CHAPTER TWO

LABELS AND LOCATIONS:
UNDERSTANDING CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORKS FOR STUDYING
SOUTH ASIAN DIASPORA LITERATURE IN AUSTRALIA

2.1 – Labels
According to Wikipedia “Labeling” is describing someone or something in a word or short phrase. Labeling theory is concerned with how the self-identity and behavior of an individual is influenced by how that individual is categorised and described by others in his society/community. It focuses on the linguistic tendency of majorities to negatively label minorities or anyone seen as deviant from norms of a community/society. However, the use of the term labeling is often intended to highlight the fact that the label is a description applied from the outside, rather than something intrinsic to the labeled thing. This can be done for several reasons—to provoke a discussion about what the best description is; to reject a particular label; and to reject the whole idea that the labeled thing can be described in a short phrase. According to Sabina Hussain (2004), labels such as multicultural or postcolonial or migrant literature used in Australia, “operates in multifarious ways and indicates the historically derived political orientation in the country and its struggle over identity formation” (105). However, these literary labels are also important as I am more interested in the discursive practices of social integration and exclusion. Labels such as Racism, Diaspora, and South Asian are often used in the terminology of nation formation for labeling the majoritarian migrant groups—always the socio-cultural “Other.” In relation to the development and use of terms like racism, exile, diaspora, expatriate, immigrant, and multiculturalism as a result of immigration and socio-political experiences, it can be argued that although the same words or terms are being used in many parts of the World they may apply differently or “delineated a sharply different social space within each nation-state” (Hage, 2005: 491; see also Alomes 2009).

Similarly, according to sociologist Howard S. Becker (1963), the developer of Labeling Theory, difference or deviance is not inherent to an act, but instead focuses
on the linguistic tendency of majorities to negatively label minorities or those seen as deviant from socio-cultural norms. This theory is concerned with how the self-identity and behaviour of individuals may be determined or influenced by the terms used to describe or classify them, and is associated with the concept of a self-fulfilling prophecy and stereotyping. For example, society may use more specific labels such as “racist” to demonstrate more clearly after the event the extent of its disapproval of the person as having offended against their social or moral norms of behavior. But there is a slightly mechanical determinism in asserting that the application of a label will also invariably modify the behaviour of the one labeled. Within this, the other side of the coin is the problems related to the stereotyping of the victim. Personal factors such as age, gender, race, nationality, social class, his/her roles and functions in social interactions with majoritarian community, and the neighborhood where the victim lives or the racist attack took place, are used to profile the victim and his/her community, by which an individual’s self-image is affected severely.¹

The labeling theory further suggests that people obtain labels from how others view their tendencies, behaviours or socio-cultural practices. American philosopher, sociologist and psychologist George Herbert Mead (1982) argued that the self is socially constructed and reconstructed through the interactions which each person has with the community. Each individual is aware of how they are judged by others because he or she has attempted many different roles and functions in social interactions and has been able to gauge the reactions of those present. This theoretically builds a subjective conception of the self, but as others intrude into the reality of that individual’s life, this represents objective data which may require a re-evaluation of that conception depending on the authoritativeness of the others’ judgment.

Many philosophers and historians have grappled with challenges of understanding the “Other.” Edward Said, making his overall statement about cultural discourse, in *Orientalism* (1978) writes:

> how does one represent another culture? What is another culture? Is the notion of a distinct culture (or race, or religion, or civilization) a useful one, or does it always get involved either in self-congratulation (where one discusses one’s own) or hostility and aggression (when one discusses the “other”)? Do cultural, religious, and racial differences matter more than socio-economic categories, or politico-historical
ones? How do ideas acquire authority, “normality,” and even the status of “natural” truth? (325-326)

Australian historian Inga Clendinnen (2003) notes “one of the most difficult things to do in the world is to get a grip on our own pre-conceptions, assumptions, unexamined convictions” about others (9). Added to this, factors such as the race, gender, class, family, community, etc. or in other words the location of an individual or group within a society can also give rise to problems of stereotyping or many other social prejudices. It is in these “social acts” and “social manipulations” that the perspectives and responses of “Others” towards “Us” can be exchanged. Negative stereotyping or racism is very important to social theory as it involves the interaction of many individuals or groups at the level of communication, action and environment.

Similarly, terms like Diaspora and South Asian, used often as literary categories, also facilitate individuals to participate in the different social positions within an existing mainstream society and sometimes self-consciously address their given roles of belonging and non-belonging. Sabina Hussain has argued that,

Borders between literary categories are established through the process of labelling which gives recognition to varied forms of literary productions and establishes definitions of (non) belonging. The application of the label creates specific spaces, thereby defining literary designations, which, in addition, reflects imaginaries of national belonging. (104)

Labeling theory thus as a socio-psychological-cultural model can help us in identifying and coping with labels, and analyze how the roles of majority and minority are determined in hostland by the terms—Racism, Diaspora, South Asian—used for classification. In the discussion that follows I will try to establish some of the key differences in the use of these three terms and their importance in the study of Australia and South Asian diaspora.

2.1.1 – Racism

It can hardly be denied that ignorance and prejudice towards Asian nations, cultures and peoples has figured prominently in our history.

(Walker, 2007: 313)

[... ] the whisper on Asian streets, in cities, towns and villages, is that Australia is a racist country. (D’Cruz and Steele 81)
With its weird red earth and its alien flora and fauna—the eucalyptus trees and kangaroos—Australia was the eighteenth-century equivalent of Mars. (Ferguson 2003)

Australia—the world's largest island and smallest continent is often distinguished from the rest of the world by its history—"a colony populated by people whom Britain had thrown out [but who] proved to be so loyal to the British Empire for so long" and its geography—"red earth and its alien flora and fauna" (Ferguson 2003; my italics). As noted in Chapter one, the history of Australia is also marked by an important phenomenon in the history of mankind—Migration. Australia has, through migration, developed into one of the world's most culturally diverse societies. This increased diversity has brought with it many new cultural experiences, and has undoubtedly made Australia a more vibrant and multicultural place.

Manfred Jurgensen (1986) claims that "with the arrival of the white man this country became multicultural on a permanent basis" (80). We know in a settler society, "everyone is either a migrant or a self-conscious descendant of a migrant" (van der Veer 2). This ethnic and racial diversity in Australia has also resulted in some cases Australia's confrontation with racism or negative stereotyping of the "Other" (see Castles 53). Today, social prejudice and racism are the two very unpleasant practices that are prevalent in both multicultural and monocultural societies throughout the world. Perhaps, in contemporary times, "this is a communal reaction to fear, a backlash against globalization that is perceived to be a threat to national identity" (A. Khan 2001). Therefore a diverse society founded on migration does bring with it a range of ever-changing issues and challenges. The question that begs to be asked is: Is Australia a racist country? According to Chris Gilligan (2009), everyone agrees that racism is "a scourge, a malignant cancer which eats away at the body of a healthy society." But we don't all agree about what racism is. Well the perception towards racism also depends on which dictionary definition you take into view. Defining racism in the Australian context is a difficult task as it is not a static notion:

- According to the Oxford English Dictionary — racism is a belief or ideology that all members of each racial group possess characteristics or abilities specific to that race, especially to
distinguish it as being either superior or inferior from other racial
group or racial groups.

- According to the Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary – racism is a
belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and
capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent
superiority or inferiority of a particular racial group, and that it is
also the prejudice based on such a belief.

- According to the Macquarie Dictionary – racism is the belief that
human races have distinctive characteristics which determine their
respective cultures, usually involving the idea that one’s own race
is superior and has the right to rule or dominate others.

Racism or social prejudices are a lived reality for many people in this part of the
world, but it remains largely a silent or invisible issue. According to the Australian
government, there is no real evidence that racism as “ideology” or as a “belief” or as a
“dominant attitude” or as a “state policy” (like apartheid) is increasing in Australia.

But in the past two years it has been expressed in more open and violent ways towards
Asians particularly Indian subcontinental students (see Castles 1992; Dunn 2003; G.
Hassan 2005; J. Ghosh 2009). The question that begs to be asked here is—Is it
necessary that racism be institutionalised? Going back once again to the
academic/scholarly definitions of racism, some sociologists have defined racism as a
system of “group privilege”—prejudice plus power. The perpetuation of racism, as
Ghassan Hage (2002) points out, is a collective social act and not the responsibility of
individuals only:

Violent racists are always a tiny minority. However, their breathing
space is determined by the degree of “ordinary” non-violent racism a
government and culture allow to flourish within it. (247)

Similarly, in Portraits of White Racism (1993), David Wellman has defined racism as
“culturally sanctioned beliefs, which, regardless of intentions involved, defend the
advantages whites have because of the subordinated position of racial minorities” (x).

Sunil Badami (2008), an Indian-Australian short story writer, recollects his
growing up years in Australia being one of only three Indian kids at school, who were
often called by diverse names such as “Curry-muncher, towel-head, abo, coon, boong,
darkie, nig-nog, golli-wog” (9-15). The assertions of white dominance, apart from
these derogatory terms, has also resulted in “curry bashing,” which refers specifically
to racist activities in which a section of Australians have engaged in the past few
years—beating up or opportunistic attacks, totally unprovoked and random acts of violence that not necessarily involve robbery on Indian students or towards South Asians as common to this (see Baas 2009). This race-based prejudice, violence and dislike towards a particular minority group denote “racism.”

However, there also exists significant protest against such incidents and support for the South Asian community (see Northrop 2010).

The ambiguity of such a situation is clearly reflected in the words of Sangeeta, one of the interviewed second-generation Indian women in Vijaya Joshi’s book *Indian Daughters Abroad* (2000):

> I think to be accepting of other people is a typically Australian trait. [. . .] Australians are willing to accept all the different cultures. I know people will disagree with me on that point. (139-140; my italics)

She quickly adds:

> Maybe now they’re not so accepting because economic times are bad; competition is greater. Now maybe they’re starting to begrudge the fact that people from other nations are coming in, doing better. That is leading to some negative things about migrants. (140; my italics)

Although an “accepting” nation but the sudden realization in the times of economic recession has made Australians suspicious of “people from other nations” that are “coming in.” This sudden realization, takes us directly into the psychological definition of racism that is also related to the growing visibility of South Asians today in almost every city of Australia that as a phenomenon was absent say three-four decades ago (see also G. Hassan 2005).

So, is racism an “attitude” or an irrational form of bigotry that exists apart from the organization of social structure in some fringe groups only? With reference to this, Ghassan Hage (1998) has persuasively suggested the utility of the binary concepts of “spatial managers” and the “spatially managed.” The “spatial managers” are those who feel empowered to express an opinion about the country, and about who belongs, and who should be allowed into the national space. The “spatially managed” are those who have opinions expressed about them, where they should be put, what they’re doing, where they should be sent back to, etc. Recent events tend to indicate that some groups of Anglo-Australians acted as “spatial managers” by reviving racism using symbols of “white supremacist” views that are relics of the past and cultural hegemony for presenting a tendency of opposition and intolerance.
towards multiculturalism and multicultural symbols of state policy. It is a known fact that all communities use symbols to make themselves visible (or audible!). But nations “don’t make symbols: people do.” The symbols that “seek to foster unity within Australian society” are “sometimes used to discriminate between who is Australian and who isn’t” (Harper and White 2). Similarly, the earlier colonial way of symbolizing non-belonging or representing the South Asian migrants was that they were “heathens, lazy, cunning and quarrelsome,” who tended to cling tenaciously to their culture in order to make up for the loss on economic front or to cope with their status loss on the social front; that they were so carried away by their desire to grab wealth and power that they had no compunction at throwing the natives out of employment and power in the latter’s own hands; and, that their difficulties in foreign countries were largely of their own making. (Sharma 45)

This representation or negative labeling is a sad excuse to justify racial abuse, exploitation, and ignorance about “Other” communities’ positive role in the development of a nation (see Alatas 1977). These situations have in some cases made migration to Australia from South Asia an increasingly complex phenomenon, as many migrants have to overcome psychological and sociological barriers, whether erected by passive tolerance or difference blindness, in their quest to make Australia their home.

