CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

ROOTS AND ROUTES: A HISTORICAL, CONCEPTUAL AND LITERARY SURVEY

1.1 - Roots and Routes: A Note on the Title

Har kase ke dur mand az asl-e khish,
ruzgari baz juyad wasl-e khish. ("The Song of the Reed")

These lines, "Who's from his home snatched far away, Longs for return some future day" (Redhouse 1881), from the Persian poem by Rumi means a lot to the central question of "roots," "routes" and "politics of location" raised in this thesis. Even in today's globalised world diasporans who stay far away from their homeland or roots seek to return or create routes of return to the day when they left it (Braakman and Schlenkhoff 2007). Horst (2002) observes that "Moving has always implied uprootedness, but it could also be interpreted as 'being at home in the world'" (12). Feeling "at home" like "the return" is not an easy task for the diasporans, the above couplet best summarizes the diasporic location of individuals suspended in a struggle between their "roots" and "routes," like the myth of Trishanku or like transnationalism that is apparently becoming "a Janus-faced phenomenon" (see Ballard 2001).

Similarly, keeping in mind the above problem; seeking a title for one’s work is not an easy task, particularly when one also has to explain it in terms of the essential interdisciplinary nature of study. This is also especially so when a large number of sociological and anthropological studies have used the coupling of the metaphors "roots and routes" in the literature on transnational migration to “capture the ways” in which refugees and immigrants “consciously balance their ethnic and new national identities in understanding themselves, their lives, and how they represent themselves to others” (Mosselson, 2006: 22). This debate, within anthropology, about place and space or having roots or routes, has resulted in the following researches: James
Clifford's *Routes: Travel and Translation in Late Twentieth Century* (1997); J. Eade’s “Roots and Routes: British Bengalis and Questions of Homeland” (1999); Shalva Weil’s edited collection *Roots and Routes: Ethnicity and Migration in Global Perspective* (1999); Jonathan Friedman’s “From Roots to Routes: Tropes for Trippers” (2002); Marije Braakman’s MA thesis “Roots and Routes: Questions of Home, Belonging and Return in an Afghan Diaspora” (2005) submitted at Leiden University;\(^2\) Jacqueline Mosselson’s PhD dissertation titled “Roots and Routes: Re-imagining the Reactive Identities of Bosnian Adolescent Female Refugees” (2002) submitted at Columbia University\(^3\) and her book *Roots & Routes: Bosnian Adolescent Refugees in New York City* (2006)\(^4\); and Peggy Levitt’s “Roots and Routes: Understanding the Lives of the Second Generation Transnationally” (2009).\(^5\) Apart from these researches I have also come across a very interesting website—“Routes to Roots.” This is an internationally-known firm that traces the Jewish diasporic “roots” in Poland, Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus and also arranges for a customized visit for Jewish families to the “old country.”\(^6\) The Internet has in the last decade opened up the “World Wide Web of Jewry” and thus emerged as “a labyrinth of many diasporas” (Docker 23).

For the purpose of this thesis, the title “Roots and Routes” reflects the processes of “rooting into a culture” and “routing out of a culture.” It is the diasporic peoples search for “roots located in a specific place of origin,” as Eade (1999) observes, that “gives way to an increasing sense of routes along which people have moved and continue to move” (26; my italics). Building on this and borrowing further from Gilroy’s (1991) work on origins and orientation, the metaphors “roots” and “routes” reflect past ethnic experiences (roots) and future ethnic expectations (routes). It thus also echoes the processes of adjustment and negotiation that the diasporans make after a successful transplantation. This interrelation of the *roots & routes* couplets, according to Mosselson (2006), privileges the individual experiences of the immigrant in understanding their adaptive processes to the hostland. She uses Table 1: Summary of the Roots & Routes Couplets appropriately to illustrate the ways in which the immigrants “construct” and “understand” his/her identity in order to “balance their past experiences”—roots and “future aspirations”—routes. She further observes that this “identity construction also acts as a coping mechanism” for each of the immigrants (23-24).
Table 1: Summary of the Roots & Routes Couplets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rooting</th>
<th>Routing</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Multicultural:</strong> value the possibility of being able to live anywhere in the world since the country of their youth no longer exists.</td>
<td><strong>Transient:</strong> prefer to distance themselves from the diaspora and the majority, enjoying relationships with other internationals, maintaining an eye on further international living.</td>
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<td><strong>Nostalgic:</strong> remain focused on returning to their country of origin and are only here for the purposes of their education.</td>
<td><strong>Loyalist:</strong> distance themselves from the diaspora and prefer to keep their relationships with those they knew at home, or those who are in a similar situation to themselves, expecting to return home in the near future.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Nonchalant:</strong> life is here; they entertain the possibility of returning home but state they probably prefer to stay here.</td>
<td><strong>Pragmatic:</strong> neither seek out nor reject diaspora as friendships but live in its milieu and appreciate the practical assistance the community offers them.</td>
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Further, James Clifford’s (1997) stress on movement or dislocation itself, in his work, as the locus of production of location or cultural production is very important for this study. He has argued that

Dwelling was understood to be the local ground of collective life, travel a supplement; roots always precede routes. But what would happen, [...], if travel were untethered, seen as a complex of pervasive spectrum of human experiences? Practices of displacement might emerge as constitutive of cultural meaning rather than as their simple transfer or extension. Cultural centers, discrete regions and territories, do not exist prior to contacts, but are sustained through them, appropriating and disciplining the restless movements of people and things. (3)

Roots and routes, further according to Jonathan Friedman (2002) are

[...] fixed and entrenched in one sense and on the move in another. Routes here can be understood partly as roots on the move, a
transmutation of roots into rhizomes perhaps. There is plenty of room for the imagination here, but there is, interestingly enough, a related meaning of the word that is not dealt with: the verb, to rout, which is, of course, one of the principal ways in which roots have become routes, in which peoples have been displaced. (22; my italics)

The question and concern with geopolitical location or “roots on the move” in a postcolonial situation is what the title of this thesis also explains.

This entanglement of “roots” and “routes” also invoke different geographies of diaspora:

While the term “roots” might imply an original homeland from which people have scattered, and to which they might seek to return, the term “routes” complicates such ideas by focusing on more mobile and transcultural geographies of home. Rather than view place, home, culture and identity as located and bounded—and geography as little more than territory—an emphasis on “routes” suggests their more mobile, and often deterritorialized, intersections over space and time. (Blunt 10)

We must also always remember that it was the experience and suffering of the “deterritorialized” indenture or labour diasporas that first led to the creation of a new kind of society in the various hostlands, as “indentured recruits came from this uprooted, fragmented mass of humanity on the move” (B. Lal, 1996: 171). And they constructed “a more meaningful world in their otherwise alien destination” (Ballard 9). However the stress placed on roots i.e. “sedentary existence in this formulation is largely secondary if not nominal” (Schwalgin 75; my italics). The “transmutation of roots into rhizomes” suggests the ways in which “roots have become routes” and therefore the stories under analysis in this thesis are largely associated with the botanical tropes of immemorial localised roots and globalised routes.

The aim of the present study, as suggested by the title, is to analyse the metaphysical and poetical notions of “roots” and “routes” as most of the “diasporic journeys are essentially about settling down, about putting roots ‘elsewhere’ ” (Brah, 2003: 616). Most of the South Asians abroad (moving on to different places) have realized that it might be the mind and heart that matter but the country where one lives from day to day, constantly engaging and negotiating with its complexities—local and global—does affect the mind and heart. I also aim, here, to provide resourceful “background” information—historical and sociological—a knowledge of which
Chapter 1 – Introduction

provides indispensable aid in analysing the various images of South Asia and Australia that materialize from the South Asian-Australian diasporan short stories presenting the rich subcontinental cultural heritage. Here my framework of analysis is not concerned with the writers’ personal history and biographical details but with the characters and situations that enliven their stories. This approach also leads towards an exploration of the “otherness” created for the readers in their fiction both in terms of people/characters and geography/living spaces.

1.2 – A Brief History of South Asian Diaspora in Australia

Human history is always a story of someone’s diaspora [...].

(Gunesekaera 174)

People have been migrating since the dawn of humanity. Many of today’s diasporic groups, particularly the Africans, Chinese, Palestinians, Armenians, Jews, South Asians, to name a few, have had long histories of travel away from original homelands. However, during the past 100-150 years these diasporas have been recorded, documented and analyzed for their economic, political and cultural impact (see Jupp 1998; Bates 2001). The History of migration from South Asia is rich in stories and metaphors of our civilization and, to borrow a phrase from Judah Waten (1952), its “imperishable peoples” immense arc of influence far beyond their own subcontinental shores, like the metaphor of the “banyan tree” spreading its roots in several soils.

The “banyan tree” and its branches taking “root” in different soils have been consistently used as metaphors by scholars across time to represent this human movement or transplantation across borders. According to Bhiku Parekh a malleable migrant “[F]ar from being homeless, [...] has several homes, and that is the only way he has increasingly come to feel at home in the world” (qtd. in Mahanta 13).

Noted Indian writer and poet Rabindranath Tagore perceived “the Indians going overseas as taking their India with them, and recreating new Indian colonies in the lands of their adoption” (qtd. in Tinker ix). He writes:

To study a banyan tree, you not only must know its main stem in its own soil, but also must trace the growth of its greatness in the further soil, for then you can know the true nature of its vitality. The
civilization of India, like the banyan tree, has shed its beneficent shade
away from its own birthplace [. . .]. India can live and grow by
spreading abroad—not the political India, but the ideal India. (Tagore
qtd. in Tinker iii)7

Yet, Salman Rushdie ridicules the very idea of metaphorical roots in his novel *Shame*
(1983), when he writes: “to explain why we become attached to our birthplaces we
pretend that we are trees and speak of roots. Look under your feet. You will not find
gnarled growths sprouting through the soles” (86). For Rushdie, “roots,” are “a
conservative myth, designed to keep us in our places” (86). This debunking of the
metaphor of “roots” supports the view that human beings were, are, and will remain
mobile and rootless (see Jin 22). However, as Sissy Helff (2009) notes, this view
cannot accommodate the characterisation of migration as a life and death prospect for
many South Asian migrants. For some migrants boarding the ship and crossing the
*Kala Pani* (black waters) meant transgression8 and thereby a loss of cultural
identity—“the sorrow of the passage across the black water” (Paranjape, 2007: 354).9
Furthermore, Rushdie (1985) himself is more ambivalent on the issue of loss of
cultural identity and suffering than the earlier quotation allows us to surmise:

> A full migrant suffers, traditionally, a triple disruption: he loses his
place, he enters into an alien language, and he finds himself surrounded
by being[s] whose social behaviour and code is very unlike, and
sometimes offensive to, his own. And this is what makes migrants such
important figures: because *roots*, language and social norm have been
three of the most important parts of the definition of what it is to be a
human being. The migrant, denied all three, is obliged to find new
ways of describing himself [or herself], new ways of being human [. . .
]. (ix; my italics)

While theoretical approaches to diaspora and diaspora consciousness are relatively
new, migration is an old phenomenon in the history of South Asia—be it internal
migration or external. The contemporary migration of people from South Asia to
Australia is marked by much cultural traffic—there is the exchange of ideas that takes
place on large scale through festivals, art exhibitions, film screenings etc.—as well as
“academic traffic”—exchange of students, research scholars and faculty members
through various exchange programmes, seminars, MoUs, academic associations,
personal visits, awards and scholarships, writers- in-residence programmes, joint
publications, et al.10 These two trends—cultural traffic and academic traffic—have
also resulted in producing a more refined or nuanced awareness and common
knowledge-base about South Asia, which though known to Australia for centuries was consciously overlooked as it belongs to the group of countries that are part of what is pathetically called “the third world.”

According to Vinay Lal (2004 and 2009) the South Asian or third world diaspora is an “incontestable fact of contemporary history.” But many Australians had and still have mixed feelings about South Asia and therefore about the inward bound streams of migrants (refugees and asylum seekers included) from this part of the continent. It is, however, an undeniable fact that Australia has been built on migration with people from over 230 different countries, speaking over 300 languages, and practicing more than 100 religions constituting the “fair dinkum Aussie” of today. Migrants from South Asia, the most populous region in the world, comprising India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, and the Maldives, have not only contributed enormously to the rich cultural life and diversity of Australia at both the local and national levels by adding to its cultural mix but also continue to enhance progressively the nation’s economic and political landscape through involvement and achievements in businesses, literature, educational and other related activities (see Appendix 1).

All countries in South Asia have experienced, under the pull of capitalism, immigration since the early nineteenth century. One of the challenges in writing about the South Asian diaspora in Australia is the nature of the beast: what does the category “South Asian” mean, and what are the various migration and entry points into Australia. Here I will focus on typology of migration patterns to Australia from individual South Asian subcontinental countries.

To begin with India, the largest number of people of Indian origin have migrated to Australia only since the 1980s. But if we look at Australian history, its earliest inhabitants, the Aborigines arrived from the Asian continent via the islands of Indonesia and the Malay Archipelago 40,000 years ago. They probably originated in South India and from here they made their way to Australia via Ceylon, Malaya, and Indonesia, thus making the Veddas, the original inhabitants of Sri Lanka, a possible connection in the migration chain (see Weerasooria 1988; Flannery 1994; Smith 2007). Thus making, according to C. D. Narasimhaiah (2000), Australia’s first inhabitants the Aborigines, “our [South Asians'] common ancestors” (24). Arguably, they can be considered the first South Asian immigrants, if not diaspora; however, the
time lag makes these ancient connections a matter for archaeological study, far away from the realm of literary or narratival probing. We shall, for the space of this thesis confine ourselves to more modern meanings of the term diaspora, as elucidated in Chapter two following. Nevertheless, even the more recent immigration history of South Asians and more particularly Indians in Australia with accurate statistics, data and evidences is yet to be written. As mentioned above, “immigration” is the most dominant feature of Australia throughout its history—be it the arrival of Captain James Cook in 1788 or later the coming of free settlers, voluntary migrants, indentured workers and so on. The earlier groups, apart from the British were Irish, Germans, Scandinavians, Poles, Hungarians, European Jews, Greeks, Italians, Lebanese, Latin Americans, Dutch, Yugoslavs and Turkish. Most of these “groups” were running away from religious persecution (see Jupp 1998), or were in search of better living standards, or were free settlers, or entrepreneurs attracted towards the Gold Rush, mining, railways, vast “virgin” untitled lands and other Australian industries, while a large number came from poverty-ridden or troubled (war ridden) countries as “displaced persons” (see Jupp 1998). The coming or intake of indentured workers from South Asia and China began at the same time (Jayasuriya 49-60), but has gone unnoticed till the advent of the “Asian” economies on the global arena since post the globalisation of South Asia.

