every new experience in terms of his Indian context.
- II. **Physical Stability Stage** – by this time, our new migrant has found a job or has started attending school / college; has made some acquaintances (not friends yet), has learned the bus numbers, and their routes; is becoming familiar with his immediate neighbourhood and, more or less, is approaching a stage of physical stability. This is also the stage when there starts a dreaming process of wish fulfilment, getting a house built in India on return after 10-15 years; sending gifts to his family, relatives and friends etc.
- III. **Merging in the Mainstream** – gradually, these people start to merge in the mainstream of life in the foreign land. Essentially, it means slight modification and adaptation in the person's value-system. He starts getting less shocked and confused over things / episodes, which initially almost startled him. (36-37)

These migrants, who have arrived in a new country, are “caught” in between homeland and hostland. Therefore, to escape this “in-betweenness,” these diasporic individuals or the whole groups / communities have to “develop forms of identities, [thus] making the representation of the diasporic identity [. . .] in relation to the new environment” (Coronado 48). This is used effectively to give an authenticity to the expression produced by the diasporic authors.

For these diasporic individuals the critics have used various metaphors. One of these is of Janus, the figure from the Greek pantheon,

whose gaze is simultaneously directed both forward and backward, suggests a certain temporality; the figure at once looks to the future and the past. (Braziel and Mannur 9)

Anita Rau Badami, a Canadian writer of Indian origin, expresses very similar and metaphorical feelings merging Janus's dilemma with that of the king Trishanku's. She says,

We are both doomed and blessed, to be suspended between two worlds, always looking back, but with two gorgeous places to inhabit, in our imaginations or our hearts. (Paranjape, "One Foot [. . .]" 161)

As discussed in the Introduction, it was Uma Parameswaran, who in *Trishankus and Other Writings* (1990) proposed the mythical figure of Trishanku, the "hanging man" from Earth, as the embodiment of the dilemma of being a diasporic individual. This condition, according to critics, is akin to the diasporic situation with respect to the notions of "home" (country of origin) and "hostland" (country of adoption / refuge) in the context of global space. The myth of Trishanku is one of eternal desire to achieve the impossible and the highly ambiguous outcome of this desire.

Through their journeys the new Trishankus, i.e. diasporans, show will, determination and a sense of rising above others by setting in motion what nobody else has achieved around them. But they are expected to assimilate the norms and culture of the host country. So, these Trishankus not only retain their cultural norms and practices but also often try to "freeze" within their geographical spaces to create a mini-India, although integrating "economically" in the ways of the hostland. This commitment towards the economic prosperity and ownership is reflected in various creative works produced by these writers and their protagonists and characters, who are Trishankus of the creative space.

As mentioned earlier in the Introduction, it would be wrong to homogenize or generalise the South Asian diaspora and similarly their experiences in terms of hostland i.e. Australia. This is primarily because the situation, location / dislocation, and perceptions within and outside the Indian diaspora changes in relation to various host nations. And, not always is a diasporan position to be pitied at as it may be considered "a richer and a more complex way of being that is equally at home and abroad" (Paranjape, Preface vi). Which to a larger extent true about the writers, intellectuals, academicians and professionals who migrated voluntarily and are part of the Australian egalitarian multicultural life and enjoy the wider horizons of improving and shaping their identities in relation to homeland(s) / hostland(s). This acceptance or assimilation of host countries as new "homelands" can be studied and interrogated

in relation to value orientation or *Stages of Cultural Consciousness*, through which an immigrant passes while in a new land.

Table

Stages of Cultural Consciousness

	Stage	Attitude toward one's culture	Attitude towards other cultures
1.	Control	Oblivious / Unclear	Curiosity / Excitement
2.	Behavioral	Denial	Confusion / Helplessness
3.	Reintegration	Idealization	Denigration
4.	Pseudo-independent	Aware	Intellectual acceptance
5.	Independent	Accepting	Accepting

Source: J. Helms's *Stages of Racial Consciousness* (University of Maryland, 1966); Modified and adapted by Vasantha R. Patri and Neelkant Patri in *Essentials of Effective Communication* (New Delhi: Greenspan Publications, 2002) 14.

The stages of cultural consciousness clearly show, as Patri and Patri observe, that the true acceptance of the host and the adoptive culture goes through several stages before it is incorporated into consciousness [. . .]. The ability to grow, develop, learn and benefit from other cultures would naturally be reduced if the stages are not gone through progressively and acceptance attained. (14-15)

It can also be clearly noted that most of the acclaimed diaspora writers, who are writing about their own experiences have in one way or the other reached the Stage 5 – Independent but the same ability to grow, develop and accept the “otherness” of the people of the hostland is often deliberately not provided to their characters, as a solution of cultural difference(s). The protagonists / characters are shown to have retained many of their traditions in the hostland, a land “alien” to them, in its original or a slightly changed form, while the Indians living in India have long discarded or changed some of the norms and practices or modified them beyond recognition. So, the diasporans are shocked and surprised at the changes, as they were still preserving

a set of cultural norm in the “India(s)” of their own that were created in Australia or any other foreign country / hostland.

The various diasporic writings, characters and the migration process, through which the diasporans pass at a basic level, can be analysed in relation to, what I would like to call, the *Four Ps Step Process*. This process highlights the changes, after an individual – the diasporan – arrives from the homeland into the hostland:

- **Place** – an immigrant leaves his homeland, permanently or temporarily, for a new country;
- **People** – meets new people from various other cultures and backgrounds;
- **Past** – feels a sense of longing for his own country and people; and
- **Perception** – about his or her present condition in relation to his past experiences change his or her outlook and he or she tries to assimilate / integrate.

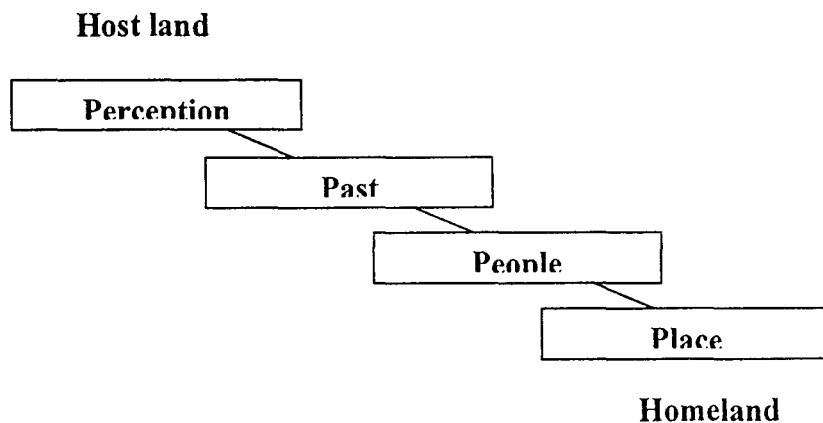


Figure 1. Four Ps Step Process

All this depends on the kind of value orientation a migrant has. For example, is he / she adaptable and accommodating, or has a sense of community or individuality, or the kind of dominant values he / she possesses, or how he / she wants to live and shape his / her future in relation to family and the larger world present around him / her.

It can be noted, that the metaphorical figure of Trishanku occupies here a “third space” and is therefore considered to be a link between homeland and hostland. But if we study closely there is a push and pull factor involved in it. Homeland, its

socio-cultural aspects try to attract these Trishankus towards itself, and similarly the hostland with its “opening” policies, incentives of monetary gains and equal status situations tries to push these diasporans or Trishankus into its own politics and culture.

A hypothesis to be put in relation to the movement and settlement of the diasporans in various hostlands is, what happens when the Trishankus start to cross over the “transit” points after some years / generations rather than living in between. They, here, just like the original myth of Trishanku must start a new cycle, which continues with every new Trishankus arrival into the hostland, as he or she brings something “new” and “valuable” in terms of their socio-cultural baggage. This process of settling down in hostland can be explained with the help of the following *Circular Model of Settling in Another Country*:

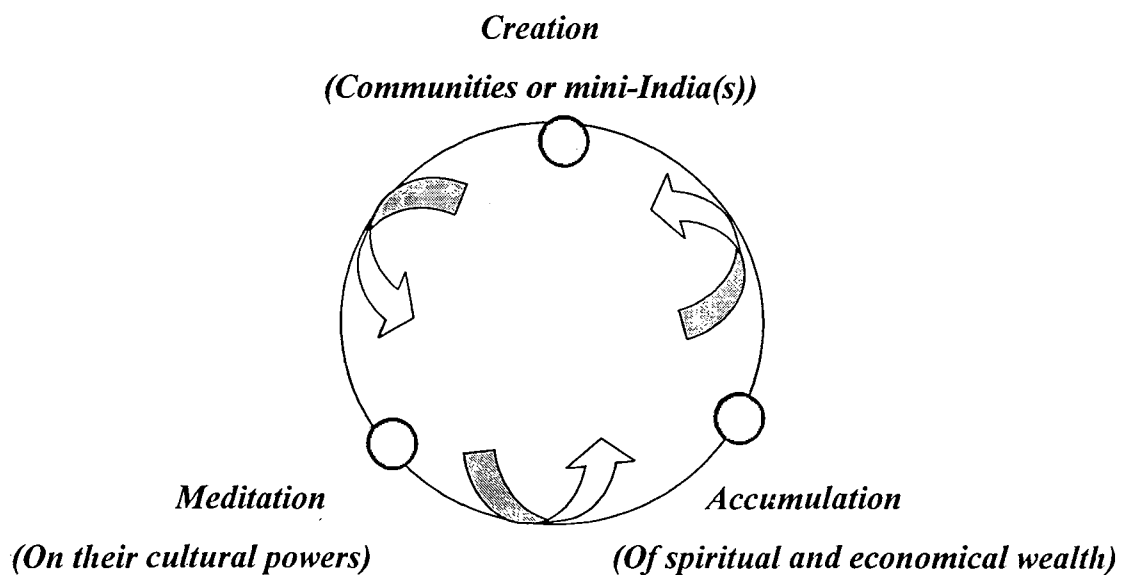


Figure 2. Circular Model of Settling in Another Country

As a Trishanku leaves his / her homeland and arrives in the hostland, the process of “Creation” starts as he / she feels a need to settle down comfortably in this new land with known things or referents of the past. So, he / she tries to create mini-India(s) or similar communities as existed in the homeland. As the communities start building up, these Trishankus start the next process i.e. of “Meditation.” Now, they strive to assert their cultural powers in the hostland and get the best bargain in terms of equal rights and status. This assertion benefits them not only in the emotional and spiritual

areas in the hostland but also in the economic standing. Finally, the Trishankus feel ready for the last process, which is “Accumulation” of wealth and its utilisation in protecting and promoting the core values of Indian culture in both the homeland and hostland. This is a kind of bi-culturalism or double cultural orientation – towards both the country of origin and the country of adoption, which is not a contradictory phenomenon as it looks initially to be. Actually, some people post-globalisation now with homes and businesses in two (or even more than two) countries are showing an astonishing ability to sustain “double” or “hyphenated” identities, with strong cultural ties and contributions towards both homeland and hostland. This has also led to a new category of highly mobile diasporans, better known as “Transnationals,” who are moving in and around the metropolitan centres of the world.

In a world of global capitalism with commercial-cultural identification, Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur have defined Transnationalism as,

the flow of people, ideas, goods, and capital across national territories in a way that undermines nationality and nationalism as discrete categories of identification, economic organization, and political constitution. [. . .] Transnationalism speaks to larger, more impersonal forces specifically, those of global capitalism. [. . .] transnationalism also includes the movements of information through Cybernetics, as well as the traffic of goods, products, and capital across geopolitical terrains through multinational corporations. (1)

Or to be precise in the Bhabhian terms, Transnationalism is a “space of translation” (25) carrying within it a free movement globally. It is however different from Diaspora, which refers “specifically to the movement – forced or voluntary – of people from one or more nation-states to another” (Braziel and Mannur 1) and “addresses the migration and displacements of subjects” (Braziel and Mannur 1). While diaspora may be regarded by some scholars as associated with transnationalism, or even in some cases resulting from the transnationalist forces functioning globally, it “may not be reduced to such macroeconomic and technological flows. It remains above all a human phenomenon – lived and experienced” (Braziel and Mannur 1).