The South Asian diaspora in Australia today is “still developing, growing in number and diversity almost by the day” (Voigt-Graf 142). As discussed in detail in Chapter one, South Asians have migrated to Australia as workers, professionals, and students—for better studies, infrastructure, jobs, a better life, and a better future. Compared to other migrant groups, South Asians have not formed ghettos in Australia and till a few years back were not “subject of direct racial abuse” (Joshi 18) or racial violence. But despite the two-centuries-long history, race now has started acting as a problematic issue, “with its complex manifestations” in the daily lives of the diasporans as sometimes “it goes unacknowledged, let alone articulated,” the result being “a blind, often intense racism” and unfounded racial prejudice towards South Asian community (Bhattacharjee 176; see also Stratton and Perera 2009).

This blind racism, prejudice and ignorance towards South Asian community has also sparked a debate on popular networking website Facebook (see Ghosh 2009),
reminding one of the 1981 “Blainey Debate” (see Appendix 4). To reputed historian Geoffrey Blainey, immigrants and their multifarious cultures appeared to receive favoured treatment over native-born Australians. He further warned his fellow Australians of the danger of continued high levels of Asian immigration and particular unease over increased South Asian migration (see Langfield 36). The fear of the “Other” has also been effectively transformed into political capital by the notorious Pauline Hanson and her One Nation Party—who tried to homogenize the official narrative by forcing one nation, one culture (see Gopalkrishnan and Babacan 3).

According to Monika Fludernik (2003) these “hate crimes are the reverse of a medal whose obverse portrays individuals who define themselves as representative of their respective (diasporic) communities” (xxii). The recent racist attacks on Indian students and taxi drivers, often stereotyped as representative of the South Asian community in Australia, or hostility towards recent immigrants from other ethnic communities, as already pointed out above, is an ambiguity. I would like to ask here, whether Benedict Anderson’s (1983) claim that “nation is imagined as limited” fits well for the Australian state too? Because Australian state that proposes to understand its various communities and at least a section of its people, who ironically belonging to both the majority and minority groups, fail to understand the “finite elastic boundaries, beyond which lie other nations” or “imagined communities” (Anderson 7) within Australia. It also fails or pretends not to understand that “[U]ltimately it is [the] fraternity that makes it [nation] possible” (Anderson 7).

In Australia the contemporary forms of racism and discrimination have shifted their focus away from biological notions of racism to cultural notions. These are referred to as “new racism” that includes cultural dimension, ethnic linkages and assertion of certain religious beliefs (see Gopalkrishnan and Babacan 5). Renata Salecl (1994) observes that old racism was a direct form of slotting people into essentialist categories so that the “Other” was really a threat against “Us.” In new racism, cultural difference is highlighted and it acts as a “natural” determinative force that “locks individuals and groups a priori into their cultural genealogy” (12). It is then not a product of ignorance in the way it used to be earlier. Today racists blame their socio-economic environment for their acts thus projecting themselves and creating victims of circumstances.
According to Chik Ling (2004) “the main problem with Asian-Australian communities and politics” is that they are “largely voiceless” (152). And thus “accepting their political position of powerlessness, the Asians quietly pursue their occupations” (Tinker 11). The silence has been there in spite of a long presence and various success stories in Australia. In Australia, migrants from Indian subcontinent represent a highly qualified group engaged in professional occupations (see Voigt-Graf 155). Also, South Asia has been targeted by Australian educational institutions, “often organizing aggressive marketing campaigns,” and efforts have been “successful” as far as “India’s burgeoning middle class is concerned” (Voigt-Graf 153). Moreover, Salim Lakha (2005) notes, that 79% of Indian residents in Australia take up citizenship (see 385-387), which is applicable to other South Asian groups as well (see Appendix 1 – Table 2). The recent racist attacks on Indians in Australia have made the South Asian diaspora come out of the shadow, become visible and voice its concerns (see Appendix 3).

The question of “how visible” South Asian diasporas or its writers are in Australia is very important (see Gelder and Salzman 49). As majority of the South Asian diaspora writers studied in this thesis, except for a few, are probably “little-known in the Australian literary community,” which testifies to show “how Anglo-Celtic, and Anglo-Australian,” the “community has been and still is” (Gelder and Salzman 49). However, these writers and stories represent the growing heterogeneity of South Asian-Australian diasporic voices thus reminding the scholars of diaspora and multicultural studies that “racism is not the whole story, but neither can it be expunged from the story” (D’Cruz and Steele 66).

Although my central concern, much narrower, in this thesis is restricted to an exploration of the politics of location in the genre of South Asian diasporic short stories in Australia, it is well worth exploring the process of immigration and the social attitudes of Australians (both majority and minority groups) towards South Asians particularly post recent racist (or “opportunistic violence” as it was referred to by the concerned Australian authorities) attacks on the students from the Indian subcontinent. In an interview Arnold Zable (2008), son of Polish-Jewish refugee parents, responding to the question on the anti-Greek riots in Kalgoorlie during World War I, notes that because of such violent attacks and hate crimes the islanders who
came to Australia felt that they are really not a part of the Australian society. He further says:

These riots are among our hidden narratives, darker episodes in Australian history that have been overlooked or conveniently forgotten. The riots, related incidents, and general distrust towards “foreigners” did alienate many immigrants and it took a long time to build a sense of trust and belonging.21

White Australian literature22 abounds in examples of “darker episodes in Australian history” which helped in a nationalistic self-definition through racially stereotyping the “Other”—in major cases the Asian (see Broinowski 1992; Walker 1999). This according to Graham Huggan (2007) is so because “for all the ideological force of White Australia, Australian literature has no more been a relentless propaganda-machine for the production of racial and cultural stereotypes than has any other national literature” (26). Similarly, the Australian government,23 police24 and media’s response25 to the racist attacks on South Asians present how quickly they have created a “well-fortified psychological defence mechanism” (Nandy, 2003: 6). The hypocrisy of the Australian authorities on racial and human rights violations has been well pointed out by D’Cruz and Steele (2003). They observe a huge “gap between white Australian rhetoric on human rights violations outside Australia (say, in Asia) and its own failure on human rights issues within Australia, especially towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people [ . . . ]” (9). This according to Hodge and Mishra (1991) is the continuing history of racism in Australian society and culture that is marked by the best known Australian mainstream writers’ inadequacy and skirting of the issue of racism in their works and thereby confirming to social prejudices and a cultural amnesia as a “defining quality of the Australian mind” (14; see also Huggan 31). Furthermore in Australian media and literature, South Asia is inscribed, “positively or negatively,” according to Australia’s “definition of itself, past, present and becoming” (Jose 9).

So, are South Asians becoming “victims of circumstances in the lands where they settle” (Tinker ix)? Is the hard work and resulting affluence of South Asians becoming a problem for a section of Australian population? And are the diasporans “regarded in terms of “images” or “stereotypes”? The roots of contemporary racism are deeply steeped in historical processes. Contemporary racism and intolerance of specific cultural groups in Australia is likely linked to historic constructions of
Australian national identity (see Rajkowski 1987; Rizvi, 1996; Dunn 2003). David Walker in *Anxious Nation* (1999) presented an examination of Australian responses to Asia (1850-1939) and demonstrated how the idea of “Asia” then was essential for an “invention” of an Australian nation. Today, in the era that is historically post-colonial, colonial attitudes and representations continue to circulate in Australia (see Alatas 1977; D’Cruz and Steele 2003). Graham Huggan’s question—Is Australia still postcolonial?—becomes relevant under present circumstances. Australia is a product of British colonialism, a settler society, populated by people whose ancestors travelled from elsewhere during and after colonial period (Stratton and Ang 135). Its “cultural, political and economic ties with Britain remain strong” (Huggan 27). So, the “virus of Australian racism,” according to D’Cruz and Steele, arrived possibly “as an unwitting cultural inheritance of the British imperial and racist mantle in the 18th and 19th centuries” (59). They further note that the lava of racism is always there in Australia and for some periods it may be publicly inactive; mostly it splutters and simmers below the surface. From time to time the lava of Australian racism bursts forth, singeing mainstream Anglo relations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Asian others, before again receding to a quite simmer. (66)

Moreover, racism in Australia has been documented since the arrival of Europeans in 1788—in fact “settlement was based on racism.” White settler opposition and racism was seen also in the violent riots of 1857 and 1880s.²⁶ According to Castles (1992):

In the colonial period, *settlement was based on racism and genocide* against the aboriginal population, while the colonies were integrated into the British Empire as suppliers of raw materials, such as wool, wheat and gold. The imperial state took an active role in providing workers for expansion through convict labour, assisted passages, and the encouragement of free settlement. When the surplus population of Britain was insufficient for Australian labour needs from the mid-nineteenth century, Britain supported Australian employers in their demand for cheap labour from elsewhere in the Empire: China, India and the South Pacific Islands. [...] Hostility towards Chinese and other Asian workers took on a violent character. The exclusionary boundaries of the emerging Australian nation were drawn on racial lines, and one of the first Acts of the new Federal Parliament in 1901 was the introduction of the White Australia Policy. (53-54; my italics)
Immigration control through Immigration Restrictions Act (1901), popularly known as the White Australia Policy, was in many ways institutionalised racism. This tradition of racism towards non-Europeans and any non-British nationalities was carried forward for a long time. It must be remembered that the granting of citizenship to Aborigines (1967) and the abolition of the White Australia Policy (1973) are still events in recent history and the "deeply ingrained racial stereotypes—such as the concept of the 'yellow peril'—have yet to be overcome" (Castles 68) by Australians. Also, the various census figures clearly demonstrate that Australia will remain "a predominantly European country" with respect to its ethnic composition well into the twenty-first century (see Appendix 2). The demographic facts are indeed "a far cry from the myth of 'Asianisation' of Australia arising from claims made by One Nation and other groups such as Australians Against Further Immigration" (Jayasuriya and Pookong 21). This threat or fear of "Asia" or mass generalizations about the "idea" which is Asia and of "Asian hordes" is well commented upon by the noted Australian historian David Walker in his in-depth and critical study *Anxious Nation*. Walker reveals an unfounded fear of "Asianisation" of Australia. In the cases that recently happened in Australia, it can be said that "it is easier to come from immigrant stock than to be an immigrant" (Israel 376).

As a settler society, Australia depended, on sustained immigration for its economic development and national security (see Stratton and Ang 151). W. M. Hughes stated in 1901 that "our chief plank is, of course, a white Australia. There is no compromise about that! The industrious coloured brother has to go—and remain away" (qtd. in Langfield 31). On the issue of South Asian immigration, James Jupp (1988) has rightly observed, that it has been "a constant theme in Australia since 1788 but has often been curiously overlooked or under-stressed by historians" (3). The White Australia policy's infamous European language test was partially devised with Indians (who were known to be fluent in English) in mind. The question then is, does racial prejudice still remain a feature of Australian society i.e. despite the existence of anti-discriminatory legislation, various multicultural policies and "the rhetoric about equity and access" (Langfield 37; see also Hugo 136)? The Australian state now, according to Stratton and Ang (1998), shamelessly flirts, for economic reasons, with the idea of "enmeshment with Asia," the cultural status of Australians of Asian descent in
“multicultural Australia” is still a fragile one. While [...] migrants of Asian region are now considered an integral part of Australia’s ethnic mix, these groups are still collectively racialised whenever a wave of moral panic about Asian immigration flares up. At such moments, the old collusion of race and culture is reinstated. (159)

So, the now common assertion that “Australia has always been a multicultural society” is both “trite and historically misleading” (Stratton and Ang 157).

Rowan Ayres (1997), a former BBC producer resident in Australia, puts the Australian concern and anxiety in these words:

Australians still think their territory is being eroded. Strangers, foreigners, whatever you like, are beginning to take over the country. And I think that is turning them into a slightly anxious, slightly frightened and slightly racist kind of nation. (7)

On the same issue, writing from a different perspective, Australian social researcher Hugh Mackay (1993) concludes that underlying the widespread sense of “anxiety” about their cultural identity which a large number of Australians suffer as they adapt to life is a symptom of the “age of redefinition” (16-17; see also D’Cruz and Steele 34). So, keeping in mind the above arguments and debates it is not wrong to say that “except perhaps in South Africa, the ideology of racial superiority was probably more powerfully developed and imposed in Australia than in any other settler country” (Melleuish and Stokes 113).

