

**Born to migrate:  
South Asian women in Sydney and the  
convergence of marriage, migration and  
maternity in shaping their participation in  
the paid workforce**

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Master of Social Science (Gender and Development Studies)



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## Statement of Candidate

I, Nila Sharma, state that this thesis entitled “**Born to migrate: South Asian Women in Sydney and the convergence of marriage, migration and maternity in shaping their participation in the paid workforce**” has not been previously submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution other than Macquarie University.

This thesis is an original piece of work and it has been written by me based on the data collected during my field work. Any help or assistance that I have received in my research work and during the preparation of this thesis has been appropriately acknowledged.

The research presented in this thesis was approved by Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee, with ethics approval reference number: 5201200592 on September 26, 2012

Signed:

Date:

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## **Abstract**

My research is an interdisciplinary project with the Department of Anthropology as well as Demography at Macquarie University. The demographic research analyses data from Australian Bureau of Statistics and census materials in order to track the broad patterns of South Asian migration since the 1970s. It also tracks class of origin and patterns of settlement. It is within this broad demographic context that the issue of gender and labor force participation is located. By giving attention to statistical overview of South Asian migrant settlement in Australia, this research initiates a consideration of what demography can tell us about the integration of South Asian migrants into Australian society.

Demographic data analysis from the year 2011 has revealed that women from South Asia are highly qualified than their Australian-born counterparts but underrepresented in the workforce. It is at this point that the research shifts to qualitative ethnography in order to understand why the gap between educational attainments and labour force participation exists. One of the common explanations for this under-employment – lack of recognition of qualifications – has not emerged as salient in the qualitative data collected through interviews and informal observation. Instead, the data points to the salience of marriage and maternity and the specific timing of the migration in terms of the way in which women's life cycles have been culturally constructed in South Asia.

Migration studies, including the issue of how immigrants fare in labour market has attracted immense scholarly attention. But a vast majority has focused on experiences of male migrants by regarding them as the main source of agency in migration. I argue that in South Asia, it is women who are the archetypal migrants, groomed for migration since birth. Because this migration takes the form of marriage and movement to the husband's kin and residence, it has simply been naturalized by scholarly literature. In making this argument, the research makes a



contribution not only to migration and labour studies, but also to the study of gender and the broader discipline of anthropology which has failed to fully integrate the significance of the 'traffic in women' to kinship studies. By showing how marriage as migration maps on to what is more conventionally recognized as 'migration', in this case migrating from South Asia to Australia, the thesis forges fresh ground for the integration of studies of racism, multiculturalism, and settlement with issues usually reserved for studies of kinship, gender and South Asia.

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## **Abbreviations**

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
DIAC	Department of Immigration and Citizenship
IT	Information Technology
LSIA	Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia
MODL	Migration Occupation Demand List
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas
SOL	Shortage Occupation List

# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

It was a sunny afternoon in the month of August, 2008, when I first landed at Kingsford Smith International Airport, Sydney. I had come from Nepal to Australia to reunite with my husband, whom I had married in May of that year.

My husband was already living in Australia when we married. Coming here on a spouse visa seemed the most practical option for me in terms of migration. This trip to Australia was my first international visit that I had travelled besides India. Thus, everything that I was to encounter during this trip was of much curiosity. From the international airport in Kathmandu to a Thai Airlines Boeing 747, the check-in gates inside airports, duty free outlets, and flight attendants: each of my observations I was experiencing for the first time in my life.

When I arrived at Sydney International Airport, my husband was waiting for me at the gate with a smile on his face. As I wove my way through the crowd and headed towards him, I was surprised by the numbers of other people waiting for their loved ones at the same arrival gate. They looked surprisingly familiar. I had expected ‘Australian’ people to be more different, less Asian and South Asian than the mass of people meeting family at the airport. With my limited exposure to a Western society – virtually entirely through media or visitors to Nepal – I had been left with the impression that Sydney would find me surrounded by people with light skin, blue eyes, and blond hair. This first experience of Sydney stayed with me. Here was a city with a surprisingly large South Asian population, with its own South Asian culture (or cultures).

My husband had been settled in Australia for several years, and I intended to live with him eventually. But this first stay in Australia in August was only to be a short one, twelve days.

When I left, I did not fly back to Nepal, but instead went to Thailand, where I planned to pursue my Master in Gender and Development Studies degree at the Asian Institute of Technology.

The choice to go to Thailand for two years to complete my master's was a strategic decision. As I had arrived in Australia on a dependent spouse visa, I had first to comply with a bridging or temporary visa status for two years before I could get my permanent residency. In the meantime, if I decided to do any further study in my field, I would have to pay full fees as an international student. My husband and I were not able to afford to pay high university fees in Australia at that time. In Thailand, I received a scholarship to support my studies. For this reason, Thailand was the obvious choice even though it meant that we had to live apart. I accepted the scholarship, went to Thailand for two years, completed my master's, and then returned to Australia in August 2010. When I came back, I was eligible for my Australian permanent residency, which provided me with many opportunities in Australia.

But the seeds for the research I did for my master's, as well as subsequently for this doctoral work were sown in the short time I spent with my husband in Sydney on my first arrival in 2008. When my husband drove me to his apartment, which he was sharing with a couple, along the way I barely saw any people. There were only cars running on the highways and streets, a fact that I now take for granted after living for years in Australia. To see a landscape devoid of people was entirely novel. Since my visit was to be very short, my husband wanted to show me as many places as possible, to introduce me to my future home. So, after dropping my luggage at his apartment, we headed up to a shopping centre. After the airport, the shopping centre was the second place where I saw a large mass of people. There again, I experienced a sense of familiarity when I saw the people's faces. The people of Australia did not look as I had imagined prior to coming here. All I was seeing were familiar faces and skin colours around me; in other words, I was genuinely surprised by the number of people with South Asian backgrounds, as I had been led to believe by the media that Australia was an

almost entirely European country. So my transition from Nepal to Australia was not without its surprises.

I realise now that I was noticing South Asians much more than the Chinese population, even though Nepal is technically sandwiched between India and China. But I come from the Terai region<sup>1</sup> which is close to India, and I grew up watching Indian films and Indian and Pakistani serials on television, eating at Indian restaurants with my family. I also speak Hindi, almost fluent in it, and my physical features are like those of people from India and Sri Lanka. I find myself, like other fellow South Asians, noticing people from my region, trying to discern their country of origin. Not only did I notice them more, my husband also took me the day after my arrival to Parramatta for dinner. And there a whole suburb is home to people of South Asian backgrounds. From grocery shops to fashion stores, signs and newspapers and music, overheard conversations and even day-to-day gestures, the streets were filled with South Asian culture. Later, my husband rented an apartment in Harris Park, another suburb near Parramatta which is popular among South Asian nationals. We would live there for almost three years. The impression that I received in those first two days after arriving in Sydney was doubtless due to the areas my husband chose to show me. They were inhabited predominantly by people from South Asian backgrounds. Later, he took me to Sydney's central business district, or 'CBD,' and to different beaches in the northern part of the city. While I noticed South Asian people there, their numbers were less overwhelming.

My initial impression of South Asians forming a major part of Australian society provided me with the motivation to learn more about migrants in Australia. It also highlighted how uneven their integration was and the ways in which enclaves of South Asian culture had formed. My head was filled with numerous questions: Where do they stand in Australian society? How do they come to Australia? How does the move affect their families, their professional lives, their

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<sup>1</sup> Geographically, the Terai region stretches from the international border with India in the Far-Western region to the Eastern region in Nepal. It is located at an altitude of 67–300m (220–980 ft). The region covers approximately 17 per cent of the total area of Nepal (Bhuju et al., 2007).

hopes and ambitions? What are they doing? How are they integrating? What parts of their culture change the most, or the least? As a result, I explored the gender dimensions of migration among the Nepali migrant community in Sydney for my master's dissertation. Although the research was conducted within a small sample of fifteen men and fifteen women migrants from Nepal, the research showed some interesting results. I found that migrating under the dependent visa category, women migrants from Nepal are more disadvantaged in terms of their career development opportunities than their male counterparts in Australia. And due to the urgency of supporting their family financially during the initial years of settlement, many Nepali women have to do unskilled jobs in Australia. The gendered nature of these findings further drove my aspiration to explore the question of women, migration and labour force participation in Australia. This dissertation is the outcome of my desire to learn about South Asian migrants in Sydney and to understand some of the problems faced by this community. I must stress here that this research is also shaped by the desires of South Asian communities in Sydney. The opportunity of a scholarship for this research arose when Social Entrepreneurial Ventures of Australian South Asians (SEVA), a South Asian community organisation which is actively involved in the social and welfare issues related to South Asian migrant communities in Sydney, liaised with my supervisor, Dr Ram, as Director of the India Research Centre, as well as key senior academics working on migration, such as Dr Fei Guo in the Demographics Section of the Department of Marketing and Management, and Dr Amanda Wise in the Centre for Research on Social Inclusion at Macquarie University. SEVA wanted to discuss the scope of a study on South Asian migrant communities, specifically in order to gain a demographic profile of the communities in Sydney, as well as to locate significant social issues that community organisations could address. At the same time the university also wanted to encourage such a community approach and outreach to community organisations to address the issue of equity in a multicultural society. The collaborative effort between Macquarie University and SEVA created a scholarship for a PhD for which I was selected. I had complete academic autonomy to pursue any line of enquiry I chose, but there



was a synergy between my interests in social issues and that of the community organisation, and I benefited from the interest, support and practical assistance offered to me by its members.

## **Who is South Asian?**

When I use the term ‘South Asian’ in this thesis, I refer to the southern region of the Asian continent, which comprises seven countries: India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, the Maldives, and Bhutan. The term ‘South Asia’ has also been used as a category in the Australian Census to represent people who trace their origins – either directly through country of birth, or else indirectly through ancestries – from the seven countries in South Asia.



**Map 1: Seven countries in South Asia**

In this thesis, the term ‘South Asian migrant’ will refer to residents of Australia who have migrated from the above seven South Asian countries and who have lived or intend to live in

Australia for one year or more. Phrases such as ‘South-Asian born people’, ‘South Asian migrants’ and ‘South Asian-born settlers’ will be used interchangeably to identify migrants from South Asia peoples in this study. Considering the significantly lower numbers of migrants to Australia from the Maldives and Bhutan compared to numbers from the other five South Asian countries, the individual country level data analysis and further qualitative research was intentionally not pursued for migrant populations from the Maldives and Bhutan.

Immigrants from South Asia have strong historical and political links to one another. During British rule (1858–1947 AD), India, Pakistan and Bangladesh were regarded as one colony known as the ‘Indian sub-continent’. Although Nepal was never colonised by Britain, it experienced direct or indirect colonial subjugation during India’s colonial period. Sri Lanka was ruled by British from 1815 to 1948. As Ralston (2006, p. 183) writes, ‘being “South Asian” refers to social characteristics and identities that have been constructed in specific historical, social, economic and political contexts’. Yet according to Ralston, ‘“South Asian” should connote heterogeneity and hybridity rather than homogeneity, given the intersecting dimensions of race, ethnicity, language, class, caste and sub-caste, religion and national origin in the construction of identity’ (2013, p. 183). These diversities exist within and between South Asian countries of origin, and they continue to shape the lives of immigrant communities from these countries here in Australia. For example, each individual country in South Asia has its own diverse ethnic groups, languages, and religious affiliations. While the majority of Indians and Nepalese are Hindu, Sri Lankans are predominantly Buddhist, and Pakistan and Bangladesh are majority Muslim countries. And the patterns of religious affiliation of South Asian migrants in Australia mirror the dominant religious patterns of their countries of origin.<sup>2</sup> However, despite these differences, when considering the migration

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<sup>2</sup> Please see Appendix 1 for detailed information on the religious affiliations of South Asian-born migrants in Australia.

experiences of South Asians in Australia, several patterns emerge that are common to all. In the following section I will address the similar patterns that emerge when understanding migration from South Asia in Australia.

## **Understanding South Asian Migration to Australia**

Migrants have been a crucial part of Australian society. Modern Australia is a migrant country with a history of successful settlement of new arrivals over the past 200 years (Ferguson & Browne, 1991). Prior to European settlement in 1788, Australia was home to approximately 300,000 Aboriginal peoples (Australian Law Reform Commission, 1977). The settlement history of Australia has been founded on the near genocide of its Aboriginal population. More than 23 million people from all over the globe have settled in this country, particularly since the end of World War II. Over the past forty years, the number of new settlers has increased drastically; and this increase has significantly affected the ethnic structure of Australia's population.

According to Hugo (2001), at the beginning of the twentieth century one quarter of the country's population was born overseas. This proportion was the same at the beginning of the 21st century (Hugo, 2001). For the year 2011, the Australian census data shows that just over a quarter (5.3 million) of Australia's population was born overseas (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2011). Hugo (2001, p. 178) argues that this apparent lack of change belies the fact that international migration has transformed Australia from an overwhelmingly Anglo-Celtic homogeneous population into one of the world's most multicultural societies. In his analysis of a century-long population change in Australia, Hugo records the transformation from a population with 95.2 per cent born in Australia, the United Kingdom or Ireland, into a population with, by 1996, 16.2 per cent born elsewhere. Moreover, by the same

point in time, 19 per cent of Australian-born<sup>3</sup> persons had at least one parent born overseas and 8 per cent had at least one parent born in a country in which English was not the main language (Hugo, 2001, pp. 179-180). Immigration's contribution to Australia's population growth is very significant and is likely to continue increasing over the next thirty years (DIAC, 2010).

The Asian-born population has been the fastest growing overseas-born population in Australia since 1981 (Wilson & Samuel, 1996; Castle & Miller, 2009). Between 1981 and 2000, the Asian-born population of Australia grew steadily from 276,000 to over a million, accounting for 6 per cent of Australia's population in 2000. Since 1981, the population figures for South Asian-born Australians alone have increased threefold (ABS, 2001). In 2011, 8 per cent of the total Australian population was Asian-born. And 27 per cent of this 8 per cent were born in South Asia (ABS, 2011).

India and Sri Lanka fall within the top ten countries of origin for migrants in Australia. Other South Asian countries, including Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal, also contribute substantial numbers of migrants (Castle & Miller, 2009). A recent report on migration submitted by National Affairs in Australia shows that as of 2011–2012, India was listed as the top source country of skilled migrants, eclipsing both China and the UK (Lane, 2012; see also Velayutham, 2013, p. 432).

Student mobility is often seen as a precursor of skilled migration (Martin, 1981; Iredale, 2005; Castle & Miller, 2009). Between 1998 and 2003, 2.6 million Asian students opted to study outside of their home countries, with India being one of the main sending countries followed by China and South Korea (Castle & Miller, 2009). A geographical analysis of student flows revealed that more than 80 per cent of students from Asian countries of origin migrated,

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<sup>3</sup> Australian-born: People born in Australia and excludes people: born at sea, whose response was classified 'Inadequately described', or whose response was classified 'Not elsewhere classified' (ABS, 2011).

mainly to the following five Western countries: the US, the UK, Germany, Canada, and Australia (Iredale, 2005).

Asia provides the biggest pool of international students for Australian universities. Because Australia's immigration policies enable students to remain in Australia after the completion of their studies, students comprise a large portion of skilled-migrant applications in Australia. According to Hawthorne (2008), in the year 2002, over half of Australia's skilled-migrant applications came from former students. Khoo and colleagues (2008) found that migrants with university degrees or higher degree qualifications are more likely to apply for permanent residency than migrants with lower qualifications. Moreover, student migrants from India and other South Asian countries are more likely to apply for permanent residency compared to students from developed countries, such as the US, Japan, Korea and the UK (Khoo et al., 2008).

Their reasons for seeking permanent residency in Australia vary according to the migrants' countries of origin. For migrants from developing countries, especially those from the Indian sub-continent, aside from better employment opportunities, salary, opportunities for promotion, and a better future for their children, achieving permanent residency in a foreign country can also be regarded as a means of escape from civil war and political turmoil (Khoo et al., 2008).

In recent years, while Australia's South Asian-born population figures have increased markedly, this increase has been matched by relatively little systematic analysis of South Asian migrant communities in Australia. A few studies have focused on these communities, but the Indian immigrant population has been the subject of analysis for the majority (Lepervanche, 1984; Helweg, 1985; Bilimoria and Ganguly-Scrase, 1988; Wilson & Samuel, 1996; Voigt-Graf, 2005; Lakha, 2005; Biao, 2007; Velayuthum, 2013; Costa-Pinto, 2014).

Earlier studies – especially those of the 1980s and 1990s – depict a positive picture of South Asian migrant communities in Australia which is quite similar to the socio-economic

representation of the South Asian immigrant populations in the US and Canada. For instance, a positive portrait of South Asian migrants in terms of their employment successes, business entrepreneurial skills, information technology (IT) skills and economic achievements has been well supported by scholars of migration in the North American context, who have argued that South Asian migrants – particularly Indians – constitute ‘model minority’ groups that are too successful to be considered a disadvantaged minority (Hirschman and Wong 1981, 1984; Chiswick, 1983; Borjas 1985, cited in Yamanaka and McClelland, 1994; Nee & Sanders, 1985; Kawai, 2005). In Australia similarly, studies have variously portrayed Indian immigrants in the following terms: they constitute a socio-economically affluent community; they live in more affluent ‘Aussie’ neighbourhoods; they value privacy; and they are not readily visible because they are residentially scattered throughout the major cities (Helweg, 1985). Joshi (2000) notes that the socio-economic profile of Indian immigrants who migrated during the 1960s and 1970s was very high, the majority of them having secured jobs in areas in which they were qualified. Those who arrived in family groups experienced, it would seem, few problems in settling down in the community and sending their children to school relatively soon after arrival. During this period, Indians ranked fifth lowest as recipients of government benefits (Joshi, 2000, p. 103).

According to these characteristics, one could easily assume that Indian migrants of the 1960s and 1970s – and by extension South Asians – were a distinctive, privileged group of people in Australia. However, unlike earlier studies which have focused on specific cohorts of migration or specific migrant groups, this study tracks broad patterns of South Asian migration to Australia since the 1970s. It also tracks class of origin and settlement patterns of migrants from different countries in South Asia. In doing so, this study will show how the demographic characteristics of this group of people has changed over the course of time.

## **Gender and Migration: Women, Work and wellbeing**

As a gendered process, transnational migration provides different sets of experiences for men and women (Kofman & Raghuram, 2005; Purkayastha, 2005; Iredale, 2005; Fincher et al., 1994). Although women are half of the total migrating population in the world (Morrison et al., 2008), they have generally been regarded as secondary migrants within the migration stream (Kofman & Raghuram, 2005; George, 2005). For this reason, but also for other reasons explored in this thesis, certainly, women have been paid far less attention than is warranted by their actual numbers (Richter, 2004; Kofman & Raghuram, 2005).

Studies focused on women migrants and their labour force participation show that the gendered nature of transnational mobility has made it difficult for women to participate equally in the regionalising and globalising economy. For that reason, Raghuram and Kofman (2005) argue that international migration has promoted a kind of femininity whereby the dependent wife has become the symbol of the home-maker and care-giver in the new place of residence. The labour market integration of South Asian-born women migrants in Australia is particularly under explored. While studies can be found of the US and Canadian contexts few have been undertaken in Australia despite the fact that Australia is geographically closer to Asia when compared to other Western countries.

Why is it important to address this lack of research on women's labour market participation in Australia? We could consider this from a number of different angles. Here is one:

By increasing women's participation in the economy and enhancing their efficiency and productivity, we can have a dramatic impact on the competitiveness and growth of our economies. (Hillary Clinton, Women and the Economy Summit, 2011)

The above excerpt is from the former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's influential speech delivered to delegates during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation's (APEC) Women and the Economy Summit, 2011. In her speech, focusing on the economic impact of women's labour force participation, Clinton says 'the increasing numbers of women in the economy

and the rising productivity gains from improving the distribution of their talents and skills has helped fuel significant growth'. According to Clinton, 'the rising tide of women in an economy raises the future of families and nations' (Clinton, 2011).

The International Labour Organisation has suggested that women's labour force participation is the single greatest factor that contributes not only to faster economic growth, but also to its long-term sustainability globally (ILO, 2012). Increasing women's labour force participation relative to that of men has a positive correlation with a country's per capita GDP (Hausmann, 2014, Augirre et al., 2012). For example, Augirre and colleagues (2012, p. 5) estimate that raising women's workforce participation to the same level as men's could raise per capita GDP in the US by 5 per cent, in Japan by 9 per cent, while in developing countries such as the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, per capita GDP could be raised by 12 and 34 per cent respectively. In Australia, the Australian Government Workplace Gender Equality Agency's (2013, p. 1) report on gender equality in business shows that 'organisations that respect and value the diversity brought by both women and men are better able to attract and retain high performers and improve operational performance'. Another study shows that greater gender diversity in executive teams is connected to a company's earnings. Barta and colleagues (2012, p. 1), did a comparative analysis of executive composition, return on equity (ROE), and margins on earnings before interest and taxes of 180 publicly traded companies in France, Germany, the UK and, the US over the period from 2008 to 2010. They report that earnings before interest and taxes margins at the most diverse companies were 14 per cent higher, on average, than those of the least diverse companies.

But it is not only a matter of women's participation fuelling growth. These are arguments that take the economy as their primary concern, not women. But women's labour force participation has been one of the core concerns of feminist discourses and the women's movement since its emergence, because it has been recognized as something that is empowering to the women themselves (Hattery, 2001; McDowell, 2014; Devasahayam &



Yeoh, 2007; Sen, 1992; Pearson, 2004; Kabeer, 2012). Feminist economists Sen (1992), Pearson (2004) and Kabeer (2012), just to mention a few, argue that women's labour force participation is an important signifier of their socio-economic empowerment. Empowerment, according to Kabeer (2012, p. 6) is 'the processes through which women gained the capacity for exercising strategic forms of agency in relation to their own lives as well as in relation to the larger structures of constraint that positioned them as subordinate to men' (see also Kabeer, 1999, 2001). Sen (1992), who notes links between women's employment and social standing in Sub-Sahara Africa, suggests that the effects of women's economic empowerment are cumulative:

The ability to earn an outside income through paid employment enhances the social standing of a woman. This makes her contribution to the prosperity of the family more visible. Also, being less dependent on others, she has more voice. The higher status of women also affects ideas on the female child's 'due'. (Sen, 1992, p. 2)

Global gender gap reports show that there are huge gaps between women's and men's labour force participation rates (Hausmann, 2014; ILO, 2012). The ILO's analysis of women's engagement in the labour market shows that women's labour force participation varies across regions. From 2002 to 2007, women had higher unemployment rates than men in Africa, South and South-East Asia, and Latin America, while in East Asia, Central and Eastern Europe and more recently the advanced Western economies, there were negative gender gaps in unemployment rates (male unemployment rates higher than female rates) (ILO, 2012). According to World Bank figures, female labour force participation rates across the G20 vary, from the very low 20 per cent in Saudi Arabia, still low 27 per cent in India to the highest Canada (62 per cent), China (64 per cent), and South Korea (72 per cent). In Australia the women's labour force participation rate hovers around 59 per cent (World Bank, 2013).

What do these unemployment figures suggest? They suggest that gender equality in labour force participation is far from achieved. The Millennium Development Goal progress report (United Nations, 2015), shows that the proportion of women in paid employment outside of

the agriculture sector grew by only 6 per cent in last 16 years, rising from 35 per cent in 1990 to 41 per cent in 2015. The gender gap between labour force participation still remains high. As of 2015, only about 50 per cent of all working-age (aged 15 and above) women are in the labour force, compared to 77 per cent of men. The proportion of employed women working as contributing family workers is 18 per cent, compared to 7 per cent of employed men (United Nations, 2015, p. 30).

The Millennium Development Goal progress report suggests that to achieve universal realisation of gender equality and women's empowerment through paid work, the fundamental causes of gender inequality between men and women have to be rectified. What that means is identifying restrictions and barriers that erode women's ability to equally participate in the labour market. This study addresses precisely this urgent need, exploring what the barriers are that affect and shape migrant women's labour force participation in Australia.

## **Methodology**

Interweaving quantitative demographic data and qualitative ethnographic data collected through interviews, group discussions, and participant observation, this study employs a mixed methodological approach. Demography is defined as the quantitative study of the growth and structure of human populations. Specifically, births, deaths and migrations are considered the core of demography (Watkins, 1993; Greenhalgh, 1997), whereas ethnography is defined by its qualitative characteristics, as 'the art and science of describing a group or culture' (Fatterman, 1998, p. 1).

Demographers have often been critiqued for their exclusive reliance on quantitative methods in their research (Watkins, 1993), and for their inability to take full advantage of the available ethnographic data (Coast, 2003). When studying gender and its effects on women's lives, feminist anthropologists have seriously criticised demographic methodologies for being

insufficient and too narrowly focused (Riley, 1999; Greenhalgh, 1995). Watkins (1993) extensively reviewed a series of articles in *Demography*, the official journal of the Population Association of America, from its first issue in 1964 until 1992. Exploring the topics of fertility, marriage, and the family, she found that demographic research lacked explanatory ability because its analysis of gender draws heavily on the researcher's common-sense understanding regarding what it means to be a woman and a man in society. This kind of analysis, according to Watkins, can seriously skew the representation of reality. To make the point clearer, consider a Sicilian woman's experience of childbearing offered by Watkins,

I had nine children in that room, back there, and I suppose I'll die there the same way – with all the men in the family sitting around the fire, muttering, 'Why doesn't she hurry up about it.' When my time came and the pains started, I'd send my husband to call my mother – after she died, he called my sister – whichever it was would tell the midwife, and they'd come and stand by the bed and wait to see how far apart the pains were. I'd hear the shuffling in the room and know the men were arriving, one by one. My father, my brothers, my husband's brothers, they all sat there by the fire and drank wine and waited ... I suppose I'll die the same way. The men used to say, 'She's a brave one, she is.' But I'll never forget the pain. I remember all nine times, just how they felt – and everyone is different, I can tell you – and you just lie there and bite the towel and never let out a sound. Not once. So many times it was all for nothing too. Six of mine died. I could have wailed then – that's all right – but there are some hurts that stay inside. Every time one of my babies was about to be born I'd think to myself, you're going to die! this time you're going to die! Then it'd come out. (Cornelisen, 1976, pp. 130-132, cited in Watkins, 1993, p. 569)

Watkins is able to show that it is only by speaking with Sicilian women that one would know that the fear of death during a child's birth can motivate women to control childbearing. It also makes clear that there is a huge gulf not just between male and female experiences of birth, but also male perceptions of birth are quite remote and disengaged from women's experience. At the same time we can utilise demographic data for documenting broader population behaviours. Where data on women is scarce, demographic data may represent an important way to approach the study of women's lives (Riley, 1999, p. 85).

Ethnography's aim is to represent reality to the reader (Atkinson, 1992). But that view of representation has been extensively debated, not only between practitioners of different

methodologies, but also among ethnographers themselves (Bryman, 2001; Coast, 2003; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Experience is not as self-evident as it may seem – certainly, the value of representing the experience of one small group of women migrants also requires a wider way of framing and tracking the social parameters of their lives, how they have been shaped in broader ways. An integration of the ethnographic and other methods such as demography may actually help us in addressing some of these problems (Riley, 1999; Kertzer & Fricke, 1997; Coast, 2003; Bryman, 2001; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).).

