CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

STEADY PROGRESS AND EVER-GROWING DIVERSITY:
THE FUTURE OF SOUTH ASIAN DIASPORA
AND ITS LITERATURE IN AUSTRALIA

Ours is a nation of immigrants and Indigenous peoples. A new world with an ancient past. A grand symphony with many melodies. (Zable 2001)

[... ] you should consider that immigration has made us the most ethnically diverse country in the world. Australians' roots run very deep and wide. That gives us a stake in all the world’s cultural heritage. (Brooks 24)

The above quotes, from two award winning Australian writers, themselves migrants, not only help us to understand the fraught and complex legacy of immigration but also best summarize the future of South Asian diaspora and its literature in Australia. Shirley Tucker (2003) has pointed out that there is often an “uneasy reception” of minority writing by mainstream critics in Australia, as it “may be perceived as unwelcome, discomforting and illegitimate: straying into Australian spaces without proper credentials.” It must be noted that Australian culture has been enriched and expanded “beyond all recognition by the impact of the cultures of the world,” and most people will, who are anti-multiculturalism and migration, also soon come to recognize the immense benefit to be derived from “an Australian inheritance which encompasses the diversity of many peoples, the wisdom of many cultures” (Corkhill, 1995: 143). And it is hoped that the South Asian diaspora and its literature will enrich the Australian multi-cultural heritage. Nevertheless, as noted in the stories and also the sociological studies, there are still significant difficulties, anxieties, maybe confusions and an element of estrangement today amongst the South Asian diasporic community in Australia. However, South Asian-Australian writings as important “expressions” of Australian “people’s lives,” may effectively help, as Lyn Jacobs
(2002) points out, "defamiliarize understandings of local conditions and encourage fellow Australians to see differently" (211) within the cultural context of South Asia and Australia.

The present situation of racism or opportunist violence against South Asians, as noted in Chapter two, is a passing moment and keeping "Australia fair" and "Multicultural," instead of being "disguised under" some "euphemistic terminologies" (Kinsella 2003), is a challenge for the Australian government. In this respect, Pakistani-Australian writer Hanifa Deen (2001) notes that the earlier government agenda for multicultural issues was "more rhetorical than real." However, Dr Geoff Gallop (2004), Premier and Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests, Western Australia observed that in "a democracy such as ours, while difference need not always be reconcilable, through dialogue it can be negotiated and mutually respected" (ii; my italics). For these dialogues and multiculturalism to succeed, Australia needs genuine partnerships between all participants. Through a dialogue between various communities, multiculturalism offers the opportunity to both embrace difference and to reproduce the nation. Multiculturalism in Australia has been seen to be more and more advantageous, especially if it is understood as diversity. This is the focus of what Stuart Hall (2000) has called "the multicultural question." It sets "unity in diversity" as the dialectical relationship between universals and particulars. It is argued that writers belonging to diverse literary groups also help the government and other decision making bodies to make better decisions about their respective communities.

Today, Australian government with its various anti-racism regulations, multicultural projects and encouragement to writers from various ethnic backgrounds is dedicated to making the migrant's voice heard and their cultural aspects seen in a positive light. According to Kateryna O. Longley, the rich and diverse contribution of South Asian diaspora to the economic, social, cultural and literary development of Australia is also highlighted as part of Australian history. As

