

Re-negotiating Identity and Reconciling Cultural Ambiguity in the Indian Immigrant Community in Sydney, Australia

Loshini Naidoo

INTRODUCTION

This paper considers the consequences of migrant experiences, in particular that of the Indian diaspora in Sydney, Australia. Its focus is on the problems surrounding individual identity and belonging as well as the processes of conceptualising self and renegotiating a collective identity within changing social and cultural structures. In order to establish how a change of social and cultural environment will impact on one's identity, it is necessary to examine the process of acculturation. With the increased cultural diversity in Australia, models of assimilation, emphasizing a more or less uni-linear process of adopting the practices of the host culture and relinquishing those of the native culture, are being questioned for their adequacy in representing the experience of contemporary immigrants. Instead arguments have been put forth for the relevance of "segmented assimilation" and related models of heterogenous and conditional adaptation (Gans, 1997; Portes and Zhou, 1993; Rumbaut, 1997).

Such models suggest that effective adaptation can occur without fully relinquishing native cultural practices and that the success of adaptation depends on how an immigrant's characteristics interact with the circumstances he or she finds in the host country (Zhou and Bankston, 1998). The most common conceptualization of acculturation has been the "canonical" assimilation paradigm (Berry, 1980; Gordon, 1964; Vega, Kolody and Vale, 1987; Williams and Berry, 1991). In this paradigm, acculturation is viewed as a dimension of assimilation (Alba and Nee, 1997) and refers to the adoption of the host society's culture and behaviours especially its language (Gordon, 1964; Keefe and Padilla, 1987).

The most common model of assimilation has been the single continuum or straight line model (Bruner, 1956; Keefe and Padilla, 1987; Porter and Washington, 1993). This model maps a largely linear process wherein the immigrant group slowly relinquishes traditional ethnic practices

in favour of more beneficial host culture behaviours. This model is often referred to in terms of high versus low acculturation, where high acculturation indicates assimilation into the host society and low acculturation indicates maintenance of the ethnic culture. By implication this means that one can be either Indian or Australian.

Due to challenges from early researchers, whether acculturation leads to full residential integration with other groups (Rosenthal, 1960) and that ethnic culture may go through periods of resurgence and persistence rather than decline (Yancey et al., 1976), two alternative conceptions developed. The first, the two culture matrix, asserted that the most effective adaptation occurred when immigrants combined aspects of their native and host cultures (Keefe and Padilla, 1987). According to this model, immigrants might retain traits and practices associated with their native culture that benefit their sense of identity while simultaneously adopting host culture practices that lead to more effective adaptation in other circumstances.

Similar themes appear in the second conception, the multidimensional model of acculturation (Keefe and Padilla, 1987; Phinney, 1990, 1991; Porter and Washington, 1993). Proponents of this model assert that individuals "can have either strong or weak identifications with both their own or the mainstream cultures and a strong relationship with one culture does not necessarily imply a weak relationship with the dominant culture" (Phinney, 1990, p. 502). This model allows for several types of adaptation rather than one "assimilated" ideal.

In the case of the Indian diaspora in Australia, the process of acculturation will be strongly influenced by the host country as different social forces will have differing effects on the patterns and pace of acculturation. The processes and their outcomes will have an impact on the individual and group identities. The host country represents a new reality, removing many of the conditions that previously underpinned identity and sense of belonging (Varvin, 2003, p. 175-176).

Diasporic identities are being associated with

the process globalisation and are defined by their heterogeneity as well as diversity. They are constantly producing and reproducing themselves with an endless desire to return to “lost origins” (Hall, 1992). For these displaced subjects, the fiction of cultures as separate, object-like phenomena occupying discrete places becomes increasingly clear. Paradoxically, as cultures are uprooted from places, ideas of culturally and ethnically distinct places become even more salient (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992). Diasporic members, living on cultural borderlands, cluster around remembered or imagined “homelands”, practise “authentic home cultures”, form ethnic communities, so as to re-root their floating lives and reach a closure in making sense of their constantly changing subjectivities (Shi, 2005, p. 57).

Globalization, for the purpose of this paper will be defined as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice-versa” (Giddens, 1990, p. 64). In conceptualizing globalization, two important characteristics emerge: the first is that the world is viewed as a single space, a whole, and the second revolves around the concept of time-space reordering. Featherstone (1995, p.72) believes that globalization “entails the sense that the world is one place, that the globe has been compressed into a locality, that others are neighbours with whom we must necessarily interact, relate and listen”.

Transnational flows of capital, globalization of culture and politics and advanced transportation have made travelling, migration, exile, refugees and other forms of displacement common experiences of different groups of people worldwide (Anzaldúa, 1999; Gupta and Ferguson, 1992, p. 18). These subjects in the course of their travel, experience the intersection of multiple, sometimes conflicting, subject positions. As a result of this, these identities undergo constant transformation and “multiply constructed across different, often antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions” (Hall, 1996, p.4). These conditions in many ways reflect my own movements and relocation to Australia.