Juxtaposing two very different pictures, sadly, while South Asians were and are being episodically targeted by racist attacks in Australia, significantly, “voices of many Australians remain silent, and among these are some recognised in Asian cities soliciting favours in business dealings of various types, including educational and development projects” (D’Cruz and Steele 11). So, if racism still remains in the thinking and attitudes of many Australians, the lack is also on the part of people across the cross-section of Australian community who have not pressurised the government and other organizations for reforms and maintenance of racial harmony. On the other hand, this lack is subsumed by the kindness or positive action of some and assertions like Rajender Singh Gabbi’s (1998), that

Australia is a “lucky country” as it is free from any social infighting or unrest and it is safe. It is a country of opportunities and anyone who has self confidence and determination to do better, can be successful. (185)
There have been similar claims by smaller groups who have also successfully carried out campaigns through e-mails and popular networking websites like Facebook for racial harmony and tolerance (see Northrop 2010). These people (of both South Asian and Australian origin) reflect a positive image of Australia: “Australia [that] provides migrants with a secure environment, freedom from political persecution, opportunities for education and training, and the possibility of a better life” (Langfield 28), thus presenting how Australia represents future opportunities for students, businessmen and professionals. But the proponents of “closer trading ties with Asia” often face “vociferous and often vituperative opposition from Australian nationalists” (Walker, 2007: 320).

On the other hand a significant question arises that was also raised by D’Cruz and Steele: Why Australian textbooks, particularly history text-books, often fail to highlight the positive contributions made to Australia by South Asians? During Prime Minister Howard’s national speech on 26th January 2006, he called for a “root and branch renewal of the teaching of Australian history in schools” and also talked about a “coalition of the willing” to undertake this task. His concerns related to the limited time devoted to Australian history in the curriculum and a focus on themes and issues at the expense of chronology and narrative. However, South Asian diasporas capacity to contribute on an equal footing to Australian cultural life was again neglected. As Deborah Henderson (2004) notes: “Given such global and regional realities it seems puzzling that the Howard government does not advocate the study of Asia in the education system and support education policies for future generations to be interculturally skilled” (9). She further notes that Australian students “must be prepared for the rewarding and complex challenge of engaging with the Asian region and Australia’s Asia-knowledge base should be supported by specific school-based Asian cultures strategies” (10).

Notably, with an increasing knowledge about Australia in South Asia, the volume of South Asian migration to Australia has increased since 1980s. As, South Asians are well aware they can earn more in Australia. There is a “combination of push and pull: the push of inadequate opportunity in South Asia and the pull of better prospects” in Australia (Tinker 10). And “the positive and negative experiences” of international students and workers from South Asia while studying in Australia
cannot but “impinge on broader relations between Australia and the Asia-Pacific region” (D’Cruz and Steele 77).

One is here reminded of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru’s declaration in Singapore on 18th March 1946:

India cannot forget her sons and daughters overseas. Although India cannot defend her children overseas today, the time is soon coming when her arms will be long enough to protect them. (qtd. in Kudaisya 84)

Furthermore, Nehru explained the complexity of the hyphenated identities of Indians to the Indian Assembly on 8th March 1948. He said:

Now these Indians abroad, what are they? Are they Indian citizens— are they going to be citizens of India or not? If they are not, then our interest in them becomes cultural, humanitarian and not political. (qtd. in Kudaisya 84)

Postcolonial India’s policy towards its diaspora was deeply informed by Nehru, who was also the Foreign Minister. It was here, in the realm of foreign policy, that he enjoyed the greatest freedom of action. And with his wide vision and cosmopolitan background he was convinced that it was in the “best interest of overseas Indians to integrate into their host societies” (Kudaisya 86). He repeatedly argued for them to “identify themselves with and integrate in the mainstream of social and political life of the country of their domicile” (Kudaisya 86).

According to William Safran (1991) this forceful integration has resulted in mistreatment of the “members of diaspora communities” by the groups of people in the host country as “strangers within the gates” or their exploitation for “the sake of the domestic and diplomatic interests of the host country” (92). In addition, this threat or attitude towards new migrants is also heightened by the influence, participation, challenge and pressure that the government of homeland yields on hostland, as was seen in the case of Indian government’s attitude in recent racist and opportunistic attacks on South Asian students in various cities of Australia—a direct result of Australian government’s “unwillingness to engage with immigration policy issues relating to recruitment or settlement” (Jayasuriya, 2008: 1). Although India has been unable to push its engagement with Australia significantly started since Hawke-Keating era (1983-1996). This is also because
While oil and water are the most important physical factors of international politics at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the most important human factors are population and migration. (McLaren 36)

Thus concerns about the well-being of migrants have also been expressed in some of the other Asian countries.

Much has changed in Australia and South Asia in the last few decades. The issue of migration to Australia has become more “controversial at both ends of the migration chain” (Sullivan and Gunasekaran 157). The composition and volume of the recent migration stream has shifted significantly. New wave of migration has a number of positive characteristics focusing on occupation, language skills and educational background—students, skills, professional and entrepreneurs. But, in recent years, many people in Australia believe that they see in migration, particularly, of South Asian students (with intention to settle permanently) and people a threat to their Anglophone (or the dominant) culture and society (see Dunn 2003). This threat is heightened by the presence of alien dresses, languages, smells, literature and code of behaviour (also see Israel 1991). This “cultural shock” is not one sided, it is equally important in the case of new migrants who plunge into unfamiliar behaviour patterns, socio-cultural values and morals. This presence, not just as “Little Indias” but also in the mainstream jobs and localities challenges the comfortable and stable world of individuals who thought the country to be “their” home or conceived themselves as being Australian. So, it is time with the presence of large number of “highly educated and skilled professionals and business people among the ‘new’ migrants” that the prejudiced section of Australians do a “rethinking” of the “theoretical frameworks” (Inglis and Wu 195).

As discussed earlier, Australia as a country has always depended on immigration for its population, but as in the early years of settlement, each successive wave was given time to settle and be absorbed before the next one arrived (Banchevska 177). Today, with incoming of a large number of students, workers and refugees from South Asia and people from many more countries within the existing population, assimilation or understanding of the “Other” at the same speed is not possible. But on the other hand it can be argued that we are living in an age when it is now more than ever possible to overcome barriers of language and culture and
communicate with “Others” on the same ground. It is an age where divergence has taken the form of multiculturalism i.e. a favourable and enlightened response towards “other” cultures existing within Australia (Manning 178).

At present the Australian national objective, to which the government is committed, is to focus on multiculturalism and encourage what is called “unity within diversity.” Obviously, a question arises about the motives that led Australia to go for multiculturalism during 1970s. According to John Clark (1997),

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

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

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

It was Al Grassby, the Minister of Immigration, who in 1970s argued in favour of increasing the “diversity of the Australian society” that was till now
considered to be a strongly traditional Anglo-Celtic culture or a white-dominated society (see Huggan 129). So by 1989 the *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* was adopted. The policy of multiculturalism was also comprehensively used to refer to the cultural diversity more largely counting the diversity represented by Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It incorporated three principles for multicultural policy:

1. *Cultural Identity* – the right of all Australians, within carefully defined limits, to express and share their individual cultural heritage, including their language and religion;

2. *Social Justice* – the right to equality of treatment and opportunity, and the removal of barriers of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, gender or place of birth;

3. *Economic Efficiency* – the need to maintain, develop and utilise effectively the skills and talents of all Australians, regardless of background. (14)

Later on, the opinion makers and academicians started mounting stress on “civic values” and on Australian “citizenship” as one of the strongest unifying symbol in this culturally and linguistically diverse nation. According to Alaistair Bonnett (2000), the institutionalised versions of anti-racism are concerned with racism “as a destabilizing influence upon ‘good community relations,’ ‘social cohesion’ and ‘national unity’ ” (4-5). It also aims to regulate and control destabilizing influences and assert moral norms, chastise and punish transgressors, and prescribe etiquette. Australian government presents integration and tolerance as antidotes to socially disruptive racism (see Gilligan 2009). But this pressure, according to Ghali Hassan (2005) has often resulted in a shallow multiculturalism that is being promoted by politicians and the media, creating ghettoised and marginalized communities “not living together but living next to each other” and against each other.

Even if we assume that people of South Asian origin, particularly the second and third generations have integrated publicly into the mainstream, while keeping certain aspects of their cultural life alive at home, what about the post-assimilation mainstream Australians attitude towards them? According to Fazal Rizvi (1996), Australians have been asked to make a decisive ideological shift in their thinking, away from the colonialist frame that has traditionally informed their perceptions of Asia to a post-colonial outlook which challenges the racist assumptions of cultural dominance and
superiority. Yet most of their attempts to revise their thinking have at best been clumsy, with the new practices of representation failing to make a decisive break from the residual racist expressions that had rendered Asians as a homogenised mass, socially inept and culturally inferior. (173)

So, the closest designation that we currently have for this attitude of neglect and indifference towards a particular community is racism—"a reduction of someone from a particular group to the stereotypes, negative or positive, we have of that group" (Chow 27).

There is of course much more that could be written about the logic of racial (in)differences, and the ways in which racial tensions can be resolved. However, this issue will provide a constant backdrop to my discussion of these selected narratives. In any case, to save its multicultural foundation, Australia has accepted its failures and has taken responsibility for stopping racism and "hate/opportunistic attacks" on South Asian and other migrant groups by better educating the young about respect for other ethnicities and showing the great benefits of a multicultural society.

It is difficult to proceed much further without indicating more clearly, what words like Diaspora and South Asianness mean, as these are the themes and issues that also go into the creative processes and are very much essential to diasporan literary studies. Learning from anthropology, migration studies, cultural studies, sociology and political science, this thesis will examine the politics of location and problem of diaspora-hostland-homeland relationship reflected through the medium of short stories by South Asian diaspora. It is chiefly the sociologists, who tend to stress divisions by class, familial linkages, race, and gender. Therefore the prizing open of a familiar concept inaugurates new directions for research. The convergences between intellectuals from diverse perspectives and fields sometimes point out the truth more clearly. Thus venturing beyond the boundaries of discipline of literary studies I try to tap into the ongoing discourse of South Asian diaspora in Australia. So, I first make an attempt to elaborate accepted definitions with reference to a geographically different context—South Asian diaspora in Australia.
2.1.2 – Qualifying Diaspora: A Brief Survey of Approaches

If change of residence were the chief criterion of diaspora; if, moreover, crossings, migrations and travel are a part of the history of all humanity; then a clearer notion of boundaries will be required to distinguish the different kinds of dislocation we suffer. (Paranjape, 2000: 229; my italics)

Modern era is an era of unprecedented human mobility, global migration and scholarly discourse on migration and in this respect it may be said that it is an era that belongs to South Asia as it features significantly in the dynamics of migration not only in Asia but also the world (see Haque 2005). While for some “the societal diversity created by global migration is a cause for celebration, for many others the growing presence of ‘foreign’ peoples give rise to concerns about the ability of national societies and national citizenship to cope with and to accommodate cultural differences” (Nagel 231). There has been a veritable explosion of interest in diasporas since the late 1980s. But the term Diaspora acquired a scholarly currency only in 1990s. Diaspora as a concept has travelled beyond communities, disciplines and generalizations. It is an historical formation that has caught the attention of a number of scholars and has “become a breeding ground for new sociological concepts within scholarly work” (Y. Hussain 5). A continuously growing theoretical literature by scholars across national spaces has responded to understand the concept and discourse of diaspora from different academic locations. In, what seems to be a controversial statement, Vijay Mishra (1996) says, “All diasporas are unhappy but every diaspora is unhappy in its own way” (189). We are reminded by Robert Sellick (2004) that Diaspora is “first and foremost a political process, beginning with decisions taken by European governments to establish colonies, for whatever reasons. It was not only people who were dispersed across the globe, but also assumptions and attitudes, structures and institutions that had their origins in various ‘homelands’” (1).

There is attached a multidisciplinary nature to Diaspora studies, as James Clifford (1994) notes that the Diasporic language “appears to be replacing, or at least supplementing, minority discourse” (311). Today, research on Diaspora is conducted from numerous academic perspectives as debates on Diaspora are spread across a range of disciplines, encompassing Sociology, Anthropology, Geography, Human Geography, Migration Studies, Culture Studies, Politics, International Relations,
Race, Multiculturalism, Post-colonialism, Political Economy and Communication (see also Karim 2003).

