

The Indian diaspora in Australia and New Zealand represents a successful ethnic community making significant contributions to their host societies and economies. However, because of their small number—slightly more than half a million—they rarely find mention in the global literature on Indian diaspora. The present volume seeks to remedy this oversight.

Charting the chequered 250-year-old history of both the 'old' and the 'new' diaspora in the Antipodes, the chapters narrate the stories of labourers who journeyed under the pressure of colonial capital and post-war professional migrants who went in search of better opportunities. In the context of the 'White Australia' and 'White New Zealand' policies designed to stem the arrival of Asians in the early twentieth century, we read of the complex survival stratagems adopted by migrants to circumvent the stringent insular world view of the existing white settlers in these countries. Together with stories of the collective suffering and struggles of the diaspora, we are presented with stories of individual resilience, enterprise, and social mobility.

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Front cover image: Picnic in Island Bay, Wellington. *From left, standing:* Sombhai Rama Vallabh, person unknown, Chhitubhai Vallabh, Rambhai Vallabh, and others unknown. *Sitting in centre:* Dayalbhai Vallabh, Laxmiben D. Vallabh, and Dayalbhai Khusal.

Photo originally published in Jacqueline Leckie, *Indian Settlers: The Story of a New Zealand South Asian Community* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2007). Photo originally supplied by Kanjibhai Bhula, Wellington, New Zealand.

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS



Bandyopadhyay
& Buckingham
(Eds)
INDIANS AND THE
ANTIPODES

OXFORD

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Networks, Boundaries, and Circulation

edited by

Sekhar Bandyopadhyay & Jane Buckingham



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Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
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Oxford University Press in the UK and in certain other countries.

Published in India by
Oxford University Press
2/11 Ground Floor, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110 002, India

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First Edition published in 2018

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ISBN-13 (print edition): 978-0-19-948362-4

ISBN-10 (print edition): 0-19-948362-0

ISBN-13 (eBook): 978-0-19-909395-3

ISBN-10 (eBook): 0-19-909395-4

Typeset in ScalaPro 10/13
by Tranistics Data Technologies, Kolkata 700 091
Printed in India by Replika Press Pvt. Ltd

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**CLASS AND CASTE CONSCIOUSNESS
THE NARRATIVES OF INDIAN
SUBCONTINENTAL DIASPORA IN AUSTRALIA**

AMIT SARWAL*

IN THE EARLY YEARS, MOSTLY 1860s onwards, migration from the Indian subcontinent to Australia began largely as a result of a desperate shortage of labour. These migrants were mostly hawkers, cameleers, domestics, coolies, quacks, and farmers in rural areas (see Mitchell 2000, 19–22). Almost a hundred years later, in the post-1970s period, that trend changed significantly with an increasing number of skilled professionals such as doctors, engineers, teachers, and relatives of earlier settled Indians arriving in Australia. This was predominately because of the abandonment of the White Australia Policy or the Immigration Restriction Act, 1901, in favour of multiculturalism. In addition, Australia's political, economic, and social stability proved magnetic for these highly educated migrants who saw Australia as

* Special thanks to Professor Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, Professor Fethi Mansouri, Professor David Walker, Professor David Lowe, Dr Lisa French, Dr Vince Marotta, Dr Michele Lobo, and Reema Sarwal for their valuable suggestions and comments.

the new land of opportunity. The figures of the Australian Bureau of Statistics report that India's share of permanent arrivals increased from 1.8 per cent in 1983 to 6.2 per cent in 2003. These figures in the last decade have boosted considerably with 500,000 people identifying with India by birth or ancestry. The 2011 census has acknowledged India as the largest source of permanent migrants to Australia, with a contribution of 15.7 per cent to the total migration programme (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011).

Thanks to Bollywood, back home in India, most of these migrants from the Indian subcontinent are predominantly imagined as rich, fully Westernized in manners, and doing India proud in foreign lands. One reason for this, as explained by renowned Bollywood producer-director, the late Yash Chopra in his address at the first Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (Expatriate Indians Day) in 2003, is that as a director he is also working as a 'historian' and carrying on his shoulders the 'moral responsibility ... to depict India [and the Indian diaspora] at its best' (Chopra 2003). In this regard, Ghassan Hage also notes that the 'last thing' the migrants (particularly men) would like to share with their families back home is shocking stories about racism, discrimination, or prejudices that they may have experienced in public spaces or at the workplace. Such a revelation would obviously be followed by: 'Why did you make us suffer and move to the end of the world just to get demeaned and insulted?' (Hage 2005, 494). Hage further notes that, therefore, the migrants' familial and class experiences, be it in films, literature, or even some sociological studies, are often 'portrayed as a positive experience', and this is 'how the whole migratory enterprise continues to legitimize itself' (Hage 2005, 494). It could be argued that this is one of the reasons the alleged 'racist' attacks against Indian students in Melbourne in 2009 received so much attention in the Indian media. It was not just discrimination, but the notion of discrimination and second-class treatment (based on skin colour and origin) against the revered, privileged, and much-envied diasporic Indian that created such a media furor in India (see Baas 2010; Jakubowicz and Monani 2010).