Different versions of context can be provided by both kinds of methodology. Coast (2003), in her analysis of three population journals over a thirty-year period, finds that ethnographies provide context; validate results and conclusions; and inform research questions for demographic analysis. Bryman argues the reverse – the incorporation of quantitative data has enabled ethnographers to collect information on an issue or context to which ethnography is not well suited.

Let me provide an example to show how the use of demography and ethnography have resulted in a better understanding of a research problem. In his research on the meaning of fatherhood and fathers' involvement with children in a village in Botswana, Townsend (2000) investigates the cultural models used to evaluate a man's role as father. Official data reported a very high percentage of out-of-wedlock births, a high percentage of women-headed households, and about 70 per cent of men aged 20–40 living away from their villages as a result of labour migration. The apparent invisibility of men's role in the official data led Townsend to investigate the social and economic relationships of men during their life course through field work. During his 11 months of field work in the village, Townsend was able to understand the dominant cultural values of fatherhood and parenting within the context of the community and was able to interpret the place of male fertility in the reproduction of the population, aspects that were hard to see from the statistical data alone. Townsend finds that the connection between marriage and biological fatherhood is weak and the attributes of

fatherhood in the community follow social rather than biological principles. Townsend notes that the practice of bride wealth in the community on the one hand allows a man to attribute to himself all the children born from his wife, while on the other hand there is no legal obligation for a man to provide for his biological offspring except for a one-off payment to the parents of the woman who claims to have been made pregnant by him. As a result many men do not declare themselves as fathers. Townsend also finds that grandfathers and mothers' brothers often carry out parental responsibilities toward the children who are not biologically and socially their offspring. A grandfather will provide for his grandchildren until his daughter, the children's mother, is married to a man who can pay the bride wealth. Under such circumstances, Townsend argues that fatherhood and childbearing are relationships that stretch over more than one generation. As he puts it,

... male fertility, in the narrowest biological sense, may continue to the end of a life time. More significantly, the varying relationships men have with members of subsequent generations influence their own reproduction, the reproduction of their sons and daughters and the life chances of their grandchild. (Townsend, 2000, p. 361)

In my research, the use of demographic data has enabled me to locate this study of South Asian-born women's labour market integration into a broader context of South Asian's migration and patterns of settlement in Australia. Through its qualitative ethnography, this study is able to highlight the experiential aspects of migration experiences which are often missed in research that is entirely based on quantitative data. I now turn to introducing the two different data collection methods that I have employed.

### **Quantitative Data**

I started demographic data collection once I registered myself with the Australian Bureau of Statistics as a Macquarie University student and got authorization to use census data for the purpose of my study. I spent one year learning how to utilise demographic techniques of analysis, under the supervision of Dr Fei Guo. The quantitative data for this research was gathered from the Australian Census of Population and Housing. The Australian Census,

which is conducted every five years by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), provides the most complete statistical portrayal of the Australian population (Ho, 2010). Drawing on the 2011 Census, this study has analysed certain key demographic characteristics of Australia's South Asian-born population, especially their geographic distribution, age and sex, English proficiency, qualifications, labour force participation, and income levels. A comparative approach is adopted in data analysis to highlight the similarities and differences between the five South Asian-born communities and across gender in Australia.

The census data were analysed using Table Builder, an online statistical programme provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Table Builder allows users the freedom to construct basic to complex tables of data by accessing all the variables available in the census. The data are available in Excel format. When accessing data from Table Builder, the standard classifications of the variables designated by the Australian Bureau of Statistic were used, and the figures are based on 'Place of Usual Residence' information.

While analysing the quantitative data, some basic demographic variables or terminologies were used. The operational definitions of those variables is provided when each is first introduced in the demography chapter (Chapter 2).

### **Qualitative Data**

The qualitative research explored the evidence gathered through quantitative data analysis. In particular, the study empirically explored the ways in which migrants are demobilised from the Australian labour market, the impact on women and, by extension, the impact on gender relations within the household. As Ho (2010, p. 6) notes, 'focusing on women highlights the complex relationship between the public world of employment and the private world of the home, allowing one to see work in its broader context'.

I embarked upon my ethnographic field work after receiving ethics approval from the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee in September, 2012. However, as a migrant woman myself, my lived experiences are also imprinted in my research. This type of

research approach is considered an 'emic approach' in anthropology. Emic suggests an attempt to see the world through the eyes and experiences of the people one studies, as opposed to 'etic' which is more external, an outsider point of view in social research (Harris, 1990, p. 48). A demographic method would thus qualify as an 'etic' approach. Combining it with ethnography amounts to an attempt to bring together the two dimensions. But in addition, my own subject status as a migrant, married South Asian woman also brings a certain complexity within the 'emic' approach itself. There were many parallels between my experiences and those of the women I write about. I come back to this issue in the next section.

As a part of my ethnographic methodology, I conducted participant observation and in-depth interviews. The objective of conducting participant observation was to produce a more nuanced understanding of women's post-migratory life experiences. A major part of my participant observation was conducted among South Asian-born women in two community centres located at Toongabbie and Wentworthville, two suburbs in central western Sydney. During the course of my field work I participated in numerous social events, festivals, and cultural programmes organised by South Asian communities in Sydney. Observation, and the informal discussions undertaken during those events with general members of South Asian communities have also shaped my understanding of South Asian-born migrants' lives in Australia.

Apart from participant observation, much of my data was gathered through in-depth interviews with South Asian-born women residing in Sydney. A semi-structured questionnaire (including sixty questions) was used as a guideline for the interviews. Each interview was conducted in English. I have referred already to the particular interest and support from a community organisation (SEVA) catering to the social needs of the South Asian migrant community in Sydney. The participants were initially recruited by following the lead of SEVA's networks; then once the initial interviewing commenced, a snowballing

technique was introduced to recruit more informants. Altogether, I conducted fifty in-depth interviews (forty South Asian-born women and ten South Asian-born men) in Sydney. A major part of the evidence in my thesis came from my forty women respondents.<sup>4</sup> Each interview lasted between forty minutes and ninety minutes depending on the richness of the information that the women had to impart. The majority of interviews were conducted at the respondents' homes. Only three were interviewed outside of their individual dwellings, for example, in a public cafe. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed.

This thesis has little to directly say about South Asian-born men, and the small number of South Asian-born men respondents in my sample requires some comment. The demographic data shaped my decision to focus on women, but during the initial phase of my data collection, I conducted random interviews with South Asian-born migrants irrespective of their gender. The reason for this is that when I sent the initial request letter for interview through SEVA's network, it was distributed to all South Asian members who were in SEVA's mailing list. In response, a number of South Asian-born women and men replied to me showing their willingness to take part in the research. Also, during the initial days, considering the exploratory nature of my research, I was open to the information that I was hoping to gather, so including both men's and women's perspectives was a strategy I chose in order to generate a better understanding of the future direction of my research findings. By speaking with South Asian-born men during the initial phase of my research, not only was I able to differentiate between men's and women's migration experiences, but I was also able to bring forward South Asian-born men's perspectives regarding the women's roles in migration (the men talked about their wives). But by this stage the demographic data had already pointed me to some fairly stark differences between men and women's experiences of workforce participation, which I wanted to explore through ethnographic means. Yet as I interviewed South Asian-born men, I kept hearing a fairly stock set of responses regarding

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<sup>4</sup> The demographic details of my respondents appear in Appendix 3.



women's experiences of migration. Let me provide a few narratives that came through South Asian-born men during their interviews.

An Indian man describes how he and his wife settled down easily in Australia:

I was transferred by my company to Australia. Back then I used to work for a multinational company. So they transfer me to Australia. When we [himself, his wife and two children] came here, I had a job offered at a high managerial position. The moment I arrived, I was handed a brand new car keys. I was only non-white working in such high position, but my colleagues were very nice. It was really a lovely feeling. We settled down very quickly. My wife had a house; our kids went to school ... In fact, after six months, it was my wife and kids who said that Australia is their home.

In the above example the man, as he had a smooth transition in Australia regarding his work life, was inclined to assume that his wife also had similar feelings.

A man from Pakistan, talking about his wife and work, responded on behalf of his wife that it is very normal for her to not to work outside of her home:

My wife comes from a very well-educated family. She has done her bachelor's degree from Pakistan. In her family, women don't work. So she does not want to work here. She stays at home. Her education is helping me a lot. She is looking after my kids. She helps them with their after school home works.

Through their narratives that were 'smooth' in the sense of showing little conflict or instability, men indicated that there was no issue in migration for women. Yet the question that I wished to address in the thesis was: Do women actually experience migration in the way these men described?

## **Doing Research as an Insider**

Insider research refers to conducting studies with populations of which the researcher is also a member (Kanuha, 2000; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Griffith (1998, p. 362) defines an insider as 'someone whose biography (gender, race, class, sexual orientation and so on) gives her a lived familiarity with the group being researched'. Kanuha (2000) argues that the insider

status allows researchers a greater level of acceptance by the group one is studying.

According to Kanuha, the greater level of trust and openness towards a researcher in return allows a greater depth in the data gathered. Although conducting this research among South Asian migrant women as an insider proved an asset during my field work, I personally consider researching as an insider somewhat challenging.

As a member of a South Asian community, my pre-familiarity with the dominant South Asian culture (such as kinship, gender, language, dress code and religion) assisted me to develop a good rapport with my respondents. For example, during my field work, when I visited community centres and contacted women for individual interviews, I usually dressed casually and plainly as a student, in conformity with my junior role. Women who were senior to me I greeted them in ways that showed respect for elders. Women who were of my age, I approached in a more friendly manner. In either situation, I played the role of a learning junior who was willing to listen to their stories. By maintaining a modest and respectful demeanour, I managed to put my respondents into a superior position, overriding as best as I could my advantageous position in terms of education.

Dwyer and Buckle (2009) argue that ‘the benefit to being a member of the group one is studying is acceptance’. And, the willingness of participants to share the information with an insider stems from the fact that ‘there is an assumption of understanding and an assumption of shared distinctiveness; it is as if they feel, “You are one of us and it is us versus them (those on the outside who don’t understand)” ’ (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 58). I felt this sense of acceptance when the majority of respondents who I approached face-to-face agreed to participate in my research at my first request for an interview. The women were enthusiastic about talking to a researcher. Most of the time I was invited to their homes to conduct interviews. On arrival, I was often welcomed as a guest. I was offered tea or coffee and on two occasions, I was invited to join my respondents for lunch. In a show of respect for their warm hospitality, I would accept the offer. As a result, interviews were conducted in rather

informal and casual settings. The women were friendly and comfortable sharing vital aspects of their lives, aspects concerning marriage, migration, childbearing and motherhood.

Feminist researcher Finch (1984) argues that her shared identity as a woman with her respondents contributed greatly to establishing a relationship with them. She further claims that the ease with which she was able to get her respondents to talk during the interviews depended not so much on her skills as an interviewer, nor upon her expertise as a sociologist, but upon her identity as a woman (Finch, 1984, p. 78). Such identity as a woman has been questioned by women from minority communities who have raised questions about race and class as well as colonial divisions between women. Perhaps these issues were addressed to some degree by my being from a South Asian background myself. At any rate both I and even the women themselves were quite surprised by the way they opened up to me, sharing some very personal experiences from their lives. One woman, who I met for the first time at her interview during my research, said after the interview that she had surprised herself. It had not felt, she said, like she was talking to a stranger and sharing her personal experiences and views. She even said, 'You made me feel comfortable.' Another woman in this research checked the time after her interview finished and was surprised by the fact that she had spoken to me for almost two hours. She said: 'I thought that I don't have much to talk about, but I have been talking for such a long time. It was very nice to talk to you.' Some other comments that I received after finishing the interviews included: 'It was of great comfort to talk to you.' 'I haven't had such a nice talk with anyone for a long time.' 'I feel so good after talking to you.' 'While talking with you I don't have to meet any expectations. And also there are not any reasons to be worried about. I can't always express my feelings with my own kids.'

My status as an insider and my identity as a woman may have provided an easy entry to my study of South Asian migrant women, but that does not mean that I did not encounter challenges during my research process. My position as an insider itself started to become

problematic as I began to understand the pattern of the interview material. Studies show that being an insider researcher can generate a need to distance oneself from those being studied.

As Ohnuki-Tierney suggests:

The intensity with which native anthropologists recognize and even identify the emotive dimension can be an obstacle for discerning patterns of emotion. As an endeavour to arrive at abstractions for 'the native's point of view,' if non-native anthropologists have difficulty in avoiding the superimposition of their own cultural categories and meanings, native anthropologists have the task of somehow 'distancing' themselves, both intellectually and emotively. (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1984, p. 584)

During my research, the deeply personal experiences of migration to Australia shared by my respondents mirrored many of my own life experiences of coming to Australia as a migrant.

As a result, during my initial interviews, at times I had difficulty concentrating on the responses and narratives of my respondents due to my inability to distance my perception and view what they were saying as something new and fresh. Asselin (2003, p. 102) describes a similar type of challenge that the researcher encounters as an insider as 'role confusion'.

According to Asselin, role confusion arises when a researcher perceives or responds to events or analyses data from a perspective other than that of the researcher. She observes that while role confusion can arise in any research situation, the insider researcher is at higher risk due to the pre-familiarity of the setting or participants through her or his role other than that of researcher. Therefore, the need to separate from my own experiences and focus on the study participants was a methodological process that I had to learn as an insider researcher. Often reminding myself of my position as a researcher, and curbing my urge to share my thoughts and feelings during interviews, I was able to guard against confusion and instead focus on each participant's responses.

Another conflict associated with the insider role that I encountered during my research was the challenge to overcome my own taken-for-granted understanding of South Asian culture. Hayano (1979) argued that taken-for-granted assumptions about social behaviour can easily cloud the researcher's observation. In my case, my pre-familiarity with South Asian cultural

practices and traditional norms and values limited my need to use probing questions about situations with which I too was familiar. Initially, I thought that somehow I would be able to comprehend exactly what my respondents meant in their suggestions regarding their culture-specific behaviour and events. But in fact, the assumption of similarities by the participants created situations where they often opted not to explain their personal situations fully. As a result, when reviewing my interview transcripts, I discovered fairly early in my field work that during the talks with my respondents, statements such as ‘You know what I mean’, ‘You know how girls are brought up in our culture’, or ‘You know the typical South Asian marriage’, were not uncommon. I noted that, I often did not require my respondents to complete their sentences, thoughts, or descriptions because I assumed – sometimes mistakenly – that I knew what they were referring to in response to a particular line of questioning.

As this methodological challenge became evident in my interview transcripts and during the debriefing of my interviews to my supervisor, I started to realise that I should be particularly cautious regarding taken-for-granted tendencies during my conversations with my respondents. Each time a respondent implied that I understood what she was talking about, I asked her to elaborate in more detail. For example, in one particular instance I delved into an issue by asking the respondent to elaborate more, just for the record:

Nilu: How did you migrate to Australia?

Respondent: I came here in 2004, you know ... with my husband.

Nilu: Can you please elaborate a bit more ... did your husband's job bring you here or did you get married?

Respondent: Oh! Yes yes, you know, I am from Pakistan and the same arranged marriage. So I came with my husband.

Nilu: Well, can you please elaborate a bit more, just for the record, how the marriage took place?

This approach of clarifying questions elicited more detail and richer information from respondents, by extension enabling more intricate analyses.

Here, I wish to emphasise another possible methodological disaster that I avoided during my field work by being particularly cautious and paying attention to detail in my role as a researcher. One day, one of the ladies in Toongabbie community centre referred to me as 'Miss Taxi' as I used to travel via taxi to the centre. I had no car of my own during most of my data collection period. I used to go to meet my respondents or visit places via taxi if public transport was not available. It was particularly difficult to travel via public transport to the community centres as there was no direct public transport available from my residential area. I either had to go by taxi or be prepared to spend two hours travelling to the centre, a journey which otherwise would have taken 10 minutes. So, calculating my time value in terms of money, I decided to travel by taxi. Fortunately, my taxi fares were refunded from my research budget. So, travelling by taxi seemed to be a viable and easy form of transport for me.

But from the very day when the lady in the centre first referred to me as 'Miss Taxi', in the weeks following when I arrived at the centre, people started to ask me: 'Did you come by taxi?' The women's eyes opened wide when they heard that I came by taxi every week. A few even came to me to confirm whether I regularly came by taxi. My travelling by taxi had captured the attention of the women at the community centre, so much so that I started to feel acutely uncomfortable. I became aware of the power dynamics that might distinguish me from my respondents if they saw me as someone who could afford to travel by taxi, paying an expensive fare every week. After realising the situation fairly early in my field work, I opted to rethink my mode of travel. I started taking public transport irrespective of how long the journey took. Soon after the re-scheduling of my mode of transport, I became aware that fewer women were talking about my arrival by taxi and, before long, I was no longer viewed as 'Miss Taxi' by the members. Having quelled my fear of being misjudged by my

respondents as someone who was rich and could afford to travel by taxi every week, I embarked upon building an informal bond with the women at the centre.

## **Limitations and Challenges**

Although I have used both quantitative and qualitative methods during my research, which obviously have their own limitations (see Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006), combining these two methodologies has served the purpose of this research well, which has been to produce a complex and nuanced picture of migration experiences. Nevertheless, using a mixed-method approach created unique forms of limitations during this research. First and foremost, I found that the biggest challenge that I faced during the course of this research was understanding and learning to use two completely different methodological practices in a limited space of time. More specifically, demography being an entirely new discipline for me, I learned from basic to complex demographic methodologies during the course of my PhD. By doing so, I was able to conduct a systematic analysis of demographic variables and interpret the data. Nevertheless, my thesis might be limited in the sense that it might not have used demography to its full capacity.

Second, I have drawn upon Australian census data to produce a comprehensive picture of South Asian-born populations in Australia. Demographic data has provided the basis upon which my entire research into labour market integration of South Asian-born women has been premised. But using census data was not without its own constraints; in particular, because of the timing of the start of my research, I had to pursue demographic data analysis twice during the course of my PhD. This was because when I started my thesis I used census data from 2006. Due to the exploratory nature of this study, one of the objectives of doing demographic data analysis was to explore and analyse what census data could suggest regarding labour market integration of South Asian-born women in Australia prior to pursuing the ethnographic research. For this reason it was essential to conduct the ethnographic research only after accomplishing the demographic data analysis. When I commenced my research in 2011, I

analysed 2006 census data. But, when the recent 2011 census data was made available to the general public in 2012 through the Australian Bureau of Statistics, I had to repeat my demographic data analysis in order to incorporate more up-to-date statistics.

Third, I conducted this research as an insider among South Asian-born women in Sydney, and, being an insider, I was able to elucidate the social and cultural aspects of being a woman from South Asia and how their gender affects their migratory journey, aspects which could have been easily overlooked or ignored by an outsider. Yet it would be unrealistic to claim that this study represents all South Asian-born women domiciled in Australia. Idealistically, the research would have been more representative, if I had done observations and data collection among South Asian-born women in different suburbs of Sydney and from various socio-economic classes. Instead, I concentrated on two community centres in the central western suburbs of Sydney. In doing so, I had the opportunity to interact with the same group of women for an extended period of time, and develop intimate and ongoing relationships with women, which enhanced my understanding of their everyday lives in Australia. In doing so this research does not represent South Asian women from different class and socio-economic status in Australia. I will however, take advantage of the fact that I do have data from two quite distinct and historically distinctive parts of South Asia in order to provide some comparative analysis in my overall conclusions, of gender and labour force participation for female migrants from India and from Nepal.

Fourth, my voluminous demographic data analysis raised numerous interesting research questions that invited further investigation. Irrespective of the time constraints, my prior interest in gender drove me to look more deeply into the issue of labour market demobilization of South Asian-born women in Australia. However, the demographic data analysis showed sharp discrepancies in labour force participation between women from different countries of origin. The country specific patterns of labour market discrepancies would have been better addressed if equal numbers of women from each country of origin had



been recruited and interviewed and their experiences analysed. But during the field work, I ended up interviewing greater numbers of women from India and Nepal whereas the number of respondents from Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh were considerably lower. During the process of recruiting respondents through SEVA's mailing list, a larger proportion of Indian people showed their willingness to participate in the research relative to the other populations. There were a few Indian women who were actively involved in SEVA and its community affairs and during the course of my research I had the opportunity to become close with these women while participating in various community programmes with them. And during my field work, I used their networks to recruit more respondents which further increased my respondents from India. At the same time, my own networks within the Nepali community gave me better access to Nepali women, resulting in a major share of Nepali women among my respondents. Among my forty women informants there are fifteen Indians, fourteen Nepalese, six Sri Lankan, four Pakistani and one Bangladeshi. Because of the skewed nature of my sample, this thesis does not engage with some of the obvious country-specific patterns of discrepancies that emerged in the demographic data analysis and which might also have influenced women's labour force participation.

The need to find a venue where participant observation was possible did not mesh well with the need to be representative of all the different situations in which women from South Asia find themselves. Of the exclusions, one which is particularly relevant and needs to be addressed in future research is the situation of South Asian women who are in the workforce. The focus on community centres systematically excluded full-time employed South Asian-born women and their experiences of migration and resettlement in Australia.

Yet these women in the workforce constitute 53 per cent of the total number of the South Asian women in Australia. This needs to be borne in mind when reading the argument of the thesis which concentrates rather on the unemployed women to ask: Why is it that more than 40 per cent of well qualified women are not in the paid workforce? It should also be noted

that the figure of 53 per cent employed is highly unevenly distributed across different South Asian regional communities to say the least.

## **An Overview of the Thesis**

The chapters in this thesis follow the sequence of different methodological approaches adopted during the data collection process. In Chapter 2, I present a demographic overview of South Asian-born migrants in Australia. I describe the patterns of occupational attainment, income levels, and education profiles of five South Asian immigrants groups: Indian, Sri Lankan, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Nepali. The demographic data analysis is more than a traditional indexing of different demographic variables of the South Asian-born populations. The profiling of South Asian communities not only illustrates more specific and individual country-level data, but also identifies commonalities and diversities among South Asian communities in Australia. By emphasising gender, the demographic data analysis provides a broader picture of the labour force participation of South Asian-born women in Australia. By adopting a demographic approach, this research will be a stepping stone towards bringing South Asian migrants and their communities to the attention of Australian policymakers, researchers, and the general public in future public policymaking and community consultation.

In Chapter 3, I seek to untangle the hidden dimensions of gender, migration and labour force participation of South Asian-born women in Australia. I explore these dimensions not only as they come together, but also as they come together *at a particular moment in time*. I argue that migration constitutes a combination of events where the structures of the host society and the migrant come together at one particular time. In doing so, I argue migration as a ‘conjuncture’; that is, a configuration that arises at a particular moment in the interaction between particular sets of policies, particular sets of economic drivers, and particular sets of cultural practices in the lives of individuals. In this chapter, the focus is variously upon Australian skilled migration policies, the gendered patterns of women’s lives not only during

migration but also in their home countries. My intent is to show how, taken collectively, these factors diminish women's ability to participate in the labour market equally with their male counterparts after migration.

In Chapter 4, I explore women's lives from the vantage point of women as migrants taken over the entire course of their lives rather than starting with their arrival in Australia. This chapter explains how South Asian-born women are displaced by marriage before they are displaced by migration. In doing so, the chapter shows the degree to which issues of resettlement apply for women even before their migration to Australia. While they may find themselves facing additional forms of racism in Australia, they have already faced gender-based discrimination in their husbands' homes and communities, in their capacity as marriage 'migrants'; that is, as incoming strangers. Chapter 5, which deals with South Asian-born women's experiences of maternity, explains how women's involvement in maternity following migration affects their potential for involvement within the Australian workforce.

In the conclusion, I integrate all of these different facets of South Asian-born women's migratory lives to ask the following question: What can this study contribute to the understanding of women migrants' lives in regards to their workforce participation after migration?

## **Chapter 2**

### **Demography of South Asian Migrant Population in Australia**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter uses demographic methods in order to give us a broad picture of the patterns that shape the presence of South Asian migrants in Sydney. It also uses whatever ethnographic and historic information is currently available to give us a picture of the history of South Asian migration to Australia. By the end of the chapter we will also be in a position to use the demographic picture to raise certain issues that arise out of discrepancies in the statistical data.

South Asian-born migrants are a prominent part of Australian society. In 2011, South Asian-born people accounted for more than 2 per cent of Australia's population (ABS, 2011). Up until 2006, 1,208,744, or 8 per cent of the Australian population, were Asian-born, of whom 247,481 (20 per cent) were born in South Asia (ABS, 2006). Within the next five years, the South Asian-born population almost doubled, reaching a total of 467,417 (ABS, 2011) (See Table 1). As of 2006, there were 92,438 South Asian-born people living in Sydney, accounting for 19 per cent of the city's total Asian population. By 2011, the number of South Asian-born immigrants had risen to 152,913, that is, 24 per cent of the total Asian-born population in Sydney (ABS, 2011). Thus, South Asian migrants have become a prominent segment of Australian society. Among the South Asian countries, India and Sri Lanka have contributed a significant proportion of South Asian-born peoples to Australia through migration, while Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal have contributed fewer. Table 2 shows details of Asian-born populations in Australia according to the 2006 and 2011 censuses.

**Table 1: Asian-born Population in Australia**

Country of Birth	Census years			
	2006		2011	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
South Asia	247,481	20	467,417	27
Central Asia	20,038	2	33,258	2
South-East Asia	552,596	46	701,865	40
North-East Asia	388,629	32	535,484	31
Total	1,208,744	100	1,738,024	100

(ABS, 2006, 2011)

**Table 2: South Asian-born Populations in Australia by Country of Origin**

Country of Birth	Census years			
	2006		2011	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Bangladesh	16,095	7	27,810	6
Bhutan	138	0	2,456	1
India	147,105	59	295,363	63
Maldives	2,72	0	3,74	0
Nepal	4,565	2	24,636	5
Pakistan	16,992	7	30,222	6
Sri Lanka	62,255	25	86,414	18
Total	247,422	100	467,275	100

(ABS, 2006, 2011)

Table 2 shows that more than 50 per cent of the South Asian-born populations were born in India. People born in Sri Lanka are the second largest group, followed by people born in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. The increase in the number of South Asian-born migrants in Australia between 2006 and 2011 is substantial, more than double for most South Asian countries with the exception of the Maldives.<sup>5</sup> The number of migrants from countries including Nepal rose from 5,000 in 2006 to 25,000 in 2011. Although the large influx of South Asian migrants to Australia is a recent phenomenon, South Asians have almost a

<sup>5</sup> The figures for migrants from Bhutan and the Maldives were small in number, comprising a total of 2,456 and 374 respectively (ABS, 2011).

century long history of migration to Australia. In the following section I will provide a longitudinal picture of South Asian migration to Australia.

## **Flows of South Asian Migrants to Australia since World War II**

Migration has played a crucial role in Australia's modern history. With more than ten million migrants having settled since 1788, Australia ranks fourth in the world in terms of migrant volume after the USA, Brazil and Canada (Burnley, 2001, p. 27). In 2010, permanent or temporary migrants and their Australian-born children accounted for 50 per cent of Australia's population (Hugo, 2011, p. 244).

Bilimoria and Ganguly-Scrase (1988, p. 17) suggest that Indians were among the first Asian arrivals to the Great Southern hemisphere, and that a native of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) was the first Asian settler in Australia (Bilimoria and Ganguly-Scrase, 1988, p. 17). During the latter part of the 1700s and the early years of the 1800s, when trade between colonial Australia and Asian countries commenced, trading ships brought innumerable Indian and Chinese crews to Botany Bay in New South Wales (Bilimoria and Ganguly-Scrase, 1988). Nevertheless, the number of Asians arriving in the early 19th century remained very low. More Asians started to come to Australia later in the century under the colonial scheme of indentured labour. However, the type of migration remained infrequent during the entire century due to the restrictive legislative policies of the colonial powers.