Despite this fact of nearly simultaneous migration, the Indian subcontinent has been “a blind spot to most Australians during the one hundred and eighty years of their history” (D’Cruz 31). Australians were present in Asia as advisers, technicians, teachers, diplomats, journalists, but most of all as soldiers and seamen for the Empire (see Walker 1999). They engaged with their neighbours—the South Asians—through travel, study, art and literature (see Macintyre 207-208), and hence this blind spot is not the result of lack of access to the subcontinent.

Indian immigration to Australia began largely as the result of a desperate shortage of labour. Adrian Mitchell (2000) observes that Australia-India connection begins of course with the First Settlement, with the transport of ships heading off to India when once the convicts had been off-loaded; and soon after that the foundling colony was sending off to India for grain, both to feed the colony and for grain seed. By the 1890s there was a small informal immigration programme under way—which is to say politely that India was supplying cheap labour to private individuals. Indians
were working as builder’s labourers in Albany as early as 1835-36. A number of British who had been in India settled in Australia and brought the household retinue with them [...] the physical presence of Indians developed throughout nineteenth-century Australia, and we find the evidence of that here and there—growing maize in Gippsland or as hawkers throughout the rural districts, confused by undiscriminating Australians with the Afghanistani camel-drivers. (19-20)

It is an oft repeated observation that the first South Asians to reach Australia travelled on Captain Cook’s ship in 1816. A significant number of Indians were brought to Australia in the early nineteenth century to work as labourers—on agricultural lands and in the gold fields, as domestics and hawkers. Still more Indians were brought to Australia thereafter to run the now famous “Camel trains,” which transported goods and mail on camel backs in the desert. These Indians, part of the first wave of migration to Australia, were important in keeping the communication and supply line open between Melbourne and Central Australia. Many of the earliest Punjabis (chiefly from the North-Western Punjab region) arrived in late nineteenth century and also took part in the rush for gold in Victoria. Punjabis, comprising mostly the more enterprising Sikhs, came to work on the banana plantations of Southern Queensland. Today, the descendents of these migrants have their own banana plantations and farms and are fairly rich. The establishment of the Sikh community would not have been possible without the welcome, tolerance and even encouragement of the existing Australian community. 14

According to Makarand Paranjape (2007): “Punjabis came to Australia about the same time that they went to Canada, that is, around 1907. Apparently, the regiment that was destined for Canada, actually went via Australia. When they returned to India, they brought back stories of unlimited stretches of land waiting to be farmed and settled in two continents” (349). This second wave of migrants arrived around the World Wars I and II respectively. Indian soldiers were present in Gallipoli (1915) fighting for the British armed forces alongside the Australians. Also, after India’s Independence from Britain in 1947, another important group of South Asians, namely Anglo-Indians, migrated in large numbers to Australia. They arrived on the scene as “British subjects” exercising the choice to settle permanently in Australia. 15 It has been noted that Anglo-Indians were present in Australia from the earliest years of European settlement, including a few convicts. The Anglo-Indians have been
immigrating to Australia in relatively large numbers since the early 1960s, and were, in fact, among the first Asians to emigrate in the 1960s and 1970s with the relaxation of rules for entry of persons of mixed descent to Australia. The term “Anglo-Indian” which now signifies a “world minority” was first used by Warren Hastings in the eighteenth century to describe both the British in India and their Indian-born children. The gallant exploits and work of Anglo-Indians in India and other parts of the British Empire—as officers in the British Armed Forces, employees in Schools, Colleges, Hospitals, Railways, Custom, Police, Ports and participants in Sports—was not mentioned in the historical documents because most of the times their Anglo-Indian identity was not adequately disclosed. They were accepted and rejected as a community on the whims of the British policies—while their religion, dress, customs and manners were identified with the British, the part in them that was Indian made them live on the periphery as a minority within the majority. 16

The third wave of migrants began arriving in Australia immediately after the Whites only policy (Immigration Restriction Act, 1901) was abandoned in 1973 and adaptation of the Multicultural policy in 1975. Australia’s political, economic and social stability proved magnetic for these new migrants, who saw Australia as a land of opportunity. They consisted mostly of teachers, doctors, engineers, businessmen, software and hardware professionals, the Fiji-Indians, who came in large numbers to Australia after the two coups in Fiji and finally, the relatives of already settled Indians in search of greener pastures.

An independent Indian-Australian writer and documentary filmmaker Surinder Jain accidentally traced the antiquity of the South Asian diaspora in Australia. While working on his documentary in 2005 on the “places of spirituality and places of pilgrimage in Australia,” he discovered a cave that looked like an ancient place of worship most probably used by South Asian Hindu labourers or pioneer-immigrants. He says about the experience:

I was wandering in the hills of Ex-Mouth when I was stopped in my tracks by a snake. An eagle (Garuda) came to my rescue and led me to a cave. I went into a state of trance when I entered the cave and noticed God Vishnu and Goddess Laxmi along with Ganesh in its central chamber [. . .]. I noticed a face on the side of the hill. It was also perhaps a natural formation of stones but looked like a Dwaarpal (temple guard) of the temple that I had just visited. 17
This amazing discovery of an old Cave Temple, on the 9th of August 2005, in the remote hills of Western Australia inspires us to trace the antiquity of South Asian diaspora in Australia. Jain is not sure till date if what he “saw was an ancient temple in ruins or just a natural rock formation with a spiritual force,” but this discovery does hint towards the antiquity of the Indian presence in Australia—the labourers or some earlier Indian or other South Asian (Sri Lankan) immigrants.18 

A connected history is that of the “Pakistani-Australians,” a group whose origins in Australia are co-mingled with the Indian history there due to accidents of history peculiar to the subcontinent, like the Partition of India first into India and Pakistan and then further of Pakistan into Pakistan and Bangladesh. So, the history of migration from Pakistan19 to Australia in search of opportunities begins from undivided India. A large number of migrants presently known as “Pakistani-Australians” have their origins in India, i.e., their ancestors migrated before the partition of India in 1947. As has already been mentioned, Indian immigration to Australia has a longer tradition in Australian history that goes back to around 1800 when a small number of Hindu labourers, from various northern regions, were brought into the country for contractual work. Late in the mid 1860s, the Afghans or popularly-called “Ghans,” came from Karachi, Punjab and Kashmir (the parts that are now in Pakistan) as the camel men. They made a very crucial contribution to the exploration, development, transport and building of the first overland telegraph line across the continent from Adelaide to Darwin and of the trans-Australian railways across Australia’s far-flung regions, a contribution that is well noted in Pamela Rajkowski’s In the Tracks of the Camelmen: Outback Australia’s Most Exotic Pioneers (1987). The immigrant population from what is now Pakistan, subsequently dwindled because of the White Australia Policy, as many left Australia and returned “home.” Post-partition Pakistani migration has a relatively recent history. Pakistani nationals started coming to Australia in the 1960s but a large number came in the late 1970s and 1980s as students, professionals and their dependent families under various plans and schemes of the Australian government—under the Humanitarian Program and the Skilled and Family Migration Streams (see Rajkowski 1987; Deen 1992). Immigration from Pakistan increased significantly in the 1990s and by 1996 the Pakistan-born population had more than tripled. However on the other hand, scholars like Abdur Rauf believe that migration from Pakistan is inseparably linked with the
arrival of Muslim traders in Australia since Pakistan’s port cities, especially Karachi, served as link routes to Australia from the Middle-East countries and further deduce that Pakistanis themselves must have accompanied or followed these traders into Australia. In other words, this school of thought dissociates the Pakistani migration pattern from that of pre-partition India by linking it with the migration of Muslims to Australia from around the world. According to Abdur Rauf (1994):

The exact date when the first Muslim arrived in Australia has not been ascertained so far. However, the remains of settlements and cemeteries of the sixteenth century Macassar Muslim fishermen have been discovered in the southern coast of the continent. More concrete evidence to support the claim is yet to be found. Today, the majority of the Pakistani-Australians residing are making a substantial contribution to the process of development of the Australian continent.

Next to Indians the largest number of migrants who have made their presence felt are from Sri Lanka. As mentioned earlier, the first recorded Sri Lankan immigration to Australia was in the year 1816 aboard Captain Cook’s ship, with the transportation of Drum Major William O’Dean (a Malay) and his wife Eve (a Sinhalese) from Sri Lanka. It was in the late nineteenth century that the first significant number of Sri Lankan immigrants came to Australia (1870s), under the category of labour migration, specially recruited to work on the cane plantations of northern Queensland, in the gold-mining fields in New South Wales, and as pearlers in Broome, Western Australia. By 1901, there were 609 Sri Lanka-born persons in Australia.

Following Sri Lanka’s independence in 1948 and the political ascendancy of the dominant ethnic group, the Sinhalese, minority Sri Lankan groups such as the Tamils and the Burghers felt endangered and began migrating to various countries including Australia as humanitarian entrants or political refugees. During the 1960s, Burghers comprised the largest number of Sri Lanka-born migrants to Australia. By 1986, there were 22,519 Sri Lanka-born persons in Australia. While many were fleeing the political instability because of the conflict in Sri Lanka between Tamil separatists and the Sinhalese, a fairly large number of professionals were also compelled to migrate because of a stagnant Sri Lankan economy and unemployment. The case of the Sri Lankan Burghers, the most westernised and English educated of
the ethnic groups in Sri Lanka, resonates in some ways with that of the Anglo-Indians. They are a Eurasian ethnic group, descendents of European colonists (mostly Portuguese, Dutch and British), from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, who intermarried with local Sinhalese and Tamils. Their culture is a colourful rich mix of East and West, thus reflecting their ancestry; they speak English along with a creole language based on Portuguese and Sinhala. They have contributed to the Sri Lankan national culture through their baila music, culinary skills and craftsmanship (particularly lace making), which they brought with them to Australia as a distinctive Sri Lankan identity. During the last few decades, the number of Sri Lankans entering Australia has been steadily increasing, with the majority of Sri Lankan-Australians located in Victoria, Western Australia and New South Wales. They prefer to identify themselves based on ethnicity, e.g. “Sinhalese-Australian,” “Tamil-Australian” or “Burgher” rather than the putative homogeneous group identity “Sri Lankan-Australian.” Sri Lanka-born immigrants are over-represented in professional and clerical occupations particularly in health and community services.

Australia did not consider South Asian countries like Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan to be of any strategic value in the past. But because of the recent migrations of professionals and skilled labourers from South Asia the structure of Australia’s population intake from these countries has increased relatively. Australia on its part is now also supporting the national governments and civil society organizations in various sectors in the South Asian region in relation to projects dealing with HIV-related research, education, human resource development, water purification, environmental sanitation, institutional reforms, good governance, etc.

Migration from Bangladesh to Australia began in the 1970s due to the War of Independence from Pakistan in 1970 and Bangladeshis were first counted separately in the Australian census in 1976.24 By the early 1980s there were perhaps approximately 200 migrants in Australia from Bangladesh, nearly all professionals. In the mid-1980s they were joined by some students pursuing tertiary studies. Between 1991 and 2001 there was a dramatic increase in the number of arrivals from Bangladesh, with the number growing to 9,000. While some arrived as a result of Skilled and Family Migration, others were accepted under the Humanitarian Program.25 The 2001 Census estimates that as a consequence of recent relaxation in immigration policies, particularly relating to students, this number must have now
grown to about thirteen or fourteen thousand (approximately). The majority of Bangladeshis live in Sydney with a smaller though significant population in Melbourne, Canberra and other regional capitals as well.\textsuperscript{26}

One of the most beautiful countries of South Asia, Nepal, is also making an inroad to Australia with its migrants.\textsuperscript{27} The door to Nepalese skilled labour was opened in the 1980s, long after the abolition of the White Australia Policy. Sydney saw the influx of skilled migrants and private fee-paying students from Nepal. Australian universities also encouraged Nepalese students to come to study in Australia on scholarships. The number of private Nepalese students studying in Australia has been on the increase with 24,500 enrolments in November 2009, predominantly in vocational studies. Some Nepalese families migrated to Australia looking for a safe home after the outbreak of the insurgency in Nepal. Thus the Nepali community grew tremendously over the years and is still growing. According to Basundhara Dhungel (2000), one of the important experiences of migrant families from Nepal in Australia is the spotting of “new opportunities, new lifestyle, new intimacy and companionship” (i). Australia and Nepal celebrate fifty years of diplomatic relations in 2010. Nepal-Australia interconnections are mostly based on tourism, education and Australian assistance in various activities since 1960s. Many Australians have also visited, as tourists and foreign aid workers, the only Hindu Kingdom in the world and have returned home with a great fondness for the Nepali people, their culture and their cuisine. The first and so far the only man-made cave temple dedicated to the Lord Shiva, the Mukti Gupteshwar Mandir, also known as the Minto Hindu temple, was made by the Nepalese community in Australia. To make the bonds between the two countries stronger, there exist a few Associations in Australia. Foremost among them is the Nepalese Australian Association (NAA) established in Sydney in 1976, which has helped Nepalese-Australians with a range of issues, from emotional and humanitarian ones. Its other objectives include assisting the newly arrived Nepalese, whether they are students on scholarships or short term visitors, and to act as an unofficial embassy in providing information about Nepal to Australians.\textsuperscript{28}

Similarly a small but fair number of tertiary educational scholarships for Bhutan have provided Bhutanese students with an opportunity of visiting Australia and pursuing various professional courses.\textsuperscript{29} Initially Australia agreed to resettle Bhutanese refugees from Nepal under the Humanitarian Programme over a number of
years as part of a coordinated international strategy. According to the recent census, the Bhutanese community in Australia is very small. To date, as many as 750 Bhutanese have resettled in different parts of Australia. On 13 May 2009, about three hundred Bhutanese gathered at Olympic House at Franklin Street, South Australia, showcasing their food, culture, dance and singing to celebrate the first anniversary of their arrival in Australia. The community’s progress in Australia has been phenomenal and for the children, teenagers and youth the future holds a lot of promise.