The history of every life lived in Australia is potentially part of the country's history as are all those lives' connections with homelands elsewhere, but only if they are allowed in, allowed to be written and published. (Longley 219; my italics)
Within the Australian history, the narratives of South Asian diaspora writers about their lives in Australia have a special value. First, they are “a shining example to those groups of Australians who suffer from any form of discrimination on grounds of ethnicity, race, religion, region, gender, sexuality, age, class, family and the like” (D’Cruz and Steele 13). Second, they are able to help continue the dialogue between the two countries through their literature and narratives as they are able to perceive more sharply—being “adopted Australians,” according to A. Phillips (1973), they are knowledgeable about Australian past without having lost the special advantage of their South Asian viewing-point (1). It is the dialogues and promotion of success stories by the Australian government and academia that has further helped in building an interest in the study of contemporary migration and settlement of people from the Indian subcontinent, their problems and future expectations. Recently, Dr Helen Forbes-Mewett, a Monash University based sociologist, won a four-year Australian Research Council (ARC) grant to investigate the nature of the attacks, which have caused great distress in the overseas student community and damaged relations with India (see Healy 2010). Also, Dr Kama Maclean, a University of New South Wales based historian and India expert, is also working on a project on Indians in Australia in the 19th and early 20th century. However, we still need a plan for South Asian-Australian diasporic area studies both in South Asia and Australia that is based not just on language, history and material life but also on a critical bilateral dialogue between the two regions, as diaspora literature “commands respect, not sentimentalization, exploitation, or neglect” (Newman xiii). Gantner (2003) reminds us that the challenge is to ensure that the next generation [of Australians] has the knowledge and understanding to get on with their neighbours, to solve global problems, and to build a shared and prosperous future. It must start in our own front yard—Asia. We don’t need to “Asianise” our curriculum. We need to “Australianise” it. (qtd. in Henderson 6)

In this South Asian diaspora literature has helped in the past and can help in the future too by opening up the space of the post-colonial world and “the possibilities of alter/native ficto-historical texts that can create a world in process while continually freeing themselves from their own biases” (Ashcroft et al. 154; see also Chambers 12).
As noted in Chapter one, the South Asian diaspora in Australia came into being in the 19th century. Although a progeny of the labour or indenture diaspora it turned out to be one of the most successful diasporas in Australia, playing an effective role in building the Australian nation-state. According to Vinay Lal (2002), the prospect for or future of South Asians in the diaspora revolves upon two modalities of thought and action. First the diasporans 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. 12

The analysis of the short stories also clearly shows that many diasporans will always maintain ties to their homelands while becoming integrated into the hostland (see Lévitt 2009). As noted in Chapter three, South Asian diasporic narratives characterise bifurcated, dis-located identities that exist in a liminal space, in-between two identities, two cultures, and two histories. Yet, “home” remains, through acts of imagination, remembering and re-creation, an important reference point for these writers in the stories discussed here. We can see 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; see also V. Mishra 1996). On the notion of “no return” and the strength of emotional and cultural ties between the diasporans and the “motherland,” Makarand Paranjape (2000) notes that

Indian civilization, however, has come to be identified with a particular geographical area which is today known as the Indian subcontinent or South Asia. From here the civilization moved eastwards, until it once flourished over much of South East Asia or Indo-China. Yet, its epicentre remained in South Asia. Similarly with the spread of the
Indian diaspora all over the world, this civilization may venture into new areas and countries but its epicentre will remain India. (242) The search for the “epicentre” and a sense of self in diaspora writing has opened up a space that invites movement, migration, and a journey to the “motherland.” It also involves putting “a certain distance between ourselves and the contexts that define our identity” (Chambers 10). The South Asian diasporic writers with their worldview appear to be at the “cutting edge of modernity and cultural life in their countries of settlement” and “provide other ways of viewing the world” they are now living in (Karim 6).

But why do so many migrant writers who talk of returning from their present locations to their old homelands never do so? Brian Penton tries to answer this in The Landtakers (1934). He writes: “a man might want to go back where he had been happy, but it would stop at that. Where he’d had his hard times—that was where he would stay?” (30). For South Asian migrants belonging to a “home”—both sensory (imagined) and spatial (real)—is a matter of debate. As “belonging” captures more accurately the desire for some sort of attachment, be it to other people, places, or modes of being, and the ways in which individuals and groups are caught within wanting to belong, wanting to become, a process that is fuelled by yearning rather than the positing of identity as a stable state. (Probyn 19)