A REFLEXIVE PERSONALISTIC EXPERIENCE

This paper draws on my participation in Indian

community life in South Africa and Australia and of my understandings of the diasporic experience based on my own experiences as well as informal discussions with friends (born in India and overseas) and colleagues in the School of Education, University, of Western Sydney. For me, entering a new environment did not mean that I had to forsake my native home i.e. South Africa. My own new reality, which lies somewhere between my two worlds, and also between my past, present, and future, has been built on new and varied meanings and forms, and enriched by my experiences in both worlds.

Indeed, my life has taken on new meaning by having two worlds, out of which has grown an awakened and richer self. I am neither exclusively here, nor exclusively there, certainly an example of the multidimensional mode of acculturation. In this world where I arrived with both conscious decisions and judgment, and unconscious forces in life, I have access to both cultures, and am able to view one from the perspective of the other. I have become more sensitive to differences, more ready to examine my own assumptions, and am more open to different ways of thinking and doing things. Caught constantly between oppositions past and present, belonging and non-belonging, here and there, inside and outside to name a few, forced to choose from either side or to develop an identity of combining elements. Because of this I find myself fitting Chambers (1994, p. 4) apt description of “the drama of the stranger”:

Cut off from the homelands of tradition, experiencing a constantly challenged identity, the stranger is perpetually required to make herself at home in an Inter-minable discussion between a scattered historical inheritance and a Heterogeneous present.

From the moment of my arrival in Australia, I tried to find an orientation, initially comparing the new environment with the home and past left behind. The disconnection from a seemingly culturally stable past and homeland confronted me and there was the problem of an identity constantly put into question by the re-consideration of the formerly lived culture as well as with the handling of this individual past in the cultural present.

It is the “living through difference” which has the capacity to unravel hegemonic practices and to establish new forms of discourses. The crossing of borders, the flexibility of spaces, and the notion of de-essentialism signify the search

for a solution and for a concept to foster this world and to make sense for the individual. I was constantly negotiating my identity and constantly creating new positions from where to view the world. I was informed by two separately considered cultures, so that my imaginations are a conglomeration of two sides. They encompass notions of outside and inside. And within this world I am making my own choices and establish my own positions which are fluid and de-essentialized. My identity is rooted in more than one space and my routes develop from the intermingling of diversified worlds.

It is true that, sometimes, we need a mirror to be able to look at ourselves. Being in-between, I feel that I understand myself better. It was only in Australia that I started to ask myself where I was from, and to reflect upon my own cultural roots. Differences and changes can be discerned and gauged only in comparison with a reference point. If I remained in South Africa, I would not have thought about the meaning of being Indian South African. Without Australian culture as a reference point, I would not have had a better and more concrete understanding of the meaning of 'Indianness'. Had I not been inside a predominantly Anglo-Celtic society, I would not have come to think about the underlying South African Indian values and beliefs that I was raised with, that have guided my behaviour, and that were so deeply ingrained within me. In entering another world, I have embarked on a journey of self-discovery and self-building between the two worlds - South African and Anglo-Celtic.

At times, the sense of nostalgia becomes so strong that it seizes me, permeating all my senses. I satisfy my craving by indulging myself in Indian restaurants; I listen to Indian classical music; I leaf from cover to cover photo albums and picture books. But there is something that I can never get over — the sense of profound guilt for leaving my parents behind. Every day I am gnawed by the guilt of not being able to fulfil my filial duties and obligations, a cardinal value of being Indian, 'and to be with them and look after them'. I had deprived them of 'the happiness derived from natural bonds', 'family happiness' of being with their eldest child. No matter how advanced technology has become, the fact that I am miles away from them is a harsh reality. I was made fully conscious that I am conditioned by geography. The emotional debt resulting from physical separation is something that I can never,

and will never, be able to repay. I know, emotionally, that I will remain Indian South African in Australia.

According to Appadurai (1990), an important feature of immigrant groups is that they "dwell in imagined worlds". Nostalgia is one way in which such an imagined world is constructed. The refugee/migration stories are important in influencing the family and worldviews. The nostalgic narratives reflected in Askland's (2005) study from East Timorese refugees; Baptiste's (2005) study on East Indian immigrant families and Lindridge, Hogg and Shah's (2004) study on South Asian women in Britain, suggests that nostalgia might be used to resolve some of the cognitive dissonance which arises from migration. The stories of personal sacrifice strengthened the family bond and served to heighten the importance of the family as a locus of meaning (Stacey, 1998). The family, however, formed part of a greater sense of shared community among the Indian diaspora arising from immigration experiences and racial belonging (Stacey, 1998). The community, as a cultural support framework, had a considerable influence on the behaviours in perpetuating and reinforcing the public self (Lindridge et al., 2004).

For many from the Indian diaspora, the idea of return is not necessarily a physical but a cultural phenomenon (Nadarajah, 1994). The many local Indian associations in Sydney and Melbourne which particularly cater for people originating from the different parts of India as well as associations, can symbolise an act of cultural return. The Sydney Murugan Temple, which in its architectural style is an exact reproduction of its parent temple in Sri Lanka, demonstrates the resolve to build a cultural institution in an alien world. Other such examples can be cited like Sikh temples and Muslim mosques. Clothey (1983, p. 196) sees the temple as affirming "a world- psychic space in which the community lives and acts out its identity".