The contest between diaspora and transnationalist forces has given rise to the questioning of the future of South Asians and Indians in particular among the Indian

critics in the diasporas and at homeland. According to Vinay Lal, the prospect for or future of Indians in the diaspora revolves upon two modalities of thought and action:

First, diasporic Indians must, without necessarily offering their allegiance to the idea of the nation-state, attempt a coalition-style politics with other communities and groups of those who are not only marginalized, peripheral, and disenfranchised, but whose knowledge systems have, through the processes of colonialism and management, and with the aid of Enlightenment notions of science, rationality, and progress, been rendered powerless and superfluous [. . .].

Secondly, diasporic Indians cannot reasonably look to the Indian government for succor and assistance, and whatever the strength of the emotional and cultural ties between them and the “motherland,” their center of being lies elsewhere. [. . .] diasporic Indians are in an in-between space, they may yet be in the position of trying to give society a new, at least slightly more human face.¹

We can see here, as has also been observed in the discussion throughout, that the future diasporans wherever they are scattered may not actually want to return home yet they “retain a conscious or subconscious attachment to traditions, customs, values, religions, and languages of the ancestral home” (Ramraj 215).

In Australia the South Asian or particularly the Indian diaspora has prominently distinguished itself in knowledge-based industries, cyber world and other prominent fields (see Introduction). South Asians settled in Australia saw that the Australian government reversed its previously discriminatory policy of keeping Australia “white.” As a result of which only “white” immigrants were allowed passage to Australia. Only a few migrants arrived from Northern and Southern Europe. This policy of the Australian government was replaced in the 1970s thus looking beyond the otherness and giving rise to a more “pluralistic, tolerant, multicultural society” (White 169). This was a favourable and enlightened response towards “other” cultures existing within Australia.

At present the Australian national objective, to which the government is committed, is to focus on multiculturalism and encourage what is called “unity within diversity.” Obviously, a question arises about the motives that led Australia to go for multiculturalism during 1970s. According to John Clark,

Understanding cultural flows necessitates paying a lot of attention to the type of cultural flow, to what is produced, and who produces it. But we should also look at the receivers, or gate-keepers for reception. If egalitarian openness may characterise the attitudes of some recent migrants, in immigrant cultures closedness more often characterises the long settled. Being in control of already established cultural values is a good way of privileging the long settled over both newcomers and the new and the best way to keep control over those values is not to tell newcomers what they really are. Australia does not have a universal and public set of common values deriving from traditional society nor is it based on the historical disjunction of a war of independence with its legitimating revolutionary myths. Access to either would give immigrants ideological claim to challenge the long settled. (207)

This particular attention towards the type of “cultural flow” and other related issues present before the Australian government in the shape of migrants from Asian and other continents resulted in Multiculturalism as a policy.

Australia’s going in favour of a multicultural policy during 1970s was the result of incoming stream of migrants post World War II, when a large number of migrants came to Australia as new settlers and refugees. This as a result created new larger diasporas amongst various cultures. Mishra (2002) observes that for the people in these new diasporas “race and ethnicity are linked to questions of justice, self-empowerment, representation, equal opportunity, and definitions of citizenry” (236). Their particular concerns in relation to their contribution to providing a concrete shape and identity to Australia – Australian society, culture and economy as skilled labour and professionals has been a vital factor in giving shape to the Australian Multicultural policy.

It was around 1973 that Al Grassby, Minister of Immigration argued in favour of the “the increasing diversity of the Australian society” (qtd. in Huggan 129) till now considered to be a strongly traditional Anglo-Celtic culture or a white-dominated society. So in 1989 the *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* was adopted. Where the policy of multiculturalism was also comprehensively used to refer to the cultural diversity more largely counting the diversity represented by Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It incorporated three principles for multicultural policy:

1. **Cultural Identity** – the right of all Australians, within carefully defined limits, to express and share their individual cultural heritage, including their language and religion;
2. **Social Justice** – the right to equality of treatment and opportunity, and the removal of barriers of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, gender or place of birth;
3. **Economic Efficiency** – the need to maintain, develop and utilise effectively the skills and talents of all Australians, regardless of background. (*National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* (1989) 14)

Later on, the opinion makers and academicians started mounting stress on “civic values” and on Australian “citizenship” as one of the strongest unifying symbol in this culturally and linguistically diverse nation. The Australian government thus redefined the principles for multiculturalism and the *New Agenda for Multicultural Australia* (1999) was released that included the following four core principles:

1. **Civic Duty** – which obliges all Australians to support the structures and principles of Australian society which guarantee us our freedom and equality and enable diversity in our society to flourish;
2. **Cultural Respect** – which, subject to the law, gives all Australians the right to express their own culture and beliefs and obliges them to accept the right of others to do the same;
3. **Social Equity** – which entitles all Australians to equality of treatment and opportunity so that they are able to contribute to the social, political and economic life of Australia, free from discrimination, including on the grounds of race, culture, religion, language, location, gender or place of birth; and
4. **Productive Diversity** – which maximizes for all Australians the significant cultural, social, and economic dividends arising from the diversity. (*New Agenda for Multicultural Australia* (1999) 8)

According to Robert Hughes, this kind of Multiculturalism asserts that

people with different roots can co-exist, that they can learn to read the image-banks of others that they can and should look across the frontiers of race, language, gender and age without prejudice or illusion, and learn to think against the background of a hybridised society. (73)

Multiculturalism though in a sense still remains what it is, an officially sanctioned, state directed or a state-oriented superficial cultural policy, or a strategy of “forced inclusion” that has replaced or merged within itself other models of settlement like assimilation and integration prevalent or popular at other times. In its true quintessence, “multiculturalism signified that “variant cultures can flourish peacefully side by side,” provided there is an acceptance of commonalities of society embodied in the political and legal system” (Jayasuriya 20). But still the real thrust always was on “learning to live with difference” and “to preserve the moral order and unity of society” (NACCME 26).

The critique of reasons that gave rise to and establishment of multiculturalism, however strong, depends on two facets like the two sides of the same coin. One is based on its being an institutional policy, or sop, or a “grand narrative” for the migrants and second, based on the notion of “collective historical guilt” (Huggan 132). Elizabeth A. Povinelli, an anthropologist, going by the second reason, believes that multiculturalism in Australia is to some extent the shamefaced confession of the past but it is also a promise of a future good. She says

Australian state officials represent themselves and the nation as subjects shamed by the past imperial, colonial, and racist attitudes that are now understood as having, in their words, constituted “the darkest aspect” of the nation’s history and impaired its social and economic future. Multiculturalism is represented as the externalized political testament both to the nation’s aversion to its past misdeeds, and to its recovered good intentions. (qtd. in Huggan 132)

In the case of Australia this discourse becomes more complicated by the inclusion of the Aboriginal intellectuals and opinionmakers / leaders critique of not seeing themselves as minority, or “new Australians,” or even ethnic in that sense which multiculturalism compartmentalises.

Multiculturalism has been further divided by Stanley Fish (1997) into two kinds – “boutique multiculturalism” and “strong multiculturalism.” According to him, “boutique multiculturalism” is highly superficial and commodified i.e. based on lifestyles, arts, culinary arts, festivals etc. of the migrants. While “strong multiculturalism” is based on true and deep respect to all cultures at their core. A strong multiculturalist “believes that each has the right to form its own identity and nourish its own sense of what is rational and humane” (qtd. in Huggan 124). So we

have in “boutique multiculturalism,” a token multiculturalism which stages, or frames, or depicts “ethnic marginality,” “cultural diversity,” or “differences” that are based on language, social attitudes, body language and expressions of various “cultural groups” with their identifying “cultural boundaries” or “markers” and thus creating an aura around them with regular transgressions of cultural boundaries. Here, there is a denial of difference and it is state that directs through policies how to become “new” Australians and live with difference and participate socially as “multi-cultural” Australians. The term “new Australian” was used, according to Stuart Macintyre, “to encourage the assimilation of polyglot immigrants” and also to put “pressure on them to give up their ethnic identities in order to conform to “the Australian way of life.” (200)

So, multiculturalism, as a neutralizing term, in itself becomes, as Donald Horne observes a way of keeping “the ethnics” quite while the “anglos” can go on running things (qtd. in Gunew 18) in the dominant social order by making the “new Australians” as vote-banks. Jayasuriya expresses the same anxiety by pointing out, that

although mainstream Australian society has given limited and cautious approval to this “culturalist” life style version of multiculturalism, it is not clear to what extent social attitude towards other groups, [. . .] have changed over time. (71)

He is also in a way advising migrants to

no longer be dependent on the patronage and indulgence it receives from dominant groups. Rather, its legitimacy will depend largely on the ability of ethnic groups to *mobilize* (my italics) and use effectively the resources available to them as interest groups representing ethnic minority interests (and also) to function more in the public domain than the private domain of limited cultural concerns. (74-75)

There are, as can be seen from the above discussion, faultlines and problems within the discourse of multicultural. This is largely in relation to its divisions and definitions be it state oriented or public.

In my view, India can play a strong role and can act as the guiding force in providing a definite outline to the word “multiculturalism” in Australia. One of the most contradictory aspects of diasporan condition in Australia, chiefly because of a large intake of refugee population. is that in the host countries the migrants become

supporters of pluralism and multiculturalism but at home they act as religious fundamentalist or hyper-nationalists, or even ethnic absolutists. Satendra Nandan observes that India has kept the fragments of her original civilization alive unlike Arabia that was overcome by Islam, China that was swayed by Communism, and Greece and Rome absorbed by Christianity. In his view it is only India that has stood against religious fundamentalism and violence. It has kept the ancient flame of harmony, tolerance and a mixed cultural heritage from the past to present still burning (qtd. in Docker 261).

Accordingly, there is a need for a “new” type of multiculturalism, quite like “strong multiculturalism” as pointed by Stanley Fish. This multiculturalism or rather “mix-culturalism” should be like as present in India – where cultural and with it the intellectual riches of the migrants are recognised. This, instead of denying or denigrating the minority culture of most Australians, aims not in “forced inclusion” but to create tolerant awareness of cultural difference within the Australian society. This can be seen in the way “new voices” are going to be heard because of a strong positive multicultural liberalism that is going to spread throughout the West. This is one of the “sensible concept of a multicultural society [. . .] in which every individual or group of individuals is given all possible encouragement to contribute to the cultural future” (Grundy 107). Thus promoting a fair treatment for all with openness towards the intercultural interactions and acknowledgement of their *belonging* to Australia, keeping in mind the present and future of both the nation and individuals.

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CHAPTER THREE

LOOKING BACK: IMAGINING HOME

“[. . .] there is no fixed origin to which we can make some final and absolute Return [. . .]. The past continues to speak us. But it no longer addresses us as a simple, factual “past,” [. . .]. It is always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth.”

– (Hall 226)

The continuance of a dialogue with the past and a constant looking back by the diasporic authors in their narratives is to a larger extent the result of notion of “home” and its “authority” over the mindscapes of the diasporic individuals, as is made clear in their most forceful expressions. But this is not to say that a diasporan will “return” to the origin because there is no point of actual return for him / her. According to Vijay Mishra (1996), this inability to return is one of the most dominant and distinctive characteristics of diasporas, he observes that “diasporas do not, as a general rule, return” (75). Although the diasporans may not actually return home permanently, as they are now located in a new “home,” they however do present an attachment towards traditions, customs, values, religions and languages of the ancestral home, which can be seen in the themes of their works. This continuation, maintenance and nurturing of their social and cultural uniqueness is often the product of their desires to connect with their country of origin, homeland, and with the other (mainly South Asian) diasporas present in different regions of the world, thereby giving it a true global unity and identity. In the words of Bhabha, this is the “celebratory romance of the past” (9). This romancing with the past is reflected in the creative output of the diasporic author and

continues to depend on the bits and pieces of its origin to hold itself together in the face of the onslaught, rejection or domination by the “other,” by the world which both frightens and fascinates. (Jain 79)

This “fascination” with / for what has been left behind, or with the very “home-idea” (Mishra 75) in relation to what is to be acquired in the hostland is the consequence of the migratory displacement. And this in turn makes the writer imagine home the way he / she wants it to be i.e. “a romantic idealization that fossilises memories,” and therefore it can be referred to as “the constant “looking back [. . .]” syndrome” (Ahmad 93). The return to home or roots, physically, is also not viable because of the other important incentives that are offered by the hostland. In the very act of returning / re-turning lies the problematic of losing identity and most important of all losing the opportunity that has been procured through hard work in the hostland.