Many writers discuss attachment, belonging and “the promise of leaving” and “the sadness of arrival” in their works (De Kretser, “Life with Sea Views”: 1). But “for most individuals,” as Satendra Nandan (2004) observes, “leaving their country is never an easy decision: one gets used to one’s country as one gets accustomed to one’s mother’s body” (7). In the same way, one gets used to one’s country of adoption too. As noted in Chapter four, these diasporans are now “expert in crossing borders and performing identities, using, transforming and inventing new identities” (Coronado 51). For them, it becomes necessary, borrowing a phrase from Gabriela Coronado (2003), to prove or to become an “Indian/South Asian” outside the Indian subcontinent and inside Indian subcontinental culture, which may also ultimately produce a new form of Indianness/South Asianness.

Further, the “circulation of texts in transnational markets” i.e. the “ability of ink itself to travel” means also that “a diasporic community is created through these literary acts” (Walters x). 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 subcontinental identity, which has integrated both the cultures—by presenting a “new” image of Indian subcontinental culture, economics and politics. Stephen Alomes (2009) argues that our often overt critical concern with loss and exile should be balanced by noting that living in the diaspora might as well be seen as “the Promethean journeys of liberation, and discovery, celebration and recreation” (384). The diasporans, through their “Promethean journeys,” have played a major role in doing away with the negative stereotypes of the past about the peoples of the Indian subcontinent. At the same time, D’Cruz and Steele note that the South Asian community with all its professional standing in Australia, has “been largely voiceless in public debates concerning their disadvantage and vilification” (61; my italics). And similarly, the power of literature, particularly South Asian diaspora literature and the voices of its authors have not yet been fully exploited to bring Australia and the Indian subcontinent together. 14 Reading “their stories, one cannot deny there is a strong Indian [and South Asian] voice waiting to be heard in this country” (Kannan 7). Australia may find it more and more useful to highlight and strengthen the diasporan creative output by promoting young creative writers of South Asian origin.

South Asian-Australian diasporic literature, as noted earlier in this thesis, despite many awards and recognitions is still struggling to make a place for itself in academic circles as a distinct tradition in Australia although it has carved a small niche for itself through some celebrated books. This is an acknowledgement of the fact that South Asian studies and dialogues are important for national productions and knowledge. Moreover, as noted earlier, studies of South Asian diaspora and its literature in Australia are not only important for literary studies but also the policy makers of both India and Australia by providing unique avenues to key policy makers and helping them understand the dynamics of South Asian socio-cultural practices. Based on such theses on the literature of South Asian diaspora, its problems and location can be best reported. These studies and narratives, like images however humble and marginal in their origins, “help us to think through things, not above them” (Kracauer 192).
These South Asian writers, who come from varied backgrounds and many cultures, as Satendra Nandan (1999) has observed, belong to one country—Australia (8). These authors have convinced their readers by the quality of their works that reveals the complexity of the migrant condition itself. As is evident from Thomas Shapcott’s observation in his introduction to the 1992 edition of Mena Abdullah’s The Time of the Peacock that it like Judah Waten’s Alien Son is another “landmark exploration of ethnic difference and family” and “one of the turning points in our cultural development” (x). Today, it is the young and vibrant writers like Christopher Cyrill, Chris Raja, Sunil Badami and Suneeta Peres Da Costa to name a few, who beautifully present the aspirations and changing nature of life-styles of the second generation of migrants and a promising future for South Asian diaspora literature in Australia. These diasporic authors through their narratives are mapping and re-imaging the everyday lives, anxieties, frustrations, and happiness of the South Asian diaspora in Australia. Shirley Tucker has observed that Abdullah’s narrator responds to her physical environment with nurturing images of a safe place that has enabled the child’s cross-cultural transition from immersion in the Punjabi culture of her parents to one that takes account of her Australianness.\(^1\)

A similar view is reflected in the sociological study conducted by Vijaya Joshi (2000). Through her interaction with the interviewed second-generation migrant Indian women in Australia, she notes that most of them described:

> the reality of having two cultures from which to construct an identity was a positive thing. Most articulated character traits, which they felt they would not have had, had they grown up in a mono-cultural environment. (200)