A Brief Literature Survey of the Indian Diaspora

Lakha and Stevenson (2001, p. 249), say that "the various associations in Melbourne are important sites of cultural activity and provide the communicative space where the heterogeneity and multiculturalism of India are represented and addressed". They continue to give

examples of various seasonal festivals conducted by the respective associations as well as occasions commemorating the birthdays of local heroes. Furthermore, they believe that migration and the diasporic experience are now themes that are increasingly woven into the narratives of the Bollywood cinema (Lakha and Stevenson, 2001, p. 251). The Indian diaspora in Australia have nostalgia not only for what they left behind but for what is inaccessible to them in the present. Regular visits to the home country be it India, Fiji, Sri Lanka, Malaysia or South Africa as well as exposure to contemporary cultural products (such as latest movies and fashion trends) enable the Indian diaspora to refresh their memories and keep up with the changing cultural milieu back home (Rayapol, 1997). Robertson, (1992, p. 159) argues that the late twentieth century nostalgia is “consumerist”. The Indian diaspora’s desire for ethnic fashions, jewellery, spices and speciality foods which can be acquired through global capitalism is embedded in a consumerist culture. So according to Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan and Swindler (1985) the Indian diaspora in Australia is “a community of memory”. For many, however, there is also what Jamison (1989) called a “nostalgia for the present”, where immigrants like those of the Indian diaspora experience a nostalgia for not only what they left behind in the past but also for what is inaccessible to them in the present.

Marie de Lepervanche’s (1984) rich ethnographic account of Indians in Woolgoola New South Wales (NSW) was also of great benefit to this paper even though it focused primarily on Sikhs as did the work of Lakha and Stevenson (2001) on Melbourne’s Indian community. The latter proved invaluable mainly because it explored Indian identity in a multicultural city through the participation of Indians in the workforce as well as in Indian restaurants and specialist shops. “It argues that the idea of a unified culture cannot be sustained in the face of diversity and the paper strives to demonstrate how Indian identity in Melbourne is perceived, forged and experienced by Indians from different backgrounds” (Lakha and Stevenson, 2001, p. 245).

Yet another interesting paper was that of Ghuman (2000) whose research on “Acculturation of South Asian adolescents in Australia”, was part of an on-going wider research project on the biculturalism and identity-related issues of young South Asian people in Britain, Canada, and the

US. The fieldwork conducted in New South Wales was intended to compare the biculturalism of adolescents of South Asian origin in Australia with adolescents studied in England and Vancouver (Ghuman, 1994). While the study focused mainly on young people from the Punjab, it did however refer to one of Berry’s (1997) strategies of integration in that the South Asian young people in Ghuman’s (2000, p. 314) study indicated that they were in favour of some kind of biculturalism in which they could accommodate the Australian norms within the demands and imperatives of their home cultures.

Bhatia (2002) indicated that social histories are important to understanding the context of family and friends for the multiple identities which arise from the dialogical self. These social histories and memories were well captured in the work of Askland (2005) on Young East Timorese in Australia entitled “Becoming Part of a New Culture and the Impact of Refugee Experiences on Identity and Belonging”. The interviews with East Timorese participants captured some of the global cultural flows (Appadurai, 1990) which influence the formation of ethnoscares in the early twenty-first century.

Rayapol’s (1997) book entitled “Negotiating Identities: Women in the Indian Diaspora”, was important to this paper in that it attempts to understand the process in which an ‘imagined community’ is being reconstructed in an immigrant context. The book explores the pioneering work of Hindu women in the construction and maintenance of the Shree Vishnu temple at Pittsburgh. Through an analysis of gender, ethnicity, religion and class, Rayapol (1997, p. 32) shows how Indian women, through a complex set of gender dynamics, challenge conventional notions of separate and distinct public and private spheres. The temple represents the site of such an intersection where women explore their roles in both the “rational, bureaucratic arenas of the temple as well as the more private tasks of socialization of children” as Gupta and Ferguson (1992) point out, Anderson’s (1983) idea of ‘imagined communities’ assumes a new meaning and life in the immigrant context.

Remembered places like that of the temple, serves as a symbolic anchor for this community of dispersed persons and Rayapol’s study (1997, p. 32) is concerned with this process of reconstruction particularly concerned to show how gender ideologies and practices change as

part of a dialectical process of accommodation and resistance to the new cultural milieu. Similarly, Lindridge et al. (2004, p. 211) in their study of South Asian Women in Britain attempt to capture the 'imagined ... multiple worlds' of young adult women in post-modern ethnic families, households and society. Drawing on a dialogical model of acculturation and diasporic identity, they show how young South Asian women in Britain use multiple identities across a variety of cultural settings to negotiate and navigate cultural and consumer behavioural borders. Through an ethno-consumerist framework, they provide a nuanced understanding of the intersections between ethnicity, self and consumption in families and peer friendship groups which reflects the individuals' co-existence and identity maintenance in two cultures.