Thus, diaspora's real and imagined families often act as 'social laboratories' where, according to N. Jayaram, the 'salient theoretical perspectives' of social science and other disciplines are tested

(Jayaram 2004, 15). Previous researches (anthropological and sociological) conducted on South Asian diaspora in Australia are inquiries into the interrelation of gender, race, and ethnicity, using cinema, literature, and general case studies such as Marie De Lepervanche's *Indians in a White Australia*, where she embarked upon an anthropological fieldwork journey, writing about the pioneer Sikhs—a prominent South Asian ethnic migrant community (De Lepervanche 1984). Her study of the Punjabi community of Woolgoolga in New South Wales, undertaken in the 1970s, provided the basis for understanding how the White Australia ideologies, policies, and practices affected the community. Through her interaction with the Punjabi community in the villages, she recorded the fascinating story of their community development and then successful establishment of the Punjabi settlers (in many cases, belonging to low caste and class). She noted how banana farming and cane-cutting jobs provided a source of income, how the connections between these pioneer settlers with their home villages were maintained, and how their arranged-marriage alliances with partners from India were organized. She noted that this continuing contact with their culture and customs also provided a secure foundation for their adjustment to different social and cultural attitudes in Australia (see De Lepervanche 2007).

However, such studies on South Asian diaspora have been restricted to accounts of 'race', 'cultural practices', and the process of immigration. While they point to the carrying forward and recreation of home and its culture with languages, customs, art forms, and even ostensible arrangement of objects, the concepts of 'caste' and 'class' consciousness in these diasporic communities often get masked by racial or ethnical affiliation and fail to be highlighted (see Sharma 2004, 49; Jain 2001, 1381). Cultural and literary theorists such as Bill Ashcroft et al. have noted that

since diaspora is also often the pre-condition for a particular class of ex-colonized people and often involves access to greater educational and economic opportunities, 'class' becomes an important issue in diaspora studies. (Ashcroft et al. 1989/2002, 219)

Mary Ann Tolbert used the metaphors of 'blood' and 'bread' (originally proposed in Rich 1986, 171) to describe the politics of location

where 'blood' represents one's familial links, and 'bread' represents one's economic status or source of income (Tolbert 1995, 331). As it is,

together the 'facts of blood and bread' locate each of us socially and politically at any given moment in relation to our access to power, our relative freedom from oppressive treatment, and our assurance of our own human dignity, integrity, and worth. (Tolbert 1995, 331–2)

In the South Asian context, 'blood' represents family and caste, while 'bread' stands for class locations encompassing the amalgam of educational background and economic worth of immigrants, and both caste and class are irrevocably interlinked.

Indian writers such as Mulk Raj Anand and Arundhati Roy have explored the dynamics of class, caste, and regional biases in a pre- and post-Independence India in their works *Coolie* (Anand 1936/1996) and *The God of Small Things* (Roy 1997) respectively. As most of the issues are a product of the original Hindu *caste-class-patriarchy* nexus and a corrupt political system that nurtures them, both in the Indian subcontinent and its diaspora, some South Asian diaspora writers in Australia have also foregrounded them in their works. It is the Australian labour market which forms the basis of migration from the Indian subcontinent, and this economic (class) basis results not only in the betterment of people who immigrate, but also in highlighting a clash of class consciousness in the diaspora and back home, as the majority of migrants are educated, middle class or working class (with technical skills), who send money back home and create through remittances a medium of relationship and belonging (see Bhagwati 2010; Singh 2010, 85–103; 2007, 93–109; 2006, 375–98). Nevertheless, in South Asian diaspora's interaction with 'others', and sociocultural adaptation to host countries, 'race' is always used in parenthesis along with 'class' as the primary term. This is because 'class' often acts as a special variant that can give rise to various new forms of oppression and, at the same time, resistance. In plain terms, 'class consciousness', as also observed by Marxist critics, refers to the beliefs that a person or community holds regarding its social status or economic rank. In the South Asian context, class mobility is dependent on education, standard of living, and tacitly understood markers of cultural sensibility and values. On the other hand, 'caste consciousness' is based on notions of purity and pollution, and denotes the

religious and sociocultural practice of societal stratification characterized by hereditary transmission of a lifestyle, which includes a vocation, status in a hierarchy, and social interaction or exclusion. P. Pratap Kumar notes,

Caste consciousness is deeply endemic in South Asian society and that is perhaps the only way they understand how social status is derived within that society. It is this consciousness that seems to tempt social groups and individuals to either display their caste name as part of their last name or discretely acquire caste names if they came from a lower order caste groups. (Kumar 2012, 225)

As a historical process, the idea of *jati* or sub-castes within castes strongly took its roots into a modern and complex one that intermingled with class consciousness and the changing economic and cultural values (see various arguments proposed by Indologists such as Basham 1967; Dumont 1980; Quigley 1993; see also Bhowmik 1992, 1246–8; Sheth 1999, 2502–10; Deliège 1999; Harris 2012). This is despite the fact of various challenges to the rigid multiple hierarchies, political movements supported by the Dalit intelligentsia, and an upward movement economically among the lower-caste groups (Ilaiah 2004, 227–55). In the Lukácsian sense, ‘class consciousness’ in the Indian subcontinent and its diaspora is not just an outcome of economic position but of the ‘class’ and ‘caste’ struggles or differing attitudes towards exploitation and oppression (also see Rees 2000, 12). Lukács in *History and Class Consciousness* has referred to it as ‘reification’, that is, the freezing of an institution or social construct into a force that starts to rein and restrict human beings (Rees 2000, 13).