For some South Asian migrants, Australia was only the journey, not the end, being “a stepping stone on a route eventually reaching the United States, a country which continues to be the ultimate desired destination for many Indians” (Voigt-Graf 143). However, recent changes made in Australia’s migration policy will make access to a good education and opportunities possible for deserving students (Valentine 2010). So it is worth concluding this history of the South Asian’s migration to Australia with Vinay Lal’s pertinent observation in the “Diaspora Purana” (2003). Lal thinks that the South Asian diaspora has come out of the shadows in recent years, and its largely forgotten history, which encompasses narratives of displacement, migration, the cross-fertilization of ideas, and the emergence of new cultural forms and practices, is increasingly being viewed as an important and intrinsic part of the story of late modernity and humanity’s drift towards globalization, transnational economic and cultural exchanges, and hybrid forms of political, cultural, and social identity. It is these hitherto ignored histories of South Asian migration to the Antipodes that this thesis will recuperate and assess.

1.3 - A Survey of Previous Research on South Asian Diaspora in Australia
South Asians in Australia, as noted above, still only make up a small proportion of the population as a whole, although their total numbers have grown rapidly since the early 1990s. South Asian diasporic literature has, according to Athique (2006) “in a relatively short space of time, achieved commercial and critical success” and “come of age” (1). Today, critics and reviewers speak of “unprecedented attention.” This high profile is also related to South Asian diaspora’s “visibility in other areas of cultural production, notably in film, music and fashion” (Athique 1). Although critical books on and by the South Asian diaspora are not many, small but significant
researches have steadily increased in number akin to the achievements of the South Asian diaspora during the last decade. This is attested by the plethora of recent publications and conference calls for papers, and academic interest in the South Asian diaspora. Some well-organised and thoughtfully conceptualised historical studies of the South Asian diaspora by academics often belonging to South Asian communities or led by scholars belonging to other racialised minority groups in Australia have helped to reveal the complex historical processes and the limitations of past research done by Anglo-Australians.

Today, nothing can alter the fact that South Asians have become an integral part of the Australian social order. The diaspora has helped in opening up borders between cultures and has inspired various critics and scholars to theorize the diasporic condition in relation to its historical, social, political, economical, cultural and personal contexts (see A. Sarwal 2006). The dilemmas of the migrants “become more poignant when migrants find that despite all their new opportunities, they still remain aliens at their destination” (Ballard 9) and no attention is paid towards ethnic issues or to the multicultural education of their children or to the achievements of their communities.

Studies of politics of location and identity amongst migrant South Asian communities and literature in Australia are very few with many studies yet in the data-gathering stage. The study of South Asian diaspora, in recent years, has emerged as an important branch of both social sciences and literature. In India according to N. Jayaram (2004), the study of overseas Indians has evolved through three phases:

1. the cultural perspective phase that focused on the study of cultural dynamics of the diasporic community, particularly on the questions of cultural continuity and change, identity and integration, and resilience and adaptation.

2. the structural perspective phase with its focus on the study of structural dimensions such as gender in Indian diaspora, caste in Indian diaspora, regional identities in Indian diaspora, and the issues of racial discrimination.

3. the political phase that focuses on the role of the Indian state and its diasporic policy. Three questions in particular: (a) What has the Indian state done for the Indian communities in various parts of the world? (b) What has the Indian diaspora done for or against the Indian state? (c) What should the Indian state do to cultivate and
harness the Indian diaspora as a resource for Indian development? (15-43)

Critical Literature on South Asian diaspora in Australia can be distinguished into three major groups: historical, anthropological/sociological, and literary analyses.

1.3.1 - Sociological and Anthropological Researches


Pamela Rajkowski’s *In the Tracks of the Camelmen: Outback Australia’s Most Exotic Pioneers* (1987) is a ground-breaking study that records the contribution of the “Afghan” camelmen or cameleers—mainly men from northern India and Afghanistan—in the opening up and development of the Australian colonies (xi-xii).

She writes:

They were a network—bringing together the many dispersed settlements around the gold-mining fields of Western Australia and connecting them to larger supply and coastal service centres; connecting the sheep properties of South Australia’s far north; passing up the Strzelecki, Birdsville and Oodnadatta Tracks and over the borders into the Northern Territory; connecting the region of New
South Wales west of the Darling River with southern and western Queensland. (xi)

Rajkowski sees the coming of Indian and Afghan cameleers to Australia as a “movement of one group of colonists to another colony within the one great empire, the British Empire” (1). The word “Afghan” or “Ghan” was given as a title to these cameleers to differentiate between the two groups of Indian migrants—one working on camel strings in the desert region and the other working on coastal plantations and farms. She notes that the “work done by the Afghans and their camels [...] was commemorated by the naming of certain improvements and paddocks after them” (33). The book is a lucid account of the contribution of the Afghan and Indian camelmen to the “economic development and indeed survival of many of the outback settlements” of Australia. It is “a tribute to their efforts and a record of their lives and achievements” (184).

Purushottama Bilimoria and Ruchira Ganguly-Scrase’s *Indians in Victoria (Australia): A Historical, Social and Demographic Profile of Indian Immigrants* (1988) is a pioneering monograph published on the Indian community, contributing in a significant way to furthering an understanding of the intricate features that characterise the Indian community that has settled in Victoria (Australia). While the study is extremely interesting, both authors are aware of its limitations in the absence of insufficient historical, social and demographic information on the Indian community. The basic concern of this study is to collect relevant information and detail with respect to the pattern of settlement, adaptability, linguistic and cultural integration, educational and professional status, cultural orientation and welfare issues, and in this light can be counted among the best in the archive of documentation generated in the 1980s on ethnic minorities in Australia.

*From India to Australia: A Brief History of Immigration; The Dismantling of the “White Australia” Policy; Problems and Prospects of Assimilation* (1992) as the name suggests is an historical account of Indian migration, white Australia policy and assimilation models employed in Australia. In his Introduction, the editor S. Chandrasekhar surveys the land, the mountains, the rivers, the fauna and the flora, the climate and the weather along with the Aborigines, economy, Indian contract labour in Australia, and Immigration Restriction Act (1901). The book is a collection of well-
conceived articles engaging with historical and political issues of Indian migration to Australia.

Vijaya Joshi’s study *Indian Daughters Abroad: Growing Up in Australia* (2000) tells the “stories of the real-life experience of marginal groups” particularly about the second generation. She writes that it was her own ethnic identity that prompted her to undertake this research, which through interviews with second-generation Indian women in Australia, assesses their status and lack of power within the diaspora and Australia. The book “maps some of the socio-cultural themes which frame a second generation Indian woman’s life in Australia” (1), particularly studying the construction of gender roles within Indian culture. She concludes that for “the women, understanding their gender roles within their family and community was intertwined with their cultural role. They were not women within the Indian community, but *Indian women*” (202). So in her work South Asian diasporic woman becomes a location for traditions that others have abandoned.

Joyce Westrip’s and Peggy Holroyde’s *Colonial Cousins: A Surprising History of Connections between India and Australia* (2010) traces the real story of the links between India and Australia and presents through an Australian perspective an “Australian Tale” of connections. According to the authors this is “a personal exploration into an Indian-Australian landscape, a subject largely ignored or overlooked by recorders of social history, novelists and the media” (3). The authors use archival material and interviews with people all over Australia, who are linked in one way or other, to the two countries and “share their memoirs, diaries and reminiscences of India experiences” (Hayes IX). Westrip and Holroyde write that their “long quest for elusive connections,” fell into three sections:

1. that of affinities, conjectured and real, which we certainly, and others in their own way, could affirm. This became the bedrock of the text.

2. research into documented evidence long since absorbed into state archives or forgotten private memorabilia. Both of these provided a context and a framework of history for the third area.

3. the anecdotal, based in the taped reflections, the immediate linking of people, many still alive, who can trace memories back through several generations, or who still travel between India and Australia as their forebears did from the earliest days of settlement. This was the oral history. (7)
This book “traverses a period of history involving the movement of Anglo-Indians from India to Australia and is the first time anyone has recorded such a comprehensive social history covering one group migrating from India to Australia over two centuries” (Hayes XI). *Colonial Cousins* is story of India and Australia, not of the British Raj. It is “another story”—“a real down-to-earth Australian version of experience in and with India from the very first days of settlement by the white British” (1). The authors note that the connections between Australia and India were quite different from that between Britain and India, as “India and Australia often suffered together under the watchful paternalism, and maternalism in the latter part of Victoria’s reign, of the mother country” (1). The book not only traces the human links but also geological, anthropological, architectural and mythological similarities between the island of Australia and sub-continental India. The authors are aware that the records referred to in this book are “incomplete or require further research” but since this research has been funded privately such limitations are acceptable. Through their book, the authors “have managed to blend the unusual story of the ‘colonial cousins’ in historical times with more recent developments in the India–Australia relationship in terms of trade and business” (Hayes XI). Although, Westrip and Holroyde both over 85 years of age in the book present their “deep understanding and genuine love of India and Australia” (Hayes XII), their passion as Australians for the India subcontinent once again reminds us of the necessity of more researches based on the same format by younger researchers who have professional backing and proper resources (8).

Some ethnic migrant communities in regional Australia have been the focus for relatively constant studies by anthropologists. In White Australia, “Sikh” and “Punjabi” were almost synonymous words. Marie De Lepervanche in *Indians in a White Australia: An Account of Race, Class and Indian Immigration to Eastern Australia* (1984) embarks upon an anthropological fieldwork journey. Her study of the Punjabi community of Woolgoolga, 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, successful establishment of the Punjabi settlers whose banana farming and cane-cutting jobs provided the source of income, the connections between these pioneer settlers with
their home villages, and their arranged-marriage alliances with partners from India. She notes 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. De Lepervanche’s doctoral field-work was also among Punjabi Indian settlers on the New South Wales north coast, an enterprise that entailed a critical inquiry into the interrelation of race, ethnicity and class in Australian society.

Purushottama Bilimoria’s *The Hindus and Sikhs in Australia* (1996) is part of the Community Profile series instituted by the Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research. The series’ main aim is to provide a perspective on the Australian population through a description of the religious communities with which the people identify. The profiles tell a story of immigration and settlement. This book is a detailed account and examination of the religious beliefs and practices of Hindus and Sikhs in Australia. Some of the possibilities and challenges that face Hindus and Sikhs living in Australia’s multicultural society are noted, the documentation of which will hopefully permit a better climate for engagement between the host populations and the newer immigrants. Bilimoria concludes that “Hindus and Sikhs, like all South Asians in Australia, have endured many hardships, and experienced prejudices on account of their colour or religious background. They have preserved despite social and cultural alienation” (73). To him in “the broader context of mainstream Australian society, the Sikh gurdwara with its ‘Word as God,’ and the moon-domes of the Hindu temple with its myriad of gods, symbolise in their different ways the struggle of maintaining distinctive communities within a decidedly multicultural and ethnically plural environment” (74).

R. S. Gabbi’s *Sikhs in Australia* (1998) is dedicated to the “Pioneer Sikhs in Australia who did not lose their heart under discriminating and unbearable conditions and gave the footings to the present Sikh community in Australia” (3). It is a brief but reliable history of Sikhs in Australia and shows Gabbi’s knowledge of Sikhism and community life. His work differs from others as he exclusively chooses Sikhs, while most of the earlier works focused more on Hindus. The book helps us understand the contribution the Sikhs have made in the development of Australia while working under unbearable conditions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. According to Gabbi,
Sikhs had a very distinctive life in the late 19th and the early part of 20th century. They were not willing to assimilate or even integrate with Europeans but European children were always happy to play with them. Most of the Sikhs were single as very few could bring their wives into Australia or get married to Aborigines or European women [\ldots]. (110)

Gabbi’s book also contains a plea to present generations of Sikhs to “set up such an image of a Sikh so that coming generations feel proud to be a Sikh and Australians will hold them in high esteem” (189). In his conclusion Gabbi, to join others in the task of related research on Sikhs in Australia, suggests to all Sikhs to “see directories under ‘SINGH’ when they pass through or visit any town or city of Australia and try to establish a branch of ‘Australian Sikhs Historical Society’ in each state with an Australian based headquarters. For a long time to come, such information will become an authentic reference and a source of positive thinking about the place of Sikhs in Australia’s past, present and future” (189).

*A Punjabi Sikh Community in Australia: From Indian Sojourners to Australian Citizens* (2001), edited by Rashmere Bhatti (co-ordinator and community settlement services officer at the WNC) and Verne A. Dusenbery (a scholar of Sikh communities in multicultural societies outside of India) was developed as a project\(^{32}\) over a number of years in response to local, national and international curiosity about the Punjabi Sikh community in the Woolgoolga-Coffs Harbour area and how they came to be established on the north coast of New South Wales. Bhatti writes about her own experience in the community: “As an Australian born Punjabi Sikh, I value the unique experiences that I have had with both Punjabis and non-Punjabis, at both a professional and personal level, in this community. My being bicultural—at home in both worlds—is what has made this project possible” (Preface).

The Punjabi Sikhs in Australia today are highly diverse in terms of their migration biographies, their cultural and social lives, their economic activities and their transnational kinship ties. This book is a “a portrait of a Punjabi Sikh community having weathered the era of the White Australia Policy and coming to terms with evolving Australian multiculturalism” (Preface). The story of how Sikhs, as Indians (a restricted race), entered and ultimately settled in a White Australia is unique. According to Bhatti and Dusenbery, it came about as a result of the political, social and economic changes taking place in both Australia and India and because of the link
Chapter 1 – Introduction

these two countries had as members of the British Empire. Importantly, the Punjabi Sikh community’s settlement reflects this country’s growth from a White Australia to a nation embracing Australian Multiculturalism as ideology. The book also analyses the roots that Punjabis have planted in Australia and how they have managed to retain many aspects of their traditional culture and religion, the establishment of gurdwaras, arranged marriages, retaining of property or ancestral land, maintaining close contacts with relatives in Punjab, community (ethnic) newspapers and radio programs, and associations to celebrate festivals and other Punjabi recreational activities in Australia. The prominent contributors to this study—W. H. McLeod, Marie M. de Lepervanche, Carmen Voigt-Graf, Verne A. Dusenbery, and Ramindar Singh—through their anthropological fieldwork and sociological studies of the community feel that the times ahead bode well for a community as promising as the Punjabi Sikhs with impressive achievements, both in religion and in the world. This book is an interesting collaborative undertaking that not only provides considerable background information on Sikhs and White Australia ideologies, policies and practices that affected the community in Australia but also opens up new issues of research related to gender and generation studies. The framework and methodology used in this project also inspires young scholars to research more on South Asian migrant communities and tell their stories.