My aim in the following discussion is to chart out and explore various theoretical approaches and analytical possibilities of conceptualizing the term “Diaspora” that can supplement the narratives of South Asian diaspora in Australia as diaspora is a particular “way of imagining, inventing, constructing, and presenting the self” (Klimt and Lubkemann 146) in different ways from the mainstream society. Today, the notion of Diaspora, as opposed to “collectivities of immigrants or people living outside their homelands, used first in classical world, has acquired renewed importance” (R. Cohen 1996). Therefore, any study related to the Diaspora must begin by qualifying this term, with its chequered and complex history, as a point-of-entry.

Diaspora evoked the dispersion of people linked to political misfortunes or to commerce. The word derives from the Greek words dia (“through” or “over”) and speiro (“dispersal” or “to sow widely”), also implying “dispersion” or “forcible dispersion” as found in Deuteronomy (28:25). First used in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures explicitly intended for the Hellenic Jewish communities in Alexandria (circa 3rd century BCE) to describe the Jews living in exile from the homeland of Palestine, diaspora suggests a dislocation from the nation-state or geographical location of origin and a relocation in one or more nation states, territories, or countries. The term “diaspora” then has religious significance that pervaded medieval rabbinical writings on the Jewish diaspora, to describe the plight of Jews living outside of Palestine (Braziel and Mannur 1). In religious terminology, this scattering of people was seen as a punishment to those who had forsaken the righteous path and good old ways. For a long time it has been associated specifically with the violent dispersal of the Jewish people—that filled them with anxiety and distrust (R. Cohen, 1996: 512). However, post 1948, when Israel became a nation for Jews, the land “promised” to them in the Biblical myth, diaspora no longer remained a term used only for the displaced Jews. A large number of Jews preferred to stay on in their countries of adoption or refuge due to the political turmoil of Israel and its relations with the neighbouring countries. As a result, diaspora as a term could no longer refer to Jews alone as in theory at least, they could “go back home.” The usage of the term has been subsequently extended, changed and expanded to other violent
and forced human dispersals such as those of the Armenian and African people. People of African origin, with the painful history of slavery, descendents of indentured labourers, people of Chinese origin displaced through cultural revolution, and many others who had been transported, displaced or exiled due to the workings of the European imperialism also began to be seen in the same framework of the diaspora. Finally, voluntary migrants and their descendents, the second generations were also included.

Increasingly, however, the word, Diaspora, has come to refer to the resettlement of identifiable communities of people across the globe, not necessarily violent or forced and the present study employs the term in this larger contemporary meaning. Diaspora has not just itself become a much-contested term, but has led to problematisation of other terms like nationality, ethnicity and hybridity (inbetweenness or anti-belonging). The most widely held view about the Indian subcontinental diaspora is the one adopted by Rabindranath Tagore—“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” (qtd. in Tinker iii). As D. Dayan (1988) observes, “diaspora” is more of an

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

The metaphor of the living tree or the banyan tree that Tagore has used, provides a sense of centre and rootedness. It can be argued that it has been so often used by the intellectuals for the diasporic condition, that it now seems a cliché, mere decorative jargon overlooking the pain and unhappiness of dislocation and other aspects of migration. According to Mohit Manoj Prasad (2005),

The diaspora is much a product of history as it is a performance of the narrative acts of inscribing place, people, event, incident, accident, coincidence, causality and the official record in contradictory practices of living/dying, dis/location, and of dying/living and dis/location as cycle. [ . . . ] Diaspora’s begin with moments of displacement with its insistent reasons for causality that begins the remove of a people, of place, of identities and representations. (12)

In the works of major diasporan authors, “diaspora” stands for traumas and pains of human displacement.
While it is sometimes “used interchangeably with ‘migration,’ it is generally invoked as a theoretical device for the interrogation of ethnic identity and cultural nationalism” (Gandhi 131). Khachig Töloolyan (1994) has tracked applications of the term that include references to “corporate diasporas” and even an “egg cream diaspora” (235). There are several other views regarding the contemporary significance associated with this dislocation and relocation of people around the world.\(^3\) In his famous article titled “Diasporas in Modern Societies” (1991), discussing the concept of formation of Diaspora and the application of this term to other than Jewish communities—most notably “expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants, and ethnic minorities” (83)—William Safran highlighted nine key points or “common features” of the diasporic phenomenon, they being:

1. *Dispersal* from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions.
2. Alternatively, the *expansion* from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions.
3. A *collective memory* and myth about the homeland, including its location, history and achievements.
4. An *idealization* of the putative ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation.
5. The development of a *return movement* which gains collective approbation.
6. A strong ethnic *group consciousness* sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate.
7. A *troubled relationship* with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance at the least or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group.
8. A *sense of empathy and solidarity* with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement.
9. The *possibility of a distinctive yet creative and enriching life* in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism. (83; my italics)

As some of the definitions have been rather restrictive in defining diasporic communities across the globe, Khachig Töloolyan in “Rethinking Diasporas” (1996) suggests a tighter definition of this concept and puts forth the following criteria:
1. The diaspora has its origin in the fact that a large number of individuals were forced to leave their country by severe political, economic, or rather other constraints.

2. Before leaving their country, these people already shared a well-defined identity.

3. Diasporic communities actively maintain or construct a *collective memory*, which forms a fundamental element of their identity.

4. These communities keep more or less tight control over their ethnic boundaries, whether voluntarily or under constraint from the host society.

5. Communities are mindful to maintain relations among themselves.

6. They also wish to maintain contacts with their country of origin, provided it is still in existence. (16; my italics)

Here too Diasporas differ from other migrant communities or people by their desire to maintain relations with their own location or ancestral land through a "collective memory." So, one of the key points in considering a diasporic community, is "group consciousness" or retention of "a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland, its physical location, history, and achievements" (Safran 83; my italics). In the words of French social scientist Michel Bruneau, "a conscious and factual claim to an ethnic or national identity" (qtd. in Dorais 4).

Also, diasporas have largely been identified or defined in terms of social or economic power they yield i.e. the development of a triadic political or economic relationship. Vijay Mishra in the diaspora double issue of *SPAN* offers a three-tier definition of diaspora as a corrective to the original OED (1989 ed.) related to the dispersion of the Jews.

1. Relatively homogeneous, displaced communities brought to serve the Empire (slave, contract, indenture etc.) co-existing with indigenous / other races with markedly ambivalent and contradictory relationship with the Motherland(s). Hence the Indian diasporas of South Africa, Fiji, Mauritius, Guyana, Trinidad, Surinam, Malaysia; the Chinese diaspora of Malaysia, Indonesia linked to high (classical) Capitalism.

2. Emerging new diasporas based on free migration and linked to late capitalism: post-war South Asian, Chinese, Arab, Korean communities in Britain, Europe, America, Canada, Australia.

3. Any group of migrants that sees itself on the periphery of power, or excluded from sharing power. (qtd. in Paranjape, Introduction: 3)
Being a diasporan, "based on free migration and linked to late capitalism," is a win-win situation or a "privileging situation" in economic terms according to Paranjape, which is not any longer "an anguished state" because of further possibilities of bi-culturalism (Preface: vi).

With reference to bi-culturalism, Diaspora, can be “minimally defined” according to John Docker (2001) as “a sense of belonging to more than one history, to more than one time and place, more than one past and future” (vii). He further observes that

Diaspora suggests belonging to both here and there, now and then.
Diaspora suggests the omnipresent weight of pain of displacement from a land or society, of being an outsider in a new one. Diaspora suggests both lack and excess of loss and separation, yet also the possibility of new adventures of identity and the continued imagining of unconquerable countries of the mind. (vii-viii)

Although there are possibilities of “new adventures of identity,” no fixed definition of Diaspora related to a particular geographical location can be offered or reached to. Kim D. Butler (2001) has proposed “shifting the defining element of diasporan studies from the group itself to a methodological and theoretical approach to the study of phenomenon of diaspora in human history” (193-194). For this he has provided five dimensions that are unique to diasporas to facilitate research and studies:

1. Reasons for, and conditions of, the dispersal;
2. Relationship with the homeland;
3. Relationship with hostlands;
4. Interrelationships within communities of the diaspora, and
5. Comparative studies of different diasporas. (195)

The historical discourse of the diaspora then may be seen as “a way of replacing or supplementing the majority/minority binary discourse” (Dorais 6) in life and literature. Isidore Okpewho (2001) further defines diaspora as “a global space, a worldwide web, that accounts as much for the mother continent as for wherever in the world her offspring may have been driven by the unkind forces of history” (xiv). This diasporic discourse based on a methodology using historical framework also provides a meaningful dimension to the whole transnational experience and further develops solidarity with co-ethnics in other countries (Dorais 7).
It is clear from the discussion above that "Diasporic discourses frame terms of argument rather than terms of definition" (Klimt and Lubkemann 148). Taking into account all the definitions of diaspora it can be said that there is a very fine line between transnational migration and pure diasporas. The term Diaspora can be restricted to, according to Glick Schiller, "dispersed populations who attribute their common identity, cultural beliefs and practices, language, or religion to myths of a common ancestry" (qtd. in Dorais 7-8).

It can also be noted, that the metaphorical figure of the diasporan occupies here a "third space" and is therefore considered to be a link between homeland and hostland. But if we study closely there is always a push and pull factor involved in it. Homeland, its socio-cultural aspects try to attract these diasporans towards itself, and similarly the hostland with its "opening" policies, incentives of monetary gains and equal status situations tries to push these diasporans into its own politics and culture. Resulting in what John A. Armstrong (1976) distinguishes as the "mobilised daisporas" (the elite) and the "proletarian diasporas" (the exploited).

Using the framework of diaspora studied so far, I would like to propose a simple point in relation to the movement and settlement of the diasporans in various hostlands—What happens when the diasporans start to cross over the "transit" points after some years/generations rather than living in between? They, in this hypothesis, just like the original Hindu myth of Trishanku must initiate new flows and movements and start a new cycle, which continues with every new diasporan’s arrival into the hostland, as he or she brings something "new" and "valuable" in terms of his/her socio-cultural baggage. This process of settling down in hostland can be explained with the help of the following Figure (Circular Model of Settling in the Hostland) that results in a paraspara (mutual and equal) contribution towards both the homeland and hostland. In the proposed concept of paraspara, migration is "a two-way process" that does not involve the migrant alone, it also "involves those who make up the environment (physical and social), that the migrant is now part of, unobtrusively and gently, or violently and relentlessly, in appositive, negative or neutral manner" (De Jong 3).
Figure 1: Circular Model of Settling in the Hostland

Creation
(Communities or mini-India(s))

Meditation
(On their cultural powers)

Accumulation
(Of spiritual and economical wealth)


As a diasporan leaves his/her homeland and arrives in the hostland, the process of “Creation” starts as he/she feels a need to settle down comfortably in this new land with known things or referents of the past. So, he/she tries to create mini-homelands or similar communities as existed in the homeland. As the communities start building up, these diasporans start the next process i.e. of “Meditation.” Now, they strive to assert their cultural powers in the hostland and get the best bargain in terms of equal rights and status. This assertion benefits them not only in the emotional and spiritual areas in the hostland but also in the economic standing. Finally, the diasporans feel ready for the last process, which is “Accumulation” of wealth and its utilisation in protecting and promoting the core values of Indian culture in both the homeland and hostland. This is a kind of bi-culturalism or double cultural orientation—towards both the country of origin and the country of adoption, which is not a contradictory phenomenon as it looks initially to be. Actually, some people post-globalisation, now with homes and businesses in two (or even more than two) countries are showing an astonishing ability to sustain “double” or “hyphenated” identities or diaspora consciousness, with strong cultural ties and contributions towards both homeland and hostland. These are the people who now travel more frequently and for longer
distances and spreading out (see Massey 1994; Paranjape 2001). This has also lead to a new category of highly mobile diasporans, better known as “Transnationals,” who are moving in and around the metropolitan centres of the world, resisting a precise definition. These are the groups who are really in a sense in charge of “time-space compression,” who can really use it and turn it to advantage of the diasporic community, whose power and influence it very definitely increases (Massey 1994).