Restrictive policies such as the 'White Australia Policy', initiated from the beginning of the 20th century, curtailed Australia's Asian migration for the following fifty years (Jupp, 2002). The Australian government's post-war reconstruction and expansion strategies opened doors to immigrants. But the Australian government's post-war immigration policy was dominated by the slogan 'populate or perish' (Jupp, 2002, p. 163). The slogan implied that Australia would perish from foreign invasion – particularly by the threats coming from Asian countries such as, Japan and China – if it could not increase its population base to strengthen its defence

ability (Jupp, 2002; Walsh, 2001). Australia preferred to be populated from the UK and other European countries and remained restrictive towards accepting Asian immigrants. It was only after the 1950s Australia began to gradually reform its 'White Australia policy'.

In 1958, the Australian Government abandoned the dictation test which was specifically used to exclude Asians (Wilton & Bosworth, 1984, p. 30; see also Walsh, 2001, p. 183). The government reassessed its racial restriction policy in 1966 and admitted greater numbers of professionals and academically qualified non-Europeans into the country (Walsh, 2001). The introduction of egalitarian and multicultural policies during the Whitlam era (1972–1975), followed by the Racial Discrimination Act initiated by the Fraser government (1975–1983), changed Australia's international relationships, especially promoting the acceptance of Asian settlers in Australia (Jupp, 2002; Wilton & Bisworth, 1984).

Over the past decades, Australia's involvement with Asia has led to varied linkages between Australia and Asia. The increase in international trade between Australia and Asia has seen the emergence of some of Australia's largest trading partners. Cultural links have fostered relationships between the regions, given that many Australians were born in Asia or have Asian ancestry. Similarly, as a result of many Asian students coming to Australia to pursue tertiary degrees, Australia and Asia have developed strong educational links. In the commercial sphere, sustainable links have developed due to increased investment by both Australian and Asian businesses in each other's countries (ABS, 2006). Socio-cultural economist Collins (2008, p. 251), who views these trends as the consequences of globalisation, claims that one in three immigrants in Australia is from an Asian country, while arrivals from South Asia have increased by more than 50 per cent in the past decade. In the following section, I will discuss flows of migrants from different countries in South Asia according to their demographic significance to Australia. A summary of the data by year of arrival (from pre-1950 to 2011) of South Asian migrants in Australia is presented in Table 3 (on p. 42).

## India

Indian immigrations to Australia can be traced back to the 1920s through census data. The record shows that during the 1920s, there were only 62 Indian-born people that arrived in Australia. Prior to the introduction of the White Australia policy, Indians arriving in Australia were basically indentured labourers, brought in by the Australian Government to work on its various projects, such as, the rapidly developing pastoral industries of the nineteenth century (Lepervanche, 1984). Compared to the poor, unemployed Britons, male Indian labours were considered sober, honest and industrious. Their simple ways of living made them more affordable to the country's pastoral sheep farmers (Lepervanche, 1984, p. 38). Mostly single men, they had left their wives and children back home in India. The plan of most was to earn money and then return home to their farms and families. They were often illiterate. Few could write any of the words in the English dictation test which every immigrating non-European had to pass to gain entry to Australia. During those years, Indians were generally brought to Australia either as 'coolies', as farm workers in the cane fields, or as labourers in the mining industries (Lepervanche, 1984, pp. 36-55). This trend lasted until the 1930s, the decade before the Second World War. During this period, which saw the first wave of South Asian migration to Australia, the restrictive policies implemented by state governments against migrants of Asian origin prevented them from acquiring various rights such as voting, residency, and freehold title. Although migrants from India were not the primary targets of discrimination by the Australian legislation, they found themselves sharing the effects of the country's anti-Asiatic policy merely for being non-European immigrants (Lepervanche, 1984, p. 55).

During the mid-twentieth century, the Indian sub-continent went through massive political turmoil. India fought for its independence from the British Raj, which had exercised its dominion over the sub-continent for almost a century (1858–1947) (Pandey, 2001). After independence, the Indian sub-continent experienced partition with massive bloodshed (Pandey, 2001; Kureishi, 1977). As a result, what historians consider history's greatest human



mass migration took place in the region. Millions of people started to move across the borders of India and the newly created Pakistan, seeking homes which would be both religiously and culturally suitable for Hindus and Muslims of the divided sub-continent (Pandey, 2001). In addition, a wider range of Indians started migrating to Western countries such as the USA, the UK, Canada and Australia. Among the immigrants were the Anglo-Indians: those with mixed Indian and British ancestry, and people of Britain who were born or lived in India. A record in the Museum Victoria – a body which explores and records stories of migrant people to Australia – shows that after the relaxation of Australia's restrictive policies, a broader range of Indians began to come to Australia. These immigrants included doctors, teachers, and engineers, some of whom were appointed to professional posts in rural and regional areas of Victoria (Museum Victoria, 2013). However, the number of Indian migrants was small because Australia still maintained its anti-Asiatic migration White Australia policy. Eldershaw and Olden (1909) have used the term 'anti-Asiatic' to refer to the White Australia policy whose rules were directed against Asian immigrants (see also Lepervanche, 1984; Ongley & Pearson, 1995). By the end of the 1970s, of the people living in Australia, 25,000 were born in India. Thus, the second wave of migration of Indians to Australia was from 1930 to 1970.

After the abolition of the White Australia policy in the 1970s, a third wave of Indian migration to Australia occurred with the loosening of discriminatory policies towards Asian applicants. The change in policy brought more egalitarian multicultural rules, regulations, and national policies. In order to promote industrialisation, Australia needed a skilled labour force. As Walsh (2001, p. 245) notes 'from the 1970s Australian government stipulated that potential migrants must have skills or professional expertise required to fill gaps in Australian workforce, or business experience and investment capital that would directly benefit the Australian economy'. To fulfil this requirement, well-qualified Asians were admitted to the country more easily than before (Lepervanche, 1984; Walsh, 2001; Jupp, 2002). The Labour government of the time declared skills to be the deciding factor for immigration to Australia,

a proposition that was accepted without protest. As Australia's immigration policy was focusing on skilled migration and targeting migrants with skills held to be short in supply in the Australian labour market, it opened the doors to professional and technical Indian settlers including doctors, chemists, engineers, geologists, economists and teachers (Lepervanche, 1984).

India, too, experienced massive economic development in the same period. During the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, it became one of the fastest developing economies and a serious global player in the spheres of IT, telecommunications, and pharmaceuticals (Premi & Mathur, 1995; Khadria, 2001). Increases in the levels of education, fewer restrictions on the mobility of family members, and increased ease of communication and international travel resulted in extensive mobility not only of labourers, but also of highly qualified professionals and students from India to developed countries such as Australia. By the beginning of the 21st century, Indian IT professionals were the most sought after employment-related migrants (Khadria, 2001). Khadria also notes that Indians accounted for most of the IT jobs in Britain in the year 2000. Thus, from the outset, every wave brought a different set of migrants from India; and the numbers have been increasing steadily. By 2006, 50,000 Indian-born people lived in Australia. The years 2006 to 2011 saw more than 130,000 Indian-born people migrate to Australia, bringing the total number of migrants from India to 280,000 by the year 2011 (ABS, 2011).

### **Sri Lanka**

The arrival of Sri Lankan migrants in Australia can be traced back historically as far as that of Indians, but they were relatively smaller in number. Sri Lankan migrants to Australia during the early 19th century were recruited as labourers in the mining fields as well as workers for sugarcane plantations (Hugo & Dissanayake, 2014, p.8). However, the pattern of Sri Lankan migration changed after the country gained independence from the British Empire in 1948 (Museum Victoria, 2013). During the early years, Sri Lankan migrants were mostly Burghers

(Sri Lankans of European descent). Following the Colombo Plan in the 1960s, a significant number of students from Sri Lanka started arriving in Australia together with the decedents of European settlers (Hugo & Dissanayake, 2014, p. 8). In the 1980s, Sri Lanka descended into internal conflict. The outbreak of civil war between the ethnic majority Sinhalese and the ethnic minority Tamils lasted until 2009 (Hugo & Dissanayake, 2014). Since the conflicts, many Sri Lankans fleeing the conflict came to Australia as humanitarian entrants under the Special Assistance Category Class 215 introduced by the Australian Government in 1995 (Department of Social Services, 2014). In 2009, the Sri Lankan Government defeated and dismantled the 'Tamil Tigers', a guerrilla organisation founded in 1972 and seeking the establishment of an independent state in the northeast of Sri Lanka. That year, the Sri Lankan Government announced the end of forty years of internal guerrilla warfare in the country. The ensuing years saw not only legal economic migrants, but also saw large numbers of Tamil refugees migrate to Australia. By the end of the 20th century, 40,000 Sri Lankan-born people lived in Australia, a number that has increased ever since. Between 2006 and 2011, in excess of 22,000 Sri Lankan-born people migrated to Australia, bringing the total population of Sri Lankan migrants to 83,000 (ABS, 2011).

## **Bangladesh**

Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan) gained independence from West Pakistan in 1971. Until the Partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947, the region was part of the country's Bengal state. Partition resulted in the state being divided into East and West Bengal, with East Bengal becoming East Pakistan. In December 1971, when East and West Pakistan were separated, East Pakistan became Bangladesh, the land of Bengalis and a country in the making (Baxter, 1997). According to Baxter (1997), Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries in the world. Forty years after independence, almost half of the country's people are still living below the poverty line (Milam, 2009). For this reason, Bangladeshis continue to migrate internationally in search of better lives and opportunities, a pattern they have followed since the foundation of the independent country. In Australia, Bangladeshis were counted separately as citizens of

Bangladesh in all censuses from 1976 (Museum Victoria, 2013). By the end of the White Australia policy in 1971, 414 Bangladesh-born people lived in Australia. The community increased three-fold over the following ten years bringing the total Bangladeshi population to 1500 in 1980. Between 1990 and 2006, the number of arrivals from Bangladesh to Australia increased abruptly: by 2006, more than 15,000 Bangladesh-born people lived in Australia with the number increasing to 28,000 by 2011 (ABS, 2011).

## **Pakistan**

According to the Australian census, Pakistan-born migrants started arriving in Australia in the 1920s, when the present Pakistan was still part of India. Pakistan-born migrants who came to Australia before 1947 were recorded as Indian-born. Following partition, they migrated from those states that became Pakistan. Statistics distinguish Pakistan-born migrants to Australia after 1947, when Pakistan became a sovereign state. Immediately after partition, very few Pakistan-born people migrated to Australia. This may be because the country came under the military dictatorship of Field Marshal Muhammad Ayub Khan from 1958 to 1969.

During this period, the Pakistani Government restricted international migration. During these years, the country underwent internal reforms, and people settled into new homes following the massive regional migration. Only in the 1970s did the international migration of Pakistanis start to increase. The country regained its democracy under the leadership of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (leader of the People's Party Pakistan). Bhutto led Pakistan as a President between 1971 and 1973, and as a Prime Minister between 1973 and 1977. Pakistan developed friendly international relationships, joined various international organisations, signed bilateral treaties with foreign countries, and made itself more open to the international market. This period saw the international mobility of Pakistani people increase. When the White Australia policy was completely dismantled around the same time (in 1973), the changes resulted in an increased numbers of Pakistanis migrating to Australia. By 1999, the number had reached 6,000. The 2006 census revealed that the Pakistan-born population had increased to 15,000.

By August 2011, the number of Pakistanis in Australia had doubled, reaching 29,006. Thus the number of Pakistani migrants in Australia had increased substantially within a decade (ABS, 2011).

## **Nepal**

Nepal is one of the smallest countries in South Asia. Compared to other countries in the region, Nepal has a more recent history of migration to Australia. Although the Nepalese have migrated internationally, they predominantly moved to India and the Gulf countries. In the early 19th century, Nepali men from the country's hill regions were recruited in Lahore as warriors for the Sikh ruler Ranjit Singh (Bohra & Massey, 2009). At that time, Lahore was still part of India. After the restoration of democracy following the 103-years-long Rana Regime in the mid-1950s, Nepalese international migration increased. Over the last half-century, large numbers of Nepalese labourers migrated to India through its open borders. Statistical data shows that more than a million Nepalese migrated to India (Bohra & Massey, 2009). The restoration of multi-party democracy and liberation in 1990 in Nepal saw a major shift in the destinations of Nepalese migrants. As well as migrating to India, more Nepalese started migrating to other growing economies in the region, such as, Malaysia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Many Nepalese from urban areas and relatively wealthy backgrounds increasingly opted to migrate to the United States, Australia, Canada, and nations in the European Union. But concomitant with the country's opening up to the rest of the world, in 1996, Nepal's Maoist guerrilla organisation commenced its insurgency, starting a civil war between the government and the Maoist guerrillas that lasted for more than a decade. The ensuing internal war saw many Nepali people become displaced and, as a result, many migrated as refugees. Since then, Nepal's unstable political and social situation has encouraged many Nepalese to move overseas. Thus, the migration of Nepalese to Western countries such as Australia is a recent phenomenon. The size of the Nepali migrant population in Australia is still very low compared migrants from other countries in South Asia. Only 48 Nepal-born people were counted in Australia in 1979 following the end of the White Australia

policy. But within fifteen years, the community numbers increased to 1,913. Between 2000 and 2006 the number of arrivals from Nepal increased dramatically from this low level. While some arrived under Australia's Skilled and Family Migration policy, others came as students. By 2006, 5,757 Nepal-born people lived in Australia. Subsequent years saw the number increasing and, between 2007 and 2011, 18,169 Nepal-born people arrived in Australia, bringing the total population of Nepali migrants to 23,926 (ABS, 2011). See Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Year of Arrival of South Asian Migrants in Australia**

<b>Year of Arrival</b>	<b>Bangladesh</b>	<b>Bhutan</b>	<b>India</b>	<b>Maldives</b>	<b>Nepal</b>	<b>Pakistan</b>	<b>Sri Lanka</b>	<b>Total</b>
< 1950	0	0	1,817	0	0	55	270	2,142
1950-59	0	0	1,848	0	0	113	943	2,907
1960-69	57	0	8,091	7	9	287	3,136	11,587
1970-79	414	0	13,344	0	39	791	6,530	21,118
1980-89	1,107	0	15,515	15	141	2,540	13,848	33,166
1990-99	4,610	16	33,252	31	1,724	5,037	19,521	64,191
2000-06	10,574	26	77,996	107	3,844	8,248	16,874	117,669
2007-11	11,276	2,317	133,647	209	18,169	11,935	22,321	198,918
<b>Total</b>	<b>28,038</b>	<b>2,359</b>	<b>285,510</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>23,926</b>	<b>29,006</b>	<b>83,443</b>	<b>451,698</b>

(ABS, 2011)

In sum, the number of South Asian-born residents in Australia was very small prior to the implementation of the White Australia policy (i.e. before 1909). During this period, the immigrants were basically indentured labourers, brought by the Australian Government to work in its developing industries such as agriculture, pastoralism and mining. The countries of Bangladesh and Pakistan did not exist before the 1940s; they were still part of the Indian sub-continent. During the period when the White Australia policy (between 1909 and 1970) was in place, most South Asian countries went through their own internal political upheavals. India sought independence from the British Raj, which had ruled over the region for almost a century. Nepal was administered by the Rana Regime, and Sri Lanka, by the British Empire. Pakistan gained independence in 1947, and Bangladesh in 1971. During this period, because

many countries in the region were in the process of obtaining independence from the British Empire, people who migrated were mostly British descendants such as Anglo-Indians and Sri Lankan Burghers. However, the mobility of the people in the region was still low and irregular.

After the abolition of the White Australia policy, the number of South Asian migrants started to increase. All of the countries in the region were independent although many suffered from internal conflict. Australia shifted towards multiculturalism and was more receptive of Asian immigrants. Its demand for skilled migrants started to increase which led to a dramatic shift in the nature of the immigrants coming to the country. Increasing numbers of highly qualified South Asians started to migrate to Australia either as skilled immigrants or students.

Throughout this entire period, the number of South Asian-born men has always been higher than that of South Asian-born women (ABS, 2011). Today, South Asian migrants rank among the prominent members of the Australian community and can be found in all states and territories.

## **Geographical Distribution**

### **Distribution of the South Asian-born Migrants in Australia**

One of the characteristic features of Australia is its level of urbanization and concentrated population. Today, because two-thirds of the nation's people live in the country's urban areas (ABS, 2008), Australia is disproportionately urbanized. Because the country's cities have attracted the employers and sponsors of the leading sectors of the Australian economy, urban areas have a high demand for technically skilled and qualified workers. Khoo and colleagues (2005) note that Australia has been fulfilling its demands for highly skilled manpower for its developed economy disproportionately through immigration. For this reason, increasingly immigrants are being attracted to the cities rather than to regional parts of Australia. In spite of this pattern, in recent years, many Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, including Australia have introduced policies requiring new

immigrants to settle in less populated, rural and secondary urban centres to foster economic development outside the largest cities. For example, region specific migration programmes, and active recruitments at the regional levels have been put in place in many OECD countries (OECD, 2004, p. 91).

Traditionally, geographical concentrations of immigrants have been explained by factors such as: proximity to an entry point; the presence of family members or members of the same community; and the economic attractiveness of the destination in terms of employment opportunities (OECD, 2004). Khoo and colleagues (2005) suggest that while employment opportunities and employers' locations were the two major factors prompting temporary migrants to choose their locations, for permanent migrants, the location of family members in close proximity was the main driving factor. However, there was no guarantee in Australia as to whether the initial choice of location of residence by temporary and permanent migrants would be their permanent place of residence because there were no visa conditions restricting migrants from choosing their place of residence. Even temporary visa holders, who had migrated to regional areas as a condition of entry, did not necessarily remain in the regional area once they were granted permanent residency (Wulff & Dharmalingam, 2008; Withers & Powell, 2003).

In the following section I will present the residential location of South Asian migrants in different states in Australia before moving to show their detailed distribution in Sydney and its suburbs without reference to their visa statuses.

The distribution of South Asian-born communities in Australia up until 2006, as set out in Table 4, shows that New South Wales (NSW) and Victoria, primarily the metropolitan cities of Sydney and Melbourne, were the most popular destinations. Up until 2006, close to 40 per cent of South Asian migrants made their homes in NSW, followed by Victoria (38 per cent), Western Australia (8 per cent) and Queensland (7 per cent) (ABS, 2006). The Australian Capital Territory, South Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory had a below-average



concentration of South Asian migrants. Of the five major South Asian countries of origin, more than 50 per cent of Nepalese, Bangladeshi and Pakistani migrants opted to settle in NSW, a slightly lower proportion of migrants from India and Sri Lanka also settled in NSW (39 and 31 per cent respectively) (ABS, 2006).

The 2011 census used for the information showed no significant change in the distribution pattern of South Asian migrant populations in Australia (see Table 5). NSW retained the largest proportion of the migrants. However, the distribution of South Asian-born people who arrived between 2007 and 2011 shows a slight shift in destinations. Alongside NSW and Victoria, Queensland and South Australia have become new preferred destinations for recently arrived South Asian migrants (ABS, 2011). The total proportion of South Asian migrants to NSW decreased from 40 per cent of the total in 2006 to 35 per cent in 2011 (ABS, 2011) (See Table 5). NSW remained the most popular destination for South Asian arrivals in Australia, despite the fact that an increasing proportion of South Asian migrants chose to live in other states. The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) data show that NSW remained the preferred destination not just for South Asian, but for all new immigrant peoples in Australia, accounting for 31 per cent (DIAC, 2012).

Within NSW, more than 63 per cent of the population of the state lives in its capital city, Sydney, and more than 90 per cent of South Asian migrants in NSW live in Sydney and its suburbs (ABS, 2011).

**Table 4: Distribution of South Asian-born migrants by States and Territory in Australia**

State/Territory of Residence	Country of Birth									
	<u>India</u>		<u>Sri Lanka</u>		<u>Pakistan</u>		<u>Bangladesh</u>		<u>Nepal</u>	
	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent
New South Wales	95,387	32	23,704	27	13,382	44	17,007	61	15,296	62
Victoria	111,787	38	43,991	51	9,188	30	5,115	18	4,310	17
Queensland	30,259	10	7,696	9	2,358	8	1,672	6	2,139	9
South Australia	18,739	6	2,670	3	1,360	5	1,286	5	1,038	4
Western Australia	29,914	10	5,339	6	2,520	8	1,495	5	920	4
Tasmania	1,468	0	295	0	111	0	56	0	294	1
Northern Territory	1,917	1	447	1	195	1	167	1	351	1
Australian Capital Territory	5,887	2	2,269	3	1,084	4	1,010	4	288	1
Other Territories	6	0	3	0	24	0	3	0	0	0
Total	295,364	100	86,414	100	30,222	100	27811	100	24636	100

(ABS, 2011)

**Table 5: Changes in the Distribution of South Asian Migrants by States and Territory**

State/Territory of Residence of South Asian Migrants	2006 Census (per cent)	2011 Census (per cent)
New South Wales	39.9	35.4
Victoria	37.6	37.4
Queensland	7.3	9.5
South Australia	3.8	5.5
Western Australia	8.3	8.6
Tasmania	0.5	0.6
Northern Territory	0.4	0.7
Australian Capital Territory	2.2	2.3
Other Territories	0.0	0.01
Total	100.0	100.0

(ABS, 2011)

***Distribution of the South Asian-born Population in Sydney***

In Australia, the distribution of the South Asian migrants is highly urbanized, even more so than the Australian population as a whole. The concentration of migrants in urban areas, especially in Sydney and Melbourne, has increased since the Second World War in an unprecedented manner and is high among recent immigrants of Asian origin (Hugo, 2008).

The settlement of new immigrants in any area is highly influenced by the pre-existing ethnic concentration in those areas, which acts as a social and economic magnet attracting new migrants (Chiswick & Miller, 2004; Wulff & Dharmalingam, 2008; Massey & Parr, 2012). This tendency of migrants to settle among others from their own country of origin allows the formation of ethnic enclaves (Chiswick & Miller, 2004). This dynamic has undermined intentional efforts by the Australian Government to distribute immigrant populations and to use new immigrants to reinforce regional economies by requiring that they first settle outside major urban areas.

When examining the pattern of settlement of different migrant groups in Australia, Hugo (1995) found that pre-existing ethnic communities provide powerful social support and a familiar cultural environment for the newly arrived. During times of economic hardship, the support provided when living within such ethnic enclaves acts as a powerful force in determining the residential location for both recent arrivals and longer standing immigrant communities (Hugo, 1995).

Kuo and Tsai (1986) note that the social networks provided by ethnic enclaves help the new arrivals to absorb the initial shock of immigration by providing information and other forms of assistance. Enclaves also offer opportunities for immigrants to maintain and pass on their mother tongue and ethnic culture to the next generation. In addition ethnic enclaves facilitate immigrants' entrepreneurship by providing opportunities for community businesses such as specialised grocery shops, cafes, or stores selling ethnic artefacts or goods sourced from the home country (Chiswick & Miller, 2004). But such enclaves can have negative consequences as well. Studies have shown that ethnic concentration, for example, slows down the acquisition of new language skills (Chiswick & Miller, 2004; Bauer et al., 2005).

Furthermore, studies also suggest that less interconnectedness within one's own ethnic networks encouraged positive psychological adjustment among migrants who were undergoing major life transition into a new host society (Walker et al., 1977; Quisumbing,

1982; see also Kuo & Tsai, 1986). As Walker and colleagues (1977, p. 36) argued, during a major psychological transition a dense social network 'may trap the individual within a limited set of normative expectations, information and social contacts, rather than fulfil his need to make a transition to new social roles'.

According to the 2006 census, more than 75 per cent of South Asian-born people have chosen to live in Australia's major urban cities, with more than 70 per cent opting for Sydney or Melbourne. This distribution pattern remains unaltered according to the 2011 census. South Asian migrants have tended towards concentration in Sydney and its suburbs. They are found in almost every corner of Sydney. The pattern of ethnic concentration is shaped by this overall convergence on urban centres.

Nevertheless, if we look at the concentration of South Asian-born population in Sydney and its suburbs over a course of time, some interesting patterns of distribution emerge. The distribution pattern of the South Asian migrants, based on their year of arrival, shows that recently arrived migrants are more likely to live in suburbs such as those of Central Western Sydney, Blacktown, Inner Sydney and Canterbury-Bankstown, whereas those who arrived earlier are more likely to live in Sydney's northern suburbs.

The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), released by the ABS, divide greater Sydney into two sections: 'Advantaged' (high valued) and 'Disadvantaged' (low valued) local government areas. This division is based on census variables such as income, educational attainment, employment, and rates of dwelling ownership. According to the SEIFA, areas such as Northern Sydney, Central Northern Sydney and Lower Northern Sydney are included in the 'Advantaged' group whereas areas such as Fairfield, Blacktown, Parramatta-South, Canterbury-Bankstown, Liverpool, and Campbelltown are among the most 'Disadvantaged' areas in Sydney (ABS, 2011).

The statistics show that a majority of Indian migrants live in the Central Western part of Sydney. Suburbs in the Central Western Sydney, such as Parramatta, Blacktown, Auburn, and

Canterbury are categorised as disadvantaged areas in Sydney. Of the 87,000 Indian migrants living in Sydney, 27 per cent live in the Central Western (Parramatta) area of Sydney, followed by Blacktown, Central Northern (Hornsby-South), and Inner Western Sydney (17, 13, and 8 per cent respectively). Smaller areas of concentration are to be found in Lower Northern Sydney (Ryde), Fairfield, Canterbury, and St George-Sutherland (Rockdale, Hurstville), with 5 to 7 per cent of migrants from India resident in each suburb. Areas including the Northern Beaches, Eastern Suburbs (Randwick), and Gosford-Wyong have only a nominal percentage of Indian-born peoples. So, while Indian migrants are distributed throughout almost all parts of Sydney, their concentration varies significantly (ABS, 2011).

Migrants from Sri Lanka are mainly located in Central Western Sydney. As of 2011, of the 22,000 migrants from Sri Lanka living in Sydney, 29 per cent lived in Central Western Sydney followed by 18 per cent in Central Northern Sydney and 16 per cent in Blacktown. Their distribution, location wise, was almost similar to that of the Indian migrant community in Sydney (ABS, 2011).

Approximately 16,000 Bangladeshi migrants live or sojourn in Sydney. Distribution of the Bangladesh-born community in Sydney shows that the largest concentration of them live in the Canterbury-Bankstown area, that is, 42 per cent of the total Bangladeshi peoples. As well, a significant number of Bangladeshi migrants reside in Outer South Western Sydney. Areas including Inner South Sydney, Blacktown and Central Western Sydney are among the other destinations for Bangladesh-born communities in Sydney (ABS, 2011).

The Inner South West suburbs such as Canterbury-Bankstown, followed by Parramatta and Blacktown, are the three suburbs of Sydney which contain a significant Pakistani migrant population. These areas each comprise almost 22 per cent of the total population of 12,000 migrants from Pakistan in Sydney (ABS, 2011). Apart from these three popular sites, areas such as Central Northern Sydney and Fairfield-Liverpool are home to significant numbers of Pakistani migrants.