Tania De Jong writes that she embarked on her study, Complexities of the Sri Lankan Migrants in Australia (1987), “as a hobby” and because of her “strong interest in migration” (ii-iii). Her study concentrates, she writes in her Introduction, on a set of human relations that are directly linked with the process of migration. She argues that this process is a particular significant component of the wider processes of social change and modernisation. Her analysis of Sri Lankan migrants in Australia, according to her, “proceeds diachronically, trying to understand human reality and relationships through the long journey which brought them to this current situation” (vi). She also surveys the condition of Sri Lankan migrants during the 1980s Australia. However she feels that her synchronic analysis of the Sri Lankan community is severely restricted by the lack of sociological analyses, studies, data and statistics on Sri Lankan-Australians. Hence her study is to a great extent result of her own “participation, observation, curiosity and questioning of those complexities Lankans face in Australian society [. . . ]” (vii). She analyses Sri Lankan reactions
within Australian society in the socio-historical context of 1950-1982. She discusses Sri Lankan migration history to Australia, Australia’s immigration policies and does a brief historical overview of culture and population. But her main focus in this short study is on Sri Lankan migrant complexities and processes of absorption, integration and assimilation (82). She concludes her study with a question: “Whether they [Sri Lankans] will be recognized as a national and cultural entity, within the context of multiculturalism for all Australians, remains to be seen” (83). Though the entire study is only a hundred pages long, but the depth of knowledge about the issues it covers and its anthropological approach are both quite fascinating.

In *Links Between Sri Lanka and Australia* (1988), W. S. Weerasooria, a prominent lawyer, civil servant, diplomat, an academic, and former Sri Lankan High Commissioner to Australia and New Zealand, notes that the Australian Aborigines probably originated in South India from where they made their way to Australia via Ceylon, Malaya, and Indonesia. This argument thus makes the Veddas, the original inhabitants of Sri Lanka, a possible connection in the migration chain. His book is based on previous researches in collaboration with the researchers who have done major and minor researches on the community at various Australian universities. Writing (or compiling) this book on Sri Lankan migration to Australia, in Weerasooria’s words, was “a voyage of discovery” (42).

Rodney Ferdinands’ *Proud and Prejudiced* (1995) tells the story of the Burghers before the mass migration, their exodus to new countries after the war, and their experiences of assimilation in Australia with the help of historical records, interviews, recollections and anecdotes. Both a sociological history as well as a personal account into the heritage of a group hitherto minoritised into a larger “Sri Lankan” history and nomenclature, the book is full of hope for the descendants of Burghers who chose Australia as their new home. With English as their first language and their dedication to assimilate, their adaptation to Australian ways of life was considerably easier than the rest of the Sri Lankan migrants (particularly from non-English backgrounds). According to Ferdinands: “Burghers do not think of themselves as on the margins of Australian society. They do not see themselves, in the political sense, as Sri Lankans. They have assimilated into mainstream (Australian) society. Politically conscious Burghers are already active in the wider community” (262).
The migration of Muslims to Australia also forms the subject of a number of studies. The Muslim strength in Australia is an issue of debate, as there is no separate census data on Muslims and the diverse groups (belonging to different nationalities) within it. Bilal Cleland’s study *The Muslims in Australia* (2002) tries to provide an account of progress of Islam in Australia. His story of Islam’s journey in Australia starts long before the white settlement, stretching back to traders from Macassar with links to Aborigines in northern Australia. Cleland not only outlines the achievements of Australian Muslims but also reveals the problems that they have faced—from community misconceptions to divisions in their own rank. He writes of the “despised men” (1)—Afghan and Indian Muslim cameleers and hawkers. But later observes that “Indian Muslims were not discriminated against [in Australia] on religious grounds during the course of the war [World War I]” (52).

Hanifa Deen, a third generation Australian of Pakistani-Muslim ancestry and an active Australian human rights activist and a social commentator, in her prize-winning book *Caravanserai: Journey among Australian Muslims* (1995), portrays the lives of Muslims in Australia. Its title, *Caravanserai*, refers to the central court of an inn where caravans pull in for the night. Caravans, or covered wagons, were the mobile homes of many Muslims who later came to Australia to make a living by hawking goods. She observes

> Caravanserai were not the place to maintain a social distance; travellers from different lands did not keep one another at arm’s length. Everyone gathered together, sharing, exchanging, enjoying one another’s company—unless you happened to be a blood enemy; though even then you enjoyed sanctuary in the caravanserai. (viii)

Deen further challenges the misleading stereotypes—images of veiled women, fierce bearded men, barbaric parents, rapists and suicide bombers—that the western media has spread. She notes that “Muslims are highlighted as a ‘problem’ with little in common with other Australians” (vii). Deen through her sensitive narrative provides “Muslims a human face” (vii) and shows them as ordinary people who have their own little problems like everybody else, who have a mortgage to pay; who like sports and watching rugby matches; who worry about gaining weight; who send their children to school; who pay tax; who vote. She says that her book is not “religious” or “academic” or “Who’s Who of the Muslim world in Australia” (vii). She concludes that there is “enormous diversity among Australian Muslims” (215) and with
education and knowledge “Young Muslims in the twenty-first century will be better equipped in terms of confidence and skills to reduce the social distance which exists between them and non-Muslims” (217). Although in the second edition of her book published in 2003 after 9/11 attacks and Bali bombings of 2002, when she revisited the Muslim people she originally interviewed in Australia to discover how recent international events have affected their daily lives, she notes that Australia has shifted from the welcoming caravanserai that she had originally envisaged to a place that many Australian Muslims no longer see as safe for their families. Her book is a valuable contribution to the long and rich history of the books on Muslims and Australian life.

Kay Rasool’s *My Journey Behind the Veil: Conversations with Muslim Women* (2002) draws upon the lives of women in Australia, India and Pakistan and provides portraits of Muslim women from diverse backgrounds. The book is based on her documentary *My Journey, My Islam*, made for ABC TV. The book explores the relevance of the veil in a modern world and the stories of the women who wear it. She says, “My task is to give a human face to women who wear the veil, especially those who live in a Western society, and are not compelled in any way to cover their heads” (xiv). Thus she is able to uncover a range of often opposing perspectives to personal belief and dispel stereotypes. The book will be a success according to Rasool “if my readers can look at a covered head without surprise or wonder, as just part of the normal landscape of a multicultural society” (xv).

“Pakistani-Muslim Immigrant Women in Western Australia: Perceptions of Identity and Community” (2004) submitted at Edith Cowan University; and Michiel Baas’ PhD thesis titled “Imagined Mobility: Migration and Transnationalism among Indian Students in Australia” (2009) submitted at University of Amsterdam.

Pandula Endagama’s study, “Sri Lankan Material Culture in North-East Queensland: A Study of Acculturation” (1981), focuses on Sri Lankans who immigrated to Australia after 1948 and also on some of the descendants of early pioneer migrant who came on the ship Devonsire in 1882. The primary objective of his study is to identify and analyse what these Sri Lankan immigrants had retained of their original ethnic culture and the ways in which the links with the homeland were maintained, which he does by way of a fascinating examination of a catalogue of personal possessions that the Sri Lankan migrants brought over, such as furniture, household items, dresses, objects of religious or caste significance, musical instruments, native plants, and the like.

Sisiri Kumara Pinnawala’s PhD thesis “Sri Lankans in Melbourne: Factors Influencing Patterns of Ethnicity” (1984) is one of the most comprehensive researches on Sri Lankan migrants. He notes that some Sri Lankan immigrants, in the Australian context, prefer their ethnic identity, for example Sinhalese-, Tamil- or Burgher-Australian. He notes that most of the Sri Lankans who have settled since 1950s in Melbourne belong to the middle class. His study of the Melbourne Sri Lankans is based on data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, fieldwork, interviews and questionnaires, and discussions with officials of different Clubs and Associations and community leaders. His division of the Sri Lankan migrants into three sociological categories or groups, namely Ethnic Assimilationists (Burghers), Ethnic Integrationists (Sinhalese and Tamil Christians), and Ethnic Tradionalists (Sinhalese Buddhists and Tamil Hindus), is quite interesting in the way Sri Lankan Diaspora sees itself in Australia.

Rosita Joan Henry in her PhD thesis “A Tulip in Lotus Land: The Rise and Decline of Dutch Burgher Ethnicity in Sri Lanka” (1986) considers the historical processes and human agency involved in the creation of a particular identity category, the Dutch Burghers of Sri Lanka, their rise and fall. She does so by reflecting upon Karl Marx’s maxim that “People make their own histories, but not just as they
please.” Her thesis, like her other studies on the same theme, is homage to the Dutch Burgher migrants and their life experiences.

Basundhara Dhungel’s dissertation “A Study of Nepalese Families’ Paid and Unpaid Work after Migration to Australia” (2006) is a case study of 28 couple families, who migrated from Nepal under “skill” or “professional” category. Dhungel observes that the patterns of paid and unpaid work adopted by migrant families with dependent children are more or less similar to that of prevailing working pattern of men and women of Australian born couples (whites). The only factor that differentiates working pattern of migrant families with Australian born families (whites) is the experience of migration and their categorization as migrants. One of the important experiences of migrant families is that there are new opportunities, new lifestyles, new intimacy and companionship and new sharing of work between husbands and wives after migration. At the same time, there are losses of extended family relatives, close friends and cultural events which affect their day to day lives. However, there are Australian based friends who provided support in the initial period of migration but these families do not provide regular assistance or support which family relatives provided in Nepal.

Bianca M. Fijac and Christopher C. Sonn’s research paper entitled “Pakistani-Muslim Immigrant Women in Western Australia: Perceptions of Identity and Community” (2004) explores the perceptions and experiences of impacting identity and community for Pakistani-Muslim immigrant women living Western Australia. Ten Pakistani-Muslim immigrant women, aged 40-50, who immigrated to Australia in the 1970’s, were interviewed about their perceptions and experiences of their community. The findings indicated that the role of religion was a core component in the experience of community and in the settlement process. Racism and exclusion, social support structures and gender roles were other factors impacting the development and maintenance of the identity and community of this group.

Adrian Gilbert’s PhD thesis “The Anglo-Indians in Australia: From Unsuccessful Caste Members to Attaining Immigrants” (1996) analysed the successful settlement and progress of Australian Anglo Indians. One of his most interesting findings is that Anglo Indians in Australia are doing better in both fact and perception than in Britain or, indeed, in India. Gilbert notes that the Anglo-Indians in Australia are doing better than people of Australian descent, although there are some
areas of concern, such as the under-representation of Anglo-Indians in management positions and the lower hourly earnings of Anglo-Indians with higher degrees.

Gilbert's is one of the important studies of Anglo-Indians who settled in Australia. (see also Assisi 2006).

Because of a recent increase in racist and/or opportunistic assaults and attacks ("curry-bashing") on Indian students in 2009, the issue of Indian students in Australia made headlines around the world. The incidents happened when Michiel Baas' thesis had already been completed and there was thus little he could do with this new development. His PhD thesis, "Imagined Mobility: Migration and Transnationalism among Indian Students in Australia" (2009), result of being involved in the topic of Indian (overseas) students for over five years, focuses on the case of Indian overseas students who go to Australia not just to study but also to migrate there. Baas notes that by the end of 2006, there were nearly 350,000 overseas students (including 38,700 Indian students) enrolled across all educational sectors in Australia, making the country one of the biggest players in the world of "offering/selling education." This number continued to grow and reached new heights by the end of 2008. Because of the recent race attacks on Indian students this increase in numbers has declined a bit but Australia still remains a popular destination for overseas study. He argues in his thesis that "imagination is crucial in understanding people's desire to be transnationally mobile. This goes not only for understanding why people decide to migrate but also how they experience the process of leaving one's country of origin behind and making their way into a new one" (3). Central to this examination are the questions: how do Indians experience the process of migrating abroad, aiming for an Australian permanent residency (PR), while being overseas students at the same time?

He explores these questions with three interrelated concepts: imagined mobility, arrival points, and in-betweenness. Adrian Bailey (2001) has argued that: "key questions of migrant agency and hybridity remain under-theorized" (413) in migration studies. Baas' thesis ultimately fills this lacuna by bringing in migrant's agency into a study on migration and transnationalism. He examines the way Indian students experience the process they are undergoing (which for many is the underlying reason for having chosen Australia as a study-abroad destination) in light of the finding that studies of transnationalism pay little to no attention to the (individual) process of transnationalization itself (10). His passion for the welfare of students, awareness of
the ongoing events, and multiple dimension and possibilities for further research is reflected when he writes that "I am still in active touch with many of the people who colored my fieldwork I consider my research as ongoing, likely to yield more data in the years to come" (11).