How, then, might one clearly define or establish a concept of diaspora? Having reviewed the changing meanings of diaspora, and pointed out differences and tensions, I use the term diaspora with care to refer to historical and contemporary presence of people of the Indian subcontinent with common national origin or national ancestry who reside outside a claimed or an independent home territory in other parts of the world preserving their diversity as a transnational ethnic community and contributing positively towards both the cultures. So the concept of diaspora, while focusing on transnational processes and commonalities, does so by deploying a notion of ethnicity which privileges the “point of origin” in constructing identity and solidarity (see Anthias 1998). A point that Clifford also makes when he suggests that diasporans think globally but live locally. This constant negotiation with one’s roots and routes through memory, nostalgia, history and most of all through metaphoric journeys or locations is one characteristic of the diasporic communities which makes it possible and pertinent to study diaspora and especially diasporic literature as a separate category. Diasporic discourse in this context becomes stronger in terms of the four-part process of “displacement, detachment, uprooting and dispersion” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblet 339), while at the same time it is crucial to take into account the unique and multifarious causes that inform this process ranging from colonial migration, political exile, professional ambition to simply the desire to cross the seas in search of a “better life.” A view very similar to Stuart Hall’s (2003), who writes:

Diaspora does not refer us to those scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to which they must at all costs return [. . . ]. The diaspora experience as I intend it here is defined, not by essence of purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity. (235)

Hall’s emphasis on the terms “heterogeneity” and “diversity” is important to the focus of my thesis. I am not looking for commonalities of expression in the short stories of South Asian diaspora, but I am more interested in analysing the ways in which they
write or interpret their multiple locations. As already discussed, the term Diaspora in the classic theoretical framework and analysis of diasporic literature is concentrated more on the reasons and conditions of migration, as well as on integration and assimilation issues in host societies. Adding to this, I am also interested in on “where” and “how” those people lived before migration and what socio-cultural baggage or politics of location—sensory, spatial, gendered, familial and class, they bring with them from their homelands (in South Asia) to hostland (Australia).

2.1.3 – Signs of South Asianness: Social and Theoretical Identities

The identity of South Asians [throughout the world] has proved to be problematic, both for the self-identification of the group and for the identifying institutions and popular perceptions of the host society. (Koshy, 1998: 285)

The term “South Asian Diaspora” allows for the “encompassing of a wider range of people and experiences” (Selvadurai 5) and diversity of region, language, religion, custom and tradition of the Indian subcontinent. It also provides some measure of inclusion within Australia, even if it is almost meaningless within South Asia itself. According to Vijay Prashad (1999) the cultural commonalities between the dominant migrant groups of the Indian subcontinent—Indians, Pakistanis, Sri Lankans, and Bangladeshis—draw them together, and “the moniker ‘South Asian’ allows them to feel solidarity despite their different national origins and religious commitments” (186-187).

As noted above, South Asia is not a homogenous region, which makes the South Asian diaspora a “complex and variegated” (V. Lal 2004) zone of engagement that includes diasporans with diverse social, political, economic, and cultural backgrounds. South Asia, home to well over one fifth of the world’s population, typically consists of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, and the Maldives. A clubbing of countries, essentially mostly encompasses countries that were part of the former British Indian Empire. The terminologies “Indian Subcontinent” or simply “The Subcontinent” are also in common usage to denote South Asia, as well as the “South Asian Subcontinent.”
On the wide currency of the term South Asia, Shiromi Pinto (2004) notes that it appears to have become the preferred descriptor when referring to the dances, literatures, cultures, even people, originating from these regions (ie. South Asian countries which are not, otherwise, in a formal or informal, economic or political block) [. . . ] a concept that is said to underlie a panoply of cultural, artistic and political products, including identity construction in the diaspora. (3)

And according to Sunil Khilnani (2004), “South Asia” is a “bureaucrat’s phrase” in the US map of the world, post-partition India came to be designated South Asia, and its new states were clubbed with the Near East (again a State Departmentism), to form the Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs. Exactly what South Asia encompassed has always had some indeterminacy to it. Even after the creation of a separate Bureau of South Asian Affairs within the State Department (which only happened in the early 1990s), debate has continued over which countries exactly to include. (19)

And by “containing division and rivalry,” he writes further:

“South Asia” conjured the idea of a common space of community—perhaps temporarily in abeyance—that seemed to transcend national boundaries, and promised a kind of irenic description and identity for a subcontinent that seemed in reality to be driven by national, religious, ethnic and other divisions. Superbly anodyne, it seems to offer a benign transcendence of these conflicts. As a term of self-description, for members of the diaspora, “South Asian” might also be seen as a gesture toward safety. (20)

The question of “identity of South Asians” negotiates a rethinking of the question of South Asianness in the diaspora. According to Brij V. Lal (2006) due to its “varied origins, divergent patterns of migration and settlement,” and further “different degrees of absorption or integration” into the culture of the hostland, the Indian subcontinental diaspora “defies easy categorization.” It is moreover “a complex confluence of many discreet cultures, languages and histories” (10).

In the case of the South Asian diaspora in Australia, people who belong to different communities or groups in homeland blend into a new identity of “geographical ascription.” The supposed “identity” of South Asians is “merely mythic.” The Indian subcontinent is also “divided denominationally”—Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Parsis, Buddhists; and moreover the Indian caste system.
Chapter 2 – Labels and Locations

separates people further (see Fludernik xx). Thus, South Asia or South Asianness can be defined as a field of inquiry that explores cultural consequences of migration from the Indian subcontinent. And it can be seen that even “within single diasporas, simultaneous diasporan identities are possible” (K. Butler 192).

For Makarand Paranjape (2000) South Asian diaspora is “a part and symbol of the larger” Indian subcontinent “not just in terms of its physical boundaries but also in terms of its mental dimensions” (243). As the term South Asian diaspora connotes people who have at some time in the past come from all the countries that comprise the Indian subcontinent, yet without the emphasis on forced expulsion that Jewish or black diasporas have conveyed (see Boyarin 1992; Gilroy 1993). Avtar Brah’s (2003) question: “Can we speak of a ‘South Asian diaspora’ other than as a mode of description of a particular cluster of migrations” (617) is very insightful to the study of South Asianness. She further suggests that “it is the economic, political and cultural specificities linking these components that the concept of diaspora signifies” (617). This means that “multiple journeys may configure into one journey via a confluence of narratives as it is lived and re-lived, produced, reproduced and transformed through individual as well as collective memory and re-memory” (617).

As noted earlier, the situation of South Asian immigrants in Australia is ambiguous. A related and much politicised issue has been that of South Asian “racial identity.” According to Sucheta Mazumdar (1991) for South Asians “questions pertaining to racial identity and skin colour have had a particularly convoluted history” (25). It is worth noting that although South Asians think in terms of class, caste, religion and region wherever they go. But upon arrival in Australia, from “being persons with no tangible race” they “become people of color in this society,” as South Asians do not think of themselves in racial terms (Rudrappa 85). Through mass media, South Asians now have “a fair inkling about race” structures in Australia, still “they are unprepared” and “cannot conceive of the ways in which their self itself will be challenged” (Rudrappa 87). Thus, South Asian migrants with their affluence become the visible minorities in Australia.

The very notion of a “South Asian identity” or “South Asianness” promotes a “unity and solidarity” among the “imagined community” of the South Asian diaspora. And “people from its various South Asian cultures have been treated typically as one
monolithic people by the West” (Y. Hussain 2). So, the term “South Asian” also “functions as an umbrella term,” that is often “abbreviated to ‘Asian,’ to unify diverse peoples against common obstacles, in the name of empowerment and coalition-building” (Y. Hussain 2).

It has been observed that the number and proportion of people of South Asian descent living outside South Asia is small in relation to other migrant populations, such as Chinese, the Jews, the Africans, and the Europeans (see van der Veer 1). Moreover, as already observed, there are a number of differences within these ethnic groups, for instance lifestyles, dress, diet and language. Furthermore, their responses to new social and economic environments are also different, with diverse employment patterns and marriage practices for example (see Y. Hussain 2; Ballard 1994).

We have already noted in the above discussion that there is no essentially “homogeneous” South Asian cultural identity but because of “our common imperial past” we are bound, apart from sharing common ocean, ecology, rivers, and cable cultures, by “a common legal, administrative, and constitutional framework” (Desai 300) at one level. And similarly, at another level “centuries of migration and movement within South Asia and intermarriages have made its people similar” (Desai 298-299) thus helping the concepts laid down for the transnational identity and the South Asian-Australian diaspora by giving them tremendous opportunities in various fields.

Transnationalism or rather a global South Asian diaspora, according to Lord Meghnad Dessai (2005), can be imagined only when we in South Asia break our “barriers [built] against the flow of goods and people” (289) created against each other. Because of these barriers and restrictions we have emphasised our “separateness, rather than [our] similarity” (Desai 289) to the rest of the World. What we need are speedy reforms in the Indian subcontinent—sorting out crucial political problems, stopping infighting within the South Asian Association of Regional Co-operation (SAARC), exploiting common advantages, creating a common market, and free movement of people (see Desai 290-292). Our mind and energy is great and what we need in South Asia is strong leadership—political and economical—which could help co-operation in various fields such as trade, transport, movement of people and
goods, and most important of all on the lines of the European Union (EU) a South Asian Monetary Union (Desai 292-293).

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

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

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

Contributing through various societies, associations, lobbies, religious and spiritual bodies, they have collaborated within and outside community to cultivate India-Australia ties successfully. 31 And their various attempts, as seen in these narratives undertaken in this study are just part of the various “means,” as Erez Cohen (2003) feels,

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

These short stories or narratives from South Asian diaspora in Australia thus play an important role in promoting the Australian and South Asian connections by acting as a gathering of colourful perceptions, experiences and reflections. There is a continuous need to re-enter these narratives, not just for the purpose of making analyses, but also to provide the diaspora discourse with new continuities, visions, and issues in terms of transnationalism, multiculturalism, biculturalism, based on questions related to social, political, cultural and economic vis-à-vis a new issue, as
proposed here, in terms of commercial-cultural benefits that are reaped by the
diasporans both at homeland and hostland.

On the use of the word "Indianness" for the people of the Indian subcontinent,
Bharti Mukherjee (1985) observes, "Indianness is now a metaphor, a particular way of
comprehending the world" (3). The very use of the term "Indian" encapsulates
diversity and brings into play various contradictory viewpoints, in relation to identity
and cultural dimensions. The divergence of viewpoints, in fact, related to any
"identity," be it the Indian or the much larger South Asian one, can also be noted in
the different ways in which the term "diaspora" has been theorised by various
academics in their dialogues.

A major trap in a study of such proportion is that the definition of South
Asianness or South Asian Diaspora in academics sometimes reeks of "Indianness" to
the exclusion of all else, momentarily excluding all other South Asians except
Indians. The discussion of "South Asianness" is problematic as it presupposes a
"unifying force." Though there is still vast scope for a serious debate about the
internal hegemonies implicit within the term South Asian, according to Crispin Bates
(2001), a genuine pan-South Asian ethnicity, that could "realistically begin to address
the material and spiritual inequalities of the subcontinent and its satellite communities
throughout the globe, may therefore be an ambition that awaits a different generation,
and a different set of circumstances to that of the present" (39).