Nonetheless, caste and class consciousness have been seen as delinked from social realities in the diaspora. Scholarly studies on caste, and its close proximity to class consciousness, have paid more attention to the traditional Indian subcontinental setting. But what about the persistence of such social attitudes among the Indian diaspora? P. Pratap Kumar has observed in relation to Indian diaspora in the UK, South Africa, and Fiji that ‘caste and social status have not been radically de-linked from each other. The presence of caste consciousness in the diaspora albeit without the operative mechanisms of *jati*, meant that caste remains in some sense notionally significant’ (2012, 224). In the diaspora situation,

the dynamics of ethnicity, caste, and class consciousness is more significant psychologically and symbolically than in actual behavioural practice in the public sphere (for an earlier case study on ‘difference’ amongst Indians in Africa, see Kumar 2012; Pocock 1957, 289–300).

The next question is: Why do South Asian immigrants become so faithful to their culture in foreign lands, while at home they seem to desire reform and favour Western culture? Why this celebration of dual belonging? Amartya Sen argues that the Indian subcontinental diasporic population sees no contradiction between being loyal citizens of the country in which they are settled and where they are politically and socially integrated, and holding on to the class identity/cultural identity of India (Sen 2005, 23–4). According to S.L. Sharma, ‘it is a defence mechanism against a sense of insecurity in alien settings [and also] a compensatory mechanism for the loss of status in foreign lands’ (Sharma 2004, 490).

Despite the centrality of caste in South Asian sociology and the study of its impact on diasporas in the UK and USA, I have come across only two studies from Australia on this subject by Costa-Pinto (2007) and Vahed (2007). In 2015, Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) aired two stories titled ‘Australians Subject to “Caste Discrimination” Migrants Say’, and ‘Untouchables amongst Us’, opening a very sensitive and controversial issue of the presence of caste and class consciousness among the South Asian migrant communities in Australia, particularly among the Indians, Sri Lankans, and Nepalese (see Selvaratnam 2015; Selvaraj and Sanchayan 2015).

This chapter attempts to fill this research gap by studying the association between caste and class in the two major Indian subcontinental communities in Australia—Indian and Sri Lankan. These two communities, parts of the erstwhile British empire, which is the focus of this book, are culturally close to each other and more prominently represent the larger sociocultural practices of South Asians both at home and abroad.

While researching on South Asian diaspora literature in Australia, I came across some noteworthy short stories and autobiographical narratives which highlighted issues related to the persistence of class and caste consciousness and pointed towards its complicated nexus with gender, education, and ethnic identity (Selvaraj and Sanchayan

2015).¹ These narratives reflect the Geertzian notion of ‘blurred genre’, ‘genre mixing’, or ‘impressions’ gathered from facts, fiction, and faction—fictionalized aspects of factual observations (see Geertz 1980; Maanen 1998/2011). I am of the view that South Asian diaspora writers are among the best observers of a society under transition, and the issues they are raising today in Australia help in creating a dynamic multicultural oeuvre. Edward Said in his work *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) has also shown how a writer is never neutral. He notes:

I do not believe that authors are mechanically determined by ideology, class, or economic history, but authors are, I also believe, very much in the history of their societies, shaping and shaped by that history and their social experience in different measure. (Said 1993, xxii)

South Asian–Australian writers through their ‘interpretive imagination’ provide the readers with ‘a structure of attitude and reference’ (Said 1993, xxii, xxvi). In this chapter I use examples from selected short narrative pieces by Sujatha Fernandes, Vijay Mishra, Chitra Fernando, Sunil Govinnage, Glen D’Cruz, and Christopher Cyrill—all South Asian–Australian writers and academics—to illustrate the diversity and clash of caste and class experiences within the South Asian migrant community.² These short narratives by writers belonging to diverse South Asian groups with different migration histories—Indian, Indo-Fijian, Sri Lankan, and Anglo-Indian—provide preliminary insights and pinpoint certain common factors in the workings of caste and class consciousness. These include aspiration to luxury, domestic and sexual exploitation, relegation from original class and

¹ Caste and class are integral themes, and in confidential or informal conversations many South Asian immigrants, now permanent residents, often vent out their frustrations about a ‘certain type’ of new immigrant who belong to a particular caste or sub-caste.

² Other South Asian–Australian diaspora writers such as Rashmere Bhatti (1992), Manik Datar (1995), Michelle de Kretser (2000), Hanifa Deen (1992), Yasmine Gooneratne (1995), Neelam Maharaj (2004), Satendra Nandan (1988), and Renuka Sharma (1994) have also highlighted workings of class and caste consciousness using the same markers and influences that are under consideration in the present study.

family expectations within a class structure, maintenance of status quo, and the future possibilities of or break from class consciousness.

These narratives alert us to the workings and carrying forward of the baggage of South Asian class and caste issues in Australia. In fact, the ideas highlighted in their works about contemporary society and culture’s dominant thought, attitude, and way of life point to the present social and cultural state of South Asian diaspora in Australia. I also contend that the trends observed with reference to South Asian class structures in these short stories and autobiographical short narratives facilitate projections into the future, although it remains to be seen in time how the next generations of diaspora negotiate their identities and contexts within inherited class networks and structures.

ANALYSING CLASS AND CASTE CONSCIOUSNESS

One of the prime issues associated with class consciousness is the aspiration to luxury—a point not limited to the first generation alone, as several second-generation individuals also show the same propensity towards conspicuous consumption. The narrator in Indo-Fijian–Australian academic Vijay Mishra’s ‘Dilkusha’ recounts how at an evening party in Sydney, guests, primarily of Indian origin, arrived in designer wear and ‘began to talk about cricket, about wealth, about cars, about riches, about flats, houses, children’s education: to be a doctor is a blessing but to be a dentist divine’ (Mishra 2004, 132). These immigrants attended Indian functions actively, looked for Indians with whom to associate, and sought friendship and company of other Indian–Australians. This was not merely to ward off their loneliness or isolation, but also to maintain their class or status by showing off their prosperity or success within their own community, which helps the immigrants assert and establish self-worth within the social milieu of Australia.