1.3.2 – Literary Researches

This thesis will, I hope, fill a vacuum in the discussion of literary narratives by the South Asian diaspora in Australia. Very few studies have dealt with the subject: I have during my research come across only a handful of literary researches on South Asian diaspora in Australia. This includes books like *Celebrations: Fifty Years of Sri Lanka-Australia Interactions* (1997) and *Celebrations!—Sinhalese and Sri Lankan Women in Canberra: Testimonies and Memories* (2008). Apart from my own MPhil dissertation, titled “Postcards from Trishankus: Images of India and Australia in South Asian-Australian Short Stories” (2006), submitted at Jawaharlal Nehru University, examining representation of India (Homeland) and Australia (Hostland) in selected short stories, I have come across Glenn D'Cruz' PhD thesis titled “‘Representing’ Anglo-Indians: A Genealogical Investigation” (1999) submitted at University of Melbourne; Sharmini Kannan’s MA dissertation titled “Pappadums in Paradise?—Journeys of Indian Migrant Women to Australia” (2002) submitted at Deakin University; Mohit Manoj Prasad’s PhD thesis titled “Indo-Fijian Diasporic Bodies: Narratives in Text, Image, Popular Culture, and the Lived Everyday in Fiji and Liverpool, Sydney Australia” (2005) submitted at University of Western Sydney; Tamara Mabott Athique’s PhD thesis on South Asian Diaspora literature in Australia titled “Textual Migrations: South Asian-Australian Fiction” (2006) submitted at University of Wollongong; and Pauline Lalthlamuanpuii’s MPhil dissertation “A Study of Women’s Characters in Yasmine Gooratne’s Novels *A Change of Skies* and *The Pleasures of Conquest*” (2009), submitted at Jawaharlal Nehru University.

*Celebrations: Fifty Years of Sri Lanka-Australia Interactions* (1997), edited by Cynthia Vanden Driesen and I. H. Vanden Driesen, as the title suggests celebrates the contribution of Sri Lankans to Australia. This edited collection contains views on Sri Lankan diaspora and writers from Australia along with a few literary articles. This massive book of about thirty-one essays, biographical writing, fictional work and
poems was released to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Sri Lankan Independence. Sri Lankan migration has steadily increased since World War II. *Celebrations* feature issues and personalities of national and international importance, and the stories from the community providing insights into a range of life-experiences. This book, intended for general readers (both Australians and Sri Lankans) is an informative and valuable contribution to an understanding of the Sri Lankan diaspora, its post-arrival experiences, success, problems, and hopes in Australia. Contribution to this collection ranges across fields as varied as academia, the law, business, and sciences. In most of the stories collected here the writers recount the day when they decided to migrate to Australia. Writing in the Foreword to this tome, Alison Broinowski says

They recall the date of their arrival, and the weather on that day. Being met by relatives, Sri Lankan or Australian friends, made the difference between feeling welcome and wishing they had not come. Small gestures of kindness from neighbours were worth much more than those who made them knew. [ . . . ] Some find a new vocation in working with other migrants, or with Aborigines. Others recognize some of the obstacles confronting them for what they are, protectionism, and they each find their own way to overcome them. (xvi)

This book makes an important contribution to multicultural Australia by showing us that “it exists not only in a policy but in people’s lives and the choices they make; [ . . . ] and the need for all of us to appreciate that diaspora involves coping with difference, indeed relishing it” (Broinowski xvii). So the recurring note in this book is of celebration—“celebration of Australia their adopted land, for affording them the opportunity to reinvent themselves as it were and yet with this theme remains a nostalgic love and acknowledgement of the debt owed their original homeland, Sri Lanka” (vanden Driesen and vanden Driesen xxi).

*Celebrations! – Sinhalese and Sri Lankan Women in Canberra: Testimonies and Memories* (2008) edited by Thishanka Karunarathna and compiled by Badra Kamal Karunarathna, of the Sinhala Cultural Association under a project funded through the 2006-2007 ACT Women’s Grants Program is an extraordinary collection of life stories presenting hopes, joys and challenges of ordinary Sri Lankan-Australian women who have made their home in Canberra over the last two decades and as they establish themselves in a new country. Sri Lankans and Sinhalese make up a small but
vibrant part of the ACT’s population. By compiling and publishing this massive collection Karunarathna has put to history the extremely important contribution and experiences of women from South Asian cultural background—housewives, academics, social workers, journalists, etc.

Glenn D’Cruz’ PhD thesis titled, “‘Representing’ Anglo-Indians: A Genealogical Investigation” (1999) examined Anglo-Indian representations in the social sciences, literature and films. In “Beyond the Pale” (2004) he says that he began his research as an academic to seek a better understanding and “discover the historical and cultural factors” that shaped his Anglo-Indian identity in Australia (226). Using the postcolonial theories of Bhabha, Spivak and Said as “insight,” he writes that his research helped him to come to terms with my cultural identity, it helped me to answer some questions about my family’s odd quirks that had long perplexed me. In some instances these often personal eccentricities resonate with history in curious ways. (2004: 227)

He observed in his thesis that the social sciences continue to construct the Anglo-Indian as “a rather pathetic figure” on the “margins of legitimate society.” He writes that

Anglo-Indians are the smallest, and possibly, minority group in India. They are the literal progeny of European colonization, and are often stereotyped as being “more British than the British” because they practise Christianity, speak English as their first language and generally adopt British social customs” (2004: 223).

The result being, most frequent representation of the Anglo-Indian male as a social and cultural misfit, like a “marginal man” whose problems exist because of “an unrealistic self-image.” During the course of his research he discovered that Anglo-Indians in British India had the reputation of being the best clerks—“a natural vocation for Anglo-Indians” (2004: 227). So, to him

It was, therefore, gratifying to recognise that in writing my PhD thesis I finally became a clerk of sorts. I sifted through fragments, organizing a mass of haphazard documents and records. The archival records told me quite a bit about Anglo-Indians, satisfying my inner clerk, but it was the critical analysis of personal artifacts I uncovered during the course of my research that I found most compelling, and most helpful in putting my life and my sense of subjectivity into context. (2004: 228)
With the help of archival material he contested the "various deprecatory stereotypes of Anglo-Indians that circulated in the literary and social-scientific texts" (2004: 228). Rather than simply dismissing the representation of Anglo-Indians in literary texts as offensive stereotypes, D'Cruz identifies the conditions for the emergence of these stereotypes through close readings of writers like Rudyard Kipling, Maud Diver, John Masters, Salman Rushdie and key works, such as *Bhowani Junction* and *Midnight's Children*. On representation in films and literature, he goes on to explain that Anglo-Indians were often presented "as feeble biological specimens prone to lax morality, melancholia and a wide variety of vices that led to poverty" (2004: 228). His thesis is the first detailed study of Anglo-Indian representations in literature and films. Glenn D'Cruz now finds value in things like *Cotton Mary* and *Bhowani Junction*—"Not necessarily because they are good films, but because they are like rare texts which deal with Anglo-Indian culture, Anglo-Indian themes" (see Assisi 2006). His thesis presenting a persuasive argument against "image criticism," underscores the importance of contextualizing literary texts, and makes a timely contribution to debates about Anglo-Indian diaspora and representation, "mixed race" identities, minority literature and Australian Multiculturalism.

Mohit Manoj Prasad's PhD thesis, "Indo-Fijian Diasporic Bodies: Narratives in Text, Image, Popular Culture, and the Lived Everyday in Fiji and Liverpool, Sydney Australia" (2005), examines "modalities of identity and representation for the Indo-Fijian diaspora and its second shift diasporic remove in Liverpool, Sydney, Australia." He also examines the "Indo-Fijian Literature in English, Fiji-Hindi, Memoir form of Indo-Fijian diasporic writings along with representations of Indo-Fijians in other texts" to "enable siting of various identities and representations" (2). The Indo-Fijian diasporic identity and representation is the core concern for this thesis in its manifestations in literature, memoirs, and narratives on the diaspora, tourist ephemera, popular culture and the everyday" (1). His arguments are well placed and theoretically sound for examining alternative practices of reading the Indo-Fijian diaspora, literature and narratives about it, and their particular production, expression and consumption of popular culture. His thesis not only helps us in understanding the politics of the retrieval of performative identities but also expands current research and scholarship on Indo-Fijian-Australian diasporic identity and representation.
My MPhil dissertation "Postcards from Trishankus: Images of India and Australia in South Asian-Australian Short Stories" (2006) is a selective reading of a gamut of stories, born out of the experiences of two worlds and cultures, produced by the South Asian diaspora writers in Australia and published in various journals, anthologies and collections. Divided into two groups: the first group (titled "Looking Back: Imagining Home") containing those short stories that look at the homeland or present an image of India and the second group (titled "Present and Future: Imagining Australia") looking at the hostland or present an image of Australia, raised certain pertinent questions and relevant issues like: How important is physical location for an individual? How do these Trishankus construct or imagine the past for future's sake? How do they re-read their own country (homeland), now that they have left it and has the image of India changed in these works? How does the immigrant look at India in relation to Australia? Are these diasporans at a privileged position or is their status as "Trishankus" a source of an irresolvable dilemma in relation to identity markers? It also argued that these short stories by South Asian-Australians has in some ways helped to situate the Australian short fiction in the world literature today by forming international literary links, which are needed by any literary culture to be considered successful and worth critical attention. The short stories under analysis presented the themes of emotional alienation, self identity, cultural expectations, cultural displacement and representation of difference, etc. and also displayed a uniform thread of sensibility in taking up issues that remain same in spite of the difference in the migration points i.e. the point of arrival of these writers from the Indian subcontinent. A significant number of the stories analysed here are by and about women who migrated to Australia, in some cases with their husbands and in some alone to pursue and see their dreams become reality. These women writers have in a very strong way contributed towards the "powerful literary contribution" of women writing in "contemporary Australian culture" as well as that of the pioneering diasporan male who have been till now projected as shouldering the responsibility of contributing towards the making of their homes and Australia. In conclusion, I observed that the South Asian diasporans present a gaze that self analyses what happened to the protagonists/characters before they arrived in Australia or the motives of as to why they arrived in Australia leaving behind their homeland. In a sense, these diasporans never cease their efforts to reveal and construe the past.
Given the growing recognition of multicultural and Asian-Australian literatures, the study of South Asian-Australian cultural production now requires attention. Tamara Mabbott Athique’s thesis on South Asian Diaspora literature in Australia titled “Textual Migrations: South Asian-Australian Fiction” (2006) responds to the gaps in the scholarship of minority literatures and makes a new contribution to diversifying the field of diaspora criticism. Athique examines the tactics employed in and around selected works of fiction—a set of fifteen texts by Christopher Cyrill, Sunecta Peres Da Costa, Christine Mangala, Bern Le Hunte, Michelle De Krester, Chandani Lokuge, Chitra Fernando, Ernest MacIntyre, Brij V. Lal, Sudesh Mishra, and Satendra Nandan. Her thesis also considers the productive limits and limitations of literary categorization. To consider the narrative detail of South Asian-Australian fiction, she looks into a set of questions: what types of stories do South Asian-Australian writers choose to tell and how do they craft them? And what are the effects of such narratives and how are their complex cultural locations conveyed? Through detailed textual analysis and using concepts from postcolonial studies, theories of diaspora and critical multiculturalism, Athique argues for an integrated theoretical approach to a set of texts that operate across local, national and transnational literary contexts.

Sharmini Kannan’s dissertation “Pappadums in Paradise?” (2002), on Indian migrant women in Australia is a work of creative non-fiction with real characters. Her dissertation has “its genesis in the stories of eleven migrant women who now live in Australia” (7). She notes in her Prologue that the “blue glass is always the hardest to find” (1) and her search for Indian migrant women is like a “quest for the blue glass. It was not an easy task. It became a process of rummaging through other people’s lives, searching for fragments and relics, Eventually I was able to fit pieces together to form a mosaic of their lives in that other time, that other place. And also in this present time, in this place they now call home, Australia” (2). Her dissertation is a record of conversations, narratives, debates, songs, questions and answers. Her study emphasises “the geographical and psychological borders and boundaries crossed in the process of migration” (8). “Pappadums” in the title is used as a metaphor for Indian women and suggests the ways in which a word from English “can be spelt in any number of ways”—Pappadums, Pappadams, Pappadoms, and Puppodoms—and “how different cultures have influenced the borrowed spelling of a foreign word”
It is lucidly written in the short stories format and “is a narrative about narratives” (12). It is “an exploration of stories and histories that recover the losses one is subjected to in migration and displacement” (12). Her dissertation explores a process of transformation that is both enriching and challenging.

Pauline Lalthlamuanpuii’s dissertation “A Study of Women’s Characters in Yasmine Gooneratne’s Novels A Change of Skies and The Pleasures of Conquest” (2009) attempts to study three main issues in migrant writing by taking Yasmine Gooneratne’s fictional work as a case study. Firstly, it is a study of Gooneratne’s concept of multiculturalism in the context of Sri Lanka and Australia. By presenting multiculturalism from a woman’s perspective, Lalthlamuanpuii observes, Gooneratne beautifully merges the public and the private sphere. Thus family as a unit becomes a space where issues of racial purity and multiculturalism are negotiated. Gooneratne breaks away from stereotypes by showing multiculturalism as a space where women break away from traditional structures. Lalthlamuanpuii further argues that Gooneratne is satirical when she portrays Australia as a multicultural utopian space. This sort of portrayal accentuates its flaws and weaknesses effectively. This awareness of its flaws shows Gooneratne’s anxiety to create an alternate model for Sri Lanka. The problems in Sri Lanka made it impossible to talk about its multiculturalism in a positive light. Lalthlamuanpuii is also able to establish the importance of Gooneratne in South Asian-Australian writing. According to her Gooneratne’s importance lies not only in how she has positioned herself as a Sri Lankan in Australia, but also in her stance as a woman migrant writer in Australia. So, unlike majority of first generation migrant writers she does not confine her works to her ethnic community only. Her novels reflect a conscious attempt to move away from communalism to a more global outlook. In conclusion Lalthlamuanpuii sees the importance of Gooneratne in her conscious refusal to position herself as the “Other.”

In spite of all the sociological, anthropological and historical research to support literary studies, there are only nominal critical articles or dissertations on South Asian diasporic literature published in Australia and most themes remain under-explored, making the fate of South Asian diaspora writer suffer in the “anxiety of invisibility” (V. Lal 2009). Literary studies have yet to see a full-length published study of South Asian diaspora writing. The larger picture in the literary area is one of lack, i.e., critical material is limited to book reviews and articles that are published in
various journals and conference proceedings or anthologised essays dealing with Australian literature. Pauline Lalthlamuanpuii’s dissertation on Yasmine Gooneratne’s novels is a good beginning, along with Tamara Athique’s thesis, thus breaking away literary research on South Asia from Asian-Australian writing.