A question that begs to be asked is – why would a diasporic writer who has “willingly” or “voluntarily” left home constantly portrays that “lost home” in his or her writing. One reason of course, and the most common one, is “nostalgia” for the “past” which is now like a land far-far away and can just be imagined through memory. The second reason, and a very important one in relation to the politics of diaspora writing, could be the readership. As

the work of a diasporic writer attracts the attention of two different sets of readers [. . .]. The culture of adoption wishes to see “through” the text to the culture of the “other”; the culture of origin wants to assess the authenticity of self-reflection. (Jain 85)

This concept of readership has a flip side too. Aware of the readership, the writer has a very strong “diasporic urge to appropriate space at home, and to use it for self-sustenance abroad” (Jain 88). This is because of a sense of alienation in their new “home” and the corresponding need to belong and therefore to travel through the memory lane in search of known and familiar markers of home. Homeland and its various known and unknown facets presented in these works cannot be judged as valid or invalid, as they represent only a “slice” of the Indian way of life, be it in India or in mini-India(s) established elsewhere in the country’s of their migration.

Satendra Nandan, one of the most prominent, well known and critically much analysed diaspora author from this part of the world, belongs to that special category of the diaspora authors who carry a triple hyphenated identity i.e. of being a Indian-Fijian-Australian. Nandan and other authors descendents of the indentured labourers are occupied with the preoccupation of reassessing their origins in the mini-Indians created by their ancestors in lands outside the Indian subcontinent. Nandan who was born in Fiji, got his education in Delhi, Leeds, London and Canberra. In Fiji he was

also elected to the Parliament in 1982 and 1987, where he became Fiji's first Labour MP and a cabinet member of the Bavadra government. He came to Australia, after the two Fijian coups, in December 1987. He then served as a Professor of Literature and Director of the University of Canberra's Centre for Writing, teaching English, Postcolonial Literature and Cultural Theory with a special emphasis on Australia-Asia-Pacific.

Nandan, in his short story "The Guru," takes a very humorous view of the diasporan situation and the Indian way of life away from India. He builds his story on the pattern, however not on the same scale and grandeur, of V. S. Naipaul's *The Mystic Masseur* (1957) and Cyril Dabydeen's *The Wizard Swami* (1987), two of the best known girmitiya narratives. It is important to mention here that it was Naipaul who started the trend for a distinctive *Girmitiya* narrative or the narratives of the old labour diaspora by providing it with a form, style, language, ideology, fantastic images and also in some ways made it consciously into a discourse to be comprehended and critiqued.

Historically speaking, the migration of the South Asians to Fiji is a very interesting story in itself. It was on the request by white settlers in the sugar growing colonies of British Guiana (Guyana), Dutch Guiana (Surinam), Trinidad, Mauritius, South Africa and Fiji, that Indian indentured labourers were sent for hard labour. These labourers had to sign a special "agreement," this word, later, because of language transformation became synonymous with the indentured labourers as "gimit" and the labourers "girmitiyas." Vijay Mishra, writing in relation to the South Asian-Fijians or the "girmitiyas" (the indentured labourers), observing the special predicament of their life in Fiji points out that it

was retrospectively seen as a deception played upon them by recruiting agents (arkatis) who convinced them of future possibilities filled with millenarian expectations.¹

Similarly, Nandan presents these people of Indian origin looking for "future possibilities" away from their motherland. They have created a "home away from home" and preserved the rich cultural, religious and social traditions of India over the years of their dislocation in Fiji. This, according to Mishra, was the construction of an "imaginary belief systems for its own self-authentication, self-generation and legitimation"² by the Indian section in Fiji. Despite the strictures against travelling overseas in the Hindu *shastras*, these early Indian immigrants were indentured as

labourers to countries unknown to them. Soon their relationship with the Fijian landscape became solid and they accounted for more than half of Fiji's population till the coups of 1987 and again in 2000, as a result of which these people migrated to various other countries for safety.

Nandan presents Pundit Bhondu Maharaj, whose "mumbling" (69) of Sanskrit mantras makes "the hair on his knuckles bristle with holy excitement" (69). He exploits illiterate people and blind believers of Hinduism, its rituals and traditions. Pundit advises the protagonist Beckaroo alias Beer Kuar Singh to not change his religion. Because that would be, according to him, a "political suicide" (72). He does not know that Beckaroo had already converted to Christianity in Tasmania to marry his love, Wendy, and "to get a good job in the civil services [as] a Christian from Tasmania would carry more weight than a local one" (72). Beckaroo, moving towards his home, looks at the houses in that area as, "temporary shelters of the fathers [which] had become the permanent homes of the children who had accepted their lot with deepening fatalism" (70).

As mentioned earlier, these migrants, who were part of the "labour diaspora" as a result of the colonial system of indentured labour created in Fiji a mini-India, which was their way of projecting a return to a past to get over their feelings of rootlessness and lack of a permanent home. This was to some extent also because the "old diaspora broke off contact with India which, subsequently, existed for it as a pure imaginary space of epic plentitude" (Mishra 2002; 236). The protagonist of the story, Beckaroo, expresses an anxiety which most of the second and third generation feels, i.e., not the sense of homelessness or nostalgia for home but change that one needs in his or her life towards improving one's lot rather than being stagnated in the old traditions of a lost homeland. He sees "history [as] what one sees in the rear view mirror (70), and one wants to move away "as far the windscreen presents new vistas, new perspectives" (70). Beckaroo stands for change in both economical and social conditions of his villagers. He can obviously see that his parents, the Pundit and the other first generation or old diasporans are living with an invariable hope of making "a trip to Motherland" (77) because they are still, what Mishra calls, "trapped in a cultural time-warp."³

Neelam Maharaj, who is by profession an economic analyst, presents in her story "Festivals" the life and struggles of Kamala in an Indian slum. Kamala works as an "efficient and capable maid" (127) in "the middle class suburb a few miles away"

(127). The responsibility of the family is solely on her shoulders. Her husband Ram, who has fully recovered from a “bout of Tuberculosis a few years ago” (128), is good for nothing, and refuses to work and share the responsibility of the family. The daily problems in Kamala’s life seem unending to her. The in-laws of her daughter, whom she married off at an early age, are pressurizing her over more dowry. Kamala as a slum dweller has to bribe the local police for carrying out construction in the house. In between the mention of all these hardships in the story are devoted paragraphs about festivals of India. Overall, the story presents how even with all the hardships, people in India try to make up things better to enjoy the small joys that festivals provide them. The descriptive paragraphs devoted by the writer in explaining various festivals, really make the story seem that it is a written to educate or inform “others” in Australia about the great Indian festivals, their importance in our lives and civilization, as Kamala says, “one had to preserve tradition, tradition was what kept us civilized” (129). The reference to these celebrations at such a level is beyond doubt there to offer a reflective feeling of “rootedness” also to the scattered Indian diaspora in Australia.

Neelam Maharaj shows another dimension that is attached with the festivals in India and which is mostly overlooked. As she relates to the image of festival, it gives a sense of the ghost of poverty that haunts the central character. Festivals, instead of bringing an atmosphere of bliss and ecstasy only provokes anger towards the impoverished state of living as Kamala fails to gift *thalis* (platters) of sweets and clothes to her daughter’s in-laws. However, festival brings into the life of her daughter Veena, the whole range of seasonal outpourings from her avaricious in-laws starting from taunts to tantrums, as her mother because of her poverty is incapable to meet their demands.

Kamala’s problem is not festivals but the “debt,” which she will take to fulfill the demands of the family and relatives. She, in spite of being a woman and doubly marginalized because of her social and economic position, shows great strength of will to provide everything she can to preserve tradition and most importantly joys of her family. The story, although, lacks subjectivity, which is an inalienable part of Indian perspective. The sense of loss of “Indianness” is represented as the voice of the narrator is of a detached observer. This detached sense of belonging is amplified by the use of scientific outpourings that get enmeshed with the religious dimension of the festival. For instance, *diwali* is no more connected with religious rituals like Lakshmi

pujan but it becomes a means to relish scientific inventions like “marvelous pyrotechnical displays of fire works” (131). The story is deficient in capturing the class-consciousness or even the sociolinguistic factors that are important in relation to representation of Indian way of life.

As one of the very recent migrant to settle in Australia Radha D’Souza presents life experiences that relate to India and particularly to the life of suburban middle class people. Before leaving for Australia, she worked as a social justice activist, columnist, writer and spent almost eighteen years practicing as public interest lawyer in the High Court of Bombay, India, representing non-governmental organisations, community, environment and various labour groups. She recently moved on to New Zealand for teaching as a law lecturer at the University of Waikato.

In “Riding High,” Radha D’Souza takes us on a “thirty hour journey by train” (94) with a very interesting story about a girl whose “cropped hair stood out incongruously like an alien imposition” (95). The hair on this girl’s head “looks [so] odd” (95) to the narrator because in India or anywhere in the world only “*angrezee* memsahib” (94) or “Christian girls had short hair” (100). The girl’s tale is interesting but an ordeal in itself. This girl “had long luscious hair” (95) which “fell like a straight sheet of blackness right down” (95) and her mother used to care about her hair. When her mother became ill and was not able to take care of her hair, she hired a maid to look after it. Her parents die leaving the responsibility of her two younger brothers and their education on her shoulders. With all her hardships she “felt like a heroine in a Hindi cinema and that lightened [her] burden” (98). But one day the tragedy struck, as on a busy day someone chopped off her long plait in the local train. She cried and on the advice of her colleague, a Christian girl, went to a beauty parlour. Before entering the parlour, she felt like a “harijan [who is] entering the sanctum sanctorum of a Hanuman temple” (100). It is in the parlour that she is enlightened on the value of the Indian hair and their demand in the European and American markets. This also in a way is a solution to all her monetary problems and later becomes a source of extra income to fulfill her own wishes. She grows her hair long for about ten months and then sells them off at rupees five hundred to buy things she likes and needs most.

This story is predictable by nature but it, still, looks at the situation in not too funny or tragic a manner. It presents India as the chaotic and unpredictable land where anything is possible.

Life of the urban, highly educated and “foreign returned” is presented by Sunitha in her story “Reminiscence.” This story presents various issues like Indian values vs. the western values, superstition vs. rationalism and urban vs. rural. Savitha, the protagonist, is an educated woman and earns as much as her husband. She teaches in a college but because of problems at her home she remains imprisoned “amidst the four walls of her room” (107). To her relatives and in-laws her not conceiving a child even after two-years of marriage proves without doubt her infertility and gives rise to all sorts of speculations and superstitious methods to get over it. Her husband, who is “foreign returned” and “highly educated” (107) is presented as a “paragon of social responsibility” (107). Savitha and her husband’s modern outlook appears to be “anglicised” (108) behaviour to others. Savitha feels that, she who is educated “was being pressured to move backwards to good old days of superstition, [and] blind belief in oracles” (109), which she would never believe in her right senses.

As opposed to Savitha is her “Americanised friend” (111), who through her mannerisms show that she is a *pukka* NRI. She shows constantly that she will not be able to live in India for a second, “she kept on commenting that India was full of dirt [. . .] infection [. . .]. Horrible really [. . .] [with] so many problems like unemployment, poverty, dowry, rape and so on, whereas America is a land of dreams. It is a land of opportunities” (111) for her. This girl got “married to a green card holder; a widower, who already had a five year-old son” (111). But she doesn’t mind it, as to her “it is better to be a second class citizen, a second hand wife in a country like America than be a first class citizen in a country like India, where problems keep escalating one after the other” (112). It is not that Savitha doesn’t know the truth about America, she was there herself and “America was no doubt [a] beautiful land” (112) but her own experience was of “an alien in America [. . .] severed from her roots / people / country” (112). And she choose to come back to India because for her “India’s poverty was far better than America’s luxuries” (112).