It can be further argued that ‘race’ works as a kind of ‘class’—especially with reference to the nature of exclusion, marginalization, discrimination, and privilege (Sampath 2015). Prominent Western intellectuals such as Karl Marx and Max Weber also ‘taught Europeans to view their own society in terms of class’ (Tinker 1977, 15). American sociologist Herbert J. Gans in his article ‘Race as Class’ points out that skin colours and other physical features were used

precisely because they mirrored any country's socio-economic pecking order (Gans 2016: 17–21). This point is well illustrated by David Cannadine in his book *Ornamentalism* (2001), where he argues that it was 'class' or 'social prestige', not 'race' per se that drove the British empire. Similarly, Ania Loomba's nuanced analysis has shown how ideas of 'race' that emerged during colonialism were mostly shaped by Western beliefs about class, colour, religion, nationality, money, and gender (Loomba 1998; Béteille 1991). Major theorists in this discipline, such as O.C. Cox (1945), Louis Dumont (1980), G.S. Ghurye (2016), Kamala Visweswaran (2010), Gyanendra Pandey (2013), Purba Das (2014), and Rajesh Sampath (2015), have all argued that both race and caste have been used as organizing principles for an exploitative system to divide society. This biased system provides an unfair advantage to certain groups over others, and also helps in constructing the other using biological or religious texts as pretexts (see Pandey 2013).

Taking this as a salient feature of colonial beginnings of a conceptualization of class–caste nexus in India, it can be argued that in fact class, caste, and race are so intertwined among Indian-Australians that this logic is used to condescendingly look down upon the Aborigines and some other immigrants for higher class positionality (Ghurye 2016). This notion, although a complex one, forms the process by which class identities and differences have been deeply manifested in Australia and amongst its various diasporas.

Indian-Australian writer Sujhatha Fernandes in 'A Pocket Full of Stories' (Fernandes 1999), presented through the eyes of a young narrator, highlights sexual exploitation of a servant girl from Mangalore in the household of a Goan family and the role of traditional socio-cultural prejudices in maintaining the exploitation of the 'lower' castes/classes. This family at one level is Western in behaviour and thought, but, at the same time, being conscious of their upper-class status is also trying to replicate the Indian/Goan social structure while living in Sydney. Nandini, a Mangalorean servant girl from India, who belongs to another caste and a lower class, is presented to the readers as only 'a small, skinny, black girl' (Fernandes 1999, 90) who knows a lot of stories—a dreamer. Nandini's sexual exploitation plus class exploitation is seen working throughout the story. She is repeatedly raped and later made pregnant by her Indian-Australian

employer. The whole family blames Nandini, the low-class and low-caste girl, for her own exploitation, and she is made to leave Sydney for the trouble she has caused the family. For the writer, 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' (Fernandes 1999, 91). Nandini is unable to take a stand against her employer because of a deep-rooted class–caste consciousness, where she has been taught to be supportive of or at least compatible with or submissive to people belonging to upper class, especially the ones responsible for her bread and butter.

According to Anand Giridharadas, in the Indian subcontinent, 'you're eternally a master and eternally a servant. And servants in many ways have been seen and taught to see themselves as being not someone who is situationally inferior, but someone who is eternally, intrinsically inferior' (Giridharadas 2011). Class differences, exploitation at work, and status consciousness away from homeland in a foreign country is a recurring theme in many short stories; it is very well highlighted in Chitra Fernando's 'The Chasm' from *Women There and Here* (Fernando 1994), where she explores the difference in attitude towards two individuals belonging to different class strata of Sri Lankan society who have just migrated to Australia. In the first case, Manel,³ a Sinhala nurse, who has arrived only eight months ago from Sri Lanka, is used as a servant in the house of the registrar of the hospital, Veeran Tampoe, a Tamil from Sri Lanka. Veeran's wife, Nelun, hates cooking, washing, and cleaning, and to her

the timely arrival of Manel, a common or garden weed, had saved her from a situation which would have come dangerously close to crushing the lily on those occasions when hospitality demanded lavish meals. (Fernando 1994, 53)

Although Manel is not a servant but a trained nurse, for the Tampoe family and their other Sri Lankan friends in the small community of Alice Springs, her status is of a poor commoner from homeland, who 'wasn't one of them'. In Manel's treatment by others, especially

³ 'Nil Manel' (blue water lily) is the national flower of Sri Lanka, and in Portuguese it means 'God is with us'.

the Tampoos, we can also read reverse ethnic discrimination. Manel is often the butt of jokes because of her accent and mixing of 'ps' and 'fs', as 'English wasn't her first language'. Her way of speaking differs a lot from the other migrants' convent school and foreign-university-educated accent. One of the community highbrows thinks that Manel's mixing with them on intimate occasions will make her 'feel like a fish out of water', but is assured by Veeran that 'he would see to it that Manel didn't stray from her side of the social fence' (Fernando 1994, 54). No one from the community likes Manel and this is reflected in her treatment at a picnic party where she has been invited to assist the Tampoos. The affluent members of the community gave 'suppressed smiles, the meaningful looks, or simply the slight curtness', which were brought on by something she had said innocently, but they also tried hard to be civil and expected 'deference' in return from Manel (Fernando 1994, 55). She knows what they feel about her and her class, but when she is not even allowed to eat the food with them during the picnic, she decides that she cannot take it anymore and politely, but assertively, says,