Nepalese migrants have settled in areas that follow the pattern of other South Asian-born peoples in Sydney. The large numbers of Nepalese migrants who have settled in the Inner South West suburbs of Sydney account for 34 per cent of all Nepalese migrants in Sydney. The Hurstville and Kogarah-Rockdale areas are almost exclusively Nepalese, that is, few other South Asian migrants live in these areas. In addition to this cluster in the Inner South West suburbs, 21 and 18 per cent of Nepalese migrants reside in the Inner West and Central Western Sydney respectively (ABS, 2011). Table 6 shows the distribution of South Asian migrants in various suburbs of Sydney.

**Table 6: Percentage Distribution of South Asian Migrants in Different Suburbs of Sydney<sup>6</sup>**

Sydney Suburbs	<u>Country of Origin (%)</u>				
	India	Sri Lanka	Pakistan	Bangladesh	Nepal
Central Coast	0.9	0.8	0.6	0.4	0.2
Sydney – Baulkham Hills & Hawkesbury	5.5	12.0	4.5	1.6	0.4
Sydney – Blacktown	17.5	16.3	20.8	9.4	3.2
Sydney – City & Inner South	3.3	2.4	2.4	10.7	7.5
Sydney – Eastern Suburbs	1.8	1.7	1.3	2.6	1.2
Sydney – Inner South West	8.0	3.7	22.4	41.7	33.9
Sydney – Inner West	8.5	10.2	2.6	4.1	20.7
Sydney – North Sydney & Hornsby	7.6	6.0	3.2	1.7	8.1
Sydney – Northern Beaches	1.6	0.8	0.5	0.4	1.6
Sydney – Outer South West	3.6	2.5	5.1	11.6	1.1
Sydney – Outer West & Blue Mountains	2.9	3.6	3.9	1.1	1.1
Sydney – Parramatta	27.3	28.6	21.7	9.6	17.8
Sydney – Ryde	5.0	7.7	2.4	2.0	1.5
Sydney – South West	5.4	3.1	7.9	2.6	1.2
Sydney – Sutherland	1.1	0.6	0.7	0.5	0.5
Total	100	100	100	100	100

(ABS, 2011)

The contemporary patterns of distribution of South Asian-born people in Sydney show that migrants from different South Asian countries of origin have formed their own ethnic enclaves in different suburbs of Sydney. Indian migrants tend to settle in Central Western

<sup>6</sup> Refer to Appendix 4 for exact numbers.

Sydney, whereas larger numbers of migrants from Sri Lanka are found in the Central Western, and Central Northern parts of Sydney. Pakistani and Bangladeshi migrants are more likely to cluster in the Inner South West suburbs such as Canterbury and Bankstown. Nepalese migrants are more likely to live in Hurstville. The majority of South Asian migrants – especially those who have arrived in Australia recently – tend to reside in suburbs of Sydney which are categorised as economically ‘Disadvantaged’ by SEIFA. The concentration of South Asian migrants in the ‘Advantaged’ or more affluent suburbs of Sydney is very low. The majority of these families in affluent suburbs are of longer standing, having migrated to Australia earlier.

The profile of South Asians arriving in Australia, which once was fairly consistent, is no longer unified. The current South Asian migrant communities in Australia have members that have come from every economic class and background in their home countries. Once, South Asian immigrants were almost uniformly members of above-average income families who had an English-medium education, and they lived in affluent Australian neighbourhoods and were residentially scattered (Helweg, 1985). South Asian migrant communities today are more concentrated, the most recent waves of migration have created their own ethnic enclaves in different suburbs. For example, in Sydney, Parramatta and its surrounding suburb of Harris Park are widely known for their Indian migrant communities, visually evident in the many Indian restaurants and grocery shops in these suburbs.

The changes in Australia’s immigration policies over time have helped to redistribute South Asian migrant communities. The South Asian migrants of the 1960s and 1970s were especially sought after for their ability to operate within the technologically advanced Australian economy. Many of the migrants who arrived at that time were either government representatives or had secure jobs offered to them in areas and for which they were qualified. The average South Asians migrating to Australia in that period were from above-average income families in their countries of origin. In Australia, they were valued for their skills in

government service, private enterprise, university instruction and large corporations, and generally held white collar jobs. Usually ranked in the middle and upper socio-economic levels of Australian society, they could afford to live in the cities' more affluent suburbs.

Unlike the South Asian migrants of earlier periods, immigrants arriving in recent years have been of very different cohorts. A recent study by Hugo (2008) suggests that the new global migration has increased not only the flow of many of the highly-skilled managerial and other high-level workers fundamental to global cities, but also the flow of low-income, low-status service workers. There are migrants who have come on student visas. As international students, most of them have to pay high university fees as well as meet their everyday living expenses in Australia. There are those who migrate under the country's skilled migration scheme but do not necessarily have job offers in their areas of qualification. Studies suggest that recent migrants are more likely to encounter occupational mismatch due to the less-than-perfect international transferability of their foreign expertise to their host countries (Borooah & Mangan, 2002; Purkayastha, 2005; Danso, 2009; Ho, 2010; Siar, 2013). As a result, skilled migrants experience 'deskilling' or occupational downward mobility. In many cases the urgent need to support their own families financially and to find a place to live forces migrants to take whatever jobs are offered, jobs that may require less knowledge-based skills and more manual skills. Women have had to juggle household work, childcare (where necessary) and low-paying jobs to provide extra support for their families. Under such circumstances, newly arrived migrants can only afford to establish themselves in areas where living expenses are lower.

This employment and deskilling dynamics help to explain why the 'Disadvantaged' suburbs are more popular among recently arrived South Asian migrants. The increasing numbers of South Asian migrants gravitating towards the western suburbs of Sydney may have three different explanations. First, in line with the low economic profiles of these suburbs, the daily necessities of life are more affordable for struggling families. Second, the increasing ethnic



concentration of South Asians in western Sydney attracts long standing migrants, who have earlier settled in other suburbs, to migrate again and settle among their own ethnic peoples. Studies suggest co-ethnic concentration plays an important role in determining subsequent internal migration of immigrants in host societies (Kritz & Nogle, 1994; Zorlu & Mulder, 2008). Third, the increasing South Asian population invites intra-community business and entrepreneurial opportunities.

### **Ages and Sex Structures of South Asian Migrants in Australia**

Australia has a large ageing population which, according to demographic projections, will continue to increase in the future. Although migration accounts for a significant proportion (60 per cent) of Australia's population growth, the ageing population numbers will continue to rise in the near future as the young migrants become part of the ageing cohort (Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2013).

Compared to Australia's total population, South Asian-born populations have a younger age structure, with a greater proportion of their populations in the younger age groups. A substantial proportion of South Asian migrants are in the economically active age group in Australia, a factor that reflects the planned intake of South Asian migrants under successive Australian Governments' skilled migration programs in recent decades. The age profile of recent immigrants who arrived in Australia between 2004 and 2008 reveals that 95 per cent were under the age of 45, and that 41 per cent were in the 25–44 age range, which is considered to constitute the prime economically active period (DIAC, 2010). The population pyramids<sup>7</sup> in Appendix 2 demonstrate these points by comparing the ages and sex structures of the native-born and South Asian-born populations in Australia (See Charts 8 to 14 in Appendix 2).

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<sup>7</sup> Pyramids are the graphical representation of population presenting an age/sex distribution. A pyramid comprises two ordinary histograms placed on their sides and back-to-back (for a detailed discussion, see Newell, 1990).

When the population pyramids of migrants from all five South Asian countries were compared with the population pyramid of Australia overall, many structural variations are observed. Australia has similar percentages of people in the younger age groups and in the reproductive age groups. The population pyramid of Australia, a convex shaped pyramid, represents a population structure which shows a constant rate of birth over a period of time (low fertility rate) and a low mortality rate. The greater proportion of females in the older age group suggests a lower mortality rate among women in the older age groups in Australia.

By contrast, the population pyramid for all South Asian migrant populations is shaped by the skilled migration program of the Australian Government. The majority of migrants from South Asia are concentrated in the labour-force participation age range, with the proportion of males slightly higher than that of females. The narrow base and narrow apex of the pyramid of South Asian-born peoples shows a smaller proportion of young (under age 15) and older (age 65 and over) peoples than in the native-born population. The population pyramid of South Asian migrants in NSW is very similar to that of the pyramid for all South Asian-born peoples in Australia. The population structure is the result of recent migrant intakes which have favoured migrants in the age range of prime labour force participants.

The measurement of dependency ratios<sup>8</sup> shows that migrant populations have comparatively fewer dependents than the native-born populations. As of the 2011 Census, 13.6 per cent of South Asian-born migrants have no children, 9.3 per cent have one child and 11.6 per cent have two children in Australia (ABS, 2011). In the year 2011, the child dependency<sup>9</sup> ratio of Australian-born people was 38 per cent whereas their old age dependency<sup>10</sup> ratio was 19 per

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<sup>8</sup> The term 'dependency ratio' refers to the number of children and elderly people as a proportion of the working age population. Dependency ratios reflect differences in the burden of dependency which the productive population must bear (Newell, 1990).

<sup>9</sup> Child dependency ratio: The number of children (0–14 years) compared to the number of 'working age' adults (15–64 years).

<sup>10</sup> Old age dependency ratio: The number of people aged 65 years or over compared to the number of 'working age' adults (15–64 years).

cent, making the total dependency<sup>11</sup> ratio for the native-born populations 56 per cent. If we look at South Asian-born population, migrants from countries such as Nepal and Bangladesh have a comparatively lower proportion of younger and older people than migrants from India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. The total dependency ratio for migrants from Nepal and Bangladesh was approximately 9 per cent, whereas the total dependency ratios for migrants from India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan were 17 per cent, 23 per cent and 17 per cent respectively in Australia (see Table 7). The total dependency ratio of South Asian migrants in NSW was consistent with the total dependency ratio of South Asian migrants in Australia as a whole. In NSW, migrants from Nepal and Bangladesh had an old age dependency ratio of less than 1 per cent whereas migrants from India and Sri Lanka for example, had a high old age dependency ratio of 8 and 15 per cent respectively. The Pakistan-born migrants had the highest child dependency ratio among all of the South Asian-born peoples in Australia.

**Table 7: Dependency Ratios of Australian-born and South Asian-born Migrant Populations in Australia**

Countries	<u>Dependency Ratio (%)</u>		Total Dependency Ratio (%)
	Child	Aged	
India	9.6	8.2	17.8
Sri Lanka	8.9	14.3	23.2
Pakistan	14.9	2.9	17.8
Bangladesh	8.4	1.1	9.4
Nepal	7.3	0.4	7.7
Australia	37.9	18.6	56.0

(ABS, 2011)

<sup>11</sup> Total dependency ratio: The total number of people aged either 0–14 years or 65 years and over compared to the number aged 15–64 years.

**Table 8: Dependency Ratio of Australian-born and South Asian-born Migrants in New South Wales**

Countries	<u>Dependency Ratio (%)</u>		Total Dependency Ratio (%)
	Child	Aged	
India	9.4	7.8	17.2
Sri Lanka	6.7	15.0	21.7
Pakistan	14.0	2.9	17.1
Bangladesh	6.2	0.8	7.0
Nepal	5.1	0.4	5.4
Australia	40.2	20.9	61.1

(ABS, 2011)

The population pyramid and dependency ratio figures reflect the differences among the South Asian countries in terms of when their migratory movement to Australia first began. When the individual country of birth group's dependency ratio is compared with their arrival history in Australia, it becomes clearer why migrants from India, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan show this pattern. Because they began arriving in significant numbers in Australia earlier than, for example, Nepalese migrants, the more established communities have a greater proportion of aged people, that is, people who originally arrived as young workers. By contrast, because migration from Nepal and Bangladesh is a more recent phenomenon, demographic profiles of immigrants for these countries showed higher proportion of young people. With respect to child dependency, because the children of migrant parents born in Australia are classified as Australian-born, they were not included in the South Asian-born population figures. For this reason, the child dependency ratio differed significantly from that of the Australian-born population, which exhibited a greater proportion of peoples in younger age groups with a child dependency ratio of approximately 40 per cent.

In order to allow us to glimpse the number of children and the accompanying parental responsibilities of South Asian migrant families, I have gone to some effort to extract data on second generation South Asians in Australia. The populations of second generation South

Asians (using the First Ancestry option from census data)<sup>12</sup> show a pyramid-shaped structure, which indicated a high proportion of children, a rapidly growing population, and a lower proportion of people in the oldest groups. The second generation of South Asian-born migrants was still small in number compared to the first generation in Australia. The population of Australian-born individuals with one ancestor from South Asia was approximately 97,000 Australia wide, and 41,000 in NSW alone (ABS, 2011). The age structure of Australian-born second generation South Asians was young, with more than 69 per cent below the age of 15. In NSW, the proportion of the population of young age groups (15 years or less) was 73 per cent (30,000 in number) of the total Australian-born population with one South Asian ancestor. These figures are more likely to increase in the near future due to the continuing flow of migrants from South Asian countries and the relatively young age structure of the first generation in Australia.

Given that members of the second generation group are so young, any study of their social-economic outcomes may prove premature, for that reason, this study focuses on first generation migrants (parent generation) using the following criteria to determine their socio-economic status: education, employment status, income, and English proficiency.

## **English Language Proficiency among South Asian-born Populations in Australia**

Language is one of the most important determinants of the socio-economic success of migrants in Australia (Chiswick, Lee & Miller, 2006). Studies show that English language incompetency, in countries where English is the official language, disadvantages migrants in terms of their access to education, income, central institutions, societal recognition and social contact (Miller & Neo, 1997; Esser, 2006; Kim et al., 2012). Studies have also revealed that

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<sup>12</sup> First Ancestry: By 'first ancestry', I mean people who claim that one of their ancestors was from a South Asian group. Use of this definition enables analysis of first generation South Asian peoples (or migrants from South Asia) and Australian-born South Asian peoples, the two types of peoples of 'South Asian origin' in Australia.

for migrants, especially those from non-English speaking backgrounds, lack of English proficiency blunts their capacity to use their other skills, limiting their educational advantages in the host country (Borooah & Mangan, 2002; Miller & Neo, 1997). Although many have come from non-English speaking backgrounds, communication and language have not been a problem for the majority of South Asian-born people in Australia. Hugo (2008) observes that spoken English language proficiency is high among all South Asian-born migrants in Australia. Apropos of English proficiency data, the 2011 census shows that approximately 80 per cent of South Asian migrants in Australia speak English only, or speak other languages, as well as English very well (Table 9). Table 10 below shows a comparison of the proficiency levels of spoken English among three groups of Asian migrants in Australia. The data show that a greater proportion of South Asians have high proficiency in English compared to peoples from South-East and North-East Asia. South Asian migrants' high competency in the English language could be attributable to the earlier British colonial rule over the undivided Indian sub-continent and to the indirect colonial subjugation of Nepal and Sri Lanka.

**Table 9: English Proficiency of South Asian Migrants in Australia**

Spoken English Language Proficiency	<u>South Asian Migrants</u>	
	Number	Per cent
Spoke English only	91,595	20
Spoke other language and spoke English: Very well	237,353	51
Spoke other language and spoke English: Well	109,917	24
Spoke other language and spoke English: Not well	18,119	4
Spoke other language and spoke English: Not at all	4,977	1
Total	461,961	100

(ABS, 2011)

**Table 10: English Proficiency of Australian Populations from Different Asian Origins**

<b>Proficiency in Spoken English</b>	<b>South-East Asia</b>	<b>North-East Asia</b>	<b>Southern Asia</b>
Very well	44	29	64
Well	34	42	30
Not well	18	23	5
Not at all	4	6	1
Total	100	100	100

(ABS, 2011)

Along with English, various other languages are used by South Asian-born peoples as their first means of communication in Australia. South Asian migrants consider language to be a part of their ethnic identity. Each region of South Asia has its own language, and migrants continue to use these languages in Australia, regardless of the national language of the host country. The languages spoken by Indians, for example, fall into two broad categories: Dravidian and Indo-Aryan. More than 50,000 Indian migrants in Australia speak languages classified as Dravidian: Kannada, Malayalam, Tamil, and Telugu. Approximately 160,000 Indians speak languages classified as Indo-Aryan: Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Marathi, Punjabi and Urdu. In the same way, migrants from Sri Lanka speak two different languages. More than 19,000 speak Tamil while approximately 41,000 speak Sinhalese. Migrants from Pakistan also speak a variety of languages; Punjabi, Balti, and Urdu, for example. But Urdu is the most popular and is spoken by more than 23,000 Pakistanis living in Australia. The majority of migrants from Nepal and Bangladesh speak Nepali and Bengali respectively. Regarding the second generation's English proficiency, Khoo and colleagues (2002) argue that all second generation youth are proficient in English irrespective of any other language used in the home. Thus, considering the high English language proficiency of South Asian-born migrants, it becomes quite logical to expect a high socio-economic status of said population in Australia.

## **Educational Attainment**

Immigrants, especially those who have migrated as skilled workers, tend to have higher educational endowments compared with the general population of the receiving society. In

other words, studies show that migrants tend to have higher educational attainments than non-migrants. But there is a tendency towards serious devaluation of migrants' (foreign) qualifications and occupational downward mobility when educational backgrounds and labour market performance of migrants are compared with native-born workers in the host country's labour market (Fagnan, 1995; Akbari, 1999; Purkayastha, 2005; Iredale, 2005; Buzdugan & Halli, 2009; Danso, 2009).

Table 11 illustrates the level of education of South Asian-born people in Australia, as of 2011. The overall level of education attainment was high for the South Asian-born populations: two-thirds held tertiary qualifications. Also, 28 per cent (i.e. 84,511) of South Asian migrants with tertiary qualifications held post-graduate degrees. More than 70 per cent held qualifications at or above bachelor's degree (ABS, 2011).

**Table 11: Level of Education of South Asian-born Peoples in Australia**

<b>Non-School Qualification<sup>13</sup></b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
Postgraduate Degree Level	84,511	28
Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate Level	10,149	3
Bachelor's Degree Level	118,397	39
Advanced Diploma and Diploma Level	54,907	18
Certificate Level	34,840	12
Total	302,804	100

(ABS, 2011)

A comparison of the educational backgrounds of South Asian-born men and women suggests that they have similar levels of educational attainment. More than 29 per cent of South Asian-born men, and more than 26 per cent of South Asian-born women with any form of tertiary level qualification, possess postgraduate levels of qualification. Even though the absolute number of male migrants with bachelor's degrees is higher than the number of their female

<sup>13</sup> Non-School Qualification: This variable describes the level of a person's highest completed non-school qualification. Non-school qualifications are educational attainments other than those of pre-primary, primary or secondary education (ABS, 2011).



counterparts, more than 45 per cent of the total number of South Asian-born women with any tertiary level of qualification have bachelor's degrees compared with only 35 per cent of the total number of South Asian-born men in the same category (See Table 12). That is, both men and women of South Asian descent who have migrated to Australia are highly educated, on average, even if many of the women have migrated as spouses, and not as primary migrants under migration regimes that targeted highly skilled workers.

**Table 12: Level of Post-school Education of South Asian-born Men and Women in Australia**

Level of Education	<u>Men</u>		<u>Women</u>	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Postgraduate Degree Level	51,431	29	33,080	26
Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate Level	5,822	3	4,327	3
Bachelor's Degree Level	60,958	35	57,441	45
Advanced Diploma and Diploma Level	34,129	19	20,778	16
Certificate Level	23,082	13	11,756	9
Total	175,422	100	127,382	100

(ABS, 2011)

A comparison of educational attainments between Australian-born and South Asian-born people suggests that, on average, the South Asian-born have better academic qualifications than people born in Australia. A large percentage (45 per cent) of Australian-born individuals with tertiary education have only reached certificate level of qualification. Only 4 per cent of Australian-born people with tertiary qualifications have progressed to a postgraduate level of education, while 36 per cent have qualifications at or above the bachelor's degree level. By contrast, 28 per cent of South Asian-born people have reached postgraduate levels of qualification, that is, a rate seven times higher than found in the Australian-born population. A further comparison reveals that four times as many South Asian-born women with tertiary qualifications, proportionally, have reached the postgraduate level of qualification as their Australian-born counterparts.

**Table 13: Level of Post-school Education of Australian-born People**

Level of Education	<u>Australia</u>	
	Number	Per cent
Postgraduate Degree	284,670	5
Graduate Diploma & Graduate Certificate	215,138	4
Bachelor's Degree	1,430,401	27
Advanced Diploma and Diploma	905,806	17
Certificate	2,365,805	45
Total	5,201,820	100

(ABS, 2011)

**Table 14: Level of Post-school Education of Australian-born Men and Women**

Level of Education	<u>Men</u>		<u>Women</u>	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Postgraduate Degree	146,507	5	138,162	6
Graduate Diploma & Graduate Certificate	75,380	3	139,758	6
Bachelor's Degree	609,704	22	820,697	33
Advanced Diploma & Diploma	374,404	14	531,402	21
Certificate	1,519,728	56	846,078	34
Total	2,725,723	100	2,476,097	100

(ABS, 2011)

Among the various groups of South Asian-born migrants, the gender differential in educational attainment varied. Smaller percentages of women migrants had postgraduate levels of qualification than men migrants. Among all of the five countries, Nepal and Sri Lanka had the lowest rates of women with postgraduate degrees, with 16 and 12 per cent respectively of the total tertiary qualified female population. But at the bachelor's degree level, proportionally more women migrants have bachelor's degree than men from all five countries. The majority of South Asian-born women in Australia had at least attained a bachelor's degree level of education or above. The educational profile of South Asian-born people in NSW proved very similar to that of South Asian-born people in Australia as a whole.

**Table 15: Comparison of Level of Post-school Education of South Asian-born Populations in Australia: Country Specific**

Level of qualification	Country of Birth (%)				
	India	Sri Lanka	Pakistan	Bangladesh	Nepal
Postgraduate Degree	30	16	31	39	19
Graduate Diploma & Graduate Certificate	4	4	3	3	1
Bachelor's Degree	39	40	44	40	36
Advanced Diploma & Diploma	17	24	13	12	33
Certificate	11	16	9	7	10

(ABS, 2011)

**Table 16: Comparison of Level of Post-school Education of South Asian-born and Australian-born Peoples: Country Specific**

Level of qualification	Country of Birth (%)					
	India	Sri Lanka	Pakistan	Bangladesh	Nepal	Australia
Postgraduate Degree	30	16	31	39	19	5
Graduate Diploma & Graduate Certificate	4	4	3	3	1	4
Bachelor's Degree	39	40	44	40	36	27
Advanced Diploma & Diploma	17	24	13	12	33	17
Certificate	11	16	9	7	10	45

(ABS, 2011)

**Table 17: Comparison of Level of Post-school Education of South Asian-born Men and Women: Country Specific**

Level of qualification	Country of Birth (%)									
	<u>India</u>		<u>Sri Lanka</u>		<u>Pakistan</u>		<u>Bangladesh</u>		<u>Nepal</u>	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Postgraduate Degree	31	30	19	12	34	26	41	35	21	16
Graduate Diploma & Graduate Certificate	3	4	3	4	3	2	3	2	1	1
Bachelor's Degree	33	46	40	41	39	54	36	46	32	41
Advanced Diploma & Diploma	19	14	22	26	14	9	15	8	35	31
Certificate	14	7	16	16	9	9	5	8	10	11

(ABS, 2011)

The educational advantages of the South Asian-born populations over the larger Australian-born could have two explanations. First, students who have migrated from India and other South Asian countries make up a large proportion of the immigrant population in Australia. The strategic review data on the student visa program reveal that India is among the top ten source countries for international students in Australian universities. Although the number of student arrivals from India has decreased in recent years, India is still among the top countries sending high student numbers to Australian universities (Knight, 2011). Second, the Australian Government's migration program, with its emphasis on skills and credentials, has increased the migration of highly qualified and skilled migrants to the country (Kofman & Raghuram, 2005).

The educational attainments of South Asian migrants living in Australia are noteworthy. Large numbers of South Asian migrants are well-qualified academically, having attained university level qualifications. However, studies show that the educational qualifications of migrants are often not fully recognized in their host countries' labour markets. For example, Buzdugan and Halli (2009) argue that the poor market performance of recent immigrants in the Canadian labour market is due to the devaluation of the immigrants' foreign education and previous work experience. They note that devaluation was most acute among migrants from the developing countries.

Studies have further shown that devaluation of foreign qualifications affects immigrant women more than immigrant men. Purkayastha (2005) notes that American accreditation agencies' lack of recognition of immigrants' foreign qualifications has significantly impeded the entry of female immigrants of South Asian origin into the American labour market. Many other researchers have come to similar conclusions in migration studies of other countries such as, Fincher, Foster and Wilmot (1994), Fagnan (1995), Purkayastha (2005), and Iredale (2005).

This pattern of educational devaluation contrasts with the importance given to education when allocating points in Australia's migration schemes. Given that the average South Asian migrant has achieved high academic qualifications in her or his country of origin, it seems the actual worth of qualifications cannot be really known unless the labour market performance of South Asian-born migrants is known. The following section will be devoted precisely to looking into labour market performances of South Asian migrants through their occupational attainments in Australia.

### **Labour Market Performance of South Asian Immigrants**

South Asian-born people in Australia are disproportionately represented in the professional occupations and show lower concentrations in the services and unskilled categories of occupations (ABS, 2011).<sup>14</sup> Wilson and Samuel (1996) note that a majority of Australia's post World War II immigrants entered into unskilled or lower-skilled occupations following their migration to Australia. The concentration of South Asian migrants in the professional employment sphere, however, contrasts with these general trends in at least three major ways. First, the post-World War II migrations from South Asia drew heavily upon migrants with training and skills, qualities that attracted points in the Australian point assessment (Hugo, 2008). Second, their level of English proficiency was generally very high (Hugo, 2008). Third, their educational attainments was high, with more than two-thirds holding tertiary qualifications (ABS, 2011). A comparison of the occupational structure of South Asian-born peoples and their Australian-born counterparts reveals higher proportions of South Asian-born people in managerial and professional jobs. When the Australian Standard of Classification of Occupation categories are disaggregated into three different groups as low skilled (machinery operators, drivers and labourers), medium skilled (technicians and trade workers, community,

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<sup>14</sup> The Australian Standard of Classification of Occupation uses nine broad categories of occupation in Australia. Every single category has been divided into sub-categories and sub-sub-categories up to a fourth digit for the census data collection. This classification identifies the occupations that South Asian-born people are involved in, either on a full-time or part-time basis.

and personal service workers and sales workers) and high skilled (managers, and professionals), the proportion of South Asian-born migrants in high skilled occupations is higher by more than 7 per cent compared with the proportion of native-born counterparts in the same categories.