This story contains a message for all NRIs, and the message is not of rejecting the traditions of homeland but “of blending the oriental and occidental ways of thinking” (108) and bringing change in “traditions that are decadent, rotten to the core” (108). The story is full of sayings and anecdotes from *Bhagavad Geetha* that are related to customs and traditions. It also makes an appeal to all, to weigh every option that comes your way before making a choice. India, here, is not only the land of traditions (and superstitions) but it has a modern face too. Savitha is a teacher and the

two texts she teaches, Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* and Bessie Head's *Maru*, are both women centric. So, problems presented here at one level have universal implications. Savitha as an earning member of the family is equal and, therefore, independent in making her decisions. She is the face of the new, independent and educated women in India. Western education and knowledge of Indian traditions and values provides her to take the best of both the worlds and she knows, what she is doing and what she can do for her family and the society.

Life of the academics and their world view, various facets of the Eastern and Western society, marked changes in history and various other relevant themes like the historical and contemporary relationships between East and West are encompassed in Yasmine Gooneratne's writings. She conveys several of her own experiences to present and make her points more personal and real to the readers. She is one of the best known novelist, poet, essayist, short story writer, editor, biographer, bibliographer and literary critic amongst the South Asian diaspora authors in Australia. Gooneratne, born in Colombo, Sri Lanka, became a resident of Australia in 1972, with her husband Dr. Brendan Gooneratne who is a physician, environmentalist and historian. In 1981 she was the first, and remains until now, the only person to receive the higher doctoral degree of Doctor of Letters ever awarded by Macquarie University. She now holds a Personal Chair in English Literature at Macquarie University, which is located in New South Wales.

Gooneratne's "Masterpiece" presents an East-West encounter in India. It is at a level about cultural clash and also about the issue of adaptation, commentary and textual "authority." She uses a story within a story format and the central story is related to the ancient Indian legend about Sri Jayadeva's literary masterpiece *Gita Govinda* or "The Song of the Shepherd" written nine centuries ago. The story presents proceedings of a seminar discussion going on the subject – *Gita Govinda*, "its status in relation to India's literature, its literary qualities and the process of its composition." On this latter aspect of the poem, a well-known storyteller had been asked to speak. While the storyteller narrates his tale about the composition of this great classic, there is present in the room an "irrepressible questioner" – an Australian Professor. He continues to interrupt the storyteller with his academic questions related to – the writer's block, women's status in India and his own theory about who completed the poem in the absence of Sri Jayadeva. In the original legend it was "the God [Lord Krishna] himself [who] descended in glory from his lotus throne in the

temple and climbed the hill to a poet's house in order to complete the poem." But on the contrary the Australian Professor feels that the poet's wife completed the poem. To the storyteller this is "sacrilegious" because "as a respectable young woman of twelfth century India, palm leaf and stylus would have been carefully kept out of her reach." The storyteller feels that the professor should study "the art of interruption" and that too of the "constructive interruption." Because it is such "interruptions [that] allow the story to move smoothly onwards, to a proper conclusion."

"Masterpiece" in a way is not just a story about the academic vs. the non-academic. It presents before the readers that unknown facet of India and tells more subtly about the rich and vast classical literature of the Indian subcontinent, its readings and interpretations that are available in the villages of India, which are "unknown" to West and has to be discovered in its full. Gooneratne presents the conflict of East and the West in a very witty yet serious authoritative tone reflecting the ancient Indian legend and contemporary Western experience.

In these short stories we see various versions of the homeland. It is not just nostalgia that makes the diasporan writers to write or imagine or present an image of the home in their writings. However strong the diversity of circumstances under which these authors came to Australia, there is an interesting parallel in the aspect in which their writing is concerned with presentation of the myths, legends, customs, festivals and rituals of the homeland for the "others" i.e. the readers of the hostland. To make them informed about the various cultural markers that are related to person of Indian origin and sensitize them about it is a very significant factor in the writings of the diasporic authors. As, sometimes, it is the utter ignorance or lack of proper knowledge about the migrants culture that frequently becomes the basis of unnecessary misunderstandings, prejudices and discriminations against them. To tackle this ignorance we find in these short stories long descriptive paragraphs and special comments about socio-religious practices of the migrants home culture, which in some ways the writers' contribution in creating a knowledge base. These authors act as source informants, or what Mishra, Paranjape and some other scholars have termed as "native informants" for the host country, who provide the people of the hostland various facets and knowledgeable perceptions about their homeland(s).

We here see a deconstruction of home and its realities. The style used is humorous, ironic and sometimes even full of cynicism on the conditions prevalent in

the homeland. It is not a rejection of the homeland but its celebration, as can be seen from the visual images used to represent India that are rich, varied and colourful.

In most of these short stories the tone is comparative i.e. comparing India with Australia and to a great extent

they [are] construct[ing] the image of homeland as not only an area of darkness, confusion, violence, but a hopeless and doomed country which must be rejected. (Paranjape, Introduction 11)

This is largely because of the rationalizing principle involved in the process of settling down in the hostland. And this imagining of “home” on the part of the diasporans is therefore to be “understood in terms of the logic of the dominant culture, of which it is an ambivalent or unwilling part” (Paranjape, Introduction 10).

These stories present not fanciful re-creations of home but for a larger part the harsher realities in which millions of Indian live everyday. It does seem that through these stories the authors are sharing “meanings as part of a diasporic community [to] make the process of settlement easier” (Coronado 43) by nostalgically remembering the past. The constant “looking back” and “imagining the lost” may signify to some readers a complexity in interrogation where the “dominant culture of the host country is not interrogated as consistently or rigorously as that of the homeland” (Paranjape 2003: 299).

India, as discussed above, is not just a construct in these stories but it sounds and feels real, bursting out with local details, variety of voices and individual consciousness that are working in it. These postcards do make the differences and similarities of the home more simplified and to some extent homogeneous too, so that the people of same origin – Indian subcontinental – reading these stories do not feel alone and away from the familiar traditions, cultural and religious rituals and its other aspects. This, use of the familiar in these postcards, helps the diasporans in making movement, with their eternal diasporic cultural baggage, towards their Australian future.

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² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENT AND FUTURE: IMAGINING AUSTRALIA

“Wherever there dwells a Gujarati, there is forever Gujarat.”

– Khabardar¹

In relation to the issues and problems of setting up or shifting of “home” to the hostland, the diasporans at every level “confronts the “localised”” (Bromley 13), be it in the form of people, places, names etc. this confrontation with the localized often gives rise to a “double representation” in the works of the diasporic authors. It is interesting to note that, how a diasporic author represents “home” in relation to where he or she came from and where he or she is now settling down. As seen in most of the cases, the diaspora writers are desperate to write and talk about their experiences and reflections both of past and present. It can be unmistakably noted that the diaspora writer although is presenting an image of Australia for the readers back home, he / she still uses the Indian subcontinent as a comparative model or reference point. They present the place that is left behind and the potential its leaving has created for their present and future. It is mainly because of the diasporic authors need to strike a balance between the two – one that is lost i.e. the homeland and second, that still has to be gained or conquered i.e. the hostland. In these short stories also, the main focus of the writer is to move away from India and towards Australia. This movement of the diasporic authors away from India, in a sense, may be considered the diasporans “farewell to India” and they, as Makarand Paranjape observes,

demonstrate a self-legitimizing logic of leaving the homeland behind and therefore at least indirectly, of embracing the new diasporic home. (Paranjape, “One Foot [. . .]” 167)

So, the diasporic writing or literature in a way remains preoccupied with a sense of self-rationalization. Self rationalizations or providing reasons for leaving the homeland, of being dislocated, of presenting a separate identity in the new homeland,

of assimilating or integrating with the mainstream, and so on and so forth. Still, this remains a common strategy amongst the writers of various migrant groups. A common strategy of

diasporic communities [. . .] to “make up” the culture, as a means of interacting with others, negotiating an image that gives them importance and value, even by “inventing” traditions derived from local customs or events but appropriated and transformed in the new environment. (Coronado 49)

The homeland still, like the hostland, remains a constant reality for them. And the process of grieving for the lost homeland ultimately leads to an acceptance of the new “home” i.e. Australia, happily or unhappily. It can be seen that in most cases this process takes place happily because of the involvement of economic and other privileges as incentives.

There is naturally a sense of alienation, at the outset, where the mainstream or the “others” stare and point out the difference – religious, cultural and social. The process of integration may take some time according to the individual and the cultural baggage or cultural orientation he or she carries (See *Stages of Cultural Consciousness* in Chapter Two). The migrants in Australia, first encounter a harsh land – unknown and alien to them; secondly, they miss the old cultural values of the homeland and at the same time are attracted towards the new society, its values and lifestyles; thirdly, the sense of dislocation felt by the first generation diasporans gets weakened in the subsequent (second and third) generations and for them Australia is their home and they are Australians; and lastly, though they are Australians but they carry with them hyphenated identities or bi-culturalness, in some cases, which gives them an extra edge over the others having mono-cultural identity, as now they can choose what they want to be, for example – Indians, Australians and Indio-Australians or Australian-Indians.²

One of the first Australian born South Asian writers to get published in Australia was Mena Abdullah. She was born at Bundarra in northern New South Wales. She was raised on a sheep property and studied at Sydney Girls’ High School. For many years, she was employed as an administrator at the CSIRO. Her short stories have been published in reputed journals and anthologies like the *Bulletin*, the *Coast to Coast* anthologies (1956, 1958, 1960 and 1962), and *Two Ways Meet* (1963). She wrote a beautiful collection of short stories with Ray Mathews, a known poet and

journalist, as co-author, titled *The Time of the Peacock* (1965). These series of interlinked stories are about an Indian family, settled in the Australian country-side of New South Wales in the early part of the twentieth century. Bruce Bennett in relation to *The Time of the Peacock* observes,

Abdullah's stories of childhood exhibit a gentle, celebratory tone, mingled with a certain sadness at the loss of childhood harmony and innocence. (*Australian Short Fiction* 158)

This family consists of a Muslim father and an ex-Brahmin mother and their three children – Rashida, Nimmi and Lal. Nimmi, the young daughter, narrates these stories. Paul Sharrad in relation to the use of a child narrator has argued that the use of a child narrator “with innocent, sometimes naïve ideas on life, and allows the white adult reader to feel benignly condescending towards all kinds of difference represented” (qtd. in Paranjape 2003: 298).

In her story the “The Time of the Peacock” Abdullah presents an immigrant Punjabi Muslim family living in the Australian hinterland, which is their world now. This particular story exploits the Australian myth of the independent rural pioneer indulged in taming the land i.e. farming. This family is away from home yet the “stories [from home] were alive in [their] heads” (1). The family gets a pet from India – a white peacock fondly called Shah-Jehan but who “will never open his tail in this country” (3). For this family being Australian is not as important as preserving their cultural heritage in an alien hinterland. The very process of preserving can be seen working internally in the family, as the narrator's mother, who was a Brahmin before marriage and “believed in the tales of Krishna and Siva” (6), even now after getting married to a Muslim “remembers her old ways” (6). The religious beliefs, however small they are, such as the mother putting milk outside the house to satisfy the snake, are dangerous to believe in the Australian hinterland. Narrator's father knows that it is foolishness to do such a thing and removes the bowl of milk without telling anybody or hurting his wife's belief. In this story, the peacock, Shah-Jehan's opening the tail can be taken as a symbol of joy and happiness, which this family is looking for in Australia. Whereas, the peacock himself becomes a symbol of, “in all his grandeur [. . .] a link between the past and the present” (Hussain 184). Intizar Hussain in his “Morenama” or “A Chronicle of the Peacocks” (1999) recounts many of the myths attached with peacock. In one of the myths, the peacock is presented as “the bird of the paradise” exiled from the heaven for his sin of helping Satan (Hussain

185). Exiled, just like this family – from their homeland into the vast hinterland of Australia – almost in total isolation from Australians, both individual Australians and the Australian society.