In spite of the difference in the migration points i.e. the point of arrival of
these writers from the Indian subcontinent show a common sensitivity and
consciousness. This is the result of the idea of "Indianness" that is not made up of any
particular geographical border in our diasporic imagination. This is also because, as
Satendra Nandan (2000) observes:

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

The people of South Asia have carried on a tradition of internal and international
migration as traders, indentured labourers, skilled workers, and professionals. Despite
"shared homelands and shared history of uprooting" South Asia is not a homogeneous
entity (Ramraj 216). There are inherent tensions that exist within it. South Asia with its several independent nation-states has certain commonalities and continuities because of a shared culture of 4,000 years with stratifications or sub categories on the basis of region, religion, language, dialects, politics, economics, caste, class, culture, etc. South Asians have suffered, survived and prospered in various countries of their settlement. As Paranjape observes, that

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

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

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

Through its struggles and experiences, in this way, the South Asian diaspora will finally emerge as, what David Walker has termed, “Australia’s Asian future—who would develop the country” (1999: 7) and that will finally lead South Asia and Australia into a more intellectual and social constructive dialogue. For this to happen, it without doubt requires the involvement and a collective effort on the part of South Asian and diaspora thinkers, artists, politicians, business people, policy makers and concerned citizens (see Desai 297). Therefore, every artistic involvement, testimonial on the subject, constructive dialogue and discourse—academic, political or public—in the present interlinked world then merely is a step towards it, as a result forming
change in perceptions and attitudes by creating a knowledge and interest base in this field. And in this whole process, ultimately, the South Asian diaspora in Australia, with its continuous growth, prosperity and an ever-increasing role and responsibility in all areas of Australian society, will be a dynamic key participant in the shift towards global peace and trade, a vital element of World reconstruction and an area of abundant cultural and literary potential.

2.2 - Locations

What you chart is already where you’ve been. But where we are going, there is no chart yet. (Lorde 180)

It is said that “when a man travels, or when he moves, he takes with him what he can, but his baggage cannot hold everything” (Scott 5). As scholars concerned with diasporic consciousness, cultural baggage, circulation and comparison, a decisive shift towards politics of location and resulting social constructs such as race, gender, family and class is a much needed dimension to the discussion of short narratives of South Asian diaspora. Structurally, according to Wylie (2003), a location is marked by the above mentioned parameters of social inequality along with sexuality and geopolitical location and their attending subject positions of identification and disidentification, material conditions, privileges and feelings as well as “conceptual resources [. . . ] to represent and interpret these relations” (31). However, major researches on South Asian diaspora in Australia have failed to incorporate and address the politics of location—the “locations” they inhabit, reproduce and transform. According to the present study this does not help in the reconfiguration of “identities in an ongoing quest for self-determination and power” (K. Butler 212) but also helps in, according to Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1987), a better understanding of “the historical, geographic, cultural, psychic and imaginative boundaries for political definition and self definition” (42).

The word “Politics,” as used in the politics of location comes from the Greek word politika and examines the acquisition and application of power structures. The word politics covers a very wide range of phenomenon. It is used here to describe, what Erik Olin Wright (2001) refers to as the “power relations within micro-organizational settings” (18)—as in the discussion of power relations embodied in a
set of practices that individuals engage in a diasporic condition. While the word “location,” according to Floya Anthias (2007) represents

[... ] social spaces defined by boundaries on the one hand and hierarchies on the other hand. Therefore when we think of our located identities we are forced to think of them in relation to each other and also in terms of some of the contradictions we live in through our differential location within the boundaries in terms of hierarchies. (17)

The notion of “location” recognizes the importance of “context” and the “situated nature of claims and attributions and their production in complex and shifting locales” (Anthias 17). Avtar Brah in *Cartographies of Diaspora* (1996), for example, explores the politics of location in the context of migration “as locationality in contradiction” (180). According to her, migrants and members of diaspora simultaneously experience situatedness in “multi-axial locationality” (1996: 205) and engage in “movements across shifting cultural, religious and linguistic boundaries” (1996: 204).

In relation to this, Purnima Mankekar (2003) notes that a “politics of location entails the examination of how one’s perspective and subjectivity are shaped by one’s complex positioning” (53; my italics) at both the old and new homes subsequent to migration. The term location thus captures a number of aspects that contribute in the making of a diasporic consciousness. So, by politics of location, I refer to a migrant’s position within power hierarchies created through sensory, spatial, gender, familial and class factors affecting and shaping the relationship with homeland and hostland—a more useful way of thinking about the potential found in diasporic processes resulting from immigration.

Immigration or “separation of people from their native culture either through physical dislocation” or through “the colonizing imposition of a foreign culture” is considered “one of the most formative experiences of our century” (Bamner xi). Immigration also signifies a situation of interaction between two cultural systems and in some cases between a traditional and a modern cultural system, like South Asian and Australian. It also means “a change in the existential conditions of immigrants with all its implications for the change in their consciousness” and further represents “a turning point in the lives of immigrants to confront a strange new world and to make sense of it” (Sharma 60). It also involves a possibility that immigrants and their subsequent generations may “modify” and “reconstruct” their diasporic world in the hostland. And although the situation of the migrant and particularly a diasporic writer
“does create a sense of identity, such an identity is renegotiated from time to time in relation to the regional or national contexts within which it operates” (Assayag and Bénié 10-11).

Adib Khan, the noted Bangladeshi-Australian writer, in his essay “Trends in Australian Fiction” (2002), observes that in the last couple of decades, “the universe in Australian fiction has begun to creak open, but not without protests and frenetic writing about the perceived threats to mainstream culture” (1). Khan obviously is referring to a shift in Australia’s literary landscape, i.e. from Anglo-Celtic towards a multicultural one (see Helff 2010). Taking on this as my reference point, this section is concerned with the theoretical 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. It also focuses on South Asian diaspora’s widely agreed “ability to recreate their cultures in diverse locations and locates the elements of the liminal within the nitty gritty of this changing history” (Ray, 2003: 34).

It has been argued that migration has ambiguities of its own, based on two dialectics i.e. of “belonging” and “longing.” According to Van der Veer (1995), “the theme of belonging opposes rootedness to uprootedness, establishment to marginality,” while the “theme of longing harps on the desire for change and movement, but relates this to the enigma of arrival, which brings a similar desire to return to what one has left” (4). In this play between “belonging” and “longing” and as people of the twentieth century we all have been somehow marked by the experience of dislocations. It has played such a prominent role in “the operative theoretical paradigm with which we have attempted to understand and explain the human condition and conditions of knowledge in our times” (Bammer xii). Keeping in mind the concepts of “belonging” and “longing” and the link between displacement, location and story, it has been suggested by Walters (2005) that “displacement creates a distance that allows writers to encode critiques of their homelands, to construct new homelands, and envision new communities” (viii).

A question that arises in mind is—what are these locations? Locations, as discussed earlier, does not merely refer to geographical locations but, locations rather, provides “a critical angle or perspective on cultural formations and emerging cultural
Chapter 2 — Labels and Locations

capacities” (Chambers 27) of the South Asian diaspora in Australia. Avtar Brah’s distinction about “borders” as metaphors and “part of the discursive materiality of power relations” (1996: 198) can also be applied to these multiple locations. These locations like spaces thus can be understood as social and cultural characteristics (see S. Hussain 104). These postmodern and postcolonial locations are “stretched across multiple ruptures” between “here and there” or both “here and there and neither here nor there at one and the same time” (Bammer xii).

So, whether the presumed South Asian migrant subject/protagonist is a student, a worker, a professional or an exile, his location “depends on the routes and temporality of diasporic movement and determines the production of class, racial, and ethnic positionality” (Shukla 565-566; see also Daniel 1996). This in turn creates new spaces for dialogues on the nature of memory, space, gender, family and class in the South Asian diasporic short stories or a new politics of sensory, spatial, gendered, familial and class locations. The socio-historical experience of difference and construction of a subject is also done on the basis of these multiple locations. Because it is not just the “historical subjectivity of a diaspora which holds the key to its cultural life” (Ray, 2003: 21) but also the locations and its politics that is played out between the majority and minority communities, this point warrants emphasis because “the very strong association of notions of diaspora with displacement and dislocation means that the experience of location can easily dissolve focus” (Brah, 2003: 615; my italics). My purpose here is to site various discussions and theories and to formulate a critique of politics of locations and the multiple modalities: memory, space, gender, family and class.

2.2.1 — Sensory vs. Spatial Locations

The element of romanticization which is present in every nationalism is even stronger among nostalgic migrants, who often form a rosy picture of the country they have left and are able to imagine the nation where it did not exist before. (Van der Veer 7)

The “element of romanticization” or the constant yearning for ones roots—sensory and spatial locations—has become a phenomenon for both the majoritarian Anglo-Australians as well as the different diasporans—“nostalgic migrants”—in different
ways (see Ray 2003). As Diaspora, do not simply refer “to geographical dispersal but also to the vexed questions of identity, memory and home which such displacements produces” (Ashcroft et al. 218). Relationships between diasporas and their homelands are an integral component of a diasporan framework of analysis (see K. Butler 204).

As discussed earlier, there are of course many diasporas in Australia and the “concept of home” or “roots” for these diasporans is “as compelling as it is for those Anglo-Australians committed to the ‘core values’ of a monolithic cultural nationalism” (Gelder and Salzman 49). But it is the politics of sensory and spatial locations that act as one of the core features that join South Asian diaspora across continents. For these diasporans South Asia or their country of origin is “not simply a space on the map,” but has been “the locus of memory, longing, desire, and anxiety” (Mankekar 52-53; my italics) or “a real and imaginary homeland” (Rushdie 1991). As immigrants these people often “draw on individual and collective memories of the past to condition their actions in the present” (Rudrappa 94). This “collective imagining” of the Indian subcontinent—of “emotions, links, traditions, feelings and attachments that together continue to nourish a psychological appeal among successive generations of emigrants for the ‘mother’ country” (Singh 4). The “security and emotional refuge provided by the immigrant community are emphasised and set in opposition to the hostile environment” (Fludernik 263). And if someone in the diaspora is asked about his or her identity or location “a story soon appears,” as their “identity is not separated from what happened” (Sarup 15). For Stuart Hall, the crucial question related to diasporic identity is not subjectivity but subject position or location. So, the South Asian diasporic writer not only provides a fluidity of identity to their protagonists but also “a constantly changing subject position, both geographically and ontologically” (Ashcroft et al. 218).

The politics of identity, politics of memory and space, and the narratives (autobiographical or fictional or factional) that they shape are central issues in the short stories under critique in this thesis. It is important to note how diasporic individuals (and characters) exercise their agency. Agency has been defined by Emirbayer and Mische (1998) as “the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments [. . . ] which through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by historical situations” (970). According
to them, *agency* can be understood as having three broad components based on its orientations:

1. **Iteration** is the capacity of persons to actively select and incorporate patterns of thought and social practices from the past, to give stability to their present situation so that they may cope with the temporal/spatial transitions of perhaps migration and immigration. The iteration of past social practices gives persons a sense of belonging to a larger community.

2. The **Projective Element** of agency refers to the imaginations of persons. Received traditions of thought and social practices from the past and recast in relation to the persons' hopes and desires for the future. The past is reconfigured to organize the future.

3. **Practical Evaluation** is the ability of people to make judgments among the various possible trajectories of action in response to present social situations [...] in order to make sense of future.

(989-990)

Through agency and reiteration the past “becomes a stabilizing influence that shapes the flow of effort and allows us to sustain identities, meanings, and interactions over time” (Emirbayer and Mische 975). This reiteration also helps in imagination and identification with the spatial and sensory locations. The South Asian diasporans imagine themselves “to be whole, to be complete, to have a full identity and certainly not to be open or fragmented,” they imagine themselves “to be the author, rather than the object, of the narratives that constitute” their lives (Chambers 25).

So in the analyses of location and connection within a changing global social order David Harvey (1993) points out that the “real as well as metaphorical territories and spaces of power” or locations must be given equal weight (3). But, what are sensory and spatial locations? And, how does the agency affect these two concepts related to memory and space? As memory and space are “neither a flat stage upon which subjects perform their historical task, nor a predefined volume through which they pass” (Papastergiadis 52), space is “both a transformative force and a field that is transformed by the interactions that occur within it” (Papastergiadis 52). Thus by exploring “the spatial politics of home and identity in ways that articulate both mobility and displacement alongside location and positionality” (Blunt 8), an exploration of sensory productions of knowledge in the South Asian diaspora can be done. As situated within a range of imagined and real nations or locations, South Asian diaspora in Australia embodies a set of (dis)connections between place, culture,
and identity. This complex relationship between facts of geographical location—homeland or hostland—and notions of imagined or metaphorical geographies is thus addressed by spatial and sensory locations (see Klimt and Lubkemann 148).