Baptiste's (2005) study on East Indian immigrant parents and some of the post-immigration difficulties they experience in their attempts to rear culturally East Indian children in the United States cultural context is invaluable to my paper even though the focus is on therapeutic issues and recommendations. The difficulty many families in therapy experienced finding a viable fit between their native cultural values and the new US values and expectations for rearing children in the US was crucial for my understanding of the Indian diaspora in Australia. Similarly, the work of Desai and Subramanian (2000) study which explored, deciphered and decoded the lived realities of South Asian youth living in Toronto, helped me understand how race and cultural differences inform one's sense of identity and showed how youth from the South Asian community constantly balance the dual needs of cultural conformity and resistance without having to negate their cultural identity. The dual consciousness that many of the youth displayed in this study resonated with many experiences of parents and children from the Indian diaspora in Australia who were evolving a new culture that encompassed selected cultural aspects of both the home country and the host country.

Towards a Conceptual Framework on Indians in Australia

According to the Indian High Commission Report on the Indian Diaspora (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2001) the

history of migration from India to Australia dates back to the 19th century, when Australia was a British colony. It was decided to import camels and their handlers or drivers from North-West India (which then included Baluchistan and parts of North-Western Pakistan). The first instance of Indian camels and their handlers arriving in Australia was in June 1860 when three Afghans arrived in Melbourne with 124 camels. The British rulers employed another 3000 camel handlers between 1860 and the 1930s. These immigrants were usually employed on three-year contracts and mostly returned to India after completion of this contract. Those who remained worked as labourers, particularly in the construction of the Australian railway network. The contribution of these Afghans in establishing the rail-road network has been recognised with the naming of a major Australian train route as Ghan Express.

In the last four decades of the 19th century, Indians particularly Punjabi Sikhs and Punjabi Muslims were encouraged to work in Australia mainly as agricultural labourers, hawkers and traders. The greatest Indian immigrant concentration was on the North coast of New South Wales. Following the enactment of the Immigration Restriction Act in 1901, the number of Indians declined and remained at around 6,500 to 7,000 until after the end of World War II. The single largest inflow of Indian immigrants to Australia was in the 1930s from Jalandhar district of the Punjab. These Indians worked as labourers in the sugar plantations in Woolgoolga, New South Wales. Around 400 families, mostly Sikhs are presently settled there and engaged in banana cultivation. The next wave of immigrants from India to Australia began when many Anglo-Indians decided to migrate to Australia some years after India's independence in 1947 and their migration was accepted even before the White Australia Policy came to an end.

As late as the mid-60s, their migration to Australia continued. The relaxation of the restrictive immigration policy by the Australian authorities in 1966 led to a marked rise in migration to Australia. According to some estimates, the Indian population there rose from 7,500 in 1947 to 14,167 in 1961 and to 29,212 in 1971. This period saw a change in the nature of the Indian immigrants. Earlier a majority of them were railway and dock workers from the Anglo-Indian community, while from the 1970s onward, they were largely professionals.

A noteworthy feature of the composition of the Indian community in Australia is that a significant component is made up of Indians who migrated from Fiji to Australia owing to the climate of political uncertainty arising in the wake of the first coup in Fiji in 1987 and thereafter in 2000. It is estimated that between 35,000-40,000 people migrated to Australia as a result of the exodus from Fiji. There was also a migration of about 10,000 persons of Indian origin to Australia are from countries such as Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, the UK and Malaysia. The 1990s again saw a sharp rise in immigration when a number of professionals, like computer and software experts, engineers, doctors, accountants, opting to settle in Australia doubled in comparison to the earlier decade. The growing recognition of India as a power in the IT field is likely to attract more IT professionals from India to Australia in the immediate future at least.

Of 30,000 Indian citizens, about 10,000 are students from India studying in Australian Universities mainly in the IT and Management Courses (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2001, p. 279). The number of students has increased six-fold during the last five years. Many of them, who took degrees from Australia, have gone back to Australia and hold positions in the Universities. The community in general has a high profile in so far as its level of education is concerned. Western Australia has the highest proportion of the Indian population followed by Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Northern Territory, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania.

Since only professionals and qualified persons are allowed as immigrants under Australian requirements, the majority of Indians are mainly professionals. A number of Indian immigrants are engaged in the restaurant business and Indian restaurants are regular cites in all the major cities of Australia. Indian food is widely appreciated by the Australians and the Indian restaurants are doing well. A small number of Indians is engaged in small and medium scale businesses, mostly of import of commodities such as textile garments. In Sydney there is a taxi stand called the 'Punjab Agricultural University Taxi Stand' and it is named after the graduates from the Punjab Agricultural University, many of whom, on migration to Australia did not get employment commensurate with their qualifications and took to taxi-driving.

Change and Continuity

Persons of the Indian diaspora in Australia perpetuate and maintain Indian cultural values based upon memories from the Indian sub-continent. These memories have an important role in maintaining cultural reality at the family level. For many parents, rearing children, particularly adolescents, within the Australian context is difficult because of differential filial cultural expectations for children in Australia compared to India or other transported Indian communities. At times, the acculturation process of parents and children often polarises the family and contributes to problems resulting from a clash of cultures.