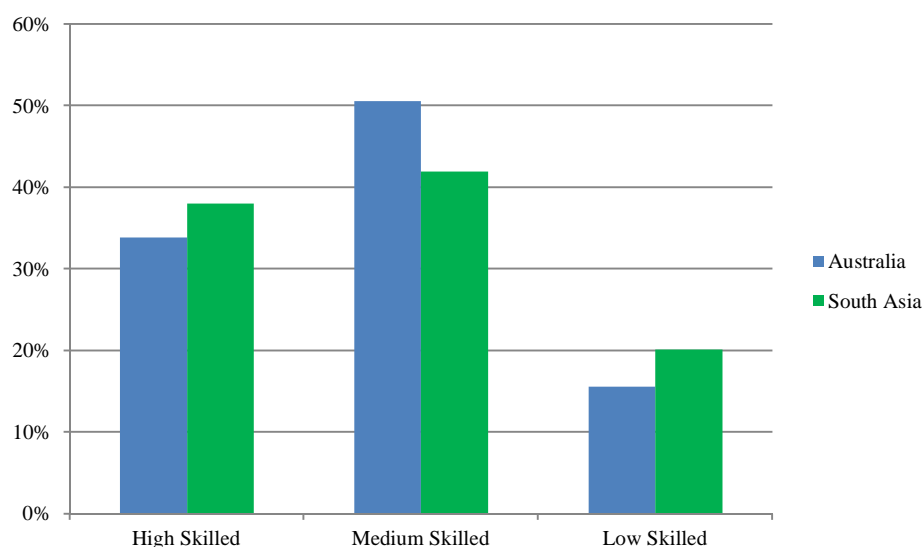
Various underlying factors may contribute to the occupational differences between Australian-born and South Asian-born populations. First, it may be due to age groups. The South Asian migrants show a significantly higher proportion of men and women in the economically active age groups (15–24). Second, a higher proportion of South Asian-born women and men have university level education compared to their Australian-born counterparts.

**Table 18: Comparison of South Asian-born and Australian-born Population's Occupational Structures**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b><u>Australian</u></b>		<b><u>South Asian</u></b>	
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Per cent</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
Managers	940,518	13	26,512	9
Professionals	1,440,391	20	83,640	29
Technicians and Trades Workers	1,035,127	15	31,153	11
Community and Personal Service Workers	700,806	10	27,834	10
Clerical and Administrative Workers	1,089,160	15	38,437	13
Sales Workers	726,766	10	24,108	8
Machinery Operators and Drivers	460,385	7	23,358	8
Labourers	634,085	9	34,921	12
Total	7,027,238	100	289,963	100

(ABS, 2011)

**Chart 1: Comparison of South Asian-born and Australian-born Population's Occupational Structures**



(ABS, 2011)

Although the occupational profile of the South Asian migrant population is comparatively strong, with a larger proportion of South Asian-born people in higher skilled occupations compared with Australian-born counterparts, the occupational attainments of people from each country failed to match the overall profile. The South Asian migrants can be categorised into two distinct groups based on patterns of occupational attainment in Australia. Migrants from India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka form one group, while migrants from Bangladesh and Nepal constitute a separate group. The former group achieved greater representation in the highly skilled occupations, such as, managers, administrators, professionals and associate professionals. For migrants from the second group, the category of 'labourers' emerges as more salient. (See Table 19).

**Table 19: South Asian-born Populations and their Occupational Structures in Australia:  
Country Specific**

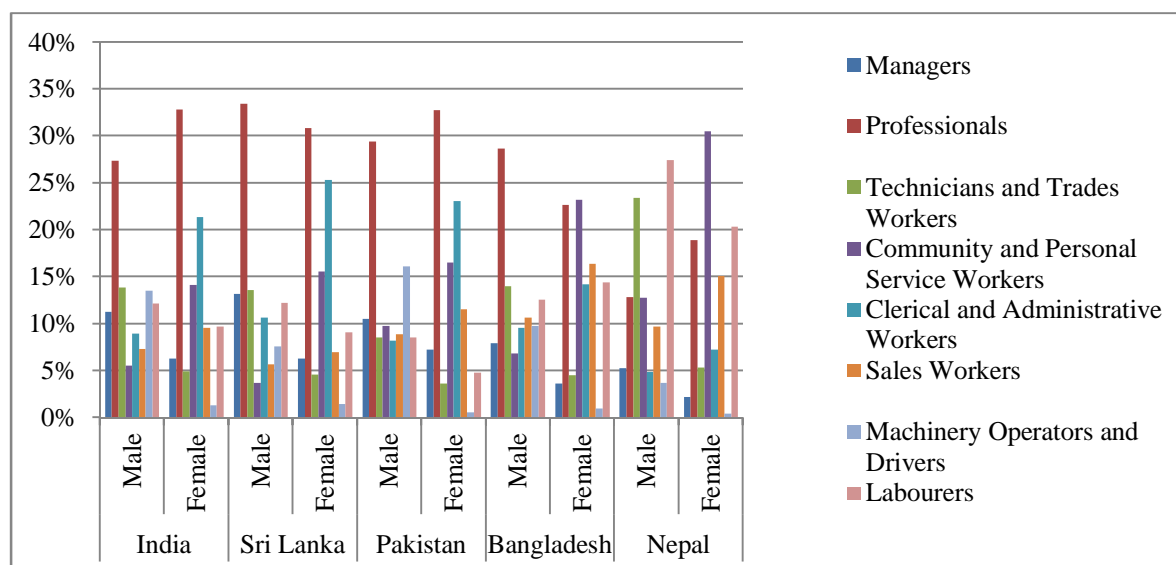
Occupation	Country of Birth									
	<u>India</u>		<u>Sri Lanka</u>		<u>Pakistan</u>		<u>Bangladesh</u>		<u>Nepal</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Managers	17,856	9	5,353	10	1,406	10	1,122	7	738	4
Professionals	55,111	29	16,855	32	4,323	30	4,506	267	2,729	15
Technicians and Trades Workers	20,050	11	5,114	10	1,075	7	1,887	11	2,988	17
Community and Personal Service Workers	16,150	9	4,514	9	1,610	11	1,930	11	3,512	19
Clerical and Admin. Workers	25,130	13	8,763	17	1,637	11	1,821	11	1,037	6
Sales Workers	15,299	8	3,244	6	1,354	9	2,061	12	2,121	12
Machinery Operators and Drivers	17,250	9	2,599	5	1,823	13	1,212	7	447	2
Labourers	21,225	11	5,680	11	1,108	8	2,190	13	4,465	25
Total	188,071	100	52,122	100	14,336	100	16,729	100	18,037	100

(ABS, 2011)

Chart 2, which details gender segregated data on occupational attainments, shows that in 2011 twice as many South Asian-born men as South Asian-born women were working as managers and administrators. South Asian-born women were more likely to be found working in jobs such as intermediate clerical, sales, and service workers. However, in the professional category, the numbers of South Asian-born men and women were similar. In the labourers and related workers category, somewhat surprisingly there are twice as many South Asian-born men as South Asian-born women. Occupations such as technicians and trade workers and machinery operator and drivers were dominated by South Asian-born men whereas occupations such as community and personal service workers and clerical and administrative workers were more prominent among South Asian-born women.



**Chart 2: Gender Segregated Occupational Attainments of South Asian-born Migrants in Australia**



(ABS, 2011)

When comparing the occupational attainments in Australia of South Asian-born and Australian-born men and women, the data reveal a promising occupational profile of the South Asian-born peoples. Approximately 30 per cent of South Asian-born men and women have pursued professional careers whereas in the same category, Australian-born men and women account for only 15 and 23 per cent respectively. The percentages of Australian-born women and South Asian-born women in all of the occupational categories are similar with the exception of the top level manager and administrator category, where there are twice as many Australian-born women as South Asian-born women (See Table 20).

**Table 20: Comparison of Occupational Attainments of South Asian-born and Australian-born Populations in Australia by Gender**

Occupations	<u>Australian (%)</u>		<u>South Asian (%)</u>	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Managers	16	10	11	6
Professionals	17	24	28	31
Technicians and Trades Workers	24	4	14	5
Community and Personal Service Workers	6	15	6	16
Clerical and Administrative Workers	7	25	9	21
Sales Workers	7	14	8	10
Machinery Operators and Drivers	11	1	12	1
Labourers	12	6	13	10
Total	100	100	100	100

(ABS, 2011)

But the labour force participation data also shows that a significant percentage of South Asian migrants in Australia are not in the labour force at all (24%). The numbers increase if one includes the unemployed, and those who were looking for either full-time or part-time jobs at the time the census data were collected. Including these additional categories increases the number of unemployed South Asian migrants to 30 per cent (126,187 out of 429,246) of the South Asian migrant's labour market (ABS, 2011).

The data for New South Wales are quite consistent with the national data. The number of South Asian-born peoples recorded as out of the labour market in NSW is as high as 30 per cent (45,036 of 151,131) labour force participants (ABS, 2011).

The gender-segregated data reveal that in excess of 40 per cent of South Asian-born and Australian-born women are not in the Australian labour force. Whereas the proportion of Australian-born and South Asian-born men in the same category are 27 and 17 per cent respectively. The comparative lack of labour force participation of women, whether they were born in Australia or in South Asia, raises certain larger concerns about women's economic strength in this society. Considering the similarities in both groups, many of the issues that I will discuss in the thesis will apply to Australian-born women as well. Issues of marriage and maternity loom large in the lives of Australian-born women, of Anglo-Australian heritage

as much as for women from South Asia. These are not exotic issues that can be quarantined as pertaining to culturally and linguistically diverse women, or those from non-English speaking backgrounds. But I am leaving that comparative task to others for future research. In this thesis I will concentrate on women born in South Asia. In NSW alone 29,000 South Asian-born women are either unemployed or not in the labour force (ABS, 2011). Even though the educational profiles of all of the South Asian-born migrants – both men and women – show that they have higher academic qualifications than their Australian-born counterparts, their labour force participation in the Australian labour market does not translate these qualifications into workforce status.

**Table 21: Labour Force Participation of South Asian-born Populations by Gender (Full-time and Part-time)**

Country of Birth	<u>Men</u>		<u>Women</u>	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
India	124,041	76	68,622	52
Sri Lanka	30,983	70	22,234	53
Pakistan	11,511	65	3,197	26
Bangladesh	12,194	76	4,911	41
Nepal	11,508	79	6,988	69

(ABS, 2011)

Table 21 shows that more than 70 per cent of male migrants from South Asian countries of origin were either in full-time or part-time work. However, the figures for the South Asian migrant women's labour force participation were inconsistent to say the least. Among migrants from Nepal, for example, the labour force participation rate for women was as high as 69 per cent, whereas in the case of female migrants from Pakistan, only 26 per cent were employed in the labour market (ABS, 2011).

**Table 22: Labour Force Participation of South Asian-born and Australian-born Peoples by Gender**

Labour Force Participation	Australian (%)		South Asian (%)	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Employed, worked full-time	52	28	57	30
Employed, worked part-time	12	27	21	23
Employed, away from work	4	4	4	4
Unemployed, looking for full-time work	3	1	3	4
Unemployed, looking for part-time work	1	2	2	3
Not in the labour force	27	38	15	37
Total	100	100	100	100

(ABS, 2011)

Therefore, in terms of labour market participation, irrespective of whether they work in skilled or unskilled jobs, significant numbers of South Asian-born women were out of the labour force at the time of the 2011 census. Female migrants from Pakistan were the least represented in labour force participation statistics among the five South Asian countries of origin. The demographic data related to the labour market participation of South Asian-born women in Australia raises significant questions for a thesis on migration. What are the main challenges that immigrant women from South Asia face when looking for jobs in the Australian labour market? Are they doing work that they were trained for academically? Is there devaluation of their foreign earned qualifications and work experience by the Australian labour market? Or, is there some broader issue that should be addressed? Should enquiry be limited only to the relation between education and employment?

## **Income Structure of South Asian-born Peoples in Australia**

The economic contribution of immigrants has been well explored by migration studies scholars. Several studies have compared the earnings of immigrants and the native-born have reached a similar conclusion, which is that immigrants tend to earn less compared with the native-born. Li (2003), for example, who analysed the initial earnings and 'catch-up' capacity of immigrants in the Canadian labour market, found that recent immigrants to Canada earned less than earlier arrivals compared to the earnings of the Canadian-born in their initial year of

migration. Li further claims recent immigrants with higher educational levels caught up with their Canadian-born counterparts faster than the earlier arrivals in economic terms. The catch up rate was slower among Asian migrants than among migrants from Europe and the UK (Li, 2003). Moore and Pacey (2003) note that the income disparities between native-born Canadians and immigrants, regardless of country of origin, have widened in recent years. They further claim that recent immigrants have faced more difficulty finding jobs and note a downward trend in earnings paralleling the decline in employment opportunities (Moore & Pacey, 2003, p. 34).

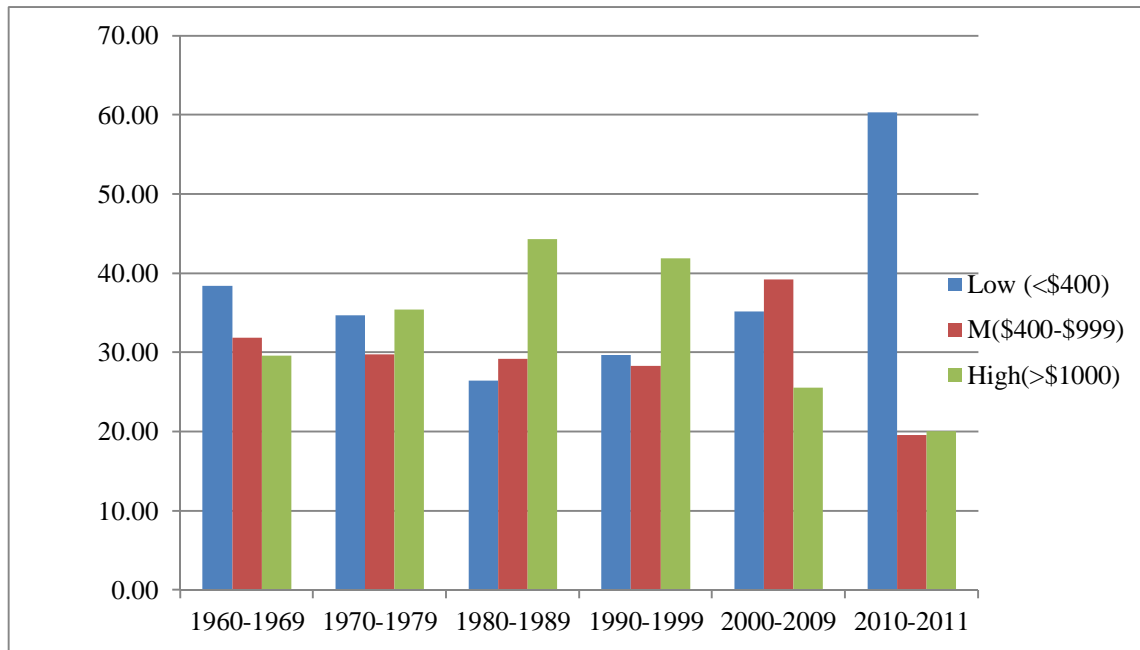
South Asian migrants in Australia have a higher proportion of positions in the higher-income occupational category compared to Australian-born people (See Table 23). However, the level of income according to the year of arrival of South Asian migrants shows that recently arrived South Asian migrants were twice as likely to be represented in low income categories (less than \$400 per week) than migrants who arrived during the 1980s and 1990s (See Chart 3).

**Table 23: Percentage Distributions of Incomes of Australian-born and South Asian-born Peoples in Australia**

<b>Income per week (annual)</b>	<b>Australian (%)</b>	<b>South Asian (%)</b>
Negative income	1	1
Nil income	7	14
\$1-\$199 (\$1-\$10,399)	9	6
\$200-\$299 (\$10,400-\$15,599)	10	7
\$300-\$399 (\$15,600-\$20,799)	11	8
\$400-\$599 (\$20,800-\$31,199)	13	12
\$600-\$799 (\$31,200-\$41,599)	12	12
\$800-\$999 (\$41,600-\$51,999)	9	10
\$1,000-\$1,249 (\$52,000-\$64,999)	9	9
\$1,250-\$1,499 (\$65,000-\$77,999)	6	6
\$1,500-\$1,999 (\$78,000-\$103,999)	7	7
\$2,000 or more (\$104,000 or more)	7	67

(ABS, 2011)

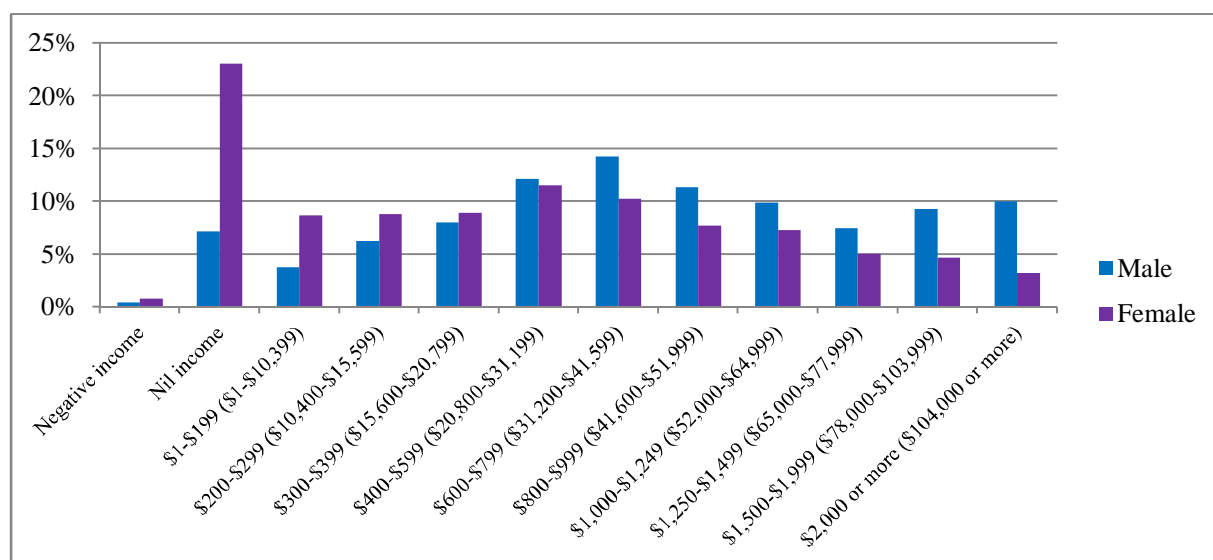
**Chart 3: Weekly Incomes of South Asian-born Migrants in Australia, by year of arrival**



(ABS, 2011)

The proportion of South Asian-born men (74 per cent) with incomes greater than \$400 per week is considerably larger than the proportion of South Asian-born women (49 per cent) (See Chart 4). Even more stark is the contrast between South Asian-born women and Australian-born women. The proportion of South Asian-born women (23 per cent) with no income is significantly higher than the proportion of Australian-born women (7 per cent) (See Chart 4). Considering the high level of educational backgrounds of the South Asian-born women, more than 50 per cent had either no income or a low income (\$400 per week); these figures present their economic situation as particularly stark.

**Chart 4: Weekly Incomes of South Asian-born Peoples in Australia by Gender**



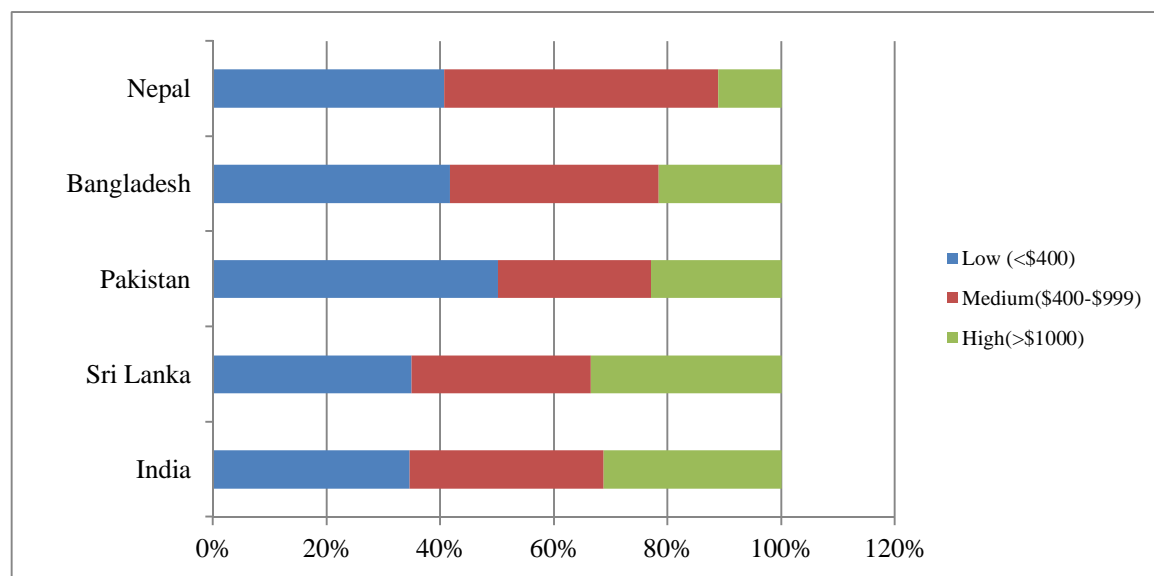
ABS, 2011

**Table 24: Comparison of Level of Income between Australian-born and South Asian-born women in Australia**

Weekly Income (annual)	Australian (%)	South Asian (%)
Negative income	0.5	0.8
Nil income	8	23
\$1-\$199 (\$1-\$10,399)	11	9
\$200-\$299 (\$10,400-\$15,599)	12	9
\$300-\$399 (\$15,600-\$20,799)	13	9
\$400-\$599 (\$20,800-\$31,199)	16	11
\$600-\$799 (\$31,200-\$41,599)	12	10
\$800-\$999 (\$41,600-\$51,999)	8	8
\$1,000-\$1,249 (\$52,000-\$64,999)	7	7
\$1,250-\$1,499 (\$65,000-\$77,999)	5	5
\$1,500-\$1,999 (\$78,000-\$103,999)	5	5
\$2,000 or more (\$104,000 or more)	3	3

(ABS, 2011)

**Chart 5: Weekly Incomes of South Asian-born Migrants by Country of Origin**



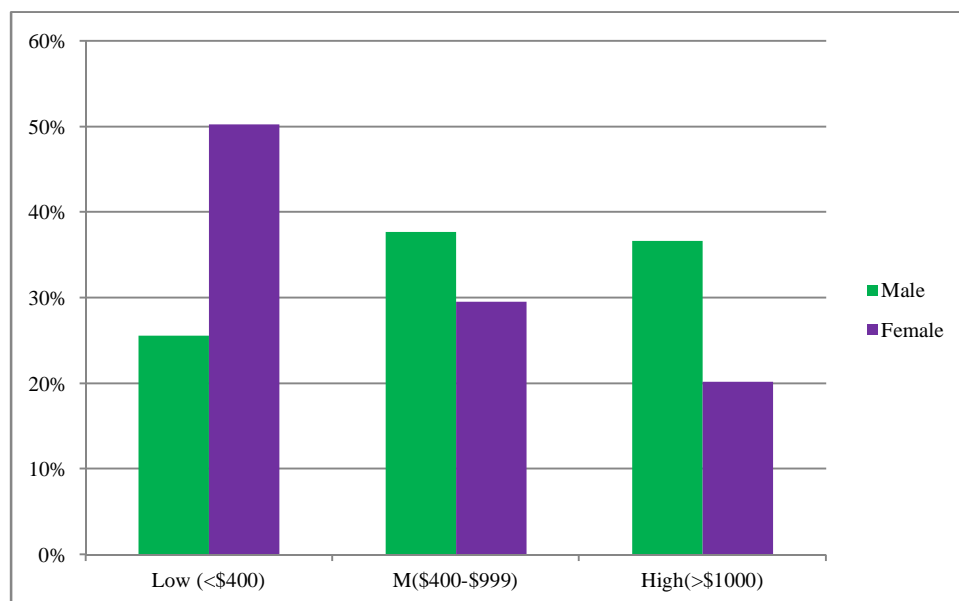
(ABS, 2011)

When comparing the income data for migrants from all five South Asian countries of origin, migrants from India and Sri Lanka shows higher representation in the high income cohort. The share of the Indian and Sri Lankan migrants in the income level above \$1000 per week is almost double that of migrants from other South Asian countries (See Chart 5, and see also Appendix 5).

When comparing the levels of income of South Asian-born men and women in Australia, Chart 6 shows that 50 per cent of South Asian-born females are in the low income category.

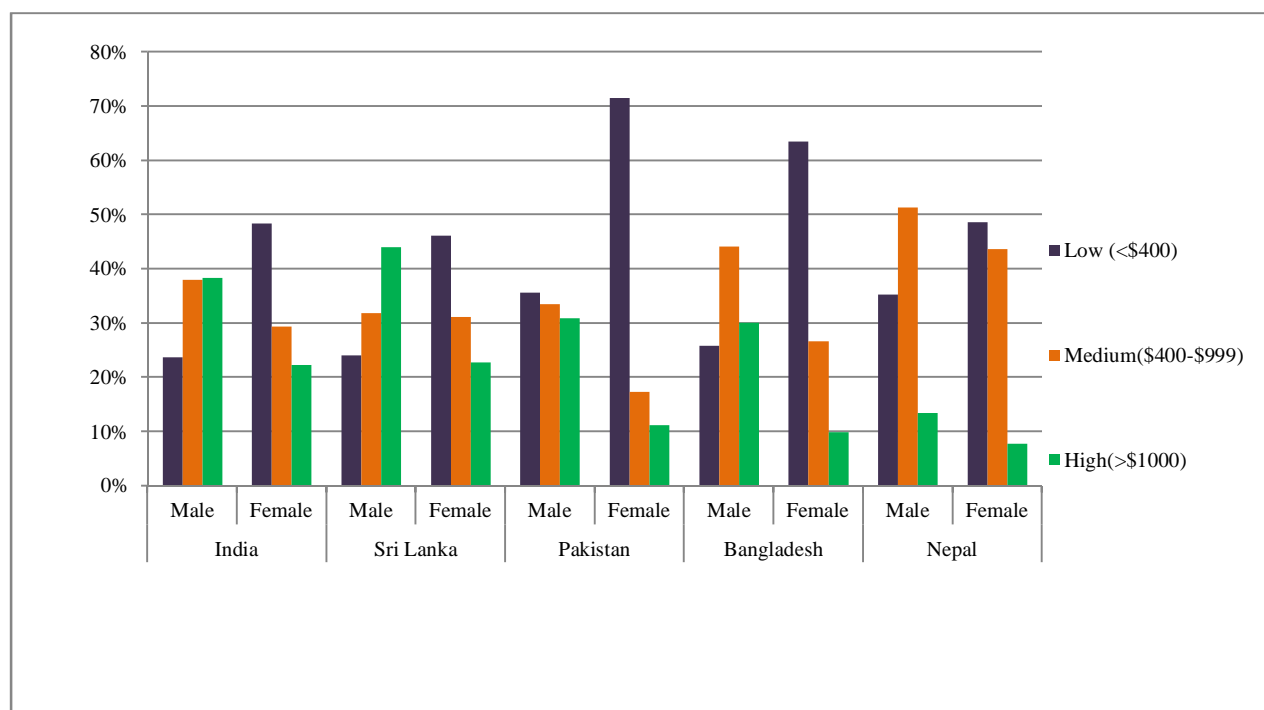


**Chart 6: Weekly Incomes of South Asian-born Peoples in Australia, by Gender**



(ABS, 2011)

**Chart 7: Weekly Incomes of South Asian-born Peoples in Australia, by Country of Origin, and by Gender**



(ABS, 2011)

Similar to Chart 6, Chart 7 (see also Appendices 6 and 7) shows that among South Asian female migrants, a larger proportion of those from Bangladesh and Pakistan are included in

the low income category. Thus, the income data clearly shows that although the overall statistics of South Asian immigrants' labour force participation is high compared to the Australian-born population, each individual country of origin has a different profile, and income varies across gender. Women from the given five different South Asian countries of origin are more economically disadvantaged than their male counterparts. In particular, female migrants from Bangladesh, and Pakistan are especially over-represented in the low income bracket.