These connections or links with the "homeland" and "associated myths of origin," according to Crispin Bates (2001), "often play a large part in identity formation amongst migrant communities" (21), even though the actual origins of the diaspora South Asians living in the hostland can be highly diverse. He further notes that the experience of migration itself and, second, any racism to which they are subjected by indigenous population are often all that migrants have in common. A selective "remembering" of the culture and traditions of home is therefore frequently employed to build a sense of community. (21)

From this it can be formulated that "the reconstitution of a memory, which veers between an imagination drawn back to the atavistic homeland," thus making Indianness or South Asianness as "a set of inalienable values" bestowed by the country of origin and "the constellation of signs spawned by the uneasy interaction of the exiled" South Asian values with the cultures of the hostland (Carter and Torabully 14).

Rushdie (1991) beautifully sums up this uneasy interaction and the politics of spatial and sensory locations by observing Exiles or emigrants or expatriates are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge—which gives rise to profound uncertainties—that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind. (76)

This theory cannot be explored without bringing into question the narratives and the ways in which they represent spaces of home and hostland. The stories analysed here attempt to provide an understanding of the variety of interpretations of the sensory and spatial locations.
2.2.2 - Gendered Locations

[...] every writer produces out of a particular cultural, historical and gendered position. (Gunew, 1987: 50)

A gendered politics of location, according to Mankekar (2003), is “far from nostalgically seeking one’s roots or being complacent about where ‘one belongs,’ ” it “involves interrogating one’s privileges and blind spots” (53). For Sneja Gunew (1987) to raise “questions about writing in relation to history, culture, gender is precisely to show that culture is unnatural in the sense of being a fabrication which changes over time and changes according to where one is positioned within the social fabric” (51). In relation to this, Sara Mitter (1991) notes:

[...] the menfolk and the women too, know that it is incumbent on the women to respect and maintain the traditions of the past—[...]. For them, being the tradition-bearer virtually means being the one who does not change: does not observe new impressions, experience new needs or voice new demands. (54)

In diasporas it becomes the obvious responsibility of South Asian migrant women to represent and preserve unadulterated traditional values from the homeland (see also Joshi 2000).

Furthermore, the challenges faced by migrant women because of being seen as the “tradition-bearer” and the power relations embedded within the discourse of gender and diaspora, are also an indicator of the resilience of first and second generation South Asian diaspora women in Australia. So,

The challenge for these women [...] is to evolve an outlook more consistent with modern city survival—without losing, or at least without seeming to lose, anything of their essential “Indianness.” (Mitter 54)

According to Vijaya Joshi, the challenge and the “burden placed on second-generation migrant women is great, for it includes notions of racial purity, cultural allegiance and family loyalty” (6). It can be noted that within the Australian context, “migrant women who adapt to conflicting cultures are often doubly inscribed” (Joshi 6; also see Ganguly 1992). Further James Clifford (1994) has stated of women in diasporic cultures “in the diaspora remain attached to, and empowered by, a ‘home’ culture and
a tradition—selectively [. . .] women sustaining and reconnecting diaspora ties do so critically, as strategies for survival in a new context" (314).

Although when gendered locations are referred to in diaspora studies discussions are restricted to women, as women often “bear the moral and symbolic weight” of representing tradition (Ram xvii). In South Asia women are still restricted in their movements and were/are sometimes not even consulted “about their wisdom or desirability of emigrating” (Banchevska 185). In case of second generation or recent South Asian women migrants in Australia, it would appear that women are today no longer quite so badly off, “because they come to an established ethnic community that provides them with company and even the closeness of kin relationships” (Banchevska 187). Though, I have little doubt that the South Asian migrant woman is a person without risk. Since so much has been already written on the effects of migration on her transplantation, discrimination and expectations, this study also concentrates on narratives of “marginal men” and their experiences in the diaspora. A debate on the issue of gender power reversals—where women “become brokers of new domestic cultures and of new kinds of sexual politics” (Appadurai and Breckenridge ii), and therefore in some cases the male migrant also bears the same burden of representing cultural tradition and family loyalty.

Robert E. Park (1965) defines the “marginal man” as a personality type that arises at a time and a place where, out of the conflict of races and cultures, new societies, new peoples and cultures are coming into existence. The fate which condemns him to live, at the same time, in two worlds is the same which compels him to assume, in relation to the worlds in which he lives, the role of a cosmopolitan and a stranger. (946)

Since its introduction in this century, the theory of marginal man and marginality has had a major impact on social science. No doubt, South Asian migrant women act as visible markers of Indian subcontinental culture and values. And if “race, nation and identity” are considered the boundaries of South Asian culture then “women are the markers of these boundaries” (Bhavani 42). Although “race is a gendered social category” that rests on “regulating sexuality and particularly controlling the behavior of women” (Liu 158), within these markers and categories South Asian migrant women also try to challenge and restructure gender roles. Over the last few decades, the diasporan male as marginal figure has also entered the narratives (if compared to
white dominant male in the Australian context). The issue of male victimisation or lack of power in terms of agency or representation of the diasporan male in crisis challenges the gender relations vis-à-vis masculinity. This diasporan male in crisis differs from the traditional figure of the pioneering diasporan male. He is “feminised,” firstly, by the challenges of socio-economic position that he faces in a new world, a feminisation that is particularly evident in illustrations of mental and bodily harm. Secondly, the changing nature of domestic life i.e. the men’s role in the home that moves them towards greater participation in domestic chores and women’s involvement with economic activities outside the home to support the high standards of living. It has been argued by Banchevska (1974) that the “wife who remains at home, no matter how hard she works, is more likely to remain obedient and submissive than the one who contributes her cash earnings to the livelihood of the family” (180). Indeed the “working” woman has been the victim of several attacks by those who uphold patriarchal views of the role of a woman in South Asian society. Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (1996) claims that nature has cast men and women in different roles, and the attempt to transgress the role assigned to a woman would result in negative consequences:

In her own natural setting—the home—she is in a position of honour and prestige, and all her qualities shine forth as a result. But the moment she steps out of it to enter a crassly competitive world, she descends from the pedestal on which her family has placed her, and sinks deep into the mire of masculine oppression. (39)

Khan is representative of an entire group of people who perceive the working woman as deviating from her role as wife, mother, and sacrificing the needs of her children, husband and family because of her own self interest (see also Jhalani 2010). The traditional role of husband and wife because of the exigencies of daily life can get reversed.

Although a homogenisation, this shift has important implications for discourse of masculinity crisis, diaspora and gender studies. The use of women’s fiction and silencing of the male in these narratives can also be used as a source in this debate. In order to elaborate the complexities of the abovementioned boundaries, the role and place of men, their trials and tribulations as reflected in the narratives under study also form an important aspect of this study.
In diaspora and globalization *gendered locations* could be defined in terms of socio-cultural-economic spaces occupied by both men and women and is central to any analysis of the migrant experience, which enables us an insight into its various *translocations*. As Avtar Brah notes,

> each generation the experiences of men and women will also be differently shaped by gender relations. The reconfigurations of these social relations will not be a matter of direct superimposition of patriarchal forms deriving from the country of emigration over those that obtain in the country to which migration has occurred. Rather, both elements will undergo transformations as they articulate in and through specific policies, institutions and modes of signification. (2003: 625)

An analysis of the stories under examination will show how the two ideas are reinforced and challenged by South Asian migrant writers. Through this I also explore the ways in which gender interacts with cultural identity. Despite similarities in basic migrant experience and cultural environment, the socio-economic experience of male and female migrant affects the construction of a gendered self and role.

### 2.2.3 — Familial and Class Locations

Story of emigration to the West, focuses on issues of assimilation, professional success, and difficulties of social acceptance. (Fludernik 261)

The story of South Asian migration to Australia is also the story of families. The family, as a primary group of society and its assimilation, difficulties and success has not only interested the sociologists but also the literary critics, who have been much interested in the family as a unit represented through the diaspora narratives in different cultures. For South Asians family is an institution which transcends in importance the interests of the individual members. And this “institution is strengthened and supported not only by the behavior of its members, but also by the recognition and pressures of the community within which it exists” (Banchevska 183). The fact is, South Asian diaspora family is constantly subjected to stresses through increasingly rapid social change and radical transformation of social structures, which requires considerable capacity for adaptation. Individual members of a family react differently to the challenges created by the new environment. The result of weakening
of sanctity of family ties is rise in situations like adolescents reacting rebelliously to their parents, homosexuality, pre-marital sex, marriage outside the community, husband abandoning his wife and children, divorce, single parents, lack of respect for the head of the family, considering old parents a burden, and lack of knowledge/interest about their roots (culture and religion) in subsequent generations, etc. As one of the interviewed second generation woman Vidya explains in Vijaya Joshi’s book:

I really don’t think my parents had any idea of what was going to happen. They came to Australia with all these ideas of what they would like to happen. They encouraged their children to be very Indian, to marry Indian. I mean those things are obviously what they wanted but didn’t get I think they could never anticipate the way society was going to interact with them, or the way their children were going to interact with society. The subtle changes, the physical changes, the appearance, the moral—lack of moral—standing that you may or may not have. (147)

These issues though universal in nature make us think: Where does an average South Asian diasporic family stand in the light of these prognostications? What is the relation between South Asian diasporic family and Australian values? Will the South Asian diasporic family be able to survive and maintain its structures in times of social change?

In today’s modern world, Gabriel Sheffer (1986) notes, diasporas are not just “ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries” but they also maintain a “strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin—their homelands” and families back-home (3). Also, the first attempts to come to terms with cultural dislocations (unhousedness or not-at-house-ness) and difficulties of social acceptance take place at family and community level. The family becomes a battlefield where tradition, represented by Indian subcontinental culture, clashes with modernity, represented by Australian culture and values. The home fights back to preserve the cultural and religious heritage. For example, women, particularly in the first generation families, were expected to maintain the household—cooking, cleaning, childrearing, etc.—in addition to holding part-time or full-time job. Immigration disrupts, in a South Asian family, what Sharmila Rudrappa (2002) refers to as “taken-for-granted cultural ideals, ways of raising children, interacting with others, the use of public space, bodily conduct, and, fundamentally,
conceptions of the self (i.e. who they are at the very core) (87). And in order to understand how they fit into the imagined community “immigrants begin to reconceptualise themselves” (Rudrappa 87). Thus a family’s “past continues into the present, conditioning how we perceive both the present and future, and directs our cultural practices in the living present” (Rudrappa 94).

With reference to South Asian diasporas interaction with the “other,” say majority group in the hostland, race is always in parenthesis as the primary term for “class.” The diasporan family (re-)creates home and its culture with their languages, customs, art forms, arrangement of objects and ideas by “instilling such resonance into the spaces they occupy” (Karim 10). However, “the milieux that diasporas seek to create are not bound by the borders of nation states—their rhythms resonate transnationally to mark out non-terrestrial spaces that stretch out intercontinentally” (Karim 10). And sometimes, South Asian diasporan families adhere to their traditional culture and class practices so ostensibly that at times it appears that they are the original ancestral culture in their cultural orientations and practices than people of homeland (see Sharma 49).

The question is: Why do South Asian diaspora families get so faithful to their culture in foreign lands while at home they seem to favour Western culture? According to S. L. Sharma (1989), “Firstly, they find in their culture a defence mechanism against a sense of insecurity in alien settings. Secondly, that they might be banking on their culture as a compensatory mechanism for the loss of status in foreign lands” (49). South Asian diaspora families, communities and societies form a larger and significant section of Australian population. These families also act as “social laboratories” where according to Jayaram the “salient theoretical perspectives” of social science and other disciplines are tested. The diasporic situations further enable and provide the scholars with unique avenues for understanding the dynamics of culture and help them “trace and analyse” certain key social processes like formation and shaping of ethnic identity and relations (33).

An important question that comes to mind in relation to the family and class is: Can the South Asian diaspora family survive in a new home? The focus on diasporan family and class consciousness has been brought to the forefront in sociological and literary studies. The family as a unit becomes a space where issues of
racial purity and multiculturalism are negotiated (see Lathamuanpuii 2009). In the early years of history of migration from South Asia to Australia men migrated from one British dominion to the other singly or in groups. They were not allowed to bring their wives or family with them and consequently the unmarried ones either remained married the daughters of European or Aboriginal Australians (see Rajkowski 171). This is all a part and parcel of problems of settling in a strange country. On the other hand immigrants with families (wife and children) find support groups when living in close proximity to their own ethnic group or other families that help them to cope with the “cultural shock.” However, Ghassan Hage (2005) notes that the “last thing” the migrants (particularly men) would like to share with their families is shocking stories about racism they experience in public or the workplace. Such a revelation would obviously be followed by “why did you make us suffer and move to the end of the world just to get demeaned and insulted?” (Hage 494). He further notes that therefore the migrants’ familial experience is often “portrayed as a positive experience” and this is “how the whole migratory enterprise continues to legitimise itself” (2005: 494).