Other notable authors like Mena Abdullah, Chandani Lokugé, Adib Khan, Chitra Fernando, and Christopher Cyrill also deserve full length studies and research. It is imperative to note here that Mena Abdullah and her short stories are crucial in the literary history of both South Asian diaspora writing and Australian literature. Annette Robyn Corkhill in *Australian Writing: Ethnic Writers 1945-1991* (1994) and *The Immigrant Experience in Australian Literature* (1995), and Bruce Bennett in *Australian Short Fiction: A History* (2002) have dedicated a section on Mena Abdullah, second generation South Asian diaspora writer of Punjabi background. And according to Corkhill (1994) Abdullah’s stories are crucial in the literary history of our immigrant writing, for their enthusiastic reception hailed the advent of a new age of critical enlightenment. Abdullah’s regional writing was significant not only for the profound cultural variance expressed, for the fact of female authorship, for the setting of the stories (a sheep farm in Australia’s New England), but also, and perhaps most importantly of all, for the autobiographically-based recording of life in a family whose religious tradition was alien to a monochrome society (the narrator’s father was Muslim, her mother of Hindu origin). (69)

Despite her crucial importance as the first major female author of South Asian origin, it is a pity that no full-length study on her life and works has ever been attempted. This is because, as Yasmine Gooneratne (1992) notes:

> Although Abdullah is one of the very few authors of Asian background who have achieved substantial publication in Australia, her finely crafted stories have not yet received the attention from Critics that they deserve. This is possibly because, although she is Australia-born, the experiences she writes about place her inevitably on, the “periphery,” and beyond the line that has hitherto lovingly enclosed Australia’s “traditional” authors in an enclave that is deemed “central” to the nation’s literary and cultural development. (115)

The present thesis is an interdisciplinary endeavour to address the highly disparate and variegated literary cultures generated by various South Asian communities within “Australia.” In what follows, we shall draw extensively upon scholarship in sociology,
history and anthropology in addition to general debates in literature in our attempt to
fashion an optic for studying the output of short stories generated by South Asians in
Australia. Short stories or literary narratives, according to Patrick White (1995),
within the purview of interdisciplinary research can offer “exciting opportunities for
analysis as inputs to research” and therefore “allow for social scientists and
humanities scholars to come together” (4-5).

The literature I have surveyed above consciously provides new directions in
the dynamic field of research on the South Asian diaspora in Australia and its social,
cultural, political, economical, and literary participation in the Australian society. As a
young researcher, one appreciates the work that must have gone into it. These books
tell us the story of “a tenacious, persistent people; who in all kinds of circumstances
have endured and survived” (Tinker x).

It may be reiterated that the study of South Asian diaspora in Australia or any
part of the globe is “not a discipline by itself, but only an area of specialized study
utilizing the data, concepts, methods and theories of many disciplines” (Jayaram 33).
The number of articles published in various journals and critical anthologies do cover,
although nominally, as noted above, a wide range of South Asian-Australian socio-
cultural and literary formations. These studies of South Asian diaspora in Australia is
still a rich and impressive gathering. It is hoped that utilising from the information
and experience of previous research and data more researches in the area of literary
studies will emerge and present a dynamic community in transit.

1.4 – Contextualising South Asian Diaspora Literature and the Genre of the
Short Story in Australia

The history of the world includes remarkable stories of migration in
every era. (Manning 1)

Migration has helped in building the much needed bridges within the various
communities by facilitating and enriching the daily cultural interaction between
various people in Australia. It is the migrants belonging to different and varied
cultures, from pioneering Settlers to penal colony convicts to Gold Rush diggers to
contemporary migrants, who have, on the one hand, helped Australia in developing a
unique culture of its own and also, on the other, made it share in an international
world culture to which it has itself contributed from the richness that it possess today based on that very uniqueness (see Grundy 107). In relation to the process of both physical and emotional migration of people, Philip Martin (1985), adopting George Orwell’s famous saying, observes: “all of us are migrants but some of us are more migrants than others” (133).

The wide spectrum of writings that we see in Australian Literature today shows that it has come a long way from the days of Anglo-Celtic dominance to an era of a literary culture that is much more representative of Australia’s migrant or multi-ethnic past and present. This has been made possible by multicultural writers asserting their own literary and cultural traditions in their work. These narratives/texts produced by authors belonging to diverse—both culturally and linguistically—ethnic backgrounds/communities have stimulated not only fascinating cultural dialogues but also a whole new area of critical perspective in Diaspora and Multicultural Studies. In a certain special way these writers and their writings have raised questions of re-defining and re-viewing the national canon. They have also tried to abolish categorisations and compartments of majority and minority literatures by making the mainstream accept their work as part and parcel of the truly “Australian made” experience. However, the “voices” of the early Indian subcontinental “coolies” or pioneer migrants themselves, according to Marie de Lepervanche (2007), an authority on migration from Indian subcontinent, are for the most part silent documents. She notes that the early South Asian migrants did not leave any journals, diaries, letters, memoirs or autobiographies and their lives as pioneer immigrants in Australia were very hard, often lonely and isolated. Yet, she asserts, their contribution to the economic success of Australia’s early industries, particularly pastoralism, must be acknowledged (see 99-116).

Today, the South Asian diaspora in Australia is continually growing and flourishing as one of the most prosperous communities, with an ever-increasing role and responsibility in all areas of society—law, engineering, the medical profession, literature, performing arts (music, dance, art, theatre, and films), economics, philosophy, sociology, history and other fields. David Carter (1997) has noted that “literature is not just a set of individual texts or authors but rather a set of institutions and institutional practices which regulate the making and transmission of (literary) meanings in a given society” (18). In the field of literature, all diaspora authors,
wherever they are present, are our very own world travellers, who have set foot in every known region and society of the earth. And their journeys and experiences have generated bridges and influenced the historical, cultural, social and academic perceptions of the ever-changing world society. Diasporans, who connect the Indian subcontinent and Australia, are of special relevance to both the countries—to India, which has a centuries old multi-cultural existence and continuous interaction/interconnection with its neighbouring (SAARC) countries combined with its plethora of languages, customs, discordant history and religious and regional diversity; and to Australia, which with its own rich and distinctive culture, provides space for the contribution of various successive immigrants and gives them political and economic stability.

In the section, I will focus on contextualisation of South Asian diasporic writers and their deep involvement in maintenance and reproducing aspects of their cultures in literature as “their identity is not separated from what happened” (Sarup 15). Literature is a world of greater complexity, an interaction between our own words and life, and therefore “both the creator and the critical analyst of diasporic consciousness” (Fludêrnik xxix). South Asian-Australian literary studies, evolved in the 1990s, aiming to define the critical discourse and expanding it to examine the politicised histories of exclusion and racism that these narratives critiqued.

In the Australian context literature has been divided into three major categories—Mainstream, Aboriginal and Multicultural. Often the last two categories are merged and we have only Mainstream and Multicultural writing in Australia. It is my contention that the latter is neither in competition with the Mainstream writing nor imitating it, but is providing “alternative” narratives of Australia—the land, the people, culture, etc. Moreover the use of the term “multicultural writing,” “migrant literature,” “minority literature” or “Asian-Australian” are homogenising terms. As the Danish critic Lars Jensen (2002) has remarked, the term “Asian-Australian literature,” as it is used in literary and academic circles alike, reflects the “blurred status” of South Asian, South East Asian and East Asian literature in Australian debates.

The British postcolonial scholar John McLeod describes the development of Commonwealth literary studies in *Beginning Postcolonialism* (2000) as:
One important antecedent for postcolonialism was the growth of the study of Commonwealth literature. "Commonwealth literature" was the term literary critics began to use from the 1950s to describe literatures in English emerging from a selection of countries with a history of colonialism. It incorporated the study of writers from the predominately European settler communities, as well as writers belonging to those countries which were in the process of gaining independence from British rule, such as those from the African, Caribbean and South Asian nations [...]. The creation of the category of "Commonwealth literature" as a special area of study was an attempt to identify and locate this vigorous literary activity, and to consider via a comparative approach the common concerns and attributes that these literary voices might have. (10-11)

Further, South Asian diaspora writing in Australia has been put under the literary label of "postcolonial migrant literature." This term can be applied to literary texts in which concepts of location and dislocation are central narratives (George 171). By taking political and ideological contents rather than formal attributes into account, postcolonial migrant literature, though referring more to a methodology than a genre category, characterizes literary texts written by authors from formerly colonized countries who have moved permanently to a metropolitan centre. However, these texts not only include first-generation authors who have spent a considerable length of time in a former colony but also second-generation authors who are still under the influence of the historical and political effects of a former colonial time. (S. Hussain 106)

To the literature of Indian subcontinental diaspora, Vijay Mishra (2006) appropriately applies Giles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s term "minor literature." He presents these five formal characteristics:

1. it removes the absolute link between peoples and mother tongues;
2. it places the writer in the midst of the greater concerns of the nation even when he or she may be seen as an outsider;
3. it voices, through a thoroughly nuanced use of English, something that belongs specifically to a diasporic group consciousness;
4. a minor literature does not come from a minor language but is something that a minority construes in the majority language, in this case predominantly English; and
5. it is also a literature conscious of the larger political agenda of the people who constitute its subject matter, and as a consequence is
often charged with the values of the diasporic community as a whole. (139)

Corkhill (1994) observes that in the 1970s the “actuality and reception of a corpus of literature” by Asian and South Asian-born authors “remained tenuous.” It was only after the late 1980s that “the social schisms had been eliminated” by South Asian migration to Australia in sufficient numbers to found “a serious, self-integrating, independent literature within the larger context of Australian writing” (68). There are, by 2009 more than eighty writers of South Asian origin, writing in English, who have published in Australia (see Bibliography of South Asian-Australian Short Stories). They have written across genres—novels, short stories, plays, radio plays, poetry, memoirs, and autobiographies. Although, riding on the wave of popularity of diaspora narratives the fact still remains that only very few of these authors are internationally known. This is not because of any lack of writing or promotional strategies employed by the publishers. There are some writers who are mostly first time or amateur authors, and are only able to contribute a story here and there as a result of their busy lifestyle and work schedule. For South Asian diaspora writers the publication scene is promising. According to Arnab Chakladar (2000), publishers in South Asia are today ready to take a risk in publishing new writers on “the Arundhati Roy factor”—that is “every once in a while one writer will come along who will break the bank and return all the investments” (197-198). In the South Asian writer’s moving away “from the margins to the centre of the bookshop” Nicholas Jose (2009) sees a moment of “creative opportunity” that has “empowered a new generation of writers and of receptive readers” (9). These writers of South Asian origin are nowadays also sought after in the South Asia despite the fact that they are “living in the diaspora.” As it is their “emotional, intellectual, and political ties with people, communities and events” in the Indian subcontinent that powerfully shapes their writing (Mankekar 57) and the notion of “home” exercises influence over these diaspora writers through its global economic, political and ideological power.

Moreover,

Mother India and her culture have, over the last few years, expanded their influence on Western society. Through the continued exposure of Bollywood films and Bhangra music, to that ubiquitous call-centre employee ringing to offer you cheap phone rates, India as a culture and
Chapter 1 – Introduction

society has loomed large in our broader cultural experience. (Velissaris 2007)

Amongst other authors, who have published widely, only a few like Mena Abdullah, Yasmine Gooneratne, Adib Khan, Chandani Lokuge, Suneeta Peres da Costa, Shalini Akhil, Christine Mangala and Subhash Jaireth have generated critical interest through their writings and are now relatively well known internationally. Their stories compose one's life, “the routes one decides to take, are the material out of which identity is constructed” (S. Hussain 113). They also reflect the broader dilemma of how to express a community’s hope and desires and package it for the outside world, or how to move from exploration of the self to the group. This literature centres on the issue of representation, an issue that preoccupies all groups constructed through difference, both inside and outside a nation (Radhakrishnan 1996). These authors, collectively, have certainly made an outstanding contribution to the literature of the South Asian diaspora and Australia on the whole by producing alternative accounts and images of both the regions.

These writers in their works have persistently raised concerns and issues in relation to the diasporic individual and identity in Australia. Yet, South Asian diaspora writers cannot be regarded as a homogeneous group as they differ in their country of origin, in their cultural and social backgrounds. Here is a list of authors who have produced a very important part of the South Asian diaspora literature in Australia.


- **Sri Lankan-Australian** – Yasmine Gooneratne, Chandani Lokugé, Chitra Fernando, Ernest MacIntyre, Dipti Saravanamuttu, Moses Aaron, Darshi Arachige, Derek Bartholomeusz, Devika Brendon, Keith Butler, Michelle De

- **Bangladeshi-Australian** – Adib Khan and Wayne Ashton.
- **Pakistani-Australian** – Hanifa Deen, Hima Raza, Azhar Abidi, and Irfan Yusuf.

According to the acclaimed Bangladeshi-Australian author Adib Khan (2002), in the last two decades or so, the “acceleration in the proliferation of cross-cultural voices in fiction” emphasizes “the diversity that reflects the type of society that Australia is” (3). The works of Anglo-Indian and Burgher writers too, with many others who might be writing in their mother tongue like Punjabi, Urdu, Bangla, Sinhala, Tamil or any other South Asian language, and the diversity they are creating is still waiting to be researched.

### 1.4.1 - Why Short Story?

The idea that the story survives even if you’re on a different continent. The stories are the things that come down from the other land, to the children that have been brought up here. (Cyrill, 1993: 24)

Here, I have analysed narratives produced between 1950-2008 in a specific genre—short stories, which “apart from positioning [...] all these writers in relation to Australian society,” have also helped to “engage the imagination in their own right, leading to insights, questions, and curiosity about human feelings and behaviour” (Bennett, 2001: vi). According to Sudha Rai (2002) the diasporic short stories not only helps, in some cases, in a “retreat from nostalgia from home country” but also “make an assault on the containing of the stereotypes of feminity or masculinity” (134-135) that are prevalent in a community. The job of a diaspora writer, also one of the dominant and central issue of creative writing that Raymond Williams (1970) has observed, then is the “exploration of community.” The short stories taken under study here explore the politics of location and analyse the dominant questions with
reference to the future and progress of South Asian diasporic community in Australia: “What community is, what it has been, what it might be; how community relates to individuals and relationships, how men and women, directly engaged, see within them or beyond them [ . . . ]” (Williams 132). The diaspora writers not only offer their own experiences but also of the South Asian and mainstream Australian community thus making them knowable and visible to a larger readership.