\* \* \*

South Asian migration has been a part of Australia's history over the last two centuries. However, the last few decades have seen a dramatic escalation of South Asian migration to Australia. The abolition of the White Australia policy, the transformation of South Asian countries into independent and sovereign states, and the easing of communication and international travel have all contributed to the recent mass migration of South Asian-born peoples to Australia. After being restricted in numbers for much of the twentieth century, today South Asian migrants comprise a substantial portion of Australia's migration intake. Now among the prominent sections of the Australian community, South Asian migrants have significantly enhanced the cultural diversity of Australia's major cities, especially Sydney.

The process that started with indentured manual labourers and trading ship crews was eventually followed by the migration of highly skilled professionals, and students seeking further education in Australia's universities. As relatively recent arrivals, South Asian migrants tend to be well-qualified, highly professional achievers, with a strong history of labour force participation. A substantial proportion of South Asian migrants are included in the economically active age group in Australia. For this reason, South Asian migrant communities reflect the policy trends of successive Australian governments which have

tightened the country's migration policy over the last few decades, the aim being to encourage the migration of skilled and economically active people into the country.

However, South Asian migrants are not a homogenous group, as evident in their overall demographic profile. Unlike the previous wave of South Asian migrants, those who migrated in the 1970s and 1980s as government officials or on skills based migration visas with pre-secured jobs, recent arrivals are more in the stream of family migration and student migration. Earlier migrants were residentially scattered, with some living in affluent mixed culture neighbourhoods. The more recently arrived South Asian migrant communities, in contrast, tend to be residentially concentrated. In Sydney, South Asian migrants are concentrated in less affluent suburbs where they have created their own ethnic enclaves. Their modes of entry and their patterns of geographical settlement partly reflect their different levels of economic resources.

The data show that migrating to Australia has different effects on the socio-economic status of men and women. Women from all South Asian countries of origin are more economically disadvantaged than their male counterparts. While the overall educational attainments, occupational attainments, and income profiles of South Asian immigrants to Australia are high, women migrants from South Asia are less represented in the highly paid occupations despite their well-qualified academic backgrounds. More than 50 per cent of South Asian-born women have little income or no income of their own. This discrepancy is more acute among women immigrants from Pakistan and Bangladesh.

This chapter has provided a historical, demographic, geographical and socio-economic profile of South Asian migrants in Australia, a context within which an understanding of the settlement experiences of women migrants from South Asia has been gained. But it also raises important questions. These questions arise when expectations we have are not corroborated. Based on their educational and professional qualifications, we would expect to see South Asian women as well represented as their male counterparts and even better represented than

their female Australian-born counterparts, in the higher skilled occupations, earning higher incomes. Yet none of these expectations is fulfilled.

How are we to understand this discrepancy? What are the main challenges that immigrant women from South Asia are finding while looking for jobs in the Australian labour market? Are they doing what they were trained for academically? Is there devaluation of their foreign earned qualification and work experiences in Australian labour market? Or, do we need to consider factors that cannot be contained exclusively within the relationship between education and employment? What can the narratives and experiences of South Asian women in Sydney tell us that cannot be understood by looking at relations between education and employment, even if that is what we wish to explain?

In the rest of the thesis, I turned to in-depth qualitative research findings to explore the different ways in which gender mediates the relationship between education and employment. For this we need to consider gender as it shapes women's lives not just as 'migrants' or as 'workers' but in their totality.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Labour Market Experiences of South Asian Women in Sydney**

#### **Introduction**

I met Gita at a friend's party when I first arrived in Sydney in 2008. She had heard that I was on a bridging visa and approached me, intent on knowing my plans over the next two years. Such conversations were frequent at gatherings in the Nepali community. If people knew that someone had recently arrived in Australia, as part of an initial conversation, they would often ask numerous questions related to the person's visa status, educational background, previous occupation, and her or his plans for life in Australia. More specifically, in the case where the person had been issued a spouse visa or entered as newly married, people would initiate the conversation by asking questions related to the new migrant's field of study. Occasionally more established residents would share their own experiences of initial job searching in the Australian workforce. For me, Gita's initial curiosity provided an opportunity to draw close to her over the years. In time, we became friends. She also became one of my important sources of insight into my research.

Gita came to Australia in 2008 on a dependent spouse visa. The highest level of qualification she had attained at the time of her migration to Australia was a Master's in Sociology from Nepal. Prior to leaving Nepal, she worked on a health-related project as project manager. She spoke with passion of her achievements in Nepal. When I asked Gita about her expectations when she migrated to Australia, she said:

People like me have been successful in a career, in a country like ours where opportunities are limited ... I thought in a developed country like Australia, I would get better opportunities and would do much better than what I managed to do in Nepal. But because of my visa sub-class, all the doors were blocked for me at least for my initial two years. For two years I was on temporary bridging visa status. Under that visa, there were limited options available for me to further my education. I could neither apply for any government funding, nor was I eligible for any international scholarship. However, my visa allowed me to do full-time work. To apply for jobs, there was no problem.

I applied for many professional jobs in public health sector. But I didn't get any professional jobs. In some places they rejected me for not being a citizen, in other places I was rejected for not having an Australian experience. Although my former qualification was recognized, in some places I was rejected for being over qualified. At one place, I was even rejected for not having an Australian driving licence. (Gita, Interview, 2013)

Gita's problems are a preliminary indication of why labour force participation for South Asian-born women in Australia is low despite their high educational backgrounds. Her bridging visa initially determined what she could and could not do in Australia. In effect, it signalled the beginning of her removal from the Australian workforce. Since then, while Gita has made many attempts to get back into the workforce, she remains peripheral.

As I have shown in Chapter 2, South Asian-born women, like their male counterparts, are highly qualified in Australia. Education statistics of South Asian-born women in Australia, like Gita, show 26 per cent of total South Asian-born women with any tertiary level of qualifications have postgraduate levels of qualification and in excess of 45 per cent of them possess a bachelor's level of qualification. However, when such high levels of qualification are compared with labour force participation statistics, the results do not corroborate. Instead, despite their well-qualified academic backgrounds, labour market performance statistics show that a significant number of South Asian-born women are more economically disadvantaged than their male counterparts. The income statistics show that more than 20 per cent of South Asian-born women have no income of their own whereas under the same category the proportion of South Asian-born men is comparatively low (7 per cent). The discrepancies that emerged between South Asian-born women and men, particularly while corroborating their labour force status with their educational and professional qualifications, led me to question in just what ways gender was working to marginalise women. Many dimensions of gender are far more subtle than overt forms of discrimination, yet they have everything to do with the gender of the individual.

In this chapter, I seek to untangle some of these hidden dimensions of gender, migration and labour force participation. Gender can often sound like a static set of attributes. Instead, I seek to explore these dimensions not only as they come together, but also as they intersect at a particular moment in time. I argue that migration constitutes a combination of events where the structures of the host society and of the migrant's country of origin come together at a particular moment in time. Here I find useful the concept of 'conjuncture', which I take both from the writings of Bourdieu (1977) and from its earlier usage in the post-structuralist readings of Marx (Althusser, 1971) where it emphasises the uniqueness of specific intersections of historical forces (see also Connell, 1979). For the purposes of this thesis, Bourdieu's use of the term which has been adapted for the social sciences, will be taken up. Bourdieu uses the term 'situation' with the same meaning as conjuncture in earlier Marxist writing. In both cases, the focus is on the context of action in the present and the way the context shapes agency and outcomes. Irrespective of whether one calls it situation or conjuncture what I wish to concentrate on is the configuration that arises at a particular moment in the intersection between particular sets of policies, particular sets of economic drivers, and particular sets of cultural practices in the lives of individuals. The meeting point of all these different forces shapes individuals' decision-making processes at a particular point in time. Bourdieu alludes to this as the field of what is possible in terms of action.

An example is provided in the analysis by Marshall Sahlins in his book *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities* (1995). Sahlins analyses the structures underlying a conjuncture by focusing on the arrival of Captain Cook on the island of Kaudai in 1778. His analysis links Cook's arrival with his murder by the indigenous Hawaiians the following year. But Cook's killing was not simply an outcome of the interaction between the cultural expectations of the British and of Hawaiian society. The death was, in part, determined by the specific timing of Cook's arrival and the fact that he returned once too often. The first time Cook arrived, he was identified with the god Lono. A series of coincidences between the time of his arrival and the Hawaiians' own religious traditions of *Makahiki* led to the belief that Cook was a form of

Lono. But when he returned to Kaudai a second time, Cook had (albeit unintentionally) re-enacted the ritual of the 'dying god' Lono. In the Hawaiians ritual of *Makahiki*, the god Lono returns, only to be killed following a confrontation with the king. Following the killing, the islanders returned Cook's body to the English explorers, and asked them to 'tell him to come back soon'. The British explorers assumed that the Hawaiians murdered Cook because he had accidentally offended their feelings regarding taboo.

Sahlins argues that in order to understand individual practices, one must first trace the relationships between different structures, of which the individual is one part: in the case of Cook, between European maritime practices and Hawaiian cosmology, or in the case of migrants, between workforce structures in Australia and educational institutions in their countries of origin. But his analysis further suggests that at a particular moment, when these cultural practices, expectations and meanings interact, the conjuncture is also entirely novel and new.

The relationship generated in practical action, although motivated by the traditional self-conceptions of the actors, may in fact functionally revalue those conceptions. Nothing guarantees that the situations encountered in practice will stereotypically follow from the cultural categories by which the circumstances are interpreted and acted upon. Practice, rather, has its own dynamics - a "structure of conjuncture"- which meaningfully defines the persons and the objects that are parties to it. And these contextual values, if unlike the definitions culturally presupposed, have the capacity then of working back on the conventional values. (Sahlins, 1995, p. 35)

Sahlin's complex argument can be applied to explore the low labour-force participation of South Asian-born women in Australia. Like the killing of Cook, leaving the labour force can appear to be a spontaneous choice. But that spontaneous choice is shaped by the meeting of various institutional forces that I will address sequentially in this chapter. They include the explicit immigration policies of the Australian Government as well as biases in the sending countries, particularly the gender bias in the way women's education is regarded in South Asia. Yet others are concerned with demographic patterns in immigrant communities,



specifically the effects of gendered patterns of migration, and migrants' use of English, as well as the way that South Asian accents are perceived by native-born Australians.

At the same time, none of these forces suffice as explanation. We must consider the precise timing of migration. I return to the question of timing in the maternity chapter (Chapter 5). While ideally it should be possible to deal simultaneously with the longer histories that feed into a conjuncture at the same time as setting out the conjuncture itself, in practice it is difficult to show all of these elements at the same moment when writing an account. I have, therefore, set out some of the longer histories of Australian recruitment policies, the way these seem to differentiate between men and women's visa status, as well as some of the gender biases that work at the South Asian end of the migratory story. I tell these histories in a fairly linear fashion in this chapter and the next, before returning to the question of timing and intersection in specific women's lives.

### **Skilled Migration and Gender: Biases in the Definition of Skill and Implications for Women as Migrants**

As of 2014, skilled migration accounted for more than 70 per cent of Australia's total migration intake, compared to 30 per cent two decades earlier (Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2014). Migrants from South Asia constitute the major portion of Australia's pool of skilled migrants. Castle and Miller (2009) note that while India and Sri Lanka number among the top 10 countries of origin for migrants, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal also contribute sizable numbers. A recent report on migration submitted by National Affairs in Australia showed that as of 2011–2012, India was listed as the top source country for skilled migrants, eclipsing both China and the UK (Lane, 2012).

Australia's migration programmes have been selectively based on skills since the 1970s (Cully, 2011). The country's growing emphasis on skilled migration may be attributed to: (1) the increasing aged populations, and (2) the urgency of competing in the global economy.

Australia is thus seeking young, highly-skilled workers to fill the population gap in its labour force and to increase the general stock of the country's human capital.

The term 'skill' implies outstanding abilities that will benefit the Australian economy.

'Skilled migrants' are those who have qualifications and attributes that can fill the specific skill shortages and enhance the size and expertise of the Australian labour force (Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2014). Under Australia's skilled immigration policies, in order to be eligible to migrate to Australia, applicants must meet threshold requirements of attributes and capabilities. For example, in order to be eligible for skilled migration to Australia, an applicant must be recognized as competent to meet Australian work standards for defined occupations.

Skilled migration to Australia is characterized as a 'hybrid system' that is, it 'combines ideas drawn from a points system with other more demand-driven and employer-led methods of selection' (Papademetriou, et al., 2008, p. 3). Australian migration also uses multiple avenues of recruitment simultaneously – points test, direct recruitment by employers, and direct recruitment of foreign students by universities.

Traditionally, skilled migrants were selected entirely on the basis of the migrant's qualifications and work experience rather than, for example, being sponsored by Australian employers. According to Cully (2011, pp. 2-3), Australia had 'a supply-drive' migration policy: skilled migrants were granted permanent residency as long as they met the requirements of the government-administered points test. Points were awarded to immigrants based on certain observable characteristics such as age, language, education and occupation (Miller, 1999, pp. 193-196; Antecol et al., 2003, p. 194).

Since the 1990s, a policy shift has oriented government requirements more towards 'demand-driven' migration, a policy that operates in two different ways (Cully, 2001, p. 2). First, the points test places greater emphasis on desirable independent applicants who possess valuable skills, qualifications or abilities that are in high demand in the Australian labour market.

Second, it gave power to employers: they could sponsor migrants and arrange for them to receive either permanent or temporary visas (Cully, 2011). Velayutham (2013) notes that in recent years, especially from the mid-1990s on, temporary skilled migration has overtaken permanent skilled migration in Australia. Once again, South Asian countries (India in particular) are the largest and fastest growing source of temporary skilled migrants (Velayutham, 2013, p. 342).

Skilled migration has proven critical to supporting economic development and sustaining Australia's labour market needs (ACCI, 2006; Collins, 2008; Productivity Commission, 2006). In the years preceding 2009, skilled migration required prospective applicants to nominate an occupation on a defined list before they lodged an application for skilled migration. The Australian Immigration Department used two occupation lists: the Shortage Occupation List (SOL) and a Migration Occupations Demand List (MODL) (the latter a subsection of SOL), when selecting immigrants. At the time, both lists included occupations that were in demand in the Australian labour market.

Australia used a point system to prioritize skilled migrants who offered the best in terms of economic benefit. As I have mentioned earlier, under this system, points were awarded for human capital factors such as, age, English language ability, employment experience, and qualifications. Prospective migrants, who were able to secure a pass mark in the points system were granted visas within government limits on the total number of migrants (see Miller, 1999, pp. 193-196 for the detail information). If their skills and qualifications met the requirements of the jobs listed on the MODL, migrants earned bonus points equivalent to one-fifth of the points total required to pass (Papademetriou, et al., 2008).

From 2009 onwards, however, the government initiated a series of reforms to the skilled migration programme (Cully, 2011). Since the number of occupations on the MODL list had reached in excess of four hundred, the list no longer served the purpose of selecting migrants with specific skills and qualification that were in demand in the labour market. International

students had numerous means through which they could apply for permanent residency. For example, they could apply while enrolled in a course which would qualify them for an occupation listed on the MODL. A review of the MODL, however, revealed that the list was not an efficient tool for assisting employers to alleviate skill shortages (Cully, 2011).

In 2010, the MODL was revoked and, with it, the provisions of bonus points for skills in the test for visa suitability (Cully, 2011). The Australian Government re-directed its focus towards the area of specialised skills when issuing migration rights. As a result, the occupation lists for skilled migration became more specific and shortened from more than 400 to 191 on the current list (Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency, 2015).

The continuing emphasis placed on skills as an important criterion of selectivity for immigration by the Australian Government, although appearing to be gender neutral, in practice, skilled migration policies have worked as a gendered process (Kofman & Raghuram, 2005; Purkayastha, 2005; Cobb-Clark, 2003). Kofman and Raghuram (2005) argue that in this globalising world where demand for scientific and technological professions is high, by defining highly skilled as those who had proven experiences in these professions, the skills required for other sectors such as teaching and nursing, work that is primarily conceptualized as women's work, have been deemed into semi-skilled or less skilled and accordingly devalued in the migration process. The gendered nature of the selection criteria for skilled immigration thus limits women's ability to migrate as independent migrants.

Demographically, international migration to Australia is a gendered phenomenon. The majority of women migrants enter Australia on dependent visas; that is, as wives and fiancées (Iredale, 2005; Cobb-Clark & Connolly, 2001; Cobb-Clark, 2003). A gendered pattern of migration was evident among my respondents as well. A minority of women migrated as primary applicants on student visas. More than 65 per cent of the women I interviewed migrated as dependents of spouses who in turn had secured visas as skilled primary applicants. The skills that are privileged in the application process more often

characteristically represent male skills in their South Asian countries of origin – a subject I explore further later in this chapter. Among my respondents, the primary applicants possessed professional skills considered by the government to be in demand; for example, in information technology, accounting, engineering and business services. As a result of educational bias in their countries of origin itself, women typically find it easier to migrate in compliance with the family-oriented selection criteria rather than independently in the skills category.

**Table 25: Migration Stream for Respondents**

Visa Category Stream	<u>Respondents</u>	
	Number	Per cent
Independent Primary applicant	12	30
Dependent Applicant	27	67
Not applicable	1	2
Total	40	100

The entry criteria for skilled migration are set on the basis of a principal applicant. ‘Principal applicants’ include those migrants who apply for immigration and to whom approval for immigration is granted. The selection criteria have almost no provision for the attributes of any dependents, except for the fact that based on one’s dependent’s qualification, a principal applicant may be awarded some additional points. As Cully (2011) says, migrants entering as partners only go through a self-selection process; as long as the authorities are assured of a genuine relationship between an applicant and a proposed partner, a visa granted to the principal applicant will also be extended to the partner. The fact that women migrants are disproportionately likely to enter as ‘accompanying’, a category for which no selection criteria apply, prompted Cobb-Clark (2003, p. 658) to write that ‘Australia’s point test is generally used to select male rather than female immigrants’.

Thus, the attributes of a migrant seeking to enter as a principal applicant under the skilled migration programme may be systematically different from those who enter as dependents. The dependents' attributes, such as qualifications and occupations, are not subject to the state-selection process where entry may be curtailed by the Australian immigration authorities in line with the country's skills requirements. As a result, dependents skills and qualifications may not have any particular economic significance for the Australian labour market. In many instances, the skills and occupations of the applicant's partner are not even recorded because the authorities consider them irrelevant (Iredale, 2005). Hence, the criteria set by Australia's skilled migration scheme, and the arrival sequence are likely to make a difference to the labour market experiences of skilled migrants and their dependent spouses.

In this section, I have attempted to establish why it should be the case that women who arrive from South Asia may have qualifications and skills, yet have not been through a process that gives them the same assurance of finding a job in Australia as their male partners who have been processed as principal applicants. In the next section, I explore the attitude towards women's education and career development in their countries of origin and how it may disadvantage women from South Asia who seek employment in the host country labour market after migration.

## **Gender Bias in Pre-Migration Education and Training**

The ability of women to migrate under skilled migration schemes depends on the form and quality of education and training they receive in their countries of origin. As in the majority of the world's countries, in South Asia the socio-cultural practices that determine men's and women's levels of education are gendered. Although in some instances gender parity has been achieved in school enrolment, numerous forms of exclusionary practices continue to exist towards girls and women in South Asian countries as well as subtle ways of shepherding women into particular courses of study. When choosing from among different fields of study at secondary and tertiary levels, a girl is frequently discouraged by her family from pursuing

education that leads to a better-paying career in the future, for example, in technical fields (Chitrakar, 2009). The intensity of discrimination varies between rural and urban areas, and amongst different social classes. Even in South Asia's cities, upper socio-economic-status women who are equipped to enter the workforce, are more likely to enrol in arts, human studies, social sciences and pure science rather than in engineering and technology. The very attitude with which South Asian women engage with education is also shaped by the gender specific expectations placed on women in relation to marriage and maternity, a topic I explore in subsequent chapters. As a result of the above gender-driven inhibitors, women study with very different expectations. Shabib-ul-Hasan and Mustafa, two sociologists, describe the attitude towards women's professional education in Pakistan as follows:

Women in Pakistan are generally submissive and are usually not career oriented, so they go for a rather easy job which does not involve a long term learning process. Most of the time, seeking education is only for the sake of education and not for the sake of pursuing a career in that field. Cultural norms treat women as a fragile commodity which cannot face the hardship and, therefore, should seek such education which should be easy and does not require a laborious job. Women are mostly interested in fields like Fine Arts, Literature, and Mass Communication. (Shabib-ul-Hasan & Mustafa, 2014, p. 3)

Similar attitudes came through clearly in my interviews, particularly with women from Pakistan. Diya, a medical doctor from Pakistan, migrated to Australia after marrying in 2007. As a doctor, Diya always sought international experience, even before she migrated to Australia. Yet as Diya said, the majority of women in Pakistan do not study for a career. According to her, the primary socialisation of women in Pakistan renders the majority of them unable to study for a career in their home country:

It's like the basic culture ingrained in you. It's like what you grow up with. In my friends, I don't know anyone who works. I think the qualification comes quite a bit [she meant that one's qualification affects her or his ability to participate in the labour market to some extent]. For example, people from India, let's say, that's like ingrained in them that they have to work after you graduated. That is not something pre-requisite for us [women from Pakistan]. People are like, a lot of the time, study just to pass the time, and you need to have a basic qualification because you cannot be illiterate, but that is before you get

married. The marriage is like the main thing ... the main event. So in Pakistan, girls either become doctors, or they do bachelor's in arts, science or whatever, and they don't work. My friends here like to work, but they don't have that much experience from back home, and they got married immediately after finishing their studies. They are finding difficulty here. They think that you don't study to work; you study just for the sake of study. And the thing is the study ... bachelor's and stuff ... it's not that recognized here. My friend wants to do teaching and for that she has to do a bachelor's in teaching here. And the IELTS requirement is very high. You have to get 8 in each module. Her English is not that bad, but it's not enough. Eventually she did a diploma in childcare but [she's] still struggling to get the job. It's like either they don't have qualification from back home, or they are not motivated enough to work here. And there are quite a few men who do not want women to work and that plays a part as well. There are men who want their women to look after the kids here. They don't want to send their kids to childcare, in the beginning at least, and they want wives to stay at home and look after the kids. (Diya, Interview, 2013)

Even similar educational qualifications can disguise very different social and career expectations for men and women. In her study of women and men who were engaged with professional software work in urban India, Radhakrishnan (2009) shows that despite their high professional qualifications, women's careers are often seen as something subordinate to a married life with children. Radhakrishnan further argues that despite a woman's high qualifications, for a woman, especially after marriage, to stay at home and look after her husband, children, and in-laws is an invisible norm, a form of cultural capital that is highly valued in Indian society. Vijayakumar's (2013) study of young women workers in a small-town business-process outsourcing centre outside of Bangalore notes that women's aspirations to education and careers are deeply embedded in gendered patriarchal social values. Vijayakumar notes that among her respondents, while educated male workers aspire to practical and long-term careers, educated female worker's work aspirations were shaped by the high value placed on marriage in a woman's life and potential life changes after marriage.

In my research, the broad trend of the demographic data supports Diya's perception of the differences between India and Pakistan. There are twice as many Pakistani-born women as Indian-born women not in the Australian labour. Nevertheless, gender and marriage are strongly shaping attitudes to education in India as well. Tara, a computer science graduate



who migrated from India, chose computer science, not to pursue a career in the field but simply to postpone her marriage, inevitable though her destiny was. Tara said that in India too, her community's attitude towards women's education and work made career less accessible:

I was brought up with a notion that, if it is a girl, she does not need to work. It is only men who are meant to work. For girls there is no need to do a master's. What is the use? Anyhow, they are not going to work. So why waste money on them? This sort of things ... you know. My dad was very keen on getting me married as soon as I finished my bachelor's. Then I went on and did my master's. That way I could push a little bit more time. But I got married when I finished with my master's – straightaway. (Tara, Interview, 2014)

As I have suggested in Chapter 2, South Asian-born women do not lack qualifications. If their labour force participation is low, the reason is not that they are under-qualified. Diya's point, in fact, shows us that it is not sufficient to simply discuss education and qualifications in an abstract sense, devoid of context. Rather, the focus must be upon the orientations that shape and give specific meanings to women's education and labour force participation. As Diya observed, women may not study for a career. They may see education solely as a way of gaining basic knowledge, a prerequisite for living life in a modern world. Like Tara, for some women, education may be either a means of passing the time until marriage, or a way of improving their marriage prospects.

Under such circumstances, women's ability to migrate independently, and to participate equally in their host country's labour market, is undermined by often entrenched cultural attitudes towards gender in their countries of origin (Iredale, 2005; Shabib-ul-Hasan & Mustafa, 2014). Taking all of the above discussion into consideration, I suggest that Australia's skill-based migration system compounds inequities that are deeply ingrained in the women migrants' countries of origin.

## **Invisible Migrants**

For a woman, one consequence of migrating as a dependent of a skilled migrant is that she is likely to be invisible in the official records of her migratory journey. As dependents, women not only become secondary in the visa application, they also become secondary in every other aspect of the receiving society. They become invisible even in studies of migration itself. For example, studies of settlement processes of migrants in host societies repeatedly advocate that receiving governments should implement inclusive integration policies and programmes. At the same time, however, almost all of these studies look exclusively at principal migrants.

Dependents are treated, in both policy and research, as socially subsumed by principal migrants. For this reason, policies assume that the social integration of the principal migrant will automatically deliver the couple's success as a unit (Cobb-Clark, 2000; Pichler, 2011; Frank, 2013). As a result, few analyses of migrants examine women's economic participation.

In Australia in particular, the gendered implication of the country's immigration policies has received very little attention. The focus of research has been primarily upon migrants' labour market skills. The findings have furthermore been entirely based upon quantitative survey data. Many studies of immigrant populations have been based on data collected by the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA) (Cobb-Clark, 2000, 2003; see also Ho, 2006). The LSIA, which collects data pertaining to immigrants, follows immigrants over an extended period, starting from the time of their immigration to Australia. As of 2006, three LSIA surveys have been conducted by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. LSIA 1 surveyed migrants who arrived between September 1993 and August 1995; LSIA 1 collected information from migrants approximately 6 months, 18 months, and 42 months after their arrival in Australia. LSIA 2, which surveyed migrants who arrived between September 1999 and August 2000, and LSIA 3, which surveyed migrants who arrived between December 2004 and September 2006, both collected information approximately 6 months and 18 months following their arrival in Australia.

In all these cases, the sample was selective: the surveys only considered the primary applicant of the immigration process. The LSIA collects information from spouses only when the latter have accompanied the primary applicants at the time of their migration. A spouse who migrated at a different time is not interviewed independently. The survey treats the event of the principal migrant's entry as the moment of migration for the couple. Information about a spouse, such as basic demographic data, is only collected indirectly through principal subjects. As a result, women who join their spouses later are likely to be excluded by the LSIA. In addition, women who migrate after marriage with a person who has already attained residency in Australia are not included in the subject pool for the LSIA. The survey's focus on principal applicants thus becomes gender biased given the pattern of visa type and their relationship to gender. Despite the seeming objectivity of focusing on economic data with statistical backing, Ho and Alcorso (2004) argue that the LSIA fails to represent the majority of female migrants who have entered as dependents of their male partners at different times to Australia.