On diaspora condition and experience borrowing the idea from Susan Koshy (1994), it can be said that, many immigrants, writers in particular, in their analysis of the diasporic condition—family and class, bring to ethnic identities perspectives available to them in Australia. These identities are further undercut and reconfigure according to class, religious, or racial affiliations by which they may have defined themselves before they came to Australia (see Koshy 76).

The narratives under study here in this thesis do illustrate the diversity of experiences within the South Asian migrant families and community. Chapter six answers some of the questions posed in relation to South Asian diaspora families and notions of class. The trends observed with reference to South Asian family and class in these short stories do facilitate projections into the future, although with reservations as the coming time will tell more about the next generation of writers and their views and opinions on diaspora family and class networks and structures.
Conclusion

[... ] to write is, of course, to travel. It is to enter a space, a zone, a territory, sometimes sign-posted by generic indicators [... ] but everywhere characterised by movement: the passage of words, the caravan of thought, the flux of the imaginary, the slippage of the metaphor, “drift across the page.” (Chambers 9)

I shall begin by drawing limits. This study is chiefly concerned with short narratives written in English. It is also concerned with a deep rooted question: What does it mean to study the work of writers who have migrated from their homes? These short narratives or stories are like “conversations”—a “set of smaller narratives” introducing characters who have migrated to Australia. Gelder and Salzman (2009) point out that: “Some Australian literary fiction has continued to turn to Europe for its themes and influences; other literary fiction travels more widely and engages with identities-in-process in relation to various conceptions of Otherness” (xi). Keeping the above point in mind, this thesis and the themes with which these authors engage in has certain urgency since the current migration debate, particularly about South Asian diaspora in Australia impinges on areas of literary, social and cultural practice. It has been well argued by Hage that “literary texts can enter into better ‘dialogue’ with other discourses” (2005: 494) and I have therefore taken an interdisciplinary approach to question memory, spatial identity, gender, family and class—issues close to the theme of politics of location. As any work on/from postcolonial perspective or postcoloniality will have to deal with interdisciplinarity, historical and political contexts, race and power relations, and contemporary socio-cultural experiences.

Monika Fludernik (2003) sees literature (novels, short stories and narratives) by South Asian expatriates as falling into four groups:

1. the novels of immigration and cultural exile that concentrate on an individual’s private journey of assimilation;
2. multicultural novels;
3. diaspora novels in which the collective identity of Indian migrants, expatriates and second or third generation immigrants is at stake; and
4. cosmopolitan novels in which South Asian expatriates are portrayed as individuals (outside a diasporic community) and in which the process of assimilation either has been successfully
completed or is not focused on the binaries of India vs America/Britain [Australia]. In these novels [short stories] the main South Asian protagonist is frequently married to a Westerner or person from another (non-South Asian) nationality and ethnicity. (265)

This thesis attempts to begin to fill this gap by analyzing and calling upon a wide range of works in this field—from historical, anthropological, sociological, cultural and literary studies—engaged in new research and study of cause of these constant shifting locations and its politics. This thesis analyses a number of short stories written by known and not so known South Asian Australian writers. The themes that emerge on my reading these works include such as those closely related to the study of politics of locations—sensory, spatial, gendered, familial and class.

I here seek to map out a neglected oeuvre, South Asian diasporic short stories, and propose that there is a slow but steady process of South Asian literary development making going on in Australia. Further, I also propose to conceptualize, through my close reading, the theme of location as an important and complex category in relation to South Asian migration to Australasia that has deep impact on the processes of family and class structures and individual/community memory and nostalgia as reflected in these narratives and when read through the theories of diaspora, postcolonialism and race relations (see Hage 1998). My focus is directed at short stories produced by South Asian—middle class and professional—postcolonial immigrants to Australia and see the “ways in which this community’s members imagine and represent themselves” (Ganguly 27-28).

Why should one deal with the topic from a literary perspective? After all, the diaspora would appear to be a sociological, economical and historical fact (Fludernik xxviii). The question is: Are imaginative writings attempts to find satisfaction by releasing pre-occupied thoughts? This study accepts the fact that individuals reveal themselves in whatever they read and write (Y. Hussain 3). The South Asian identities and issues expressed in the works examined in this thesis are the collective concerns of authors who have roots in South Asia and are living in Australia. The issues include migration, settlement, identity, family, marriage, children—important to these authors regardless of their being Indian, Sri Lankan, Pakistani, or Bangladeshi. These short stories are “essentially products of individual imaginations” and can also be taken as “eyewitness accounts: not literal autobiographies, but representations of
aspects of the lived experience and preoccupations of each author which she recognised as relevant to lives other than her own" (Y. Hussain 3).

Little attention is given to South Asian-Australian short story writers particularly by Australian critics. Australian literary criticism has been relatively slow to address the South Asian Australian literary studies and examinations of literature. Short stories by prominent South Asian writers have tended to concentrate on a number of key topics and themes. By identifying these common themes and the different ways they are addressed in these creative works, we can uncover some of the major issues in the South Asian diaspora in Australia. I hope to throw some new light on problems of politics of location and conflict it causes.

Endnotes

1 For a detailed discussion, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labeling_theory.


3 Mellor (2004) notes the complexity of racism and demonstrates how everyday racism occurs through a range of means by a range of players.

4 See http://www.spiked-online.com/index.php/site/reviewofbooks_article/7877/.

5 See Sydney gang rapes, Ashfield gang rapes, and Cronulla riots involving ethnic Australians as perpetrators.

6 See “85% Australians Feel Racism Exists in Australia” (2009). Also, the India’s High Commissioner to Australia Sujata Singh had acknowledged that there had been “a racist element” to the attacks on Indian students in Melbourne (“Racism Confined to ‘Minority’ of People: Australian Minister” 2009).

7 According to reports, in Victoria alone in the past one year “an astonishing 1447 people of Indian origin were punched, kicked, raped or robbed” (see Bolt 2009).

8 A study on racist attitudes conducted by a team led by Dr Kevin Dunn of the University of New South Wales in 2003 found one in eight Australians interviewed admitted they were prejudiced, particularly towards Muslim Australians. The study also found some Australians were living in denial of such prejudice though 80 per
cent of those surveyed recognised racism was a problem. Unfortunately, the problem has been promoted since, and continues to contribute to decrease in the process of integration.

According to Phil Griffiths (2005) “[R]acism towards Asian people was grounded in *strategic fersas*” (163) that were highlighted strategically by the ruling class for serving their own interests and hold on working classes in Australia.

In Melbourne and Sydney, Indian students protested against what they claimed were racist attacks. The protesters also accused police of “ramrodding” them to break up their *dharna*. Former Australian High Commissioner to India John McCarthy agreed that there may have been an element of racism involved in some of the attacks on Indians, but that they were mainly criminal in nature. See also “Nepalese Student Bashed in Sydney” (2010).

See Facebook group “I am Australian and I would rather Immigrants Living here than Racists” and also various standup spots related to Australian racism done at the “2010 Melbourne Comedy Festival Gala,” available at www.youtube.com.

The development of racist movements has also been linked to the crises that many of the countries face as global economic decisions cause societal changes.

For a detailed discussion on the dynamics shaping racism in Australia, see Dunn 2003; Griffiths 2005.

Lake (2010) observes that the power of Anzac mythology is still working at the symbolic level in Australia today. Earlier it has been used “to serve as White Australia’s creation myth” (Lake 1). She further notes that the Chinese colonists also joined the celebration of Federation in 1901, “even though they were subject to systematic racial discrimination” (3). She further observes that it is “inappropriate” for Australia, a “modern democratic nation to adopt an Imperial, masculine, militarist event as the focus” of its “national definition in the twenty-first century” (3).

India has become the third largest source of international immigrants and second largest source of skilled migrants and international students to Australia (see Bhandari 2008).

On the rise and fall of anti-immigrant and racist parties and major policy shifts in the last years of the century; see James Jupp, “Immigration, Asylum and Extremist Politics: Europe and Australia,” National Europe Centre Paper No. 70, Paper

17 Recently Hanson said that “a multicultural country can never be a strong country” and supported this assertion with a number of widely publicised remarks about Asians’ not assimilating and living in ghettos, and more recently about Africans bringing disease (particularly AIDS) into Australia.

18 According to Andrew Bolt (2010) many of the attacks on Indians (students and taxi drivers) in Victoria and elsewhere seem to have been carried out by members of recently arrived racial minorities, whether African, Middle Eastern, Maori, Pacific Islander or Asian. While the Australian and Indian media along with Victoria police have been very reluctant to admit such things and blame the attacks on whites.

19 Australia’s first Asia-born Cabinet minister, Penny Wong, Federal Climate Change Minister said that racism in Australia was confined to “a minority of people” with extreme views: “On the whole I think Australians are tolerant.” However, Wong had a few years back recounted her “pretty difficult” childhood facing racist remarks while growing up in Adelaide (“Racism Confined to ‘Minority’ of People: Australian Minister” 2009).

20 It is also interesting to see how migrants re-define or “make use of the strict immigration regulations in Australia in ways different from those intended by Australian policy-makers” (Voigt-Graf 143; for an interpretation of the ways in which migrants challenge the structures of the system, see Ballard 1994).


22 The invasion narrative added with conspiracy theories and taking over of the vacant fertile Australian land by the Asiatics formed “a sub-genre in the narratives of racial conflict” in Australia (see Walker, 2007: 315).

23 Describing the seriousness of Australian government towards growing attacks on Indian students, the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said that an assault against any international student was “one assault too many.” Nonetheless, he pointed out that if compared with international criminal data, Australia would still be safer than the UK, France, Italy, and the US. He further observed that “In any relationship, there are bound to be problems. Let’s not take this out of context” (qtd. in Srivastava 2009).
Victoria's Chief Police Commissioner Simon Overland said: “Some of these crimes are racially motivated; however I also believe that many of the robberies and other crimes of violence are simply opportunistic” (qtd. in Bhandari 2009).

There are often discrepancies in how the media (in South Asia and Australia) reports “racial” violence. The Australian media has been accused of using stereotypes to that groups’ detriment. According to BBC journalist Stephen Evans (2009) Australians attitude, particularly media attitude and reporting, towards casual racism needs an urgent “self-questioning.” And according to journalist David Penberthy (2009): “Addressing our casual racism would require a total change in our national psyche.”

Hate crimes and racial violence are not a new concept in Australia. Violence against the Chinese community is an early example in Australia’s history of mobs attacking Chinese miners (see also De Lepervanche 1975).

A result of early Aboriginal campaigns and struggle demanding full citizenship thus extending “the Australian principle of equality” (Lake 3).

See National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia (1989).

Internationally known Indian filmmaker Mahesh Bhatt, recounting his film unit’s recent alleged mistreatment and harassment by the Australian authorities (particularly Melbourne City Council) while shooting there for a film on racial attacks against Indian students – Crook: It’s Good to be Bad in Australia, says: “[...] after what has happened to me and my team at ground zero there, that it is agreed that Australia is a great place and all that, but there is still there a great section of society that has a very clear and pronounced bias against us. It has been a nightmare for me” (Prabhakar 5). Contrary to what Australian government has publicised Bhatt feels that apart from suffering huge financial losses the whole thing has left him traumatised.

The critical interest in this diaspora and its study is largely post-1990s, which coincides with the period of globalization and political interest in home countries to strengthen their foreign policy and relations with the host countries through Diasporas (see C. Cohen 1999; Kalra et al. 2005).

For a detailed discussion, see Chapter one.

For a discussion on cultural constructions of masculinity and national identity, see Bode 2009.
Amartya Sen (2005) argues that the Indian subcontinental diasporic population sees no contradiction between being loyal citizens of the country in which they are settled and where they are politically and socially integrated and still retain a sense of affiliation and companionship with the homeland (73-74).