According to Jambunathan and Counselman (2002, p. 658) "families follow a patriarchal, joint family residential pattern (grandparents, parents and children living together). Roopnarine and Hossain (1992) see the joint family system as a major influence in the socialisation process. Parents in the Indian diaspora lay a great deal of emphasis in their parenting practices on familial bonds, dependence on and loyalty to the family, obedience, religious beliefs and achievement (Kakar, 1988). More recent studies stress that parents in the Indian diaspora, place a high value on academic achievement and family inter-dependence, discourage autonomy, and emphasize the importance of extended family, with respect and obedience to elders (Helwig and Helwig, 1980; Wakil et al., 1981; Dasgupta, 1989). It has also been asserted that Indian parents prepare children from their earliest years for their eventual adult roles, in which males traditionally stay with their parents and take care of the entire family, while females support their spouses, and care for the household and children (Ramu, 1977; Roland, 1988; Roopnarine and Hossain, 1992).

The challenge for families of the Indian diaspora in Australia is for them to raise their families in a non-Indian, western context, where a predominantly western worldview prevails. Harrison et al. (1990) proposes three adaptive strategies that most immigrant families use to fit into the majority culture: family "extendedness" and role flexibility which are defined as support system network that help families solve problems in times of stress; biculturalism, which is defined as the capacity of a person to function effectively in two or more culturally different situations and ancestral worldviews which refer to the traditional

values of culture and family taught by parents to their children.

Typically, families of the Indian diaspora in Australia are so organised that they are still patriarchal and male dominant. Family structure is hierarchical with regards to age and gender and roles and expectations of those in these roles are defined. As a result, communication between parents and children of this hierarchical arrangement flows downward in order of position and status within the family. Children are expected to respect parental wishes and to behave in ways that reflect well upon the family and the community.

Success in education or the economic sphere is highly regarded and as such the educational success of children is regarded as an honour to the family. However families in their desire to achieve cultural continuity are often in conflict with their children because the latter are able to adapt and acculturate at a much faster rate than their parents, who still prescribe and maintain the cultural status quo in regards to parenting from the homeland. The greatest fear of all parents is that their children in becoming too "Australianised" are losing sight of the family's preferred normative submission to certain core values and practices. Hence, conformity is equated with loyalty to the family. As such, families of the Indian diaspora in Australia are often forced to establish like their East Indian counterparts in the US "strict rules for their children's behaviour in order to establish some form of control over them" (Baptiste, 2005, p. 352).

Some parents may go as far as minimizing their children's contact with the visible markers of the Australian culture for example, dating based on personal choice, partying, using contraceptives, marrying for love vs. arranged marriage, or reject the culture outright (Baptiste, 2005, p. 352). The Australian constitution which recognises the rights of children is condemned by many parents from the Indian diaspora for being "too permissive and challenging the parents' authority and values (Baptiste, 2005). However, rebelliousness and deviation from tradition are not necessarily permanent features of adaptation among people in the Indian diaspora. Lindridge et al. (2004, p. 21) for instance, in their study of South Asian women in Britain, assert that the desire to rebel on the part of children "diminished as participants grew older and they tended to return to the traditional South Asian values". They go on to say that an "important influence on the

conformity was the power of the emotional bonds with parents and family and the desire to please them. Since not all parents were bound by tradition, negotiation with cultural differences and cultural identities became much easier for those who were actively engaged with the host country. The latter was felt to be most "amenable to the development of self-identity and esteem (Sue, 1983). This area would constitute an important one for further investigation among the youth in the Australian Indian diaspora. To some extent assimilation through the use of religion is proving to be an effective tool in social control and submission to normative values.

Assimilation through Religious Association

To overcome the anxiety associated with possible assimilation into the Australian way of life many families of the Indian diaspora in Australia, use religion or religious affiliation in order to make their children "good Indians". As mentioned above, some of the anxiety can come from a mismatch between the migrants' religious practices and those of others in the host country. While religion may bear a less pragmatic relationship to adaptation, it may also have a tremendous psychological impact on the self-esteem of the immigrant. For example the single continuum model of acculturation may view the retention of some religious practices as maladaptive while those scholars following an ethnic identity perspective may argue that retaining the cultural heritage through native religious practices may increase self-esteem even when such practices may diverge from that of the host culture (Phinney, 1990; Porter and Washington, 1993). Such expressions of cultural affinity may increase one's sense of ethnic pride and may in turn increase one's personal self-worth.

Weiting (1975, p. 139) in an examination of intergenerational patterns of religious beliefs speaks of:

The threat to society posed by the possibility that the young might not adopt the essential wisdom and values of that society.....If a society is to continue its existence beyond one generation, the members must transmit what they consider to be necessary knowledge and values. The continuity of a social system by definition requires transmission between generations.

The Hindu festivals of Holi, Diwali, Dasahara, Eid, Rakhee, Baisakhi, Buddha Jayanti and so on

amongst the Indian diaspora in Australia further strengthens the religious identity of this diaspora. Often, religious organisations play an important role in retaining the ethnic identity among immigrants, while binding them through caste, creed and regional affiliations (Sahoo, 2004). For instance, the establishment of Hindu Heritage Society (HHS) in Australia during 1998 has provided a platform for Hindus of different castes, creeds, regions and individual beliefs to share their ideas and practices. The HHS is also affiliated to the Federation of Australian Indian Associations (FAIA).