Similarly, in Abdullah’s another story titled “Kumari” there is only loneliness for children, as they do not have other children for companions and playmates. The only past-time the family can think of is talking about India and naming the various plants, animals and places in their mother-tongue – Hindoostani – to continue or form new links with the past.

A further insight into the working of an immigrants mind, language acquisition and the process of creating stories or yarns is provided in Mena Abdullah’s “The Outlaws.” After migrating to Australia, it is through stories or yarns – the very acts of exploration that the protagonists / characters / individuals try to explore what they have lost in leaving their homeland and what they have achieved in this new land. In this particular story, Abdullah compares the story of an Australian bushranger, Thunderbolt, with the story of an Indian dacoit, Malik Khan. Narrating stories becomes very important because the migrant experiences are best reflected in the type of stories each individual remembers to comfort himself / herself and at the same time to tell others. For example, here, the narrator’s mother’s stories are set in a mythological space and time and are the most fanciful. She acquaints her children to the

gentle and strange, stories of the time when magic people walked through Hindustan, and everything they touched was right and good.

(42)

While the “father’s stories were true and real” (42), containing practical wisdom inside them. His stories were based on his experiences as a hawker in Australia. But it is the stories of Uncle Seyed, which gives pleasure to the narrator and other children because his “stories were different – not always gentle, not always real [. . .] his stories were for grown-ups” (42) and, most importantly, in the language of the new homeland – English, an act of educating the children with the ways of the hostland.

Even in the compromises and acceptance made by the protagonists about their new identity as Australians, we see a celebration of the past through constant references to India. Manik Datar, who was born in Calcutta, confidently defines her roots through the kin networks and webs of social connection in Australia and India and uses the same theme in her fictional narratives about Indians in Australia. In her

story “My Sister’s Mother” the younger sister living in Australia “begins to understand that my sister’s mother is different from my mother” (76). The difference is not in terms of blood relationship but it lies deep inside the psycho-sociological conditions before and after the family’s migration to Australia. The elder sister never migrated and stayed back in India – “the country of [our] ancestors” (76), where she proudly “belongs as a native” (76). The real shock for the younger sister is not the elder sister’s feeling proud about India but it lies in how her elder sister perceives even the internal migration taking place within India. She believes fervently that “outsiders from other provinces in India should recognize they are guests and not demand equal rights as the local people” (76). This statement shocks the younger sister and it is obvious because she herself is an “emigrant in a country already taken from its local people” (76). There are further shocks for her as she faces linguistic problems related to the use of English – Indian English and Australian English. At other levels the younger sister to preserve her authentic Indian image in Australia owns, as a proud possession, a “white marble mortar and pestle” (77) and because of it has suffered the jokes of her Australian friends to whom it looked like “a piece of Taj Mahal” (77). The elder sister does not need it as it is very old fashioned and she proudly says that “in India we are quite modern, we can buy all masalas readymade” (78). The elder sister, who is a connection between India and Australia is “caught between two beliefs” (78) but is still very happy and comfortable. While, on the other hand, the younger sister is still trying to balance and hold on to both the cultures for her futures sake in Australia and because of this she is not rooted in either Australian or Indian. As the younger sister is married to an Australian, going back to India is not a possibility for her. The only choices in front of her are either to strike a balance between her Indianness and Australianness or merge in the Australian identity.

The diasporans have come to Australia with a dream – “to learn, to earn [. . .] to save and return” (83), as the protagonist in Manik Datar’s “Point of No Return” says very poetically. He came to Canberra because he wanted to do something for his country. This is the very nationalist ideology in the heart of most of these immigrants (going for study) that is carried on in their cultural baggage. The protagonist of this story like the other diasporans is

grappling with its world [. . .] have an urge to name all things [. . .] birds, plants, places, whims of weathers, foodstuff, objects of everyday use – for in naming them in Bangla (he) can testify their reality. (84)

He is in search of Indian names and definitions for things Australian. Readers often find him comparing the things Australian with what he has left behind in the homeland, a practice to legitimate the things he finds. Nevertheless, in doing so he provides to the readers with various images of Australia, Canberra in particular – “the bush capital” (85).

In India, for his family and relatives the problem is where to place Australia or where it belongs in terms of cultural effects – to East or West. As they have no stories – good or bad – of Australia and its impact on the immigrants and their culture. So, Australia emerges as a fascination for them but lack of stories or images of Australia makes it, obviously, “not rate[d] highly as a foreign destination” (85). On the other hand in Australia on reaching the Indian Cultural Club, he finds that he can act as a bridge or a point of contact with the homeland for others because of his status as a recent migrant to Australia. But still, even here, he cannot stop himself from thinking in terms of Bengali and non-Bengali i.e. the internal Indian regional or provincial divisions. The only option in front of him as a solution to his dilemmas is to “make friends with Australians, White Australians” (88). Again, he wants a choice in terms of friendship thus excluding Aborigines and other migrants as being Australians. Result of such a situation can only be “loneliness” (88). The solution for his problem too lies in his resolve to “belong” to Australia from within.

This sense of “belonging can be intellectual” (23), according to Peter Read. Manik Datar reflects this sense of “belonging” to the Australian land her writings. She feels bonds with Australia

because she had consciously grafted herself to Australia, because she liked the look of the land, because it gave her space as a non Anglo-Celtic Australian; because she felt accepted by its people; because she held a commitment to its democracy; because of her memories, and because occasionally she felt an ache for the land. (Read 23)

A clear solution that she provides to both the protagonists these stories is that to search back or return is pointless and to find space and identity or to belong in the diversity of Australia is a more desirable and a profitable aspiration keeping in view the future that lies ahead.

Sujhatha Fernandes in “A Pocket Full of Stories” presents a Goan family trying to replicate the Indian social structure while living in Sydney, Australia. They have as a new visitor, Nandini, a Mangalorean servant girl from India, who is

presented to us, by the narrator, as “a small, skinny, black girl” (90). Exploitation and racism, in terms of colour, caste or class is seen working throughout the story.

However, the exploiters here are not Australians but the employers of Nandini.

Nandini is raped and made pregnant by the narrator’s uncle. The whole blame for the acts falls on Nandini, who is made to leave Sydney for the trouble she has caused the family. For the narrator and readers it is not just a rape in physical and sexual terms but it is rape of a dream, of a conjurer whose “pocket was full of stories [. . .] never ending multicoloured [. . .] tales” (91). Towards the end of the story Nandini gets educated in the ways of the world. She knows that coming to Australia was a dream for her. It was a fantasy world, and now she was leaving it with her pockets empty, leaving the child narrator behind to reminiscence about her stories.

In K. C. Paramanandam’s story, “Of Human Infatuation,” chiefly two ideas are examined, first in relation to the individual and his surroundings / environment, and second about the individual and his relationship to “other” individuals / communities. The kind of existential stance a diasporan takes when faced with loneliness and alienation is also an important aspect presented here. Rajan, the protagonist has been in Australia for the last four years, studying and thinking “over nothingness of life” (16). Rajan, the protagonist of the story, seems to have withdrawn from the meaning and value of companionship, although from inside he yearns for it. To avoid loneliness, “he makes a painful nostalgic journey into his solitary past and sees himself sauntering along streets of his cherished village” (16). Actual return is not possible for him and therefore the only option for him is to relive that lost past in his dreams. He wants to be the part of “whole” because “it is full of shades” (17) and thinks himself to be in a “world within worlds” (17) but in the words of his white friends, he “haunts the place” (18). He continues to struggle to locate a sense of being Australian or wants to at least find an Australian identity but his inability to find an outlet, reflects his “acute frustration” (19).

For Nandini, in “A Pocket Full of Stories,” Australia robbed her of the multicoloured stories that she carried, and it made Rajan in “Of Human Infatuation” to struggle to locate a sense of being Australian. Similarly, Australia made the narrator of Rani Jhala’s “Life’s Key” a widow. But she did not lose her faith and “learnt to give more meaning to the purpose in life” (21). She came to this “another planet” (21) i.e. Australia, after marriage. She lived a happy life with her husband and children. After the loss of her husband she made “this new country [her] future home”

(22) and was prepared to take on “the modern sprawling city that was Sydney” (22). Australia took away from her many things but also presented before her the challenge and opportunity to realize her potential in absence of her husband. She, by utilizing a job-oriented course, became socially and economically independent. Australia to her, towards the end of the story, symbolizes, like the plant she has grown, “love of today and promise of tomorrow” (21).

Throughout these short stories / postcards, we can note that the characters are not stable in their present. However hard the protagonists try to locate a sense of Australianness, it escapes from them or makes them first accept the challenges as a test of resilience. But this is just the initial stage of migration and process of settlement. There is always an aspiration inside the diasporans to move on with life in this new home. The protagonists are put under predicaments which their authors might have gone through or experienced or dealt with in one form or the other during the process of settling down in Australia.

In most of these postcards the Trishankus try to bring India to Australia with them by using myths, legends, historical facts etc. in their stories. According to Bruce Bennett, the “powerful hold of myths and stories brought with migrants, and retained in the new country, recurs in much cross-cultural fiction” (*Australian Short Fiction* 158).

These diasporans besides using myths also display a proudest possession, which reminds them constantly of home. These proudest possessions are “iconic referents,” which perform the signifying function of an icon and to a certain point act as a linkage between personal and national. For the diasporans, in their everyday life in Australia, everything to depends on these representations or icons. These icons will break when the Trishankus or the diasporans reach Stage – 5 of the cultural consciousness (see Chapter Two). Then there will be no need for those “old” icons. In the breaking of old icons signifies a withdrawal from original and a movement or a way towards constructing or shaping life’s narratives by gaining meaning from experiences individually under the conditions provided by the hostland.

For example in “Life’s Key,” a rose plant becomes the symbol of “love of today and the promise of tomorrow” (21). And, it does not take time for the protagonist to realize that “thorns are inseparable.” A “white marble mortar and pestle” is the “proudest possession” and an authentic one too for the younger sister to show her Indianness in “My Sister’s Mother.” Her elder sister who presents the

modern face of India counters this perceptual exaggeration. In Mena Abdullah's "The Time of the Peacock," narrator's mother has made her own garden full of Indian flowers, a connection with the old country or in other words with the Indian subcontinent inside their farmhouse – "her own walled-in country." Similarly, the white peacock, Shah-Jehan, in the same story is a reference to "Indians" or migrants who are settling in Australia. Peacock as India's national bird symbolizes the national sentiments and an Indian way of life in the diasporas, wherever they are settled.

These objects or icons, which the diasporans carry with them as cultural products are used as helpers in making a sense out of the alien situation presented before them. Sticking with them and putting meanings inside these objects or referents in an alien environment can also be seen as, at the initial stages of migration, a way of legitimating their relationship with home from a "third space" for future's sake. This in a way is the diasporans' strategy of providing these objects a dominant meaning in reference to homeland by articulating an ideological or socio-religious function different from what they had back home and thus establishing a privileged position.

In these stories we also see two very fascinating issues in relation to Australia. First is the populating of the Australian land by Indian immigrants. In Mena Abdullah's stories we find a family making home in the Australian hinterland, while in others it is the charm of the city – Sydney, Canberra or other places. These characters are drawn towards Australia for economic opportunities. So, be it the Australian city or hinterland it doesn't matter, filling the spaces and becoming part of a social change by bringing his or her economic logic to change their destinies is what matters to them. Second, the presence of Australians – White, Aborigine or people from other cultures settled in Australia – in these short stories. They exist but only on the periphery or just as references in these postcards and are not an active participant in these stories. And even if they are part of one or two stories, they have no say in the central issue of these stories. This can be seen as a test of adaptability not only for the diasporans but also for the Australians. The stories because of it's being written by the first generation diasporic writers are inward looking in terms of both characters and situations. In these stories, the "self" is not just the individual' but also the collective identity of community to which they belong. We can note that the diasporic community uses all the resources available

to survive collectively in adverse conditions, reproducing, transforming and inventing specific forms of identity to make clear their distinctiveness, creating “resistance identities” as cohesive strategies against the risk of cultural disappearance under the pressures of assimilation, or against a disadvantaged position in a country dominated by one culture-language-race. (Coronado 42-43)

The diasporans imagining Australia and resisting forced identities may vary within the individuals of a diasporic community. It depends on the conditions and space provided to them in the mainstream environment of the hostland and also on the diasporans “urge to appropriate space at home, and to use it for self-sustenance abroad” (Jain 88).