### **Biased Immigration Policies**

Women are also disproportionately limited by immigration policies that are restrictive towards labour market participation of dependents. In Australia, dependent visas directly or indirectly put limitations on a migrant's labour market participation. A dependent of a student, has to follow all the rules that apply to a principal applicant, being limited to 40 hours of work each fortnight, for example.<sup>15</sup> As a result of this limitation, dependents are automatically excluded from jobs that require full-time employment.

Dependents of students in the higher education sectors, for example, Master and PhD degree study, and dependents under family reunification visas, are allowed to work unlimited hours. There again, as temporary visa holders, restrictions on further stay following the expiration of

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<sup>15</sup> For work conditions for student visa holders and dependent family member, see <http://www.border.gov.au/Trav/Stud/More/Work-conditions-for-Student-visa-holders>.

the student visa limit opportunities. The initial temporary visas render dependents unsuitable for full-time jobs mainly because of employer expectations and the restricted term of the visas. In the same way, dependents on family reunification visas have to be on temporary bridging visas for two years before they are granted permanent residency. As a result of their status, although they are assured of permanent residency in Australia after two years, dependents are initially excluded from applying for permanent full-time jobs, especially for positions in the government sector.

While on temporary visas, migrants are not eligible for any form of government-funded support. For example, temporary visas disallow dependent migrants' access to full Medicare facilities. Medicare, a health care service provided by the Australian Government to its people through the Ministry of Health, was introduced by the Whitlam government in 1975. Under Medicare, Australian residents are entitled to free or subsidised treatment by health professionals including doctors, specialists, optometrists, and, in specific circumstances, dentists and other allied health practitioners.<sup>16</sup> But, in order to access these Medicare facilities, one has to be either a permanent resident or an Australia citizen.

While on temporary visas, migrants who choose to re-train are not eligible for subsidised tuition fees at universities. Often the international fee that universities charge is several times higher than the fee for domestic students. International students are the highest source of revenue for universities in Australia. In the year 2012, student fees paid by international students accounted for 16 per cent of the total university revenues (Department of Education, 2013). The revenue generated from international student fees help universities to fund domestic students' tuition fees and research. Studies suggest that international students' fees subsidised each domestic student by approximately AU \$1,600 (Beaton-wells & Thompson, 2011). Unable to afford such fees, dependents are less likely to re-skill or re- train until they

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<sup>16</sup> For detailed information on Medicare services, see:  
<http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/subjects/medicare-services#a3>.

become permanent residents. My Nepali friend Gita described her experiences as a dependent visa holder as follows:

I could have come here to do master's degree by myself but because I was married, I came here as a dependent of my husband who was a permanent resident in Australia. Initially I wanted to continue with my study here but because of my dependent visa, I had to pay international fee which was big amount of money for us [migrants]. Then I thought of applying for scholarships. But there also I could not apply for international scholarships because I was a spouse of a permanent resident and I could not apply for domestic scholarships because I was not a permanent resident. So my study chances were completely blocked. I went to The University of Sydney to enrol in a master's degree. My application was suspended because of my visa status. First, I was sent to domestic student section, and the administration guided me to international student section. From there I was again transferred to domestic student section. This process continued for 3-4 times. Then I spoke with the head of the department and finally they told me that they cannot enrol me as a student because the enrolment system does not have my visa class. This means, before me, not any spouse dependent had gone to University of Sydney to enrol in a degree. (Gita, Interview, 2013)

Dependent status, together with policy provisions for dependents in receiving societies, thus immediately downgrades women's career prospects after migration. According to Gita, the fact that she could not study for two years diminished her initial desire to study.

### ***Dependents and the Devaluation of Qualifications***

Human capital theory has been used to understand the causal relationship between market demand and the supply of migrant labour in host countries' labour markets (Frank, 2013; Junankar & Mahuteau, 2005; Cobb-Clark, 2000; Chiswick & Miller, 2008). Human capital theory, according to Frank (2013), argues that accumulated human capital (educational level, technical skills, knowledge and work experience) increases migrants' human resources and promises a positive labour market outcome in the host country. Human capital theorists regard the discrepancy in the labour market outcomes of men and women migrants as attributable to their differential investment in human capital (Mincer & Polachek, 1980; Ho & Alcorso, 2004; also see Ho, 2010).

The educational demographics of South Asian-born migrant women in Australia present a challenge to these arguments. The statistics on South Asian-born women's qualifications in Australia show that they do not have any less human capital investment than their male counterparts. Most of them are highly qualified academically. The census data on the educational endowment of South Asian-born women suggest that more than 26 per cent have some form of tertiary qualification. Four times as many South Asian-born women with tertiary qualifications have reached postgraduate level of qualification as their Australian-born counterparts. More than 45 per cent of the total numbers of South Asian-born women with any tertiary level of qualification had attained bachelor's degrees.

The high level of educational endowment in the demographic data was consistent with my interview sample of 40 women. Table 26 below shows the educational profiles of my respondents.

**Table 26: Level of Education of Respondents at the Time of Migration to Australia**

<b>Level of Non-School Qualification</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
Postgraduate level	17	42
Bachelor's Level	18	45
Diploma Level	3	7
Not Applicable	2	5

Among my respondents, 45 per cent could claim a bachelor's level of qualification; and, 43 per cent had possessed a postgraduate level of qualification at the time of their migration to Australia. More than 80 per cent had achieved some form of tertiary level qualification at the time of their migration to Australia.

The 2011 census shows that approximately 80 per cent of South Asian migrants in Australia either speak English only, or speak other languages as well as English very well (ABS, 2011). More than 90 per cent of South Asian-born women speak English well or very well in

Australia. In my sample data, I found similar patterns of high language competency: I interviewed all of my respondents in English because of their high proficiency level.

With their high educational attainments and English language ability, human capital theory would predict that South Asian-born women will be successful in the Australian labour market. Yet the employment statistics for South Asian migrant women revealed that in 2011, more than 30 per cent with post-graduate qualifications are unemployed (ABS, 2011).

Similarly, 19 per cent of women migrants with bachelor's degrees or higher levels of qualification do not have any income of their own (ABS, 2011). Among my informants, only 50 per cent were working at the time of my data collection. Of this 50 per cent, 37 per cent were working full-time and 12.5 per cent were working part-time. The remaining 50 per cent included those who had never worked in Australia, those who had once worked in the past but were not working at the time of data collection, and those who were seeking employment.

So, what does the extant literature say about these under-performance figures? The findings for Australia fit Akbari's (1999) research into immigrant populations in Canada during the 1990s which compared the educational attainments of immigrants between 1957 and 1994. Akbari found that the educational attainments of recent immigrants, measured in terms of university education, were rising; in some cases, immigrants had higher levels of educational achievement than their Canadian-born counterparts. But the labour market performance of immigrants, especially that of immigrant women, was still low compared to that of the native born. Akbari suggests that factors including discrimination, devaluation, or lack of recognition of foreign education negatively affected the performance and incomes of immigrants in the Canadian labour market.

Terms such as 'de-skilling', 'downward mobility', 'non-recognition of foreign credentials', 'educated unemployment', and 'cumulative disadvantage' are frequently used to describe the work experiences of highly-qualified immigrants in different Western receiving countries (Gallie, 1991; Green et al., 2002; Kler, 2006; Danso, 2009). The main findings of this body of

research is that immigrants suffer labour market disadvantages due to lack of recognition of their international qualifications and work experience. This lack of recognition leads to the de-skilling and downward mobility of immigrants within the labour market of the host society.

While some studies detail the labour market successes of migrant populations, they are few in number. Those that have presented positive portraits of migrants' employment in their host societies have been very restrictive in selecting their sample population – often studies have focussed on the principal applicants for migration (Cobb-Clark, 2000; Pichler, 2011; Frank, 2013).

Studies have found that employment outcomes vary according to the migrant's gender and country of origin (Borooah & Mangan, 2002; Purkayastha, 2005; Iredale, 2005; Danso, 2009; Buzdugan & Halli, 2009). Migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds frequently experience difficulty transferring their credentials to the host country's labour market in English language economies. Women in particular experience cumulative disadvantages, often due to the devaluation of their credentials and their dependent visa status. Purkayastha (2005) notes that the devaluation of foreign credentials is the most racialised barrier that female immigrants from South Asia encounter in the US labour market. Within this market, accreditation authorities nurture a pre-established assumption that foreign students do not meet the standard of education required in the US.

Basran and Li (1998), who studied Indian and Chinese immigrants with professional qualifications from their countries of origin who had migrated to Canada, alerted readers to the failure of Canadian institutions to recognize the credentials of foreign-trained professionals. Their findings detail how this omission contributed to the migrants' occupational disadvantages. Professional organisations that were responsible for recognizing the credentials of foreign-trained professional immigrants acted as gatekeepers, to the disadvantage of professional immigrants. The difficulties that immigrants encountered when



transferring their foreign credentials and work experience in Canada resulted in many experiencing downward social mobility after migration.

Danso's (2009) more recent study of the devaluation of foreign credentials in the Canadian labour market reveals that structural barriers in the market prevented skilled immigrants from advancing their professional occupations. Despite the points system used in Canada to entice millions of highly-educated immigrants, Danso argued that 'due to the systemic and individual racisms and discrimination that they face, many immigrants of colour experience high levels of unemployment or underemployment, much to the detriment of their families and the Canadian economy and society in general' (Danso, 2009, p. 550).

Buzdugan and Halli (2009) suggest that the prestige of the school or country from which the education was attained affects the valuation process. In many instances, because employers lack information about the quality of education when assessing foreign qualifications, they devalue foreign credentials.

Finally, if we now move to Australian studies, Borooah and Mangan (2002), who analysed the occupational outcomes of indigenous and Asian employees in the Australian labour market, found that Asian migrants and people from other minority groups were subjected to two types of labour market disadvantage compared with their Australian-born counterparts. The first was the attribute disadvantage; the second was racial disadvantage. By attribute disadvantage, Borooah and Mangan mean that Australian employers do not recognize qualifications obtained overseas, especially those of Asian migrants. For this reason, Asian people have less occupational mobility compared to white Australians. In the sphere of employment Asian women are more disadvantaged compared with their male counterparts in terms of occupational mobility. Even though the women may be highly qualified, Australian employers' perceptions of job suitability for Asian men and women remain highly gendered. Australian employers consider Asian men more suitable for professional and managerial work than Asian women (Borooah & Mangan, 2002).

However, the Australian immigration points system does take into account the educational level of the spouse. In Australia, recognized authorities assess migrants' education and skills, both for the purposes of immigration applications and for work in their specific fields or professions after arrival. For example, the Department of Education and Services in New South Wales provides a general assessment of migrants' higher education qualifications obtained overseas.<sup>17</sup> Although this form of assessment does not provide registration, licensing, professional membership or industry requirements for any occupation, it assists individuals by helping organisations such as prospective employers to understand the equivalent educational level of an overseas qualification in the Australian context (Australian Government, 2014). In cases of specific occupations, professional authorities can assess and give recognition to overseas qualifications and skills.<sup>18</sup> These professional skills assessments include a wide variety of occupations: doctors, engineers, scientists, accountants, nurses, psychologists, educators, mathematicians, and social workers, to name but a few.

At this point, my data diverges from the argument that failure to recognize foreign qualifications is the main reason why women migrants to Australia are excluded from the labour market. As I have mentioned before, more than 80 per cent of my respondents have achieved some form of tertiary level of qualification at the time of migration to Australia. Many of them – especially those who had bachelor's and master's levels of qualification from overseas, had assessed their overseas qualifications successfully within the required professional bodies in Australia after migration. In fact, given that for many, their spouses were already in Australia when they migrated, some of the women knew in advance that they had to have their qualification recognized in Australia if they wanted to work in the fields for which they were trained. Only those women who had *pre*-tertiary qualifications (for example:

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<sup>17</sup> For detailed information, see: <https://internationaleducation.gov.au/services-and-resources/services-for-individuals/qualifications-assessments/pages/qualification-assessment.aspx>.

<sup>18</sup> For detailed information on overseas skills recognition, see: <http://www.immi.gov.au/Work/Pages/asri/asri-index.aspx>.

Intermediate of Arts, Diploma in Geography) faced problems getting their qualifications recognized by any specific professional body.

For example, Jas has a Master in Psychology from India. The first thing she did after arriving in Australia was to assess her foreign qualifications:

I assessed my qualifications as soon as I came to Australia. That was the first thing my spouse suggested me to do. He said that it is better to assess the qualification so that we know if there is anything that I need to do if I want to upgrade myself in the field. (Jas, Interview, 2013)

Jas now works part-time in community services. Although community service is not her field of expertise, Jas claimed that her Australian equivalent degree in psychology helped her to get her current job.

Prisa is a graduate in computer science. When speaking about her career, Prisa said that she did not want to work in the field of computer science because she lacked interest in computer programming. For Prisa, validation of her overseas qualification had a different purpose:

When I first came to Australia, I did not know that there was such thing called education assessment. My husband, and my in-laws told me about it. When they told me, I did it [assessed her qualification]. In future, if I want to pursue a career, even if it is in a different field, I could show that I have an Australian equivalent qualification. (Prisa, Interview, 2013)

At the time of our interview, Prisa was not working. But she seemed confident that validation of her overseas qualification would add strength to her resume when she searched for jobs in the future.

Gita, to whom I referred earlier in the chapter, had a master's degree in sociology. Validating her overseas qualification was never an issue for Gita. Her qualification was successfully assessed as equivalent to the Australian qualification. Following the assessment of her former degrees, Gita was able to apply to do a master's degree in an Australian university. But, when

it came to finding a job in her field of study, the fact that she had the Australian equivalent qualification was of little significance.

This study supports the theory that women who come as dependent migrants will most likely become invisible in Australian migration schemes. But migrating as dependent has not necessarily rendered the women I interviewed less successful in assessing their qualifications and skills in Australia. That being said, when seeking access to work opportunities, for many of my respondents, the Australian equivalent qualification was of little significance. My exploration of language in the next section provides one explanation to this issue.

## **Language**

Language is one of the most important determinants of the socio-economic success of migrants in Australia (Chiswick, Lee & Miller, 2006). Studies show that English language incompetency in countries where English is the official language can disadvantage migrants in terms of their incomes, access to education, access to central institutions, social recognition and integration (Miller & Neo, 1997; Esser, 2006; Kalin & Royko, 1978). In their writing about migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds, Borooah and Mangan (2002) stress how lack of English proficiency not only seriously undermines their other skills, but also limits their educational advantages in the host country.

Here once again, South Asian-born migrants present a challenge to existing research.

Although many come from non-English speaking backgrounds, the 2011 census shows that approximately 80 per cent of South Asian migrants either speak English exclusively, or speak English and other languages very well (ABS, 2011). Hugo (2008) confirms the high English language proficiency of South Asian-born migrants in Australia. We, therefore, need more subtle criteria, other than just whether a language is spoken or not, to discuss the way discrimination works against South Asians. Studies have shown that not only language, but accent come under scrutiny when migrants attempt to access jobs, housing, shopping,

hospitals, and public transport in host countries (Brennan & Brennan, 1981; Hawthorne, 1994; Massey & Lundy, 2001; Creese & Wiebe, 2012).

In this thesis focus is upon migrants who speak English, but as a second language. Bhela (1999) notes that one's primary language shapes the learning and usage of all subsequently acquired languages. He argues that 'when writing or speaking the target language (L2), second language learners tend to rely on their native language (L1) structures to produce a response' (Bhela, 1999, p. 22). Beebe (1988) and Beardsmore (1986) also suggest that while using a second language the structural entities of the first language, such as, grammar, vocabulary and syntax are grafted onto the second language, resulting in a high frequency of structural errors in the second language.

It is not just the structural component of a person's first language that is mapped on to her or his acquired second language, the speaker of a second language often also shows a marked transfer of accent from the first language. And one's age at the time of learning a new language has a marked effect on determining such accent transfer to second language acquisition (Johnson & Newport, 1989; Flege et al., 1999; Piske et al., 2001; Birdsong & Molis, 2001). In their evaluation of the pronunciation of English by 240 Korean native speaker migrants in the US, Flege and colleagues (1999) note that with the increase of age of arrival, respondents' foreign accents became more marked in their English language use. Similarly, Tahta and colleagues' (1981) study undertaken in the UK with a random sample of 109 people who learned English as their second language, also emphasised the overwhelming importance of the age of the learner in determining whether or not there was transfer of accent from her or his primary language. They found that if second language acquisition occurred after the age of twelve years, accent invariably transferred from the first language.

These findings suggest that once a person's accent is established in any primary language, a phenomenon that mostly occurs during the pre-pubertal phase (Lennenberg, 1969, cited in Tahta et al., 1981), it is highly likely that she or he will speak the subsequently acquired

language with that accent. Among my respondents, since the majority had migrated at an adult stage of their life cycles, they have already established a linguistic habitus in their primary language. More importantly, many spoke English before they arrived to Australia, and their accents were well established. As a result, the majority spoke English with an accent different from that of Australians.

According to social research, one's English accent plays a vital role not only in showing one's personality, but in determining the impression one makes on others (Behrens & Neeman, 2004, Eisenchlas & Tsurutani, 2011). Watson's (1996, p. 44) study of overseas-born managers in Australia found that applicants who had foreign accents or lacked flawless English were screened at the time of the initial telephone enquiry. Hawthorne (1994) found that employers often rejected applicants from non-English speaking backgrounds, not only due to their poor English skills, but also due to more subtle issues, like accent and cadence. According to Massey and Lundy (2001), in the United States, a large majority of African-Americans who speak black-accented English are discriminated against in the housing market over the phone, even before they have the chance to meet a landlord in person (Massey & Lundy, 2001).

In Australia, although demographic data shows that migrants from South Asia have good language skills in both spoken and written English, the reality is that those skills are not enough to ensure migrants' integration into the labour market. One of my informants, Nanditi, who arrived in Australia from India when she was ten years of age, commented on the English language proficiency of other South Asian migrants. From her perspective, the English skills of the Indian community were less than adequate:

Indian migrants, they come with a qualification; but they are not valued here. Because ... really ... I mean ... Indians ... practically their English is quite poor. They may have fantastic qualifications from back home but once you put those people in the workforce ... their English skills are really un-rich ... You need exceptionally good English skills ... even in the government jobs. Language is one of the barriers, and a huge barrier and you see that straight away. There are hardly any Indians and practically no Indians at such senior level, at least in my department. (Nanditi, Interview, 2013)

In Nanditi's opinion, South Asian-born people speak 'poor English', thus she was inclined to doubt the value of their qualifications. One of the key differences in skills between Nanditi and others from South Asia – as she pointed out – was her Australian accent. As a result she said that she had never encountered problems involving her language skills, the significance being that the right accent can be the point of inclusion or exclusion for the desirable end of the employment market. A migrant who arrives early in her or his life usually picks up the Australian accent during schooling in Australia. By contrast, Jas, who migrated as an adult, shared with me the story of the challenges she encountered during her initial days searching for employment because she did not have an Australian accent. Jas migrated to Australia in 2001 when she was in her mid-twenties. Jas is well educated, and has a Master in Psychology degree from India. Approximately four years after coming to Australia, when her youngest son was two years old, Jas started searching for jobs:

When my little one was a bit older, I thought I will give it a try ... you know ... So, I started calling. For me the challenge was the accent. I was literate; I knew things. But just to grab the accent and be part of Australian society was a bit of a challenge. In India also, it is same. If you go to another state, it is hard to get the accent that is same as ours. But here it is completely different. In India we can speak our mother tongue [Hindi] whereas here we have to speak all in English. It is not like I don't know English or anything. I know English but the accent was a bit of a challenge. Initially, I tried at call centres ... you know ... so many people have told me that call centre jobs are good to learn skills such as English. They said it is hard, but it is good skill to get. So I tried the call centre jobs. Especially for call centre jobs, I think, you have to have very fluent English with your accent. At the beginning, I was selected for couple of interviews, and they took it over the phone. I missed a couple of them because I could not catch it because of the accent. I just hung up the phone and said I cannot do it. Then I went to customer service at Coles, and that was a good exposure to me. (Jas, Interview, 2013)

Jas's technical competency in English was good: I noted this when interviewing her. But, when it came to practicalities, that is, interacting with people in their everyday lives, technical competence in English is not sufficient for effective communication or professional assimilation. My respondents may well have been speaking grammatically correct English

but, the fact that they lacked the specific art of using or vocalising English using an Australian accent has disadvantaged their employment opportunities.

Sita, who migrated to Australia in her late twenties, felt that even after working in Australia for more than fifteen years, her accent has shaped her work experiences, albeit indirectly:

In Australia, being from South Asia has affected me, mainly in terms of my English accent. In my work place, if there is a presentation they prefer the other person to speak. Not by telling you not to speak or anything where you can contest, but by saying, Sita can you manage to write while she [her work colleague] presents? As if they are distributing the job. But I think that for the first generation, they go through that. Second generation are far more ... they are comfortable. (Sita, Interview, 2013)

Tina, who was also in her mid-twenties at the time of her migration, found after working with Anglo-Australians that her inability to immediately understand what her co-workers said made her feel humiliated in her workplace:

There are Australians in my work place ... In the course of working, when I could not understand the word, my fellow Aussie friends have denied to repeat the word, and have treated me as if I could not understand such a simple word. That type of behaviour of my colleagues makes me feel very bad. (Tina, Interview, 2013)

But, in contrast, Vina, who migrated as an adult from Sri Lanka, thought that language, especially understanding the Australian accent, was a major issue for Sri Lankan migrants in Australia. She added that her South Asian accent had never been an issue for her in her workplace:

Language is a big issue here in Australia for people coming from Sri Lanka. It is difficult because of the accent. People cannot understand Australian English accent. But our office is a multicultural office. Actually in our office Aussies are minority, and we all laugh about it. So language has never been an issue. It is said to be multicultural, and *it is* multicultural. (Vina, Interview, 2013)

Like Vina, Sanju, who worked in the aged care sector along with other migrant colleagues from different countries, also focused on the nationalities of her co-workers when I asked her



about her ability to speak English. She said that she worked with people from China, Korea, the Philippines and Thailand:

These people are also from non-English speaking countries like Nepal so it is easier for all of us to communicate with each other without worrying about understanding Australian native speakers. (Sanju, Interview, 2013)

The use of language and emphasis on accent thus appears to be very situation specific. For example, Jas was able to function capably in Coles customer service but not in a call centre. Compared to call centres, verbal communication is very limited in retail businesses' customer service. While Jas had to engage in extensive two-way communication to solve customers' problems in the call centre, she could 'get away' with simple greetings at Coles, for example, 'Have a nice day'. Thus, while she felt that her lack of an Australian accent affected her ability to perform her task at the call centre, she was very comfortable with her Indian-accented English in customer service jobs. Sita worked in an office in which all of her colleagues were Australian born. In an environment dominated by people speaking with an Australian accent, Sita and her Indian-accented English frequently came under close scrutiny. In contrast, situations like Vina and Sanju's workplaces – multicultural environments with people from different backgrounds and nationalities – accent did not seem an immediate barrier.

Sociolinguistic research into attitude towards language has revealed that people are drawn to those who share a similar accent, and often respond negatively to those who speak accented English (Fulmizi & Stewart, 1982, cited in Eisenclas & Tsurutani, 2011). And, the negative reaction is fostered by the stereotypical attitudes directed towards speakers of a different language (Callan & Gallois, 1987; Behrens & Neeman, 2004). Newman (2002) notes that the stigmatization of a specific linguistic trait, for example, pronouncing *dem* and *doze* for *them* and *those*, by extension stigmatizes the entire group. In his ethnographic analysis of accented English and the use of accent-reduction therapy (a service that was predominantly run by

speech pathologists trained not in the nature of language but in the clinical treatment of people with speech defects) by educated South Asian migrants in the US, Newman notes that middle-class and professional Indian immigrants were stereotyped for speaking accented English. Indian immigrants' English was considered distracting, irritating and penalizing. Thus, due to the stereotypical prejudgement of American society regarding their English, Indian migrants were pressured to seek accent-reduction therapy. However, a recent study in Australia showed that increasing contact between the 'multi-cultural middle class' and Anglo-Australians, especially those who are highly educated and professionally employed, has facilitated dissociation of foreign accent and negative stereotyping among the new generation (Colic-Peisker & Hlavac, 2014). Yet this type of professional employment is precisely what my respondents largely do not have.

My respondents frequently came under scrutiny because of their different accents. They were discriminated against and judged critically because they were not able to grasp things said by their Australian colleagues. Some got away with the challenge, not because they fully developed an Australian accent, but because they did not have to communicate extensively with Australian-born people or work in settings wherein their accented English came under scrutiny.

Their primary language invariably shaped their speech practice and all subsequently acquired languages. As their English accents were already established, they were less likely to be able to change their English accents even after many years of residence in Australia. This linguistic disadvantage has created an extra challenge for well-educated women seeking work in the professional sector.

This practical form of linguistic difficulty is not so much lack of competency in English that can be remedied on arrival through opportunities of free language training in Australia. In any case, in recent years, this training has been provided on a fee-for-service basis, a policy that only further disadvantages migrant women.

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What emerges from the entire discussion in this chapter is the combination of events that shape women's labour force participation decision-making. Sometimes they are gendered assumptions regarding women migrants which are built in Australian institutional practices, and policies, other times they are gender biases that operate in South Asia. Yet others are concerned with social biases on the part of language speakers belonging to the majority group in Australia. While the lack of South Asian-born women's labour force participation in Australia at times looks like individual decision-making, in effect, those decisions are shaped by the interaction of conflicting forces. This takes us back to the argument about conjuncture which Bourdieu describes as the 'context of action'. According to Bourdieu, social fields – whether scientific, religious, academic, political, medical or judicial – comprise their own structure of internal power relations within which practices are produced. Those practices, Bourdieu claims can only be accounted for in relation to the situation within which they are produced, that is, the conjuncture (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 78).

When considering international migration as a social field, if we reflect back on Gita, and the moment that she migrated to Australia as a dependent, her decision-making was already shaped by the conjuncture where two sets of power relations intersect. The intersection between Australia's immigration policies and the socio-cultural institutions of her home country determined how Gita could migrate to Australia. After her arrival in Australia, her initial dependent visa status interacted with the various policy provisions implemented in various Australian institutions. From the universities' policies of enrolling dependent visa holders, to employers' employee-hiring policy provisions, decisions were shaped at every level by various structural forces that combined to limit Gita's work opportunities.

Discrimination against those migrants who speak with a South Asian-English accent creates an extra hurdle, blocking women's smooth integration in labour market.

Discrimination against subtle factors such as one's accent appears an ongoing issue for women migrants in particular, as they are less likely to modify their accents despite years of residence in Australia. In effect, the multidimensional nature of their respective situations has rendered this problem much more entrenched. If prejudice and stigma had been confined to one particular structure, women could negotiate the obstacles. However, if and when these inequalities unfold simultaneously in women's lives, the interaction of these structures can seriously limit women's choices allowing them very little space for agency. So, although at times lack of labour force participation looks like women's personal choice (and more often than not, South Asian-born women talk as though it is their choice), women's choices are shaped by pre-existing constraints. In the next chapter, I centre my discussion on marriage and migration. I show how for this particular group of women, the social field of migration begins from within their countries of origin. I argue that the issues of resettlement apply for my respondents even before their migration to Australia.