You are rich and educated. So maybe you thought me a fool. Maybe I was a fool to think you liked me. I am a simple village woman. To me your ways are strange. So, I think I'll leave your picnic now. (Fernando 1994, 62)

The educated and rich people of her own community are unable to understand her pain; although they believe that Australia is fair to everyone and is a land of opportunities, money, and equality, yet to them 'all this equality business has turned that girl's head and she forgets that there are boundaries which must be respected' (Fernando 1994, 57). They want their status quo to persist in the small Sri Lankan-Australian community. They know that Manel is liked by one of the Australian doctors working in the same hospital and feel that it is his 'attentions' that have gone to her head. They see a possibility of Manel's marriage and her becoming a surgeon's wife, thereby attaining a higher status. The community further feels that it is the Australians' fault that a status quo is not being maintained: 'These Aussies—decent chaps and all that—but a bit dense when it comes to the finer points of birth and breeding' (Fernando 1994, 62). And, even if she is able to marry an Australian doctor, for the Sri Lankans

in Australia, a change in Manel's 'civil status' will 'never change her ancestry' (Fernando 1994, 63). They would not give her the same respect as they would give to a person having a reputed family name and equal or higher status. Here, one is reminded of Roland Barthes's remarks in *Mythologies* (Barthes 1984) that when the petit bourgeois is a man unable to imagine the 'Other,' he comes face to face with him, blinds himself, ignores and denies him, or else transforms him into himself. In the example of Manel, how the dominant Sri Lankan community seeks to contain the 'Other' and maintains its status quo in a diasporic situation is most revealing. They caricature, silence, and marginalize her, and turn her into a comic spectacle or clown by using 'strategies of negation' (Dissanayake 2002, xx). The difference between the privileged and unprivileged in the homeland continues to be a marker of a class boundary in Australia, as the 'migrants mark the outer limits' and also provide a point 'which gives the norm some scope and dimension' (Sarup 1996, 12).

Families and communities in the diaspora can also expect to receive new, young migrants from time to time. After the low-class Manel, the second visitor to this small community is Vijay, a sociologist from Colombo, on a ten-day holiday. His 'being a friend of Veeran Tampoe's brother automatically made him the *prized possession* of the Tampoos' (Fernando 1994, 53). And his visit and stay offered the Tampoos an opportunity 'for an entirely natural display of large quantities of crystal, silver, an elegant blue-and-white dinner service and a twelve-piece walnut dining suite unavoidable at lavish meals [...]' (Fernando 1994, 53). Vijay first feels elated by their hospitality and is touched by their gestures of friendliness, but later on observes the community critically and understands that 'the covert intent of the Tampoe-Mendis-Ahamed probing concerning his family and friends' was in order to find out if he was 'one of them' (Fernando 1994, 53, 56); and also, if he knew the right people, studied in the best university, and if his views on Yale, Oxford, and Cambridge were similar to theirs. Although, they were satisfied about his ancestry, yet

there was something about him that they were beginning to find disconcerting: the occasional expression suspiciously like amusement as they were talking about serious matters, his observation on men, manners and morals. These indicated not the outsider, but the apostate. (Fernando 1994, 56)

Being a sociologist, these immigrants with their class consciousness are at best subjects for Vijay's 'ironical contemplation' (Fernando 1994, 56). To him,

they're like primitives. No one at home in Sri Lanka will believe this.... There was here the rage, the frustration of the disposed. The supermarket cornucopia and the electric plenty were there; they laughed all the way to the bank. Yet deep within, they were dispirited. The landscape, its endless flatness broken only by huge bumps of rock or deep clefts, overwhelmed them. They talked to people. An exchange of sounds with no engagement of the spirit. (Fernando 1994, 61)

Soon, the community realizes that Vijay, although one of them in terms of class, is a man who 'dreams of equality' and class and social revolution back home (Fernando 1994, 57). He is of the view that the subordinate position of women, represented by Manel, is inextricably linked to a class-based capitalist system, and the community and family structure within that system. For him, only if the capitalist economic system is changed can the exploitation of women and lower classes end. With his leftist views that are anti-status quo, Vijay is not welcome anymore in this community, as he notices the 'absence of conventional hospitality formula—the polite request to come again', while taking leave (Fernando 1994, 63–4). This further reflects the coldness of their hearts and the false expectations and values that people adhere to in the name of traditions, customs, and social practices in a community (Paranjape 2007, 354).

David Cooper argued in *The Death of the Family* (1962/1971) that human and especially women's oppression was grounded in the family and class, which 'obscurely filters out most of our experience and then deprives our acts of any genuine and generous spontaneity' (Cooper 1962/1971, 5–6). Cooper's central argument was that the family was crucial to hegemony, 'reinforcing the effective power of the ruling class in any exploitive society by providing a highly controllable paradigmatic form for every social institution' (Cooper 1962/1971, 8). The immigrant community's search in Fernando's story is for a status quo ante, to maintain the state in which class structures worked before migration—not just economically, but behaviourally too. Being the first to arrive in Australia from their respective communities, they feel a notion of 'ownership' of this small community and the opportunities offered, and have a vague

feeling of the power to exclude others like Manel, low-class recent immigrants, from better prospects and, therefore, behave in an antagonistic manner in their formal relationship to such individuals.