These diasporans who are now “expert in crossing borders and performing identities, using, transforming and inventing new identities” (51), it becomes necessary, borrowing a phrase from Gabriela Coronado, to prove or to become an Indian outside the Indian subcontinent and inside Indian culture. Which may also ultimately produce a new form of South Asianness. Therefore in Australia, as is felt by other migrants too, they become more “authentically” Indians, Sri Lankans, Pakistanis and so on or collectively “Indians” – contributing, understanding, and strengthening key elements of Australia’s social, cultural, political and economic foundations by transmitting the values of their homeland to their present keeping in view their, and coming generations future.

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¹ Noted Gujarati poet Khabardar, writing early in this century, expresses the notion of nation and nationality that can be and has been echoed by diasporans in various languages. Qtd. by Lord Meghnad Desai in *Development and Nationhood: Essays in the Political Economy of South Asia* (New Delhi: OUP, 2005) 222.

² See Uma Parameswaran's article "Ganga in Assiniboine: Prospects for Indo-Canadian Literature" where she identifies four phases of the immigrant experience to Canada. Qtd. in Makarand Paranjape, "One Foot in Canada and a Couple of Toes in India: Diasporas and Homelands in South Asian Canadian Experience," *In Diaspora*, ed. Makarand Paranjape (New Delhi: Indialog, 2001) 164.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

“Making sense of ourselves is what produces identity.”

– (Spivak 179)

These short stories, born out of the experiences of two worlds and cultures – Indian and Australian – and the notions like globalization and transnationalism, present for us the creative and innovative potential of their authors. These stories also help us in the comprehension of two notions that are best related to the identity politics – “self” and the “other.” These stories by South Asian-Australians dynamically emerge out as an influential literary form in the Australian literary atmosphere thus exploring, on the one hand, the cultural diversity within the South Asian community in Australia, and on the other, their interaction with Australians and other migrant groups. It can also be argued that these short stories by South Asian-Australians has in some ways helped to situate the Australian short fiction in the world literature today by forming “international literary links” (Bennett 2002, 5), which are needed by any literary culture to be considered successful and worth critical attention. The narratives taken here are in addition “an assurance of a dynamic, prolific and innovative group of writing” (Sareen 2001, viii) that has been produced from Australia but is working towards the larger objective of a canon making in Australian, South Asian and the world diasporic literature.

However, as has been argued in Chapter Three and Four respectively, not much of Australia in terms of characters is visible in these “localized narratives” of the South Asian diaspora in Australia. In Chapter Three, “Looking Back: Imagining Home,” the stories are concerned with the dilemma of “leaving,” “alienation” and the prospects of “return,” if any, that the diasporans feel and undergo. However, the diasporans’ nostalgically remembering the past makes it clear that it is not a rejection of the homeland but its celebration. The visual images used to represent India are rich

and variegated. Even in Chapter Four, “Present and Future: Imagining Australia,” the charm of the Australian city be it Sydney, Canberra or some other draws the characters towards Australia for economic opportunities. But, strangely, these stories do not present other Australians such as whites, Aborigines or people from other cultural backgrounds settled in Australia as an active participant. These characters do exist but only on the periphery of interaction with the South Asian diaspora or just as minor reference points in Australia. The major reference point for the diasporans, like Janus’ face, still remains the homeland but their gaze is always towards their future in Australia. The diasporans in both the process – looking back and looking ahead – show a movement more towards their Australian future as they try to comprehend by analyzing the realities and positive / negative aspects of both homeland and hostland..

It can be argued that there are a range of reasons behind this above mentioned phenomenon of “localized narratives” produced by the diasporic authors. One important reason for this can be that the South Asians, no matter where they are, try to stay connected with their roots in one way or the other. Another reason can be that in their very essence these short stories or narratives are based in and around a certain specific cultural and personal milieu. Here, the questions of cultural appropriation and representation of the “other,” as the case may be, by mainstream or a migrant writer can also be raised. And to justify this notion of cultural appropriation and representation various claims are made by the diasporic writers. First of all, artists are free from the moral obligation of being responsible to the communities they present; secondly, artists address humanity in general; thirdly, artists write for themselves, or, finally the one that is pointed out most commonly, artistic expression can be both universal and particular at the same time (Selvadurai 5). The main reason behind these territorial or cultural localizations of the narratives is the presence and need for a space for presenting creativity. So, the already settled are being treated as the “other,” as strangers and therefore are excluded or marginalized from this localization by the new migrants or diasporic authors, only till the time when the diasporic culture and narratives will be able to make a stronghold on the culture of the mainstream.

These short stories, as can be observed present the themes of emotional alienation, self identity, cultural expectations, cultural displacement and representation of difference etc. and also displays a uniform thread of sensibility in taking up issues remain same in spite of the difference in the migration points i.e. the point of arrival of these writers from the Indian subcontinent. The rationale behind

this can be that the idea of “India” or “Indianness” is not made up of any particular geographical border in our diasporic imagination. This is because

Unlike some other diasporas, the Indian consciousness of India is not linked by a single region or transferred institutions, nor by colonial hierarchies transplanted, nor by politics or economics or military considerations. Indeed not even by language. It is essentially and vitally one of cultural imagination. (Nandan 54)

On the whole, chiefly, these stories are also governed by interests of the writers to present an image of India and Australia as they experienced it. This is also their attempt, through their writing, to pass down the Indian cultural and traditional values plus the Australian spirit that they imbibed to the next generations in Australia as a social responsibility. The social responsibility of not to get “absorbed” by any dominant culture of the present and future times or even “the existing nation state, whether of the homeland or the host country” (Paranjape 2003: 305) but to create a cultural mix of their own containing positive aspects of the global world order.

A significant number of the stories analysed here are / by and about women who migrated to Australia, in some cases with their husbands and in some alone to pursue and see their dreams become reality. These women writers have in a very strong way contributed towards the “powerful literary contribution” of women writing in “contemporary Australian culture” and, which according to Bruce Bennett, has replaced “the bush mythology of the pioneering Australian male” (2001, v) as well as that of the pioneering diasporan male who have been till now projected as shouldering the responsibility of contributing towards the making of their homes and Australia. The women protagonists here are coming to terms with their sense of Australianness or their recently acquired Australian identity and other issues based on race, religion, education or profession. These “immigrant women’s struggles to negotiate a new territory, culture and milieu are often wrought with pain, fragmentation and psychic alienation” (Patra 195) as can be noted in the stories by Mena Abdullah, Sujhatha Fernandes and Rani Jhala. Despite the fact that their dilemmas are presented as more of a personal kind rather than community oriented, these women protagonists unquestionably follow the societal construct where “community looks upon them for the preservation and continuation of ethnicity” (Mund 110) be it Australia or India, as can be seen through the woman characters in the stories by Manik Datar, Mena Abdullah, Rani Jhala, Neelam Maharaj, Sunitha and other authors too.

At a basic level, these stories question the South Asian diasporans' status vis-à-vis the "other" Australians in a multicultural society. To answer which, as also the other questions that arise in relation to the status quo of the South Asian diaspora in Australia, the stories at one level do seem to be a bit restricted, mainly because of the notion of "home" and "individual," and his or her endeavour to discover "self identity" and a "place" in a foreign land / country. These stories do point out the problems arising from living in a diasporic condition i.e. life in a foreign country, identity crisis, experiences of marginalisation etc. The main question, however, reading these narratives remains – how do these storytellers construct meaning out of the situations that they present before and around the protagonists? A point to understand this can be that, the meanings are generated not because these diasporans are encountering "difference" for the first time as they come from a land – South Asia – where diversity is the key word and has become an everyday experience, as a result of the presence of a plethora of languages, dialects, regions, castes, class etc. These meanings are generated because it is their every experience and interaction that gives rise to altogether new values, significances and meanings.

Much has changed in Australia in the last few decades. Today, an Australian identity involves a plurality rather than any single set of defining characteristic. It has also been argued by some scholars that multiculturalism in Australia has emerged as "a mild form of "cosmopolitanism"" (Bosi 136). Thus resulting in the presence of so many vibrant, dynamic, and "polyphonic voices of Aborigines, migrants, feminists, homosexuals, environmentalists, academics, business representatives, the media and so on [Who] have eclipsed [the] stereotypical monocultural definitions" (Patra 200). Australian identity, in all its complexity, now includes within it many values and identities that have been absorbed from various settled / migrant and unsettled (Aboriginal) culture. It has in the long run attained a new kind of egalitarianism and tolerance based on the concept of multiculturalism rather than assimilation.

South Asian-Australian diasporans present a gaze that self analyses what happened to the protagonists / characters before they arrived in Australia or the motives of as to why they arrived in Australia leaving behind their homeland. In a sense, these diasporans never cease their efforts to reveal and construe the past. Which is mainly to suppress the guilt of leaving the homeland for economical gains and other privileges that the home couldn't afford and later the remorse of not been able to go back to clear the "debt" which they owed to the motherland. There is

undeniably a sense of nostalgia, longing, dislocation and something amiss from their lives but for them there is still / always will be a hope of better tomorrow / future because of the privileging situations and “two-ness” – Indianness / Australianness or “biculturalism” that Australia has offered and about which they have started to feel proud.

These stories by predominantly presenting the sense of “localization” critique the state oriented multicultural policy that seems to be restrictive in a globalised world. State oriented multicultural policy has somehow promoted an inward looking gaze among various migrants thus converting and forcing individual migrants of the first wave particularly towards migrant groups. This resulted in making the migrant communities inclusive by encouraging retaining of their own languages, customs, rituals and cultures. It as a tool of “empowerment” ultimately “disempowered” the second generation of these migrants by bringing into being hyphenated individuals. It also helped the “others” by giving a chance to them in categorizing the new migrants under ethnical or racial groupings. The new migrants for the dominant majority become a pure object and a spectacle that is restricted in a particular space and therefore is no longer a threat to the hostland and its culture. The diasporans or Trishankus occupy a “third space,” as has been observed by Bhabha and other scholars, and therefore act as a link between the homeland i.e. Indian subcontinent and the hostland i.e. Australia.

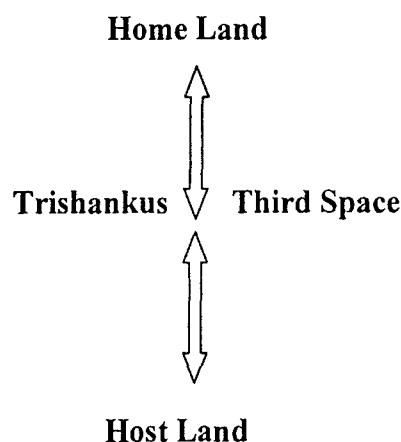


Figure. Two Way Model of Diasporan Interactions

So, the interaction that is taking place between these two countries – country of birth and the country of adoption – is, here, through the diaspora and is two ways,

depending on how strong and willing are the diasporans in maintaining and sustaining these links.

This limits the scope of diasporic participation in the host land that has subsequently been adopted as the new homeland by the diasporans. To break this limited role of the diasporans and for a more active participation by them in the land / culture of adoption, a new definition or character of the proposed concept of multiculturalism now is needed because multiculturalism has become a contested space in a global order of things. This new definition should be broadly based on two of the most important categories on which migration takes place – economic factors and cultural factors. This new definition can be of or based on what is called “cultural mix” or “mix-culturalism,” where there is a commercial-cultural give and take of economical, cultural and literary tools. Thus providing a fair go and equal opportunities to every Australian (white, Aboriginal and migrant) to participate fully as “Australian” without highlighting or categorizing or compartmentalizing their differences. This can be called a “proper equivalence multiculturalism,” as every person is equal because they have and share equal values, meanings, importance, and contribute as a “global citizen” or transnational in the constant making of Australia in the world. There has been going on a questioning of various problematic concepts such as nation, migration, citizenship etc. in its very basic and collective ideological use by the critics. As was seen in Chapter Two, notions such as Diaspora and the newly emerged concept like “transnationalism” that are related to the process of migration of people have also been critiqued and analysed in depth to provide alternatives in the global order.