There are hundreds of Hindu temples in Australia especially in major metropolitan areas like Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney NSW, Queensland and Perth, which have wider networks within Australia and with their counterparts in different parts of the world (Sahoo, 2004). Another feature of religious practice among Indians abroad is their faith in Gurus/spiritual teachers. During the last few decades several spiritual leaders/gurus have extended their teachings to Australia too, in their quest to internationalise their doctrines and build up a following across the globe. Their followers have established either religious meeting points or Mandirs (temples) in their respective gurus' names. They include Swaminarayan, Sathya Sai Baba, Mata Amritanandamayi, Sachidananda Swami, Meher Baba, Swami Murugananda Saraswati, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Maheshyogi, Swami Prabhupada, Swami Chinmayananda (Chinmaya Mission) and Swami Ranganamananda (Ramakrishna Mission), Leaders of Arya Samaj and Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), and OSHO (Rajneesh). They have made it possible further to maintain transnational networks among Indians across the world through the arrangement of seminars, discourses, symposia, workshops and charitable works.

Other cultural aspects such as arranged marriages, music dance and drama are also intertwined with religious beliefs. These according to Williams (1988, p. 287) are "variations of the rituals that preserve in powerful forms elements of the religious traditions". At times when there are no eligible candidates in an arranged marriage by (by religion or class), then parents may "import" potential spouses from the country of origin for a child; this tendency is truer of wives than husbands (Wakil et al., 1981).

Desai and Subramanian (2000, p. 60) in their

study of South Asian immigrant youth in the greater Toronto area asserted that parents "had difficulty dealing with the concept of dating because it meant acknowledging the growing sexuality and sexual awareness of the children; that it symbolised the erosion of cultural values and all that is bad and wild about western culture which is likely to influence their children to take drugs, drink alcohol, smoke, engage in sex and rock n' roll". Finally parents are in fear that coming from a culture where marriages arranged by parents or elders in the family are still very much the norm, their children by being allowed to date and hence select their own partner could end up marrying someone from a different ethno-cultural, racial or religious background.

The Indian diaspora in Australia have multiple identities. They see their identity in terms of nation, region, religion and language. Their national identity is being Indian, their religious identity could be any one of the many religions represented in India for example, Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and so forth, their regional identity could be south Indian or north Indian or those from the central region and each region has its own corresponding language or dialect. These different identities are complex and impact on the way in which they relate to each other and to the outside world. According to Barth (1969), different identities surface in different circumstances and many in Goffman's words "mark the boundaries" in regards to ethnicity. While nations are often perceived to be homogenous in culture, internal diversity of region, ethnicity, class, gender and religion are celebrated (Handler, 1994).

The fact that most Indian children, particularly those from Fiji, India, Malaysia and Sri Lanka can speak their native language "reinforces their family orientation and cultural identity... their bilingual ability related to the need to negotiate an existence within two" (Lindridge et al., 2004, p. 223). In Melbourne, mainly Urdu speaking Indians and Pakistanis established the United Migrant Muslims Association where a common identity is articulated based on linguistic and religious affinity (Lakha and Stevenson, 2001, p. 257). These authors continue to assert that the organisation showed that language was an important means of creating community and constructing identity.

Lindridge et al. (2004, p. 223) assert that the native language is spoken because of parental pressure but that language skills weakened as

children grew older, arising from a cultural shift in the sites in which they enacted their identities, for example family and friendship groups. Conversely, these authors also saw the decline as not one of loss but rather one of cultural identity. It reflected the “emergence of a “new” language, a form of sub-cultural capital in which the axes of gender, sexuality and race are all employed to keep the determinations of class, income and occupation at bay” (Lindridge et al., 2004, p. 224). The fact that they could speak another language apart from the mother tongue, empowered them and the fact that even their friends engaged in the new language is an example of what Bourdieu (1990) spoke of as sub-cultural capital. In this way, multiple identities could be constructed that satisfied family and community expectations and helped them retain their ethnic identity within the wider society (Lindridge et al., 2004).

Schools represent a primary determinant in the socialisation and acculturation of immigrant children. The influence of the school on one’s acculturation process is closely related to language. To provide better educational opportunities is one of the main reasons why many families immigrate. “Many parents are willing to experience downward mobility in their careers and social status as they see it as a sacrifice they are making to ensure a better future for their children” (Desai and Subramanian, 2000, p. 60). As such there is a great deal of pressure on the children of the Indian diaspora to perform well academically. There is also the added pressure for these children to enter professional fields and take on careers that are highly valued in the community like doctors, lawyers and chartered accountants. Rayapol’s (1997) study shows that parents however accorded greater priority to the education of their sons over that of a daughter and sought to channel the son’s energies towards greater professional careers and daughters were encouraged to settle for more ‘feminine’ occupations. Naidoo and Davis (1988) in their study of South Asian women in Canada observed that women in particular had a “dualistic” attitude, one that is traditional with regard to marriage, family, and religion, but “contemporary” on values, related to education and careers outside the home. It would appear from the latter research that education and careers among South Asian women was not viewed as being incongruous to the Indian way of life. Alongside marriage, religion and family, educational achievement and careers

among South Asian women were probably seen as an investment, symbolising their value (economic and personal) both within and outside the family and going beyond patriarchal ideologies of women as homemakers.