Class consciousness and the process of migration are thus inter-related as migration is not always a highly individual decision. The concentration of migrant families from South Asia in the major capital cities of Australia has a number of implications for the job markets, services, and possibly community relations (Inglis and Wu 1992, 204). Here I would like to refer to a story that specifically addresses the issue of education and profession. This is Sri Lankan–Australian writer Sunil Govinnage's story titled 'Arrival' from *Black Swans and Other Stories* (Govinnage 2002), where Jayadeva, who has recently migrated to Australia with his family from the war-torn Sri Lanka, is surprised to note that 'there was not a single soldier or security officer guarding the airport'. To him, Australia is really a lucky country: 'No Civil Wars. No ethnic divisions, No wars at all!' (Govinnage 2002, 38). He could immediately see a better future for his family as

he carefully stepped out of the arrival lounge, placing his right foot first, as he was setting out on an important journey, a custom he had learnt as a child from his parents.... He was stepping out into a new country, to lead a new life. (Govinnage 2002, 39)

Officials at the airport were polite and people fast and efficient, and his immediate reaction is to think that indeed it is a lucky country—'his second homeland' (Govinnage 2002, 35). But the very next experience gives him pause. The family meets a taxi driver, a migrant from Lebanon, who was an ENT surgeon back home but is now driving a taxi to sustain his family in Australia. Although he is bitter about the Australian Medical Council Exam—a must for Asians—which he could not pass, and although it took him two years to recover from this shock, he and his family have adjusted and are happy. He sarcastically says to Jayadeva's wife, who is a pediatric surgeon:

Welcome to this lucky country.... The exam is there to eliminate candidates.... If you come from a white country, like England or South Africa, there are no exams for doctors. All the doors are open to you. (Govinnage 2002, 40–1)

But if you are an Asian, then 'it's a long journey'. The taxi driver is frustrated about how Australia—the 'clever country'—treats its 'educated

migrants' (Govinnage 2002, 40). Migrants with professional skills are often disappointed when they discover that their skills may be in poor demand, or their qualifications not recognized by Australian rules and regulations. Furthermore, the only work available to them carries not only less pay, but it lowers their occupational and, therefore, social status both in Australia and back home.

The narrative that I move on to now presents the other side of the coin—about immigrants who were in a position of social disadvantage in the class ladder in their home country, such as some Anglo-Indians. In the words of V.R. Gaikwad, Anglo-Indians were

mid-way between two cultural worlds, and under the peculiar conditions of their origin and socio-cultural development, Anglo-Indians could never get to know the West to which they aspired to belong, nor did they have emotional ties with India where they really belonged. (Gaikwad 1967, 4)

Glenn D'Cruz in his autobiographical piece *Beyond the Pale*, reflecting on his family life in India, observes that they were part of 'the Anglo-Indian railway class, and lived on a modest income in a humble abode without running water, domestic servants or the various other conveniences of bourgeois life' (D'Cruz 2004, 230). But his father, who was highly class conscious, knew that to escape their marginal status in a post-Independence India, he must migrate and look for success and a new identity. He believes that as an immigrant in Australia, attaining social mobility through 'respectable' jobs is a necessity, especially for Glen and others like him who are second-generation immigrants. Glen notes about his father's class consciousness and life in Australia:

My father had a somewhat bizarre obsession with office work, and hoped that I would become a clerk, a position that signified a high social status among his generation of Anglo-Indians. He even made me sit the public service entrance exam, against my wishes, when I was fifteen. A few years later he got me a job as a sheet metal worker's assistant because he feared that remaining idle for three months between the end of school and the beginning of university would be bad for my 'character.' (D'Cruz 2004, 226)

In the eyes of Glenn's father, his son's early lifestyle in Australia as a musician is seen as something with 'no ambition and no prospects' (D'Cruz 2004, 226). It represents wasting an opportunity. Through his research into the Anglo-Indian community, Glenn notes the

factors that shaped his father's attitude and principles. He knew that the Anglo-Indians did not have emotional ties with India, only ancestral links. He now knows why his family immigrated to Australia in the early 1970s. He realizes that 'despite experiencing various degrees of racism', it is in Australia and not in India that his 'father's bourgeois ambitions were more or less realized' (D'Cruz 2004, 230). It is in Australia that his family 'managed ultimately to acquire the accoutrements of middle-class life—"respectable" jobs, houses, cars and so forth—all of which seemed beyond their grasp in post-independence India' (D'Cruz 2004, 230).

Christopher Cyrill's autobiographical short story 'The Ganges and Its Tributaries' is also a fine example of the genre of family history, where the second-generation narrator attempts to understand as well as portray the life experiences of the first-generation South Asian immigrants. He acts as a 'chronicler who recites events without distinguishing between major and minor ones [and] acts in accordance with the following truth: nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history' (Benjamin 1968, 256). Cyrill notes how his Anglo-Indian family grew in Australia: 'My parents began sponsoring relatives to Australia in 1976. Every three months or so a different aunt, uncle and their family would arrive from India and stay with us until they found jobs' (Cyrill 1993, 163). He further notes,

As soon as they [family members from India] appeared in the doorway of Gate 8B, I expected the women's saris and the man's knee-length shirts and cloth pants to change, as if Australia would disrobe them. I hoped that the accents I heard would disappear by the time each family had left the airport.

When he saw our relatives my father gasped, as if he was trying to decide which language to speak in. (Cyrill 1993, 165)

So the arrival and relocation of the extended family, although a happy occasion of meeting and celebration, for Christopher is also a moment of dislocation: 'I cannot recall any time when my parents and I were alone after the first of my relatives arrived. It seems now as if I was always being displaced from my bed by an aunt or uncle' (Cyrill 1993, 166). Cyrill's father explains his motives to come to Australia:

Opportunity. India is starving and I want my children to be fat. I once wanted you to marry an Indian girl, but now I want you to mix your genes.