Initially, when settling in another country, a concept like commercial-cultural identification in a world of global capitalism is also a very problematic for the migrants. As this soon provides an opportunity or freedom to the migrants in defying the geographic borders or the “third space,” positively, and also helps in constructing a sense of transnationalism, amongst the “hypermobile diasporans / communities / individuals,” in a now perfectible mobile world which goes beyond nation, language, ethnicity, class, caste and other identity markers. This is also the point at which systematic connections build up between cultures, and patterns, meanings, structures (economical and political) and images (social and cultural) are located. It is also a site of constructing the individual self away from the inhibitions of the geographical boundaries, thus determining and re-defining for himself or herself a sense of

individual self in the global society. Therefore, diminishing the geographical distances and forming global alliances help the diasporans or transnationals to capitalize and participate as “global citizens” rather than participate as restrictive citizen of one country. Recent examples of models such as One Global Economy, One Free World, European Union, Free-Market Policy, and recently the much talked about the South Asian Union (an initiative of the SAARC forum), on the same lines as EU, is in progress. Here, Trishankus or the migrants don’t act as occupying a “third space” as they did earlier but show a constant movement in a triangular form thus changing home and hostland according to the new global environment and opportunities. The new global environment also provides for the coming closer of homeland and hostland on a same or equal base, which also means that it is going to help further in making the future of South Asian diaspora in Australia strong. This can be well illustrated from the point that the stories analysed here are written in English language, the language which is understood by a majority of reading public both in India and Australia. This helps in projecting differences and sameness, at the same time, through its subject for different set of readers – Indians, Australians and a global audience around the world who is interested in knowing about these bi-cultural and transnational experiences.

In the transnational context the world seems to be truly a global village, as our very own Upanishad proclaim “World is one family.” This world is, positively, becoming day-by-day smaller and highly tech-savvy, and the very concepts of “nation” or “nationalism” (except emotionally) is becoming “primitive” in their essence, as the whole world is converting into a “melting pot” – an international culture. Even the so-called urban centres because of this kind of international culture have been

transformed by the process of local-global dialectic in which once migrant groups have syncretised the so-called “host” cultures and have unsettled commonsensical ideologies of race, nation and identity by forming new diasporic “cityscapes.” Migrants, that is to say, have not been merely passive travelers but have actively transformed the worlds into which they have entered. (Bromley 3)

Because of this global-local dialectics the export and import of talented and enterprising people from the urban centres of the country became easy, as is reflected in these stories and the background of their authors. This was seen as a result of

borderless globalization started by the multi-national corporations (MNC), successfully, who demanded and get hold of the right kind of employees regardless of their nationalities.

In her short piece ““International Community”: What an Intriguing Idea!!” Radha D’souza, the Indo-Australian writer, writes about the ages old idea of “Vasudeva Kutumbam” which is now the modern concept of an “International Community,” that

it was deeply embedded in [her grandmother’s] spiritual beliefs about Life and Creation. Creation was to her, a source of constant wonder about the world. Thus “Vasudeva Kutumbam” or the Family of Vasudeva was a spiritual concept that did not have any institutions or laws or rules of governance. Indeed, in her conception it could not, because once it had any of those things, it ceased to be a spiritual concept and became one of the “worldly” matters that we negotiate in our everyday lives. Vasudeva Kutumbam was something that people had to arrive at through a process of “self realization” that involved renunciation of power and possessions, which in her ‘worldview’ were the key to the troubles in the world. Having sowed those seeds, my grandmother left me to this world. I have since tried to integrate the profoundness of those feelings with the intellectual prowess of “Western” education. (<http://www.arena.org.nz/vasudeva.htm>)

And, it can be deduced from the above discussion that as this global order will get older by covering many nations because of the ease of travel and access to information, the transnational perceptions of the new Trishankus or diasporans about the notions like location, home, citizenry and other issues will be seen manifested in the form of literary, artistic and political expressions thus enabling a new hybridity – a mix of traditional and modern not just of two countries – homeland and hostland, but of various other countries too, where the person stays for shorter or longer periods because of various academic, professional, economical or political necessities. As these transnationals will mostly be encountering metropolis or the modern urban space / life in various countries, gradually, they, in my opinion, will also move away from class, caste, and gender consciousness and will help in creating a global consciousness through their works or activities that will also look beyond “national” and “racial” barriers. They will not struggle for acceptance like the old diasporans but

will make creative connections – *paraspara* i.e. a sustained mutual interaction or connection between old home and new “homes” where boundaries will have no meaning. Ultimately this transnational experience means crossing borders rather than creating it, which according to Gabriela Coronado is the “dynamics of the diasporic experience [. . .] a continuous movement of being inside and outside, of belonging and excluded [. . .]” (51).

These new Trishankus will not produce separate narratives or “cultural fictions” (Bromley 1) but alternative narratives about the hostland i.e. Australia, facets of which are still in some ways unknown to other Australians and the world. It is not part of the restrictive multiculturalism propagated as a State policy to patronize “minority cultures” by differentiating them from the dominant Anglo-Celtic Australian culture. This new definition, as discussed above, provides for a free exchange of ideas in relationships between various cultures present within the hostland, and a mutual understanding without State enforcing it on citizens and also without the diasporans or migrants taking it as their duty to make “others” sensitive about their cultural conditions and baggage, as was seen in most of these short stories where the author is trying to educate about issue such as religion and culture.

Thus, the new kind of multiculturalism is more of a public and practical affair in a “contact zone” between people rather than just a theory. And it is here i.e. at the interface of culture, as Robert Hughes points, “some of the most interesting things in history and culture happens” (73). As evident from the above discussion on multiculturalism both in political and public spheres “multicultural policies ought to be aimed at allowing all Australians to share as fully as possible in the existing and developing cultures of all other Australians” (Grundy 107) to contribute fully in the same.

It is, definitely, the uniqueness of Australian land that has been the source of inspiration for these writers, making them explore home and local. Local, here, being reflected as Australian for them because of their increasing proximity with the things Australian – economically, culturally and politically, as is reflected in their creative works. Though in this the concept of “otherness” to some extent has been simplified with an inward looking gaze because of the cultural (baggage) discourse. And therefore, as argued earlier, the question of identity becomes central to these writing, where this “identity” is both ways and open ended like the hyphen (-) which looks at both the self and the other and homeland and the hostland. Still, this creates a third

space or a diasporic space, which belongs to self-realization and the processes of rationalization for the diasporans, wherever they stay. Mena Abdullah points out this fact beautifully in one of her stories titled “Mirabani” in the collection *The Time of the Peacock* (1965):

“It is not India,” said Father.

“And it is not Punjab,” said Uncle Seyed.

“It is just us,” said Ama. (31)

For the diaspora the spatial identity or geographical location, where one resides is not important anymore, as pointed above, whether be it India or Australia or any place on earth. It is better for them, as pointed in the quotation from Spivak, to make a sense of themselves and their situations to produce self identity (179) and to move around and maintain and sustain a network contact with both India and Australia thus to act in prominence.

We have already seen that there is no essentially “homogeneous” South Asian cultural identity but because of “our common imperial past” we are bind, apart from sharing common ocean, ecology, rivers, and cable cultures, by “a common legal, administrative, and constitutional framework” (Desai 300) at one level. And similarly, “centuries of migration and movement within South Asia and intermarriages have made its people similar” (Desai 298-299) at the other level.

Some critics who are against globalization have called globalization – “McDonaldisation” of the world. They feel that the new global order or the New world order based on the economic and political aspects post World Wars I and II, and the Cold war is nothing but the recognition of superpowers like the USA and its allies. Thus, concepts like globalization or free trade or global world is in their view a particular economic theory promoted by the US.

Globalization, which started in the South Asian region a bit late then the rest of the world, is here to stay and will continue because of the “expanding trade and greater access to Western markets” (Desai 293) now. Thus helping the concepts laid down for the transnational identity and the South Asian-Australian diaspora by giving them tremendous opportunities in various fields. But there are certain issues that need to be sorted out and visions to be fulfilled in this region first.

Transnationalism or rather a global South Asian diaspora can be imagined only when we in South Asia are going to break our “barriers [built] against the flow of goods and people” (Desai 289), and created against each other. Because of these

barriers and restrictions we have emphasized our “separateness, rather than [our] similarity” (Desai 289) to the rest of the World. What we need are speedy reforms in the Indian subcontinent – sorting out crucial political problems, stopping infighting within the South Asian Association of Regional Co-operation (SAARC), exploiting common advantages, making a common market, free movement of people etc. (Desai 290-292). Our mind and energy is great what we need in South Asia is strong leadership – political and economical – who could help in co-operation in various fields such as trade, transport, movement of people and goods, and most important of all on the lines of the European Union (EU) a South Asian Monetary Union (Desai 292-293).

It can also be added here that the South Asians, in particular Indians abroad have facilitated and galvanized in building India’s and the subcontinents image in a far better way than they could have done from the country itself. Repatriation of foreign earning by the diaspora also plays a significant role in the economic development of the homeland. Lord Meghnad Desai calling South Asian community a “successful business community” writes that

South Asians abroad have shown that they can make a success in any country they go to. In most countries in the West, the South Asian groups which have settled there have succeeded against most adverse circumstances. (290)

Facing all odds in terms of economical, social, political, and cultural spaces, as first generation immigrants, these diasporans have created variant hues on Australian multicultural landscape.

Contributing through various societies, associations, lobbies, religious and spiritual bodies, they have collaborated within and outside community to cultivate Indo-Austral ties successfully. And their various attempts, as seen in these narratives are just one of the various “means,” as Erez Cohen feels,

by which migrants come to understand and experience their life in a “new” place. Such attachments are not merely an act of nostalgia or part of the effort to maintain culture, as depicted by multiculturalism. Rather, relations with the homeland are part of the ambiguity of “home and away” that constitute the life experiences of many immigrants and construct their various ways of generating “communities” in their new context. (38)

These short stories or postcards by from Australia thus play an important role in promoting the Australian and South Asian connections by acting as a gathering of colourful perceptions, experiences and reflections through narratives produced by diasporans. There is a continuous need to re-enter these postcards, for the purpose of making analyses, and in this way into the diaspora discourse to provide it with new continuities, visions, and issues in terms of transnationalism, multiculturalism, biculturalism, based on questions related to social, political, cultural and economical vis-à-vis a new issue, as proposed here, in terms of commercial-cultural benefits that are reaped by the diasporans both at homeland and hostland.