These frank admissions and testimonies of second-generation migrant Indian women in Australia, and the analysis of some of the selected short stories here show that “migrant women construct their own cultural space”—what Homi Bhabha refers to as “third space” (Joshi 200).\(^1\)

According to Vijay Mishra (2006), the literature, particularly the genre of short stories of the South Asian diaspora “is an accomplishment worth noting and being placed alongside all the other successes of this diaspora” (139). 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 have in some ways helped to situate the Australian short fiction in the world literature today by forming “international literary links” (see Bennett 2002), 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 viii) that has been produced from Australia but is working towards the larger objective of a canon-making process in Australian, South Asian and the world diasporic literature. Writing and reading about diasporic locations, then, is also part of the construction of community spaces and the “search for viable homes for viable selves” (George 5).

These stories then act like an instrument that fills meaning in “both textual and extra-textual” discourses and in the “unsaid” (D’Cruz and Steele 29). This acceptance of “silences,” “otherness,” and “multiple views” leads to the formation of an ideal nation. I would here love to quote the words of Gary Younge, a black feature writer and columnist for The Guardian, in which he describes what an ideal nation should be:

It is a nation where citizenship is not undermined by the happenstance of race or choice of faith but is understood as a common purpose and sense of belonging. A country that celebrates diversity because it understands the distinction between discriminating between people and discriminating against them. It is a place where people are not demonised collectively because of who they are but judged individually by what they have done. A land, like any other, where the poison of racism will always be present but where the antidote of anti-racism will be always available for those who wish to use it. (qtd. in B. Lal, “The London Link”; 82-83)

Younge’s words are a philosophy that Australia as a country professes and the people of Australia are always ready with the antidote of anti-racism. South Asian diaspora in Australia has seen good days and from their historical journey, it can be prophesied that they will cope with this passing crisis of racism and indifference displayed by a certain section of Australian public. In light of the recent debates and issues related to racism, multiculturalism, immigration, diaspora, and transnationality, it is imperative to suggest that to co-exist peacefully there is a need for the edification of the dominant society about various minority groups. There will always be celebrations of
diversity and South Asians will be remembered in Australia for what they have achieved. The proclamation of Leila, the protagonist in Yasmine Gooneratne’s “In the East My Pleasure: A Postcolonial Love Story” (1992): “I become an American Learning Experience. About Asia. About Australia. About the world—the real world, which is outside America. [...]” (274) can be borrowed and reversed for Australia and Australians too—South Asians become an Australian Learning Experience. About South Asia. About Australia. About the world.

This also helps us better study politics of gender locations across transnational space. On the construction of “social location,” Adrienne Rich has proclaimed that “a place on the map is also a place in history within which as a woman, [...] I am created and trying to create” (1986: 212). Chapter five explored the representation of male and female protagonists in selected short stories and narratives of South Asian diaspora in Australia. Early sociological studies have focused almost exclusively on female migrants and their oppression. This chapter argued how gender roles are constantly redefined within power hierarchies created through historical, political, economic, geographic, kinship-based and other socially stratifying factors (see Pessar and Mahler 2001). In this chapter we also analysed how in some cases marginalized men and women protagonists, who were disadvantaged or in subordinate position earlier were able to take advantage of the opportunities available to them and negotiate an improvement in their status. A point well proved by sociological studies on South Asian diaspora in Australia.

The role of both men and women in the South Asian diaspora community is also valuable in maintaining and transmitting cultural traditions and values for the family. Chapter six emphasised the ways in which the family experience of migrating and assimilating into Australia from the Indian subcontinent has affected the migrants’ choices in life. It is in the narratives and tales of the first and second generations that the interaction with individuals and families from outside their community is registered. It is proved that family bonding unites the diasporans against discrimination, racism and class prejudices from the outside society and remains a major reason for their success in Australia. Chapter six also analysed narratives in the light of the broader context of class structures—social and economic changes occurring in South Asian diaspora in Australia. It was noted how education and employment are important signifiers of class position both in the diaspora and
homeland. It was argued that class identity examines how a person fits in to the
diasporic community and also in the mainstream Australian society. The analyses
proved that we cannot understand South Asian diasporic literature without
understanding the ways in which family and class are intertwined in literary discourse
in terms of migration strategies involved.