You are Anglo-Indian born in Australia. You are like a trinity—marry, mix'. (Cyrill 1993, 167)

Lack of opportunities in India, that is, economic constraints motivated Cyrill's father to leave his original homeland which, however problematic, was the only homeland he had ever known before he decided to migrate to Australia in search of livelihood or economic betterment of the family.

Anglo-Indians assumed that they would be treated well. However, the White Australia Policy made sure that Anglo-Indians were not treated any better than other non-white migrants. Therefore, despite economic success, the class status failed to improve (James 2001; Leonard 2007). Cyrill's father then comes up with a new idea of the envisioned future and loyalty for his family (other immigrants and Australians) and a solution to the dilemma of identity and class consciousness:

The world is getting smaller. One race, soon there will be only one race. I want my grandchildren to eat *naans* with spaghetti. No more cousins marrying cousins. At the start there was only one country; now water separates us. Drift, you must mix. (Cyrill 1993, 167)

The 'one race' that Cyrill's father looks forward to is actually a race where genes of all the nationalities get mixed. The image of grandchildren eating '*naans* with spaghetti' is the image of a cosmopolitan and multicultural society as proposed in the 'melting pot' model. According to Sneja Gunew, food 'has long been an acceptable face of multiculturalism'. She further notes that in Australia

one of the few unthreatening ways to speak of multiculturalism is in relation to food, in other words to say that all migrants have improved the diversity of national cuisine. The usual way in which this diversity is celebrated is through a multicultural food festival. (Gunew 1993, 16)

But Cyrill's father takes the metaphor of food to an entirely different level. For him, race mixing or integration is a positive option not just for Anglo-Indians, but also for other migrant groups present in Australia and indeed the whole world. Once people become related by marital relations, the hatred in the world will also diminish; as his father says, 'they cannot hate without hating themselves' (Cyrill 1993, 167). Here, we see a trajectory, a journey of an immigrant deprived of class status in both homeland and host land. His first

project is to bring India to Australia—by getting as many Indian relatives to Australia as possible—in order to build a sense of community in the new homeland. Realizing the futility of that project, he goes to the other extreme—a world where there are no class barriers at all because everyone is related!

* * *

These narratives, works of fiction based on facts and observations from real life, clearly present multiple interpretations of the broader context of social, structural, and economic changes occurring in South Asian diaspora in Australia where the majority of Australians are mute observers with no major role to play. In some cases this leads to a reinforcing of conservative ideologies as traditionally valued, common-sense ideas. However, migration to Australia has brought new social and class distinctions amongst the South Asian migrants as each family, in setting its strategy for life in the new homeland, faced a central question: whether to give priority to social security or economic advancement? I have argued that despite the modern nature of South Asian diaspora in Australia and the egalitarian nature of Australia, and even if caste as an institution cannot be practised publicly or caste consciousness has not survived, this consciousness has very subtly merged with class consciousness and a demonstration of social status in relation to others: the 'others' being those who do not belong to the same *jati*, linguistic group, and economical level, as the control is still in the hands of first-generation families, thus affecting everyday experiences. Also, in most cases, immigration from the Indian subcontinent to countries such as Australia is prominently based on experience-sharing stories from the peer group, particularly belonging to the same caste/class back home.

Apparent equality, or illusory social relations, or class solidarity, or retention and reproduction of class separations, ancestral customs, language and religion, and marriage patterns in the diaspora consciously and unconsciously from the first to the second generation often obscure the role of class in these family narratives and histories. But an analysis of the behaviour, language, and subscription to a common ethnic or national identity in the diaspora highlights social differences and class identities that are also linked to society,

power, and circumstance. Class separations are readily expressed and manifest themselves through such acts as the branding of the lower classes, conspicuous consumption, spatial settlement practices, and educational or job-related decisions. It also gives a person a sense of personal location, which in turn is linked to a person's lived experience in homeland and host land, and shaped by gender, ethnicity, religion, race, sexual orientation, nationality, education, and occupation (Canella and Grieshaber 2001). Education and employment are important signifiers of class position both in the diaspora and homeland, as these are the very ideas that deny or downplay the significance of classes.

Class and caste identity in the South Asian diaspora helps in making sense of the social, cultural, economic, and political changes taking place around an individual and family. In the South Asian diaspora's short stories, there is a wide spectrum of representation of class and caste consciousness (added with ethnicity)—from Manel and Nandini, who are subjected to an extreme form of reassertion of old class structures and disillusionment to the attitude of Cyrill's father who wants his children to 'mix' and bring in new patterns of equality, not just culturally, but through matrimony as well.

In conclusion, a more multidisciplinary dialogue or study of South Asian diaspora in Australia, within anthropology as well as literary and cultural studies, may help explore some of the questions raised in this chapter and highlight new class consciousness and subjectivities. This will help us understand the dynamics of a major aspect of the whole project of migration. In other words, our understanding of the class and caste consciousness is crucial to our understanding of the new world emerging around us.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to Professor Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, Professor Fethi Mansouri, Professor David Walker, Professor David Lowe, Dr Lisa French, Dr Vince Marotta, Dr Michele Lobo, and Reema Sarwal for their valuable suggestions and comments.