Here, the South Asian diaspora will finally emerge as, what David Walker has termed, “Australia’s Asian future – who would develop the country” (7) and that will finally lead South Asia and Australia into a more intellectual and social constructive dialogue. For this to happen, it without doubt requires involvement and more of a collective effort on the part of South Asian and diaspora thinkers, artists, politicians, business people, policy makers and concerned citizens (Desai 297). Therefore, every artistic involvement, testimonial on the subject, constructive dialogue and discourse – academic, political or public – in the present interlinked world then merely is a step towards it, as a result forming change in perceptions and attitudes by creating a knowledge and interest base in this field. And in this whole process, ultimately, the South Asian diaspora in Australia, with its continuous growth, prosperity and an ever-increasing role and responsibility in all areas of Australian society, will be a dynamic key participant in the shift towards global peace and trade, a vital element of World reconstruction and an area of abundant cultural potential.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

**TOP TEN COUNTRIES OF BIRTH FOR THE OVERSEAS-BORN
POPULATION AT SELECTED CENSUSES
1901, 1921, 1947, 1961, 1981, 2001**

Table 1

1901 Census

Birthplace	Number	%
1. United Kingdom	495,074	57.7
2. Ireland	184,085	21.5
3. Germany	38,352	4.5
4. China	29,907	3.5
5. New Zealand	25,788	3.0
6. Sweden and Norway	9,863	1.2
7. India	7,637	0.9
8. USA	7,448	0.9
9. Denmark	6,281	0.7
10. Italy	5,678	0.7
Top Ten Total	810,113	94.5
Other	47,463	5.5
Total Overseas-Born	857,576	100.0

Table 2
1921 Census

Birthplace	Number	%
1. United Kingdom	568,370	67.7
2. Ireland	105,033	12.5
3. New Zealand	38,611	4.6
4. Germany	22,396	2.7
5. China	15,224	1.8
6. Italy	8,135	1.0
7. India	6,918	0.8
8. USA	6,604	0.8
9. Denmark	6,002	0.7
10. South Africa	5,408	0.6
Top Ten Total	782,701	93.2
Other	56,878	6.8
Total Overseas-Born	839,579	100.0

Table 3

1947 Census

Birthplace	Number	%
1. United Kingdom	496,454	66.7
2. Ireland	44,813	6.0
3. New Zealand	43,610	5.9
4. Italy	33,632	4.5
5. Germany	14,567	2.0
6. Greece	12,291	1.7
7. India and Sri Lanka (Ceylon)	8,160	1.1
8. Poland	6,573	0.9
9. China	6,404	0.9
10. USA	6,232	0.8
Top Ten Total	672,736	90.4
Other	71,451	9.6
Total Overseas-Born	744,187	100.0

Table 4

1961 Census

Birthplace	Number	%
1. United Kingdom	718,345	40.4
2. Italy	228,296	12.8
3. Germany	109,315	6.1
4. Netherlands	102,083	5.7
5. Greece	77,333	4.3
6. Poland	60,049	3.4
7. Yugoslavia	49,776	2.8
8. New Zealand	47,011	2.6
9. Malta	39,337	2.2
10. Ireland	37,057	2.1
Top Ten Total	1,468,602	82.6
Other	310,178	17.4
Total Overseas-Born	1,778,780	100.0

Table 5

1981 Census

Birthplace	Number	%
1. United Kingdom	1,086,625	36.2
2. Italy	275,883	9.2
3. New Zealand	176,713	5.9
4. Yugoslavia	149,335	5.0
5. Greece	146,625	4.9
6. Germany	110,758	3.7
7. Netherlands	96,044	3.2
8. Poland	59,441	2.0
9. Malta	57,001	1.9
10. Lebanon	49,623	1.7
Top Ten Total	2,208,048	73.5
Other	795,786	26.5
Total Overseas-Born	3,003,834	100.0

Table 6

2001 Census

Birthplace	Number	%
1. United Kingdom	1,036,261	25.2
2. New Zealand	355,762	8.7
3. Italy	218,722	5.3
4. Viet Nam	154,818	3.8
5. China	142,807	3.5
6. Greece	116,431	2.8
7. Germany	108,214	2.6
8. Philippines	103,915	2.5
9. India	95,445	2.3
10. Netherlands	83,290	2.0
Top Ten Total	2,415,665	58.8
Other	1,689,803	41.2
Total Overseas-Born	4,105,468	100.0

Source: "Report of the Review of Settlement Services for Migrants and Humanitarian Entrants," Chapter One - The Policy Context, 23 Nov. 2005

<www.immi.gov.au/settle/settle_review/pdfs/chap01web.pdf> 26.

APPENDIX II

INDIA-BORN POPULATION OF AUSTRALIA

Table

1901-2001 Censuses

Year	Number	%
1901	7,637	0.9
1921	6,918	0.8
1947	8,160	1.1
2001	95,445	2.3

Source: "Report of the Review of Settlement Services for Migrants and Humanitarian Entrants," Chapter One - The Policy Context, 23 Nov. 2005

<www.immi.gov.au/settle/settle_review/pdfs/chap01web.pdf> 26.

APPENDIX III
SRI LANKA-BORN POPULATION OF AUSTRALIA

Table

1901-1996 Censuses

Census Year	Sri Lanka-Born
1901	609
1911	611
1921	637
1933	638
1954	1,961
1961	3,433
1966	5,562
1971	9,091
1976	14,866
1981	16,966
1986	22,516
1991*	37,263
1996*	47,103

* Excludes overseas visitors.

Source: "The Sri Lankan Born Community," *Community Information Summary* 2003, Multicultural Affairs Branch and the Economic and Demographic Analysis Section of DIMIA, 9 Mar. 2006 <<http://www.immi.gov.au/statistics/infosummary/source.htm>>.

APPENDIX IV

COMPARING MIGRANT STOCK: THE FIVE LARGEST FOREIGN-BORN GROUPS IN AUSTRALIA, CANADA, AND THE UNITED STATES

Australia, Canada and the United States are all considered “traditional countries of immigration.” All three countries also categorize their immigrants by place of birth, providing an opportunity to compare some aspects of their foreign-born populations. These graphs provide a window on the origins of immigrants in each of these countries to help explain the immigration patterns that give rise to unique immigrant populations.

AUSTRALIA

- Approximately one in every four migrants in Australia is from the United Kingdom, while one in every 11 migrants is from New Zealand. Combined, these two groups alone account for one-third of all migrants in Australia.
- The five largest foreign-born groups in Australia, including those from the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Italy, Vietnam, and China, account for 46 percent of the total immigrant population.
- The immigrant populations of both Australia and the United States are dominated by a single foreign-born group.
- China is the only country to appear in the five largest source countries of Australia, Canada, and the United States.

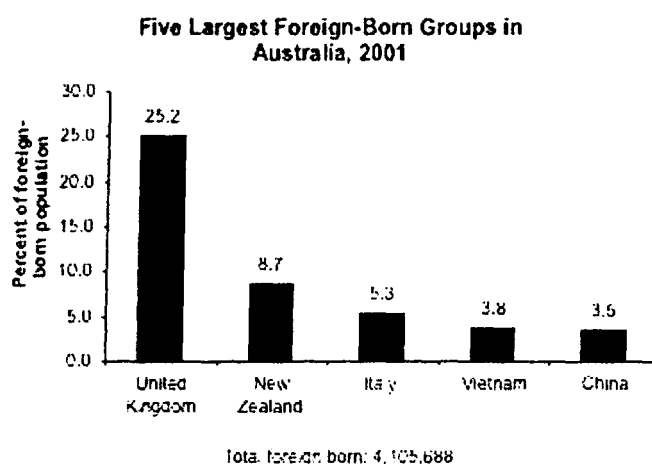


Figure 1. Australia, “Comparing Migrant Stock: The Five Largest Foreign-Born Groups In Australia, Canada, And The United States,” Migration Information Source: Fresh Thought, Authoritative Data, Global Reach, 23 November 2004
<http://www.migrationinformation.org/DataTools/migrant_stock_groups.cf>.

CANADA

- Approximately one in every nine immigrants in Canada is from the United Kingdom.
- The five largest foreign-born groups in Canada, including those from the United Kingdom, China, India, Italy, and the United States, account for 33 percent of the total immigrant population.
- While immigrants from the United Kingdom represent the largest foreign-born group in Canada, unlike Australia and the United States, the immigrant population of Canada is not dominated by a single group.
- In addition to China, Italy is one of the five largest source countries for both Canada and Australia, while India is one of the five largest source countries for both Canada and the United States.

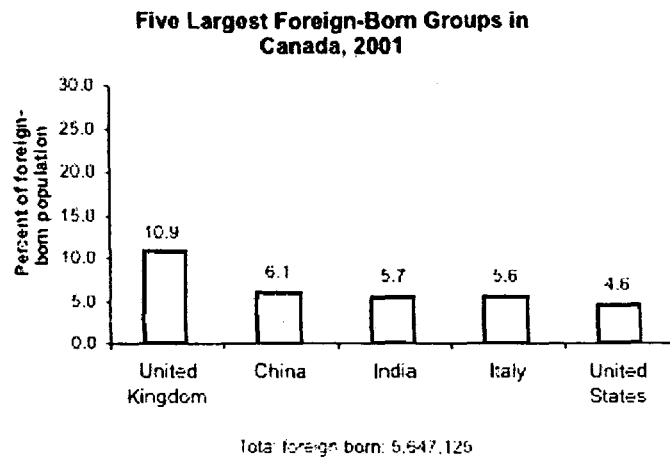


Figure 2. Canada, “Comparing Migrant Stock: The Five Largest Foreign-Born Groups In Australia, Canada, And The United States,” Migration Information Source: Fresh Thought, Authoritative Data, Global Reach, 23 November 2004
<http://www.migrationinformation.org/DataTools/migrant_stock_groups.cf>.

UNITED STATES

- Approximately one in every three immigrants in the United States is from Mexico.
- The five largest foreign-born groups in the United States, including those from Mexico, the Philippines, India, China, and Vietnam, account for 44 percent of the total immigrant population.
- The immigrant population of the United States, like that of Australia, is dominated by a single foreign-born group.
- In addition to China, Vietnam is one of the five largest source countries for both the United States and Australia, while India is one of the five largest source countries for both the United States and Canada.

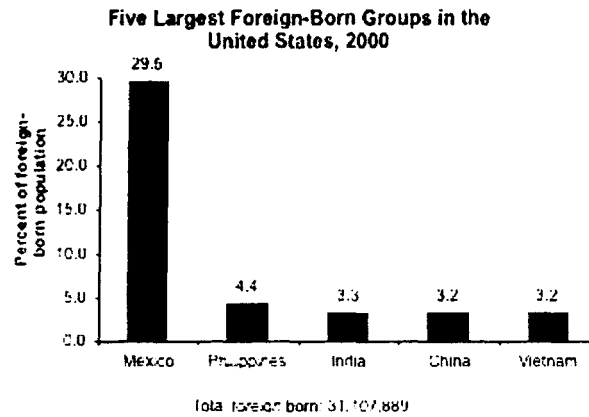


Figure 3. United States of America, “Comparing Migrant Stock: The Five Largest Foreign-Born Groups In Australia, Canada, And The United States,” Migration Information Source: Fresh Thought, Authoritative Data, Global Reach, 23 November 2004 <http://www.migrationinformation.org/DataTools/migrant_stock_groups.cf>.

Table

Comparing Migrant Stock: The Five Largest Foreign-Born Groups in Australia, Canada, and the United States of America

Australia: 2001			Canada: 2001			United States: 2001		
Country	Number	Percent	Country	Number	Percent	Country	Number	Percent
Total	4,105,688	100.0	Total	5,647,125	100.0	Total	31,107,889	100.0
United Kingdom	1,033,647	25.2	United Kingdom	614,610	10.9	Mexico	9,177,487	29.5
New Zealand	355,765	8.7	China*	345,520	6.1	Philippines	1,369,070	4.4
Italy	218,718	5.3	India	322,215	5.7	India	1,022,552	3.3
Vietnam	154,830	3.8	Italy	318,095	5.6	China*	988,857	3.2
China*	142,781	3.5	United States	258,420	4.6	Vietnam	988,174	3.2
Greece	116,430	2.8	Hong Kong	240,045	4.3	Cuba	872,716	2.8
Germany	108,220	2.6	Philippines	239,160	4.2	Korea	864,125	2.8
Philippines	103,942	2.5	Poland	181,810	3.2	Canada	820,771	2.6
India	95,455	2.3	Germany	177,675	3.1	El Salvador	817,336	2.6
Netherlands	83,325	2.0	Portugal	155,770	2.8	Germany	706,704	2.3
All others	1,692,575	41.2	All others	2,793,805	49.5	All others	13,480,097	43.3

*Excluding Hong Kong and Taiwan

NOTES

(1) The total population of Australia in 2001 was 18,972,350; for Canada in 2001, it was 30,007,094; and for the United States in 2000, it was 281,421,906.

(2) For Canada, the number of foreign born for the total and each region category was

rounded to end in either 0 or 5. Hence, the sum of all regions will not equal the value given for the total foreign-born population.

Source: "Comparing Migrant Stock: The Five Largest Foreign-Born Groups In Australia, Canada, And The United States," Migration Information Source: Fresh Thought, Authoritative Data, Global Reach, 23 Nov. 2004
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