This study feels that, the importance granted to “non-literary” or sociological
aspects of diaspora study, in the first two chapters of this thesis, dealing with one or
the other South Asian group of immigrants and the discussions on the positive and
negative effects of diaspora, racism, South Asianness, politics of location, and
various Australian migration and multicultural policies on the diasporans do not
“marginalize” the narratives or autobiographical essays dedicated to its literary
representation but help in expanding the discourse on South Asian diaspora in
Australia. To sum up, this thesis’s heuristic ambition is twofold: to fill the paucity of
not just critical material but also lack of awareness about South Asian diaspora
creative writing both in South Asia and Australia and chart out the geography of
South Asian Australian fiction and locate it in the larger rubric of South Asian
diaspora writing as well as the Australian national literature. Keeping in mind the
previous research done in this area, we need to use interdisciplinary sources—both
primary and secondary, especially official sources—archives, reports, etc.—more
critically and seek out new materials, in the forms of oral testimony and life-
periences, that are often neglected in the case of South Asian diaspora in Australia.

In order to understand the current situation of South Asian diaspora in
Australia, I feel that literary analysts, particularly related to diaspora studies, have an
important task to play in shaping the hitherto under-researched area. These scholars
can help the social scientists in a better understanding of South Asian diaspora
narratives with their viewpoint and analysis of both the internal and external events,
and by continuously questioning the narrative strategies employed by authors in their
works that is influenced by/influencing the social reality of the larger world around
them. As noted earlier in the Introduction research on South Asian diaspora in
Australia, in spite of a decent history of migration, is still “a new, dynamic and
developing field” that “requires its own research methods” and “tools and techniques”
(Horst 13) and which can develop only through an interdisciplinary model. Present
studies of the South Asian diaspora in Australia have been greatly expanded on in
recent years by research and scholarship in areas such as sociology, history, and anthropology—as is evident in the discussions related to previous research and debate mentioned in the Introductory chapter of this thesis. These researches with their extensive fieldworks not only act as a foundation for my own research, but also point out a path for future researchers and help expand and explore literary, cultural, and diaspora studies in Australia. Also, scholars who are concerned with South Asian migration and diaspora in Australia need to work on both sides of the ocean in alliance.

What I found particularly interesting, as mentioned earlier too, is that there is no exhaustive or authoritative account of the South Asian diaspora in Australia. The rarity and small number of critical material on South Asian diaspora and diasporic experience in literary criticism, both in South Asia and Australia is daunting and yet a challenge for the new researcher at the same time. The most prolific of Indian expatriate cultural critics, Gayatri C. Spivak (1985), has expressed her doubts earlier about the value of academic work (teaching and writing) where the academic project becomes reduced to mere “information retrieval” (243). However, with a good number of research works being undertaken by scholars, to name a few—Glenn D'Cruz, Sisiri Kumara Pinnawala, Basundhara Dhungel, Sharmini Kannan, Mohit Manoj Prasad, Tamara Mabbott Athique, and Michiel Baas—and books and articles written and published by academics and literary critics—J. V. D'Cruz, Marie de Lepervanche, Brij V. Lal, Pamela Rajkowski, Laksiri Jayasuriya, Bruce Bennett, Vijay Mishra, Makarand Paranjape, Paul Sharrad, Cynthia van den Driesen, Suwendrini Perera, R. S. Gabbi, Vijaya Joshi, Annette Robyn Corkhill, and many others—in South Asia, Australia and other parts of the world this situation is headed for a positive change and we can hope that these researches will make visible those particular threads—historical, social, cultural and anthropological—in the formation of a South Asian-Australian canon.