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EDITORS

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Jane Buckingham is associate professor of history at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. She is an associate director of the New Zealand India Research Institute at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, and former director of New Zealand South Asia Centre, University of Canterbury. She specializes in Indian history and has published in areas including medical and disability history,

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CONTRIBUTORS

Margaret Allen is professor emerita in gender studies at the University of Adelaide, Australia, where, in 2010, she finished her teaching career: four decades in history and gender studies. She researches transnational, postcolonial, and gendered histories, focusing upon links between India and Australia from c. 1880 to 1940. She has published on Australian missionaries in India and the experiences of Indian men negotiating the White Australia Policy. Currently, she is working on an Australian Research Centre–funded project focused upon India, ‘Beyond Empire: Transnational Religious Networks and Liberal Cosmopolitanisms’ with Associate Professor Jane Haggis, Professor Fiona Paisley, and Professor Clare Midgley. With these scholars she recently published *Cosmopolitan Lives on the Cusp of Empire: Interfaith, Cross-Cultural and Transnational Networks, 1860–1950* (2017).

Robyn Andrews is a senior lecturer in the Social Anthropology Programme at Massey University, New Zealand. Her PhD thesis, ‘Being Anglo-Indian: Practices and Stories from Calcutta’ (2005), was the first of a number of Anglo-Indian Studies projects she has been involved with in India and the diaspora. She published *Christmas in Calcutta: Anglo-Indian Stories and Essays* (2014) and writes articles and book chapters for both academic and community publications. She co-edits the *International Journal of Anglo-Indian Studies*.

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Alison Booth's research focuses on performance networks, cultural representation, and producing festivals and events that engage the Indian diaspora. She completed her PhD thesis on 'Performance Networks: Indian Cultural Production in Aotearoa/New Zealand' at the University of Otago in 2014. Her 2016 publication, 'Negotiating Diasporic Culture: Festival Collaborations and Production Networks', in the *International Journal of Event and Festival Management* was highly commended at the 2017 Emerald Literati Network Awards for Excellence. She is the Bachelor of Arts (Event Management) programme leader, lecturer, and postgraduate supervisor in the Faculty of Culture and Society at Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand. She represents Auckland University of Technology as an associate director of the New Zealand India Research Institute.

Devleena Ghosh teaches in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Technology Sydney, Australia. She researches and publishes in the areas of gender, environmental, and postcolonial studies. She is the co-author of *Colonialism and Modernity* (with Paul Gillen, 2007) and recipient of the 2016 Wang Gungwu award for the best article published in the *Asian Studies Review*. She is currently collaborating with Heather Goodall on a project on connections between progressive women in India and Australia.

Heather Goodall is professor emerita of history at the University of Technology Sydney, Australia. Her projects include those on indigenous histories and environmental history in Australia and on

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Heather is the author of *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in NSW* (1996) and *Beyond Borders: Indians, Australians and the Indonesian Revolution, 1939–1950* (in press). She is co-author with Allison Cadzow of *Rivers and Resilience: Aboriginal People on Sydney's Georges River* (2009); co-author in collaborative biographies with Isabel Flick on *The Many Lives of an Extraordinary Aboriginal Woman* (2004); and with Kevin Cook on *Making Change Happen: Black and White Activists Talk to Kevin Cook on Aboriginal, Liberation and Union Politics* (2013). Heather is co-editor of a number of books including *Echoes from the Poisoned Well* (2006), *Water, Sovereignty and Borders* (2009), and, most recently, *Telling Environmental Histories: Intersections of Memory, Narrative and Environment* (2017).

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Jacqueline Leckie has been an associate professor in the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, Otago University, New Zealand, for twenty-eight years and is a former head of department. Her research is on the anthropology and history of Asia-Pacific, especially migration, gender, mental health, ethnicity, and labour. Among her books are *Indian Settlers: The Story of a New Zealand South Asian Community* (2007), and the recently co-edited *Migrant Cross-Cultural Encounters in Asia and the Pacific* (2016). She is currently completing a book on colonial madness in Fiji and is also writing a history of the University of the South Pacific. Jacqui is the lead director of the 2017 Otago Foreign Policy School on 'Open and Closed Borders: The Geopolitics of Migration'. At Otago University she is an associate director of the Centre for Global Migrations, and a principal investigator with the Asia-Pacific Biocultural Health Theme, and the Otago Global Health Institute.

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Michael Roche is professor of geography in the School of People Environment and Planning at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand. A historical geographer, he completed his PhD at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. He has contributed to the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* and *The Historical Atlas of New Zealand and Te Ara*, the official online encyclopaedia of New Zealand. He is a life fellow of the New Zealand Geographical Society and a member of the New Zealand Geographic Board Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa, the national place-naming authority. His research interests have spanned from forestry and land settlement in New Zealand to the First World War soldier settlement schemes to the development of university geography in New Zealand.

Amit Sarwal is a senior lecturer in the University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji. He is the founding convenor of Australia-India Interdisciplinary Research Network and an affiliate member of the Contemporary Histories Research Group at Deakin University, Australia. He has previously held positions at SBS Radio, Deakin University, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia, Monash

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Sita Venkateswar is senior lecturer in the Social Anthropology Programme and associate director of the Massey chapter of the New Zealand India Research Institute. She received her PhD in cultural anthropology from Rutgers University, New Jersey, USA, in 1997. Sita's research incorporates critical feminist scholar-activist research methodologies, designated as public anthropology, informed by feminist and postcolonial theories. Her current research explores a visual and multi-species approach to food resilience and climate justice that focuses on millet cultivation in India and elsewhere in the world. Her most recent co-edited book is *Globalization and the Challenges of Development in Contemporary India* (2016).