Writing on the “nature” of a short story and the “stuff it is made of,” Australian writer and critic, Brian James (1959) noted:

[ . . . ] a story must tell a story [ . . . ] a story must have a beginning, a middle, and an end. [ . . . ] it must be interesting and carry along with it a definite feeling of suspense that finds no relief till the very last [ . . . ] the ending of the story must be satisfying, unexpected, and yet inevitable [ . . . ] the desire to re-read a story is a good test of its success. If it stands re-reading, again and again, you may be sure there is something in it. Each re-reading, too, will add something new, some little slant or other on life that you had not quite see before. [ . . . ]

I would emphasize, therefore, that good stories, [ . . . ], are drawn from life, and their characters are living men and women: no matter from how long ago the stories come, the people in them never die [ . . . ]. (vii-viii)

The writers of the diaspora construct their identity as they tell their or a character's life-story, who become “living men and women.” In the process of diaspora writing not only fabrication but also “exclusion, stress and subordination” is carried out (Sarup 16). The purpose of the diaspora writer is to make the readers see, and also to take them directly to, the heart of the situation, as one of the major characteristics of a short story, according to Frank O'Connor, is that it “[ . . . ] springs from the heart of a situation rather than mounts up to and explains it” (qtd. in Hale 31).

But, instead of its more glamorous cousin novel, why write short stories? Critics like Hergenhan (2004) have noted that collections of short stories are difficult to market in Australia. Is this because they are no longer as popular with readers as they used to be? Or, is it because Australian publishers find it more profitable to publish novels? To Hergenhan the fact that some publishers package stories as “novels” suggests this is so. The literary discourse of South Asian Diaspora in Australia primarily consists of short story, poetry, and novel respectively; the genres of drama and autobiography are still developing and only handful in number. It can be
said that South Asian diaspora's literary corpus comprises of stories—stories of past, present and future of this community.

For the diasporic author, the short story is not just a creative mode of expression but it fulfils his/her need to constantly explain his/her position to fellow citizens of both the homeland and the hostland. It is also a means of showing solidarity with other diasporans around the globe. In this sense, the short story becomes a message sent to others, informing others about how they are faring in the new country, and also to fellow Australians. According to Bruce Bennett (2002), “stories of a culture can be thought of also in a popular image of bottles from the past washed up on the shore” (1) and for the South Asian reader, these diasporic “bottles” literally contain messages that are washed up on the sub-continental shores (see A. Sarwal 2006).

Moreover, for the diasporic author struggling to find space in the literary world, the genre of short story is the best stepping stone to be noticed and it is no wonder that the first literature produced by South Asians in Australia consists of short stories published in newspapers and magazines. At the same time it is easier for the reader to access a different kind of literature (here South Asian-Australian diasporic literature) through this “protean genre” (Bennett, 2002: ix). Conversely, Santosh K. Sareen (2001) observes, “this form, being an enormously flexible and varied narrative form, is the most accessible for initiating [the South Asian reader] into Australian literature” (vii). The short story, contrary to common belief, “is not merely a story told short it is a particular kind of literary construction” which is universal in nature (Prescott 13). Things or incidents mentioned in a short story are succinct and bind the readers to its immediate effect and therein rests its significance. Further, its being less descriptive than a novel provides the readers a “window” to open up their own imagination by touching, as Vance Palmer observed, “a myriad intimate nerve” of the reader (qtd. in Bennett, 2002: 4).

Borrowing, from Vijay Mishra, the notion of the “hawker-like-capacity” of South Asians to carry their ancestral and cultural baggage around, to lay it out in new contexts, Shyam Selvadurai writes in his introduction to *Story-Wallah: Short Fiction from South Asian Writers* (2005), “The effect is a marvelous cacophony that reminds me of […] one of those South Asian bazaars, a bargaining, carnival-like milieu. The goods on sale in this instance being stories hawked by story-traders: story-wallahs”
Chapter 1 – Introduction

(14). The “goods on sale” here are the “migrant or multicultural stories,” a generic category drawn together during the 1980s by critics such as Manfred Jurgensen, Peter Skrzyniecki and Sneja Gunew (see Gelder and Salzman 47).

Though my primary area of research is the short stories of the South Asian diaspora in Australia, I have also used for reference “faction” narratives, where fact or nonfiction fuses with fiction and produces “lived, factual experience rendered through a quasi-fictional approach” (B. Lal, “The Road to Mr Tulsi’s Store”: 45). According to Brij V. Lal, noted Indian-Fiji-Australian historian, “the rules of engagement” in short autobiographical narrative or faction narratives “are more flexible,” as “there is room for imaginative reconstruction” (B. Lal, “The Road to Mr Tulsi’s Store”: 45). These short autobiographical narratives were published as creative pieces written about life-experiences or the process of migration. It differs from an autobiography in that it isn’t the whole “story of my life” kind of approach so much as it is a descriptive story about a memorable event or time in the author’s life or an account of something meaningful that happened with him/her. The thoughts and feelings expressed about what happened are really important as it is a story of an experience and the process of identity changes, influenced by the migration experiences. Each work is significant from the point of view of content and issues, and deepens our understanding of the issues involved in migration, settlement and the diasporan experiences.

1.4.2 - Why I Write? – Reflections of Some South Asian Diaspora Writers

If you can tell stories, create characters, devise incidents, and have sincerity and passion, it doesn’t matter a damn how you write. (W. Somerset Maugham)

To write can be a way of putting oneself into the world and, in the process, creating a version of the world as lived and viewed [. . .]. (Khoo 13)

Before we proceed to the analyses of short stories, I would like to discuss the reflections of some South Asian diaspora writers on the art of story-writing and how and why they write.
Christopher Cyrill (1993) writes that his teacher Gerald Murnane was an "amazing influence" on his writing and who made him write his "own stories" (24). Although, he believes that "writers are born" (24) and rejections from editors and publishers a part of writer's life. In an interview with Tamara M. Athique (2003), on the purpose of storytelling, he observes, "I don’t think it’s theoretical."

I am trying to write about certain images that appeal to me and trying to entertain on the level of language. I’m not a plot writer. I’m not interested in plots basically. My narratives are associative rather than linear. I don’t see myself as anything more than hopefully some sort of juggler or magician with language who carries across some kind of truth, but not necessarily something that is going to change your life. (286)

The most celebrated writer of Sri Lankan origin Yasmine Gooneratne (1994) gives three reasons for writing. First, "I write because I enjoy it. The sheer act of writing is a source of great pleasure for me. In the process of writing poetry or fiction I begin to discover what my deepest concerns and desires are [. . . ]" (167). The second reason is her desire to "Create work that will do for its readers what my favourite books do for me: become life-companions [. . . ]" (167). And, thirdly, she as "a teacher and lover of the English language, [. . . ] wants to explore its creative possibilities [. . . ]" (167).

For Bangladeshi-Australian writer Adib Khan, the process of creating fiction was therapeutic. He says that his "writing life has merely intensified" his "curiosity about identity." He writes in "In Janus' Footsteps" (2002),

Writing fiction was purely accidental during a period of soul searching to know why I was so restless when I turned forty. There was a growing dissatisfaction with my professional life as a teacher and boredom with the predictability of my middle-class existence in a Victorian country town. I had reached that point of lethargic blandness where any desire for intellectual fulfillment was being blunted by an increasing indifference about the wider world. Underneath all of this was a kind of insurgency, a revolution from within that insisted I pay attention to myself. Well I made an effort to meet the real me by recording my reflections in fragmented bits of writing. Further, as a writer of literary fiction Khan (2003) feels that his purpose of writing is "narrow." He observes, "I am one of those writers who finds human fallibilities far more interesting than human virtues" (314). A statement to which all his works are an
evidence. On the benefits of being a migrant writer, Adib Khan notes: “You have a huge landscape to work from and I think you’ve got to take advantage of that. Or let’s say you have twin landscapes to work from. [... ] I realised that Australia is not a foreign landscape. I have been here thirty years. I have the advantage of living on a double block, and they are both mine” (315).

Chandani Lokuge (1994) says that she started writing to reflect on what was happening around her. She felt a certain empathy with the people, who were troubled both in Sri Lanka and Australia. She used their stories, experiences and snapshots of life to mix with her characters. Her stories are often based on what happened to people she knew (175) as she believes the world we live in is full of chaos and “fiction means giving that chaos some kind of order” (2004: 351). As a writer she feels that a “migrant’s double vision” is “one of the most energetic areas of the creative process because you have two cultures or three cultures from which to draw and you know each one quite well. So you are not really strange to it but at the same time you are little distanced” (2004: 349).

For Michelle De Kretser (2005), who started as a travel writer, interest in writing “began with a journey” (A2). She notes that long after her return from a trip of France,

The landscape I had encountered in those weeks kept their grip on my imagination. [... ] Fiction, like all my dreams, is rooted in metaphor. It visits us in disguise: as a landscape, a journey, a man whose face I didn’t see one summer morning. (A2)

She doesn’t use her hyphenated identity (Sri Lankan Burgher-Australian) to promote her works. She does not think that being a migrant writer is “limiting” but she does not see herself as one and wants her work to be assessed on its own merits (2004: 309-310).

The incessant traveller Hanifa Deen in “On Reinventing Oneself” (2001) writes that the “business of reinventing” herself “as a writer did not represent an abrupt change— I can see that now—it was more a work in progress.” She humourously notes:

If I were ever to write a memoir—which believe me—I will never do, I would lock myself away, tap into my stream of consciousness and pursue my inner monologue by looking for early traces of
dissatisfaction with my lot. And if I was a writer of fiction and couldn’t find any—why I’d invent them!

But as a writer of non-fiction, she does not have the liberty to invent events and characters. She further observes that like “many writers I have a weakness for metaphors and I often use the metaphor of the bangle. [. . .] In my books I tell of a world where women break their bangles and step into a new freedom where they have the space and the resources to reinvent themselves.”

Subhash Jaireth in “Jack and Jill Went Up the Hill . . .” (1997) notes that a diasporic writer, such as himself, is more like “a conjurer.” As “he was neither here nor there. He was a comma between the two, a hinge, a pause, an existential hiatus” (101).

For Satendra Nandan (1999) writing is like a homecoming: “in writing one reads life—the most precious four-letter word. English is not my mother tongue but I use it as a creative weapon of freedom. Writing, for me, is a remembered tin shack on a small river’s bank; it’s also hoeing your garden in Gunghalin full of echoes from other worlds” (10).

Brij. V. Lal, a historian and writer, says that for him the experience and process of “writing about unwritten pasts in a creative and imaginative way” is much “more intellectually challenging and emotionally rewarding” (“The Road to Mr Tulsi’s Store” 44). His writings are full of the indenture experience of his people. Since most of the earlier works were written by outsiders, he feels that he wrote about the same experience as an insider (possessing cultural knowledge and linguistic skills) to “really understand” himself and the “forces that formed” him. He wrote about things that were not written in historical documents and records. He started writing about “layers of experience that are very important to how a community defined themselves out of that experience of indenture into something else” (2004: 330). He calls his writing “faction writing”—“writing about a past that is real but undocumented because memory is not archived” (2004: 330).

Suneeta Peres Da Costa (2003) as a writer feels more concerned with the question and importance of language—“Is it here to help us communicate? And should it represent the madness of the world?” (372). She believes “it should” and to represent the madness is her “role as a writer” (372).
Sharmini Kannan (2002) says she wanted to write because it “was a passion.” She goes on to say that since she was unable “to talk,” she “soon discovered” that words on paper were my one way to communicate my deepest thoughts and desires. My writing became my breath, my sight, my hearing, my voice, my life and my power! Without it, I could not be heard. (6) She further believes that “stories are told through movement, they are exchanged in the production of things. They begin in the hands. They find their rhythms in the chopping, hammering, sewing, bathing, shuffling and tidying” (3).

So what makes them write?—Their sensitivity to what is happening around them, their understanding of pressing social and historical issues, and their attitude to life are some of the reasons. As Edward Said (2000) explains:

Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that—to borrow a phrase from music is contrapuntal. For an exile, habits of life, expression, or activity in the new environment inevitably occur against the memory of these things in another environment. Thus both the new and the old environments are vivid, actual, occurring together contrapuntally. (186)

The writers of South Asian diaspora, whatever their reasons of writing, do share their dreams, voices and most intimate memories with us. Their narratives, fictional, factional or autobiographical, have several dimensions. Thus creating “newer and more complicated transnational subjectivities that are fragmented and fissured and constantly on the move” (Dissanayake xviii).

1.5 – Conclusion

Migration in this rapidly globalizing world has not just spread the roots of diasporic literature deeper but also put it on a global level by concretizing it as a natural and inevitable result. South Asian-Australian writers have played an important role in the spreading of new ideas and thoughts. These writers through their short story and autobiographical narratives present “the clash of the new and the old worlds” (Paranjape, 2007: 354). They are also making possible an understanding of the diasporan culture and its outstanding contribution towards the cultures of both the home and the hostland vis-à-vis the diaspora cultures of the world more interesting
and vibrant. Thus making it obviously positive, to celebrate the achievements of the South Asian-Australians and others in their involvement in various forms to the process of building a liberal World.

However, it must be remembered that literary publication often has little to do with literary proliferation. South Asian-Australian diaspora studies have become more important as the movement of people has increased in magnitude and frequency. However the books, anthologies and articles commemorating the South Asian diaspora and their presence in Australia only points towards a nominal recognition. We still need to know more about and highlight the development of South Asian diasporic literature in Australia as a key part of this knowledge building process. South Asian diaspora through its literature has strongly stressed the benefits of immigration to Australian society through its ever increasing ethnic diversity. It is their presence that has made Australia more dynamic and cosmopolitan (see Castles 1992). Also these narratives produced from Australia deserve a special status in analyses of the social-cultural-economical-historical “narratives” produced by the South Asian Diaspora around the world. A clearer notion of politics of location will be required to distinguish the different kinds of “dislocation” the diasporans suffer psychologically and sociologically (see also Paranjape 2000). Literature acts as an instrument for the deployment of these often “complex discursive strategies” (see Huggan 2007). 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. In turn, these migratory experiences have created diasporic locations—of nostalgia, spatial identity, gender, family and class—that need to be read and explored in one interpretative framework i.e. politics of location (as discussed in Chapter two) that helps in examining the position of the migrant as a subject influenced by political, economic, cultural structures and processes in his/her environment thus affirming a community’s genuine right to self-identification.