Through this, South Asian diaspora will finally emerge as, what David Walker (1999) 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 socially 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 is merely a step towards forming a 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.

There is clearly further accommodation to be made on all sides but the story of the hitherto success of South Asian diaspora in Australia suggests we can perhaps be optimistic about the future (see De Lepervanche 2001). But this success also depends on the proposed concept of *paraspara*—where migration is a two-way process that does not involve the migrant alone, but also involves those who make up the environment (see also De Jong 3). *Paraspara* then is also a sustained mutual interaction or connection between old home and new home where boundaries will have no meaning. Ultimately this transnational experience means crossing borders rather than creating them, which according to Gabriela Coronado (2003) is the "dynamics of the diasporic experience [. . . ] a continuous movement of being inside and outside, of belonging [. . . ]" (51). So, this new environment, space and age calls for challenges to our methodology, institutions and institutional practices and re-questions the ways in which we have negotiated with Australia and the South Asian diaspora in Australia. In an increasingly globalized world, as students of South Asian Australian narratives and texts, we must be conscious of other borders that shape ethnicity and cultural identities. Finally, in the stories of South Asian diaspora we must recognise "our stories" and "other(s) stories" (Chambers 25).

Exhilarating voices from older and newer generations of Asian-Australians can be heard, found in various collections like *Alter/Asians* (2000) or *Diaspora: Negotiating Asian-Australia* (2000). Thus Asian critics "calling for renewal or change or celebration, or simply to be recognised, they constitute more than one viewpoint in any society, and can be heard no less in Australia than in many countries in the Asia-Pacific region" (D'Cruz and Steele 12).
A key theme of this thesis is the constitution of location through both movement (routes) and attachment (roots). I am fascinated and intrigued by the ways in which the idea or politics of location circulates and the ways in which South Asian diaspora produces a politics of location that has multiple contexts or categories. Analyzing the ways in which diasporans define themselves in relation to these locations helps us understand South Asian diaspora and its creative output better. And it is precisely through carefully situating the selected literary narratives in their literary, social, class and other contexts that we can help “capture both their specificity and their relevance to other contexts” (Hage, 2005: 495). By analyzing and reflecting on these short narratives a clear impression can be gained of the present condition of the South Asian diaspora in Australia since the “point of the author, the point of arrival, becomes the point of departure, and the boundary of the sentence is breached by the surplus of language” (Chambers 11). These short stories are also a way by which authors try to explain the “identity categories” that “immigrants bring with them and those to which they are assigned” (Cornell and Hartman 80). These stories provide possibility of an enriching creative life in Australia with a utopian vision and possibility of being located at home while dislocated from the homeland to writers of South Asian descent. But at the same time the South Asian-Australian authors must engage (critically) in the struggle for recognition and representation in which our diasporas are involved thus creating positive scenarios of self-fulfillment, freedom and opportunity, and presenting the fate of South Asian diaspora in Australia.

As noted earlier too, my purpose here in this thesis was not to define a rupture but to fill a vacuum and offer a constructive discourse on South Asian diasporic fiction in Australia. This thesis has raised a lot of issues pertaining to this complex phenomenon and attempted to deal and analyse most of them with reference to the narratives. This study has sought to show how multiple locations become part of the broader question of negotiation with the community and self. Furthermore, eliciting the views of these South Asian-Australian writers about the future of South Asian diaspora, I sincerely believe, might help us give an insight to determine whether they see a future with a bi-cultural identity or an integrated one as both these cultural capitals will increase in coming years.