Another symbol of the diaspora’s shared roots is that of food (Firth, 1973; Macchiwalla, 1990). Food helps to forge solidarity and carries with it a set of interrelated meanings because of its “ritual connections and the social context of its consumption” (Lakha and Stevenson, 2001, p. 252). The narratives about home cooked meals serve as reminders of Indian identity and also reinforce the emotional bond with the family (Stacey, 1998). Food is also prominent in many family and community gatherings. For example, during the festival of lights (Diwali), the temple will hold a huge dinner to celebrate the event and this requires a great deal of organisation on the part of the community. Lakha and Stevenson (2001), speak of the dish called “breyani” usually served at major festivals and though generally associated with Muslim cuisine, is widely consumed by all non-vegetarian Hindus in social rather than religious contexts. Even sweet food is served at special festivals and functions as it has auspicious meanings. Food accrues significance because of the number of social practices that occur around the preparation and consumption of food in Indian culture.

In the homes, food construction habits are significant to defining boundaries of the Indian diaspora’s “imagined community”. A typical everyday meal in an Indian home can consist of one or two vegetable dishes, a meat or fish dish (in non-vegetarian homes), with rice as a basic starch. However, with many women working and with the internationalization of the food system in Australia, convenience foods that are less time consuming and not as physically draining are becoming the trend. Common convenience foods in Indian homes include canned fruit and soups, biscuits, cereals, instant mixes for various Indian sweetmeats and breads, jams, juices and sauces. Italian and Asian dishes are often presented as special meals. Canned fish and frozen chicken products are also very common in Indian homes. Convenience foods and dining out are now attractive options for a “quick meal”. Despite this trend however, food among Indians is intimately linked to the home and there is a preference for home cooked meals.

“The proliferation of Indian restaurants and

grocery shops is a conspicuous expression of the increasing heterogeneity of Indians and their cultures in Melbourne” (Lakha and Stevenson, 2001, p. 253). There are a variety of Indian grocery shops or spice shops in all the major cities in Australia that sell a variety of Indian sweets, spices, ayurvedic medicine and Bollywood DVDs. So restaurants and Indian grocery shops also became a medium through which Indians could interact with the community members outside the home. Lindridge et al. (2004) believe that the multiple identities become evident in food consumption through the amalgamation of cultural food tastes in an effort to make foods from other cultures like their own for example, adding chillies while still consuming western food. “The permeability and blurring of boundaries could be clearly seen in these discussions of food to create an ethnoscapenot limited solely to friends and family but represented areas where participants could safely engage with both their cultural worlds, through food consumption” (Lindridge et al., 2004, p. 229).

Yet another arena for navigation and negotiation is that of dress. Clothing provided important cultural codeswhen interacting with the community and the mainstream culture.

“Within the former the need to maintain family reputation i.e. the collective and public self, was evident resulting in dress codes that showed respect for traditional South Asian patriarchal values, typically wearing less revealing clothes, or choosing South Asian clothes like Punjabi suits or saris..... clothing conformity also being motivated by an inherent fear among participants that seen wearing the wrong clothes i. e. revealing western designs, by the South Asian community would brand them a “floozy” or “a slut” or damage the family’s reputation (Lindridge et al., 2004, p. 226).

In many instances, the family and the community were considered custodians of cultural tradition. While the Indian immigrants negotiate and navigate their multiple identities, the various arenas discussed above, become sites on which these identities interact within the larger diasporic identity. So while there are other identities that may separate a community in a host country, religion, language, food and clothing become some of the ways that these multiple identities come together to form a community.

Music and films also reinforces ethnic and cultural identities. Among the high school and

university students, parties are a key place for identities to be renegotiated, and transformed entrenched. The regular “Bollywood” parties in Parramatta, Sydney are where the DJs mix Indian music (such as *bhangra* or Hindi film music) with hip-hop and dance music also have large video monitors that broadcast images of Indian popular culture: Hindi film stars, popular music videos, and so on. Anderson’s (1991) notion of imagination could be extended beyond the level of community to include the notions of geography and dialogue. These concepts might be read into the context of the club scene. While many at the dance club may not fully understand the Hindi lyrics nearly all write India into their senses of self and forge collective identifications with India during performative events. Beyond multi-local identifications, participating in club culture gives a powerful, symbolic voice with which to express oneself and even India itself. The Bollywood movie industry offers cultural identity to the Indian diaspora in Australia through its stories which are steeped in religious depictions, Indian cultural norms and values and offers to Indians abroad, a sense of belonging, identification and recognition as well as pride in being Indian.

From our discussion so far, it can be established that identity is developed, transformed and negotiated through an ongoing process of interaction between individuals and their social surroundings (Jenkins, 1994, p. 199; Varvin, 2003, p. 176). Pivotal to the formation of identity, is habitus, which Bourdieu (1977, p. 72) sees as being determined by past conditions:

the structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (eg. The material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively “regulated” and “regular” without it in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor”.