In this thesis I am more interested, as pointed above, in making an attempt to understand the historical and contemporary socio-cultural contexts which modify the meaning of politics of location for South Asians in Australia. In this part of the Introduction I will provide an overview of the structure of the thesis and also cite the central problem for this research.
As discussed earlier, this thesis expands on the field of literary and cultural studies analysis and endeavours to interrogate the metaphysical and poietical notions of “roots” and “routes” as most of the diasporic journeys are essentially about settling down, about putting roots “elsewhere.” As pointed in discussion of Hergenhan’s views on short stories, it is no longer as “popular with readers as they used to be.” But these short migratory experiences, texts in which concepts of location and dislocation are central narratives, have also created metaphorical locations—spaces of nostalgia, marginality, gender—that need to be read and explored in one interpretative framework i.e. politics of location.

This thesis is an interdisciplinary endeavour indicating an existing necessity to address issues of a disparate literary culture within the Australian community. This research contributes to the body of the literature on South Asian diaspora writing in Australia. The aim of this study is to analyse and provide resourceful “background” information—historical and sociological—a knowledge of which provides indispensable aid in analysing the various images of India and Australia that materialize from the South Asian-Australian diasporan short stories presenting the rich subcontinental cultural heritage. Here my framework of analysis is not concerned with the writers’ personal history and biographical details but with the characters and situations that enliven their stories. This approach also leads towards an exploration of the “otherness” created for the readers in their fiction both in terms of people/characters and geography/living spaces.

The thesis has been divided into seven chapters including the Introduction and Conclusion. In the first chapter, Introduction, I have provided a background to the main arguments and history that is at the core of this thesis. It also presents my research methodology and engages with the existing research on this area. I use historical, social, political, economical, cultural and personal contexts as means of widening the scope of research, analysis and writing. Researchers examined in this chapter consciously provide a new direction to the dynamic field of research on the South Asian diaspora in Australia and its social, cultural, political, economical, and literary participation in the Australian society. The chapter also provided a brief history of migration from South Asia to Australia and Australian immigration policies towards various South Asian countries. Briefly over-viewing South Asian diaspora writing in Australia it also provides resourceful “background” information—historical
and sociological—a knowledge of which provides indispensable aid in analysing the various images of South Asia and Australia that materialize from the South Asian-Australian diasporan short stories presenting the rich subcontinental cultural heritage.

In the second chapter major theoretical frameworks like Immigration, Racism, Multiculturalism, Diaspora, South Asian-ness and some key terms are explored. The wider definition of diaspora by William Safran is used to provide context to the development of ideas on the diaspora. Safran suggests that the concept of diaspora be applied to expatriate minority communities whose members share several of the given characteristics. It is a definition used by postcolonialists and remains problematic, because “to speak of an Indian diaspora, is to insist on a claim to an essential psychological and historical unity that girds the spectacular spread of a people. A much more useful definition of diaspora is when it refers to both the historical and contemporary presence of people and their identities and representation who have origins in other areas of the world but make new worlds in their movements and migrations” (Prasad 3). The critical and theoretical works of Postcolonial critics such as Benedict Anderson, Stuart Hall, Khachig Tölölyan, R. Cohen, Isidore Okpewho, John A. Armstrong, Ken Gelder, Vijay Mishra, Avtar Brah, James Clifford, J. V. D'Cruz, Ashis Nnady, John Docker, D. Dayan, Bharti Mukherjee, Makarand Paranjape, Shiromi Pinto, Sunil Khilnani, Monica Fludernik among others are discussed. Chapter two also argues for a shift towards the study of politics of locations adding another dynamic dimension to the discussion of short narratives of diaspora. Locations do not merely refer to geographical locations but rather provide “a critical angle or perspective on cultural formations and emerging cultural capacities” (Chambers 27) of the South Asian diaspora in Australia. This chapter is concerned with the ways in which this shift is accelerated in Australia’s literary landscape by the South Asian diaspora writers who produce and cover politics of location in diverse forms and dynamics in different contexts—of space, memory, gender, family and class or race.

In South Asian diasporic short stories we see various versions of the homeland. Chapter three examines the formation of ideas like (lost) home, nostalgia, sense of belonging and diasporic identity represented through the ideas of time and journeys of the authors through memory i.e. how “roots” can be constructed by nostalgia for home. In Chapter four, the narratives are analysed in the light of
questions and issues that the spatial identities of the diasporans carry. In other words, South Asian diasporans’ experiences as presented in the narratives are analysed through politics of spatial location i.e. a migrant’s position within power hierarchies created through historical, political, economic, geographic and other socially stratifying factors in the new homeland and lost homeland is examined.

Chapter five engages with narratives that analyse how social, cultural, political and economic conditions of both the homeland (old home) and hostland (new home) affect the protagonists and shape their gender roles in the society. This chapter thus explores the representation of male and female protagonists in selected short stories and narratives of South Asian diaspora in Australia.

Family and Class issues have been of great interest for sociologists. Chapter six examines family and class relations as crucial sites for understanding South Asian diaspora literature. This chapter emphasises the ways in which the familial and class experiences of migrating and assimilating into Australia from the Indian subcontinent have affected the migrants’ choices in life. It is informed by an understanding of how the notions of family and class are constructed, the significance of family honour and class status, the role of the individual within the family and diaspora society, as well as gender and class divisions within the family and society.

Chapter seven, the Conclusion, puts together the observations and analyses of the previous chapters to show that these short stories dynamically present the cultural diversity within the South Asian community in Australia, and on the other hand, also their interaction with Australians and other migrant groups. These stories not only emerge as a “dynamic, prolific and innovative group of writing” but also present South Asian diaspora and its literature in Australia as an acknowledgement of the stage that South Asian studies and dialogue are essential for national productions and knowledge. The Conclusion also outlines possible areas of further scholarship in this area as such 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.

At the end I would like to mention the reason why I undertook this research. Makarand Paranjape in his Afterword to Shifting Continents/ Colliding Cultures: Diaspora Writing of the Indian Subcontinent (2000) notes that

instead of the diaspora writing India, I wanted India to write the diaspora. While, the diaspora, out of its own needs, compulsions, or
I found this statement quite interesting and started a journey to chart out the geography, needs, compulsions, or expediencies of South Asian diaspora in Australia and to locate South Asian-Australian fiction in the larger rubric of South Asian diaspora writing. At the very initial phase of my journey I found paucity of not just critical material but also lack of awareness about South Asian-Australian diaspora creative writing both in South Asia and Australia. So, in order to redress this problem I delved deeper into the frameworks and trends of this writing to see if these writers also capture the ideas of politics of location as reflected in their writings. And in order to address the above mentioned structure I not only rely upon the analysis of short stories but also refer to Australian government policies, theories from literary and sociology, blogs, websites, and newspaper reports and columns. Though now with a good number of research works being undertaken by South Asian authors in Australia who are also academics and literary critics this situation is headed for a change. The discipline of literary studies “has for a long time defined its subjects in national terms characterized by a cartographic ordering of cultural production” (Walters xii). This justifies a thesis on the South Asian diaspora narratives, a form of cultural productions produced from Australia. These narrative and cultural productions also form a part of the larger rubric of the social-cultural-economical-historical “narratives” produced by the South Asian diaspora around the world, as they also show how multiple locations become part of a broader question of negotiation within the community and self.

Endnotes

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

2 Cultural Antropologist Marije Braakman's research provides an insight in experiences of Afghans in Germany about home and belonging in relation to their attitude about returning to Afghanistan.

3 It explored the ways adolescent refugees understand their national and self-identities in the context of flight and relocation and the impact of education on the refugee condition.

4 Jacqueline Mosselson's more recent research, based on the same metaphor, examines the political and cultural impact of education in transitional, post-conflict states, specifically how youth may effect change through education and non-governmental organizations to heal the tragedies of war for future generations.

5 Here Levitt argues against summarily dismissing the power of being raised in a transnational social field. She observes that when children are brought up in households that are regularly influenced by people, objects, practices and know-how from their ancestral homes, they are socialised into its norms and values and they learn how to negotiate its institutions. They also form part of strong social networks. While not all members of the second generation will access these resources, they have the social skills and competencies to do so, if and when they choose. Capturing these dynamics, and tracking how they change over time, requires long-term ethnographic research in the source and destination countries.

6 See http://www.routestoroots.com/. This might be understood as the bazaar or bizarre model of diasporic culture (see Friedman 2002).

7 Rabindranath Tagore in a letter addressed to C. F. Andrews when contemplating a visit to Java.

8 As Kala Pani represents the taboo of the sea in Indian culture. Fear of crossing the Kala Pani also derives from the notion in Hinduism that it entailed the end of the reincarnation cycle, as the traveller was cut off from the regenerating waters of the
Ganges. Migration across this has often meant losing one’s caste privileges and having to reinvent oneself.

9 For a detailed study on the consequences of migration movements for Indian indentured labourers, see Ebr.-Vally 2001.

10 Student migration is an example where “migrants become agents creatively opening routes into Australia using regulations that were put in place for other purposes” (Voigt-Graf 155).


12 According to Associate Professor Richard Roberts from the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Wollongong, there is little consensus between researchers about the timing of this event, estimates pertaining to this initial occupation range from 125,000 years before present to as recent as 40,000 years ago, see “When did Australia’s Earliest Inhabitants Arrive?” (2004).


After migration to various countries, Anglo-Indians felt that their identity was disappearing rapidly; therefore to protect it from vanishing completely a number of associations have sprouted in many countries. In Australia, the Anglo-Indians have formed associations in order to trace both their Indian and British origins and to preserve their cherished values and culinary lifestyles that are a result of their mixed heritage and provide them with a social and cultural bond with this heritage. A few examples of such Associations that are making Anglo-Indians proud of their heritage are The Anglo Indian Guild of Victoria, The Anglo-Indian Association of Victoria, Anglo Indian Institute of Western Australia, The Anglo-Indian Association of NSW, and The Australian Anglo-Indian Association. As Australian people they have merged into the wider culture.


The work of Pratibimb – Indian Cultural Community of Australia (ICCA), a non-profit organization on popular networking website is also commendable. Its
membership is open to all and aims to be a reflection of the Indian population in Australia. The objective, according to its creator Navneet Choujar is to “bring together talented individuals/groups under an umbrella to protect and promote them, and evoke the diversity of the rich Indian cultural heritage. There are no religious boundaries, no caste barriers; we do not speak about political affiliations or financial tie ups. Let us come together with a common cause—our culture!” (http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=118558284832134).


21 Pakistan-born Australians have also played a significant role within local Muslim organisations, and have contributed to the development of independent Muslim schools and language programs throughout Australia. A number of Pakistani associations also support this community, the oldest being the Pakistan Australia Association (PAA) formed in 1959.


23 For a detailed discussion on Sri Lankan Burgher migration, see Ferdinands 1995; Vanden Driesen and Vanden Driesen 1997;

For a detailed discussion of the changing nature of Australian Immigration Policy, see http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/08abolition.htm.

The community has active social and cultural networks such as the Australia Bangladesh Council of Victoria (ABCV), which promotes Bangladeshi culture and supports newly arrived migrants. Similarly, the Bangladesh Australia Association, Canberra, is an integral part of the Canberra multicultural community that represents people of Bangladeshi origin. For more than two decades the Association has been a strong participant in Canberra’s multicultural life and has actively promoted cultural diversity and harmony in the Canberra community. Bangladeshi-Australians have also lend a helping hand in the economic development of Bangladesh and in forging Australia-Bangladesh relations because of the repatriation of foreign earnings, highlighting key business areas in which Australian entrepreneurs should be interested and by providing a platform for bilateral cooperation in other fields between the two countries.


Other prominent associations include the Nepal Australia Friendship Association (NAFA) formed in January 1989 in Queensland (a non-political, non-profit aid organisation dedicated to assist communities and individuals with projects that improve the quality of life in Nepal), the Nepalese Association of Victoria (established
in 1997, aims to promote the interests of all people of Nepalese origin living in Victoria and also to promote Nepali culture, heritage and goodwill between Australia and Nepal), the Gorkha Nepalese Community and the Nepalese-Australian Welfare Association (both located in Sydney) have also been playing a key role in promoting awareness about Nepalese communities in Australia. On a lighter note, perhaps, one might note that the one "Nepali" phenomenon that has most vividly registered upon Australia has been the Nepali-run restaurants in various states of Australia—Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne and Brisbane—these have helped publicise, in however limited a fashion, the kingdom’s rich cultural heritage in Australia.


30 The Australia-Bhutan Friendship Association (ABFA) works hard to promote relations between Bhutan and Australia, with a very consistent, well defined and focused programme of co-operation. Australia’s support for a number of development programmes in Bhutan through its aid programmes and projects like building roads, education, and providing better health care services has also brought the two countries together.


33 The discovery of South Asia diaspora literature as a field of study by the Australian academia can be dated back to a symposium held at the University of Western Australia in 1987, where critics explored the theme of exile in literatures and cultures of the Asia-Pacific region (see Bennett 2006; Helff 2009; Sarwal and Sarwal 2009).

34 For a more extended discussion of the politics of the Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas gatherings, see V. Lal 2003; Kudaisya 2006.

35 Samvad India Foundation, a non-profit, Public Charitable Trust has instituted the “Raja Rao Award,” to honour and recognise writers (including scholars and critics)
who have made an “Outstanding Contribution to the Literature of the South Asian Diaspora.” It has been given to Yasmine Gooneratne (2001) and Vijay Mishra (2008)—an achievement for South Asian-Australian diaspora.

36 Includes Indian-Fijian authors now settled in Australia.

37 For a detailed discussion on idea, meaning and form in short story, see Hale 1963.


39 The concept of globalization and diaspora formation is clearly an ongoing process related to global flows (see Kelly 1998).

40 The information related to the thesis and dissertations under analysis is drawn from library research at Monash University.