After analysing the narratives, we are encouraged to consider that the future of literature of South Asian diaspora in Australia is “pregnant with promise” (Chambers...
It can no longer be ignored or shunned or denied a voice because of its being in between. What I have suggested through the analysis of short stories of South Asian diaspora in Australia in this thesis is that we can read diasporic narratives through the literary construction of multiple locations. I have also analysed the ways in which these writers use fiction to perform their varied and multiple claims to old and new homes. Working on these short stories has been an exercise in re-defining and reviewing my own thoughts about the process of writing and our diasporas across the globe. South Asian authors have in these short stories not just questioned the politics of locations but also transformed the imagined communities and homelands into real ones—as the diasporic paradigm enables a global approach and initiates a new perspective (Fludemik 283). Being part of the postcolonial migrant literature these texts carry

in one way or another elements of migrant experiences, that is (possible) feelings of dislocation and highly sensitive awareness of location and subject position within the native community, but these experiences and perceptions always include and are an amalgamation of political and historical connotations. (S. Hussain 106)

These experiences and awareness of location of the diaspora writer, according to Rushdie (1991), is an “access to a second tradition” (124) and a narrative space that has been modified through “narrations and diversified forms of imagining” (S. Hussain 115).

The South Asian-Australian writers in their short narratives not just present the theme of politics of location—sensory, spatial, gendered, familial and class, but also hold a mirror to both South Asian colour consciousness and social prejudices and Australian practice of “insidious forms of racism” (D’Cruz and Steele 19) that can harm the practice of multiculturalism. The noted American writer John Steinback (1976) observed that “a novelist not only puts down a story, but he is a story. He is each one of his characters to a greater or lesser degree.” Since the stories are told from within “the dominant culture,” the hostland or country of migration, “the engagement with the dominant culture describes the adaptation to dominant forms and its escape and modification at the same time” (S. Hussein 107). These works also deepen our understanding of the ways in which South Asian diasporic communities define and use collective memory to negotiate a sense of origins.
Finally, the chapters reveal South Asian diaspora writers’ dilemma of location their “inner turmoil and anxieties translated into and finding expression in their creative work” (Riemenschneider 116). As discussed earlier in Chapters one and two the diasporic discourse with its four-part process of “displacement, detachment, uprooting and dispersion” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblet 339) becomes stronger in these narratives as the authors explore the processes of displacement and dislocation of identities through migration, journey, settlement and nostalgic returns and their character’s struggle to negotiate locations within Australia. All of the South Asian diaspora writers discussed in the present study are caught between two different cultures and reflect that they are fully at home in none of them. This is because the writers who are “[D]isplaced, uprooted and insecure,” according to Terry Eagleton (2005), usually “cling to the values of order, authority, hierarchy and tradition more tenaciously than some of their less unsettled colleagues” (259). But when this is combined with the fact that they are now in the first world, a more cosmopolitan world if compared with the homelands they had left, it also becomes the source of a richer (multi)cultural tradition that is inextricably linked to a truly “Australian made” experience that helps them “cast a more critical eye” on both the homeland and hostland (see also Eagleton 259).

South Asian intellectuals with their understanding and exploration of socio-cultural issues and dilemmas have helped in highlighting South Asian diaspora creative writers settled in Britain, USA, Canada and other countries of their immigration. Similarly, since 1965, beginning with the publication of Mena Abdullah’s groundbreaking The Time of the Peacock, a literary discourse has developed in the South Asian diaspora in Australia that further adds to cross-cultural studies taking place in South Asia since in these instances “critics ‘at home’ and writers ‘in the diaspora’ basically belong to the same culture” (Riemenschneider 118). Although South Asian diaspora short story as a genre in multicultural Australia is certainly a great achievement, the present study concludes that it still has a far way to go when compared to writings belonging to other prominent diverse ethnic groups of Australia. Many young South Asian diaspora writers need to build on the flexibility or the power of their stories to challenge the readers about the complexities of life in diaspora and Australia. In conclusion, it can be said that these short stories by South Asian-Australian diaspora writers are no doubt a crucial link in the literary history of
Chapter 7 - Conclusion

Australian immigrant writing and allow, through the politics of location, to secure the *roots* and *routes* of one’s journeys and destinations.

Endnotes

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1 Geraldine Brooks is the 2010 recipient of The Dayton Literary Peace Prize for Lifetime Achievement.