So the Indian diaspora in Australia are

socialised into the Australian sociocultural context, developing consciously or unconsciously, their habitus in relation to their multiple socialisation. Through their socialisation into the Indian social structure, the Indian diaspora in Australia are exposed to various categories and definitions of their identity. As we have seen, such categories follow ethnic lines and are categorised by religion, family, education, food, clothing, music, films and others. Similarly aspects of Australian culture have various categories and definitions of their own and the people of the Indian diaspora in Australia have to constantly navigate and negotiate their identities while still trying to maintain a sense of community with those having the same cultural roots. Kellner (1992, p. 174) says that “the boundaries of possible identities, or new identities are continually expanding” and similarly the boundaries between cultures are blurring. Hall (1992, pp. 362-363) explains how diasporas are “obliged to inhabit at least two identities, to speak at least two cultural languages, to negotiate and translate between them. He describes diasporas as communities that:

bear the traces of particular cultures, traditions, languages, systems of belief, texts and histories which have shaped them. But they are also obliged to come to terms with and make something of the new cultures they inhabit, without assimilating them. They are not and will never be unified culturally in the old sense, because they are inevitably the products of several interlocking histories and cultures, belonging at the same time to several “homes”- thus to no particular home.

Lakha and Stevenson (2001, p. 260), say that while Indians in Melbourne enjoy a rich cultural life, the weakening of cultural influence over the second generation is a major issue. A survey of Indians in Victoria has shown “that the preference for communication in English was pronounced amongst young Indians, 75% of whom preferred to speak in that language. Their reluctance to communicate in Indian languages was attributed to the “the pressure of monolingualism” and the fear of appearing ‘different’ so in order to negotiate their daily interactions between two contrasting cultures, second generation ethnic minorities lead a dual existence by projecting multiple identities in different situations through their consumption (Lindridge et al., 2004, p. 235). In moving to Australia, Indian immigrants adopted a strategy of acculturation enabling their navigation across

the cultural borders of their two homes. By means of imaginative resources, such as cultural practice, sentiments of shared values and standards of morality and shared cultural heritage, they continue to draw from India as an imagined homeland that serves as a source of spiritual and material guidance that lends itself immensely to community and individual identity. This ‘imagined communality’ is paralleled by corresponding feelings of communion with, and belonging within, the Australian nation.

CONCLUSION

The Indian diaspora in Australia exhibits and expresses hybridisation in their history as Indians and their lives as Australians. However, while this may be the case, the experience of living in-between two cultures is paralleled by experiences of loyalty and sense of belonging to both the homeland and the country of settlement. The experience of identifying with, while simultaneously differentiating themselves from, both communities generates feelings of ambiguity; they are simultaneously inside and outside their communities of belonging (Askland, 2005, p. 161). Narratives of the past are located in the discourse of community and nationality while narratives of the future are based on Australian ideals of freedom to choose and individuality. So the Indian diaspora in Australia experience in their ethnoscape “radical disjunctures between different sorts of global flows and the uncertain landscapes created in and through these disjunctures” (Appadurai, 1990, p. 308). The “dialogical approach to acculturation emphasises the asymmetrical power relations between conflicting voices and “I” positions are very much of the diasporic self” (Bhatia, 2002, p. 73).

The paper has shown how the Indian diaspora in Australia strive to build an identity for themselves in their new homes. International migration affects many aspects of the self, requiring significant redefinition and reconstruction of both personal and communal identities. Immigrants continuously reorganise the delicate structure of their various social identities in new cultural contexts (Ward et al., 2001). Some identities relate to membership in the host culture and others reflect attachment to values of their heritage culture. Within their new social context, newcomers form perceptions regarding expectations that members of the dominant group have

of them. Perceptions are likely to affect the process of redefining their identity and whether and to what extent they choose acculturation and membership in the host culture.

The social identities they bring with them and the identities they develop in the new environment influence social cognitions that in turn guide their behaviour such as the clothes they wear, the foods they eat, the people with whom they associate, the values to which they adhere and the strategies used to accommodate to the new culture and its people. The cultural and religious centres play an important role in both educating the larger Australian population about Indians and provides not only a meeting point for the members of its community but are attempts by Indians to create a unique identity for themselves. They also constitute the most public face of the community, endowing it with a history, legitimacy, and purpose that all communities crave to display. Immigrants have often found that religious identity furnishes a form of social cohesiveness and community building that is quite distinct.

The meeting of the Indian people from different nation states in their new home, Australia, provides them with a sense of shared cultural and social history which is often suppressed in their countries of origin and which gives rise to new forms of imaging and imagining for the future.

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KEYWORDS Indian Diaspora. Australia. Sydney. Identity. Ethnic Minority

ABSTRACT Immigration in many ways represents a metamorphosis, changes in families, social and political status and tensions between the traditional norms and values of a culture with the social and cultural expectations of the host country. The deterritorialised identities of the immigrants, in this case, the Indian diaspora in Australia, face what calls "a generalised condition of homelessness" that requires the negotiation of multiple identities across a variety of cultural settings. The 'imagined new world' of these immigrants are constructed from memory and represents a journey where they experience and express their nostalgia in various forms. This paper examines the intersections between ethnicity and identity as it is played out in the arena of the family, religion, education and other social and cultural contexts.

Author's Address: Loshini Naidoo, School of Education, Penrith Campus, University of Western Sydney Locked Bag 1797, Penrith South DC, Australia
Telephone: 0961 2 47360623, *Fax:* 0961 2 47360400, *E-mail:* l.naidoo@uws.edu.au

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