3 Speaking at the IFA ceremony in Sri Lanka, Shashi Tharoor (2010), said Hindi films embody “the very idea of India’s diversity” and are “part of India’s soft power in the world.” He further observed that “Hindi cinema is perhaps India’s most successful brand ambassador internationally. Bollywood is bringing its brand of entertainment not just to the Indian diaspora in the US or UK but around the globe [. . .]” (http://tharoor.in/press/international-indian-film-awards/). Bollywood has a marked and continued presence in Australia and experts see this as just the beginning of a successful long term relationship between India—the most film literate and Australia—a professional film industry (see “Bollywood in Australia” 2007; Sarwal and Sarwal, *Creative Nation*: XXVI-XLIX).

4 On 23 June 2010, Julia Gillard was sworn in as the first female Prime Minister of Australia by Australia’s first female Governor-General Quentin Bryce. She has repeatedly assured the Indian government and South Asian community in Australia that Australian government has a zero-tolerance policy for violence against international students. It is hoped that as Prime Minister she would be able to improve Australia’s reputation as a non-racist prime center of higher education on the sub-continent.

5 Recently, Australia has also agreed to a proposal for sending a group of Australian Youth Ambassadors to India in the near future to promote bilateral links between the two countries (Bhandari 2008).

6 According to the Australian government’s Immigration department, “the planned 2002-03 Migration Program, if continued over the next 10 years, is estimated
according to preliminary modeling by Access Economics to provide net benefits to the Commonwealth Budget of around $30 billion (in constant 2002-03 prices and without savings in Public Debt Interest (PDI)” (see DIMIA Annual Report 2002-03).

7 The Racial Discrimination Act of 1975 protects individuals from discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin. In 1995 the Act was extended to make racial vilification against the law in Australia.

8 One such programme is the DIMIA’s “Living in Harmony” programme. It is designed to bring into Australian sporting activity the excluded groups by “aiding and encouraging a host of sporting bodies to promote racial and ethnic tolerance in Australia” (Vamplew 371).

9 Australia has commended the growing Indian diaspora in the country for its contribution in enhancing bilateral links. In a statement Foreign Minister Stephen Smith said that the “Indian diaspora in Australia is making a tangible contribution to enhancing bilateral links” (qtd. in Bhandari 2008).

10 A new TV series, titled My Australia, is being produced by the ABC that will be broadcast by Australia Network to 44 countries in the Asia Pacific region. It looks at Australia through the eyes of people from India and the Asia-Pacific region who are studying or living there. In each episode a variety of people will have new experiences of Australia and they are going to find out more about Australia, its culture and people.

11 Area studies has served as the training ground and launching pad for several well-known first and second generation academics of Asian Australian studies. Many academic Organizations through their conferences have devoted time to studying this as a new field of inquiry. The pioneering work of Association for the Study of Australasia in Asia (AASA) and Indian Association for the Study of Australia (IASA), and various Indian Ocean festivals has also highlighted the importance of a long-neglected region and Australia’s promising bilateral partner through conferences, publications and the establishment of ever-closer links among scholars.

The works of South Asian diaspora writers often reflect a “pervasive and unresolved biculturalism” (Paranjape, 2007: 355-356). Borrowing further from Paranjape from what he observed in relation to the Indian-Canadian writing, the “passages to India” or the subcontinent or homeland are actually going toward the hostland or Australia.

Noted scholar Vinay Lal (2009) observed that the diaspora Indians must display “greater political awareness” and need to “make ethical, sensitive and democratic choices, such as forging linkages with other disenfranchised and disadvantaged groups” in the countries of their settlement.

On the other hand, the ability of South Asian diaspora in Australia to retain, reconstruct and revitalise some aspects of their culture and holding on to their cultural differences of race, language, tradition and religion referred to in the study by R. K. Jain (1993) as “cultural persistence,” is evident because of their earlier isolation and victimisation by social prejudices and racism.

“Australian Made” is a label on products found on a supermarket shelf that most often refers to goods and services in an attempt to circumscribe their origins i.e. the item packaged and distributed in Australia.