## Chapter 4

### Marriage as Migration

#### Introduction

When I got married, I moved to my husband's home [from Bangalore to Tamil Nadu]. After marriage I left my job and went to live with my in-laws. (Sassa, Interview, 2013)

When I got married, I came and lived in my in-laws house [Jaya's natal home and marital home are both located in Kathmandu, Nepal]. I didn't know what to expect. Knowing the kind of family that I was getting into, I had questions about whether they would accept me or not. But the biggest fear for me at that time was, whether I get to keep up with things that I was used to doing up to this time of my life – my job, my friends, my life-style. Then, I moved to Hong Kong with my husband. That is when I had to be without job for almost a year. Four years after, we moved to Australia. When we came here, my husband started his job after the third day because he had been offered a job before we got here. And I was left alone with a 16 months old baby to look after. (Jaya, Interview, 2014)

Jaya and Sassa, like many other South Asian women, described marriage as a movement from one house to another, from one family to another, and often from one city or even country to another. Their stories highlight women's movement as intimately tied to marriage – something that seems so natural that it usually passes un-noticed. Yet that is not how women tell the story of their migration. Jaya, 49, is a loving wife, and the mother of a 17 year old daughter. She married quite late by the South Asian standards at the age of 29 years. At the time of her marriage, Jaya had established her career as an engineer, working for a well-known company in Kathmandu. When describing her migrations, Jaya automatically refers to marriage as the central and key form of migration. The others – her moves to Hong Kong and Australia – are almost added on, after the central event has already occurred ('... then I moved to Hong Kong with my husband').

Jaya's story begins to alert us to the ways in which that simple act of marriage, so closely tied to the social fact of the woman being the one who moves, affects women's work opportunities and labour force participation. Moving to different places of residence at the time of marriage is possibly one of the most significant factors that displaces a woman, diminishing her capacity to participate equally in the labour market alongside her male counterparts.

I argue that we cannot begin the story of women and migration at the point at which they arrive in countries like Australia. South Asian women, like women in all societies that practice patri-virilocal residence after marriage, that is, where women are understood as being moved from the father's home to the husband's home at the time of marriage, effectively become migrants by virtue of marriage. And, like all migrants, they go through a profound liminal phase of resettlement after marrying. In other words, they are displaced by marriage before being displaced by migration. In effect, migration to Australia could be said to simply exaggerate their pre-existing resettlement issues.

In this chapter, I seek to show how the cultural construction of women's lives in South Asia revolves around marriage. This necessarily takes one into a voluminous literature. But the main contribution I wish to make here is to re-view the cultural construction of marriage and womanhood from the perspective of migration, to show how issues that have traditionally been sequestered in the literature on "re-settlement after migration" in fact affect women well before they leave their countries of origin. While they may face additional forms of racism in Australia, they have already faced gender-based discrimination in their husband's homes and communities, precisely in their capacity as 'migrants' – that is, as the stranger who is moving into a settled community.

### **Kinship and Marriage Practices in South Asia**

The centrality of marriage to womanhood is the topic of the next section. It is integrally linked to the topic of migration because of the way in which inequalities between men and

women translate into patriarchal ideologies that render it crucial for parents to ‘give away’ their daughters. This movement *away* from one’s natal home has no parallel for men.

Before beginning however, it is important to highlight the fact that kinship in South Asia is extraordinarily heterogeneous (Uberoi, 1993) and marked by regional variations in North, South, East and West Asia. As well there are regional and religious differentiations between Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists, Christians, and numerous minor religions. Kinship also varies according to social class, caste, and culture within any given linguistic region. There may be as many varieties of kinship organisation as there are distinct communities in the region. According to Karve (1965), in the north, people prefer to marry complete strangers. Marriage follows village exogamy principles, whereby a prospective spouse is sought outside of one’s village. The kinship relation between wife-givers and wife-takers is hierarchical, with wife-takers considered socially and ritually superior to wife-givers. This is amplified by the practice of ‘hypergamy’, particularly among upper castes, that is, where women marry ‘up’ in the caste hierarchy.

In the south, in contrast, women are more likely to be married to close kin or relatives living within close proximity to their natal homes. The relationship between wife-givers and wife-takers is relatively equal, a situation described in the literature as ‘isogamy’ to distinguish it from the hierarchical form taken by hypergamy. The north-south differentiation of kinship and marriage identified by Karve (1965) remains one of the key features discussed and noted in kinship studies in South Asia (Dyson & Moore, 1983; Uberoi, 1993; Kaur, 2004; Jejeebhoy et al., 2013).

Traditionally, marriage transactions are accompanied by the passage of goods or services between the kin groups in the form of dowry or bride price. Here again, the north differs from the south. In the north, where marriage exchanges are often hypergamous, dowry given by the bride’s family to the groom’s family is normative. In the south, marriages involving bride price have historically been more common although one should note the shifts that have

occurred towards the dowry form becoming more generalised across India (Srinivasan, 2005). But the contrast is significant. As already noted, marriages that effectively mean that – from a woman’s point of view – one’s affines are already one’s kin, is a singular feature with implications for the degree to which women experience stranger-status after marriage (Karve, 1965; Dyson & Moore, 1983). According to many sociological commentators, the sociological and gender implications of these different kinship practices are significant. Many have described the less strongly patriarchal, more egalitarian form taken by Dravidian forms of kinship in the south as affording greater autonomy and decision-making power for women than is the case with their north Indian counterparts, even after marriage (Dyson & Moore, 1983; Basu, 1999; Rahman & Rao, 2004; Srinivasan, 2005). However, the fact that dowryless marriages are rapidly in decline has resulted in serious negative consequences for women’s status, even in the south. As Srinivasan (2005) argues, the increase in the dowry practices in the south – a strategy to acquire a higher standard of social and material life – has given rise to devaluation and discrimination of girls and women. The amount of dowry that parents have to give, according to Srinivasan, has not only influenced son preference in the community, but has also affected the quality of a daughter’s upbringing. Parents often opt to save money for a dowry instead of investing in their daughter’s education, for example.

Despite the historical variations in kinship practices in South Asia (Uberoi, 1993), there has been an overall tendency in colonial and postcolonial modernity towards greater homogeneity in terms of marriage patterns, evincing a broad shift that favours the normative order of the Hindu upper castes (Rao, 1993; Basu, 1999; Srinivasan, 2005). Concomitant with the massive rise in the levels of dowry transacted during marriage (Rao, 1993; Basu, 1999; Bhat & Halli, 1999; Kaur & Palriwala, 2014), practices in the region show a marked tendency to override non-Brahmanical practices in favour of a more Brahmanical Hindu model of marriage, favouring hypergamy, and increased exogamy when viewed from the perspective of women – that is, women are more likely now to be married out of their kin and their natal territory. It is



worth reviewing, in this context, some of the key features of Brahmanical ideology which accords prestige to the model of *Kanyadana* or ‘gift of a virgin daughter’.

According to the dominant Brahmanical ideology, prestigious marriage practice should include the ‘gift of a virgin’ or *Kanyadana*. Manu, the Hindu lawgiver, strictly condemned any act of exchange by the father of the bride during the marriage: ‘No father who knows (the law) must take even the smallest gratuity of his daughter; for a man who, through avarice, takes a gratuity, is a seller of his offspring’ (*Manu* III, 51, cited in Tambiah, 1973, p. 68; see also Ram, 1991, p. 165). And, the weight of authority and tradition vested in Sanskrit textual codification in South Asia meant that marriages which take the form of the gift of a virgin daughter are exalted, while denigrating marriages which involve bride-price (Ram, 1991). In the Brahmanical evaluation, bride-price practice is similar to selling daughters for profit and thus reprehensible. The honourable act recommended for the more prestigious in society became the ‘gift of the virgin daughter’. The political domination of the upper caste Brahmins, along with the religious domination they exercise in South Asia, further cemented the Brahmanical version of marriage as ‘gift of a virgin’, that is, as a socially and ritually superior practice (Sheel, 2008). The generalisation of such an ideology is itself a shift from a traditional form of caste power which did not require that everyone follow the same norms, but rather inferiorised and arranged different practices in a hierarchy that privileged the practices of the upper castes. Today, modernity still privileges the practices of the upper caste Hindus, but with a new insistence on wiping out heterogeneity.

Such an insistence is not, of course, uniformly adopted. Hindu upper caste norms are themselves transforming (see Kaur & Palriwala, 2014). For example, studying the changing marriage system in a middle-class Vattimas, a Brahmin subcaste in India, Fuller and Narasimhan (2008, p. 737) show that endogamous and companionate marriage are developing although arranged and endogamous marriage remains the norms, both ideally and statistically for Vattimas. In exploring gender equality in the context of rising companionate marriage

ideals in suburban middle-class Hyderabad, Gilbertson (2014) illustrates a shift in marriage from a hierarchical relationship of respect to a more equal relationship of friendship. And, as we have noted already, non-Brahman castes in the south of India continue to blur the distinction between affines and one's kin, making marriage an easier transition for women. Nevertheless, *Kanyadana* continues to be an ideology that is worth exploring because it makes explicit certain tendencies that can be observed in a more diffuse way in a number of non-Brahmanic and non-Hindu communities. These tendencies concern the assumption that women must migrate at the time of their marriage, from their natal homes to their husband's home, that they must be 'given away' at the time of marriage. Moreover, it is a 'one-way' movement that cannot be reversed. The woman must never come back and expect to find a home. Indeed, such an ideology can be seen at work well beyond the South Asian cultural region itself, to the 'giving away' of the bride by the father in western Christian weddings. Viewed from this perspective, the experience of a Muslim woman like Jahan, still fits into what I am describing broadly as the ideology of *Kanyadana*.

Jahan will be introduced later in the chapter. Here I focus on her discussion of the concept of marriage. When Jahan described her marriage and movement from her natal home to her husband's home, she alluded to a song by a popular Bengali writer Rabindranath Tagore:

During weddings we play Rabindra Sangeet, "Jokhon porbe na mor payer chinnho ae Baate". This song means that after wedding I am not supposed to come back to my mother's place. Once my foot steps out of my mother's place, they are not meant to come back. (Jahan, Interview, 2013)

As a Muslim family, and following Muslim marriage practice, Jahan's father might not have given Jahan as 'a gift' during her marriage. But the cultural ideas and practices of marriage, her permanent transfer to her husband's home after marriage and her experiences of being a stranger in her marital home resonate with the stories of many other women participants in my research irrespective of their religious and cultural backgrounds. And while women in southern India may find themselves less of a stranger in their marital home, they too find it

difficult to 'return' and expect to find a home in their natal family in the event of marital violence or discord (Rao, 2015; Palriwala & Uberoi, 2008). In her study of marriage, violence and choice among Dalit women in rural Tamil Nadu, Rao (2015) shows that cross-kin marriage and the fact that women enjoy a relationship with husband's natal kin prior to marriage does not ensure that Dalit women are able to exercise agency when faced with domestic violence or in making decisions regarding finances and family decisions. Instead, their capacity to exercise authority is more shaped by the presence/absence of children and the economic opportunities available to them as working women.

### ***Women and/as the Gift***

A typical Nepali folk song expresses well a father's feelings during his daughter's marriage. Not only does it represent the mixed emotions of the father, the song also highlights the ambiguous position of women in Nepali society. The daughter is precious, so her father is performing a virtuous social act by gifting her to a stranger. At the same time, she has been a burden and the father experiences intense relief as he gifts her to the stranger.

Hun Mal Chori Aaru Lie Dine

Rakhi Dharauti Sarijani Line

Khusi Chu Ajha Gari Bidahi

Halka Bhaiye Jhai Arini Kahaayi (A traditional Nepali Song)

Daughters are objects to be given [to others]

I have kept her like a loan held in trust

Happy I am today, for I farewell her [to her in-laws' home]

The burden of debt has been lightened today [my translation]

The song suggests that a daughter is meant to be given to others. Even more strikingly, she is kept like a loan taken from others. Her place with her parents, the place into which she is born, is transient. She resembles a bond or security which the father has managed to keep safe; but, now he is giving his daughter's hand back to the rightful person concerned. He feels

vastly relieved, released from the burden of a perceived loan. Women are born to-be-given-away – in a state of anticipated removal.

The song represents many other kinds of everyday formulations that provide some inkling of the deep importance placed by parents on ensuring that their daughters are married. While parents also place pressure on their sons to marry, a daughter's marriage becomes more significant because if she remains unmarried, it is a matter of social dishonour for her parents (Gupta, 2014; see also Parrot & Cummings, 2006, p. 160). For this reason, Sarvate (2000, cited in Parrot & Cummings, 2006) suggests that poor families in India who often are unable to afford a dowry, sometimes choose to kill an infant girl or abort a female fetus rather than cope with the dishonour associated with having an unmarried daughter at home.

Yet, if marriage represents a relief for the father of the bride, the confluence of marriage and migration makes marriage something more complex for the bride. In his analysis of a girl's psychological conditions during her marriage and entry to her husband's family, Kakar (1988) delineates the emotional upheavals of a bride:

In her inner ideals and conscious resolution to be a good wife and an exemplary daughter-in-law, a bride comes into her husband's family with a tremendous burden of anxiety and nostalgia, with a sense of antagonism towards her mother-in-law who has, after all, usurped the place of her own sorely missed and needed mother, with a mixture of shy anticipation and resentment towards her husband's sisters and other young female relatives who have presumed to replace the sisters and cousins and friends at home, and with ambivalent feelings of tenderness and hostility towards the unknown person who is now her husband and claims her intimacy. And if her husband turns out to be unworthy, she knows that there is no going back for her. (Kakar, 1988, p. 62)

However, in this section I will concentrate on one element of marriage, that is, the principle of woman-as-gift, a practice that also provokes considerable anxiety among sociological thinkers.

Levi-Strauss, deeply influenced by Marcel Mauss's theory of exchange, wrote in *The Elementary Structure of Kinship* that marriage is an institution which leads to a cycle of

exchange. In societies in which women are considered the most valuable of possessions, they are also considered natural stimulants for the perpetuation of the exchange cycle (Levi-Strauss, 1969):

On the one hand, women are the most precious possessions, but above all because women are not primarily a sign of social value, but a natural stimulant; and the stimulant of the only instinct the satisfaction of which can be deferred, and consequently the only one of which, in the act of exchange, and through the awareness of reciprocity, the transformation from the stimulant to the sign can take place, and, defining by this fundamental process the transformation from nature to culture, assume the characters of an institution. (Levi-Strauss, 1969, pp. 62-63)

Feminists are more ambivalent regarding such theories. Some feminists such as Rubin (1975) have seen that in Levi-Strauss's theory of exchange of women there lay the basis for developing a political economic of sex. For others, such as, Hartsock (1998, p. 171), Levi-Strauss's notion of women as a 'natural stimulant' of exchange has invited criticism for being 'a phallocratic perspective that ignores women's lives and instead treats women as unreal beings who are at the bottom simply symbols created by the male mind' (Hartsock, 1998, p. 171). Revisiting Levi-Strauss's work, in her book *The Feminist Standpoint Revisited and Other Essays*, Hartsock comments:

If we begin from the realities of women's lives, it is hard to imagine that women are not humans, but are the means by which humans (men) communicate and establish a social synthesis. On the basis of a division of labour analysis, one can see that the reality is the reverse. Women are not, as Levi-Strauss would have it, the creation of an intentional act of the male mind, the invention of a symbol by means of which to construct society and to distinguish it from nature. Women are the literal and material producers of men, who in turn like to imagine that the situation is the reverse. (Hartsock, 1998, p. 183)

Thus, according to Hartsock, Levi-Strauss is inclined to assume that women, unlike men, are simply commodities (Hartsock, 1998, p. 179).

Levi-Strauss's characterization of the gift of women is highly elaborated in the marriage practice of *Kanyadana* in South Asia. In *Kanyadana*, where the father of the bride gives his

(virgin) daughter away as a gift, the act is followed by more gift-giving in the form of dowry. He must not accept anything from his son-in-law to be. In South Asian marriage practices, specifically in exogamous societies, gift exchange takes the form of a uni-directional flow. Members of a group that takes a daughter will not necessarily give a daughter to the givers but will rather give their daughters to others. So, in that sense, the procedure is as follows: I give to you, and you give to another. This is in keeping with Levi-Strauss' (1969) description of marriage by gift as a form of generalized exchange where the transfer is never directly reciprocal. In making his argument, Levi-Strauss stressed that 'regimes of generalized exchange are inherently unstable since they inhibit a closure of [the] matrimonial cycle' (Parry, 1986, p. 454).

This is quite the opposite of the way Malinowski perceived exchange in primitive economies. In Malinowski's discussion of exchange in the Trobriand Islands, especially his discussion of the Kula ring in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922) and his more general discussion in *Crime and Custom in Savage Society* (1926), he puts forward a model that portrayed exchange 'as essentially dyadic transactions between self-interested individuals, and as premised on some kind of balance' (Parry, 1986, p. 454). This may not be how gift exchange operates during *Kanyadana*. The existence of hypergamy does allow some reciprocity in that wife-givers gain an increment in their social status by alliance and by giving away daughters as 'gifts'. Nevertheless, the overwhelming direction of prestations during *Kanyadana* is tilted towards the wife-taking group, making the process quite unlike Malinowski's Trobriand practice. As Parry notes, 'The endless stream of gifts cannot be a *quid pro quo* for an elevation in rank and there is no question of a dyadic exchange' (1986, p. 462).

In the theory of the gift propounded by Mauss, gift exchange follows a cycle. At some point, when the initial gift giver receives a gift of similar kind or of higher value than the gift she or he initially gave, the exchange cycle comes to an end (Mauss, 1990). The giver establishes a

moral superiority as well as a sense of plenitude over the gift receiver. As Mauss states, in the Pacific context, the principle of gift giving is governed by the concept of *mana*, i.e., the authority, honour, and prestige of having wealth. Thus, the giving of a gift becomes a means of showing one's superiority, of being higher in rank and enjoying the glory associated with being a superior gift giver. One must give gifts in order to maintain and increase *mana*; and, one must reciprocate so as to prevent oneself from losing the previously achieved *mana* (Mauss, 1990, p. 8).

Read in terms of Mauss's theory, the South Asian father who gives his daughter as a gift without accepting anything in return should be elevated to a superior position. This is true to some extent. He is certainly considered superior to those who exchange their daughters in return for 'something', either goods, labour, money, or some other form of bride-price (Sheel, 2008; Parry, 1986; Raheja, 1988; Tambiah, 1973). In his summative study of various life forms of gift (*dan*) in contemporary India, Copeman (2011) delineates a different reasoning for the superiority of *Kanyadana* among Hindus. He notes that *Kanyadana* is considered a most auspicious form of *dan* as it encompasses varieties of other *dan*, which makes it pre-eminent: *Kanyadana* includes *vidya dana*, *shram dana*, *dhan dana*, *anna dana* (Copeman, 2011, p. 1085).

Yet there remains a paradox. In the context of the gift of the virgin daughter, unlike Mauss's notion of superiority of gift giver, the father of the bride (who gives the gift) is actually inferior to the gift receiver, that is, the groom and the family of the groom. The man who receives the gift as well as his family, becomes superior not only to the bride, but to the bride's family.

Anthropologists have attempted to explain the hierarchical relationship that obtains between wife-taker and wife-giver during *Kanyadana* (Vatuk, 1975; Parry, 1986; Raheja, 1988). Vatuk (1975), in her analysis of gifts and affines in north India, argues that the inferiority on the part of gift-giver during *Kanyadana* is created by the marriage alliance itself (also see Parry,

1986). Vatuk (1975, p. 159) argues that ‘the recognition of the relative superiority of bride-takers in the context of affinal interaction is conceptually independent of the relative position of the two families in terms of economic assets, prestige, and local reputation’. Raheja (1988, p. 119), who focuses on the ritual context of prestations in north India, argues that gift-giving involves the transference of inauspiciousness from donor to recipient. ‘It is the obligation of wife-receiving people to act as recipients for the well-being of those ... who are related to them as wife-givers’ (Raheja, 1988, p. 199). Raheja’s detailed ethnography of the numerous affinal prestations during a Gujar wedding enables an understanding of the anomaly of women’s social position in much of South Asia: on the one hand, they are precious to their parents and kin; on the other, they are burdens. While Raheja does not explicitly evaluate the hierarchical relationship between wife-givers and wife-takers, she strongly argues that the central rite of *Kanyadana*, like many other prestations, is supposed to remove sin and danger from the family of the donor. An unmarried daughter is expected to bring great inauspiciousness and misfortune to her father’s house, especially after she has begun to menstruate. Thus, she has to be given as a gift to avoid any misfortune and inauspiciousness happening to her natal family. During marriage, ‘the inauspiciousness is transferred to the groom and his family through their acceptance of the *Kanyadana* and the prestations that accompany and follow the gift of [a] virgin’ (Raheja, 1988, p. 134).

Allen (1982) discussed the ideals of female purity maintenance in his comparative study of girls’ pre-puberty rites among the Newars of Kathmandu Valley and the Nayars of Kerala. Allen notes that the practice of pre-pubertal marriage of girls among Newars of Kathmandu Valley, which follows similar ritual practices to *Kanyadana*, is an institutionalized response to the danger associated with the sexuality of an unmarried yet sexually mature girl. Allen notes that:

An unmarried yet sexually mature girl is an anomaly to be avoided at all costs. A man who has failed to marry off his daughter prior to first menstruation is said to have committed the sin of embryo murder, and her presence in his household endangers the purity of all of its adult male residents. (Allen, 1982, p. 180)



If we return to Raheja's thesis, we can use Allen's reference to 'embryo murder' to revise her argument. The wife-takers certainly remove from the father the inauspicious burden of having a sexually mature daughter whose fertility is unharnessed. But by turning her into a wife, the wife-takers do not themselves take on the burden of inauspiciousness. They transfer her into a state of auspiciousness not only as a wife but also as a potential mother-to-be. We glimpse here how closely tied women's fertility is to their various ontological status – as pre-pubescent girl, post-menstrual unmarried girl (burden and anomaly) and as wife/mother-to-be. I trace this close relation between wifedom and maternity in the next chapter.

The *Kanyadana* ideology in effect consists of two conflicting hierarchical principles overlaying each other. The first is entirely consistent with Mauss's point, that the gift giver is superior. This principle of political hierarchy obtains in numerous contexts: between men and god, and between men and men. In all religions in South Asia, humans are embedded in spiritual hierarchies with gods, often with a number of divine and semi-divine entities. The social orders that exist among various castes, classes, as well as between men and women, are often ideologically merged with this hierarchy (see also Fuller, 1992). Thus, humans and divines alike are linked in ascending orders of moral and spiritual value. How does gift giving operate between humans divinity? In offerings, it is humans who are gift givers. Yet, divine is superior. Because divine's gifts will always override anything that humans have to offer (see Fuller, 1992). *Kanyadana* ideology upholds this hierarchy by signalling that gift giving is superior to exchange, and that the gift giver is superior to the one who exchanges his daughter.

In actual practice, however, the structures of patriarchy and male dominance override all other forms of hierarchy. The ideology of woman as a burden effectively defines women's social relations. In her day-to-day life, frequently a young woman realises all too soon that she is not perceived as a gift. More often she is treated as a burden. As I have just argued, this is

especially so when she reaches the age of puberty, for it is then that her sexuality becomes a burden. As the Nepali folk song states, she is perceived as a loan held on trust by her parents. In marriage, although she is gifted as a precious gift by her parents, the groom who takes her is seen to be doing a dual favour, not only by converting her into a potentially auspicious being, but taking her (a burden) off her parent's shoulders.

## **Marriage and Migration**

The patriarchal ideology, not surprisingly has little to say about women's experience of thus being 'given' as a gift. In order to shift from patriarchal ideology to seeing how this is actually lived out by women, I turn at this point to my ethnography of South Asian migrant women in Sydney.

Jahan, 38, was born into a middle-class family in Bangladesh. She migrated to Australia fifteen years ago as a dependent of her husband. I met Jahan at a community centre where she does volunteer work. She teaches knitting, painting, and doll making as well. She also keeps the financial records for the centre, and procures the raw materials required for training. As she was in charge of the training activities at the centre, Jahan was a logical point of contact during my field work.

Jahan told me that as a child she was outgoing and versatile. She achieved good grades and numerous awards at her school and college. The youngest of three sisters and a brother, she never felt that her parents prevented her from doing the things she wanted to do. Indeed, she could sense their pride in her. But marriage was to change her life completely.

A distant relative offered a marriage proposal for Jahan fifteen years ago when Jahan was 23. The proposal came from a family who just lived two blocks away from Jahan's parents' house. Jahan's husband, who was then quite young, had been studying in Ireland before leaving to settle in Sydney. He had just arrived in Bangladesh for a short family visit when the proposal was sent to Jahan's house. As Jahan said:

When the proposal for my marriage came, my mum didn't check or question on anything like his background, job, whether he can afford a good house or not, what his salary was ... nothing. He had five sisters and a brother; in that sense, he had a big burden of his sisters and young brother on him. But my mum didn't say anything. My mum looked at his education. Then she decided to give my hand [in marriage] to my husband. (Jahan, Interview, 2013)

Jahan's marriage was reminiscent of the recent trend in marriage practices in South Asia, wherein parents choose marriage partners for their daughters from among boys who are studying or plan to settle overseas especially in the global north – in the US, the UK, Canada and/or Australia. Kalpagam (2008) notes precisely this in cases where urban middle-class families in Tamil Nadu form alliances for their daughters with boys who have settled in the US or Canada. In a sense, migration has become a component of what has been described as 'hypergamy', a girl's family marrying 'up'. Forming an alliance internationally serves as a status enhancement strategy for the families through marriage. For Jahan's family, a proposal from such a highly-educated man signalled an opportunity to secure a good future for Jahan. And, it also ensured high social status for the family in the community. Jahan's family accepted the proposal. The marriage took place less than a month from the time when the initial proposal was received.

After her marriage, Jahan moved to live with her husband in her in-laws' home. In accordance with the patri(viri)local norms, in South Asia, she left her natal home to live with her husband and his paternal kin. This movement has recently achieved recognition in South Asian migration studies as a form of migration. Palriwala and Uberoi note:

In China and India, where the patri(viri)local marriage is predominant, marriage for women entailed a new home and work environment, and possibly even different types of work, structured by new people, relationships, and authorities to submit to. The incomer was expected to follow the local mores and ways of doing things rather than those of her natal family or locality, and it would take time for her to be accepted and incorporated as an insider, if ever. Even if she made her home with her husband, she [would] rarely forsake the idea of a home left behind. In effect, and simply by virtue of her marriage, she was the epitome of [a] permanent migrant. (Palriwala & Uberoi, 2008, p. 28)

When Jahan moved to live with her husband's family, to her husband it was his home. To her, it was a place full of strangers. Once in her husband's home, Jahan lost her autonomy. Much of the extant kinship literature emphasises the considerable physical distances that women are compelled to travel as a result of exogamous marriage in South Asia. This removal often entails a sense of remoteness for a woman in terms of the natal home she has left behind (Jeffery, 2014; Gupta, 1995; Dyson & Moore, 1983). Yet for Jahan, remoteness was achieved through purely *social* shifts in relationships and expectations, rather than through sheer physical distance. When Jahan married, her social world shifted. She did not simply become a wife, she entered into the social hierarchy of her husband's family as a daughter-in-law, now subject to their authority. She occupied the lowest position in the family and was expected to comply not only with the wishes of her husband, but also with those of the elder members of the household. Only by complying could she display the proper conduct of a submissive daughter-in-law. Her behaviour was closely watched and she was only allowed to visit on her own with their permission. Describing her everyday life before and after her marriage Jahan said:

They [her husband's family members] treated me as if I was an educated servant to their family. I had to do everything for them. There was no help around. In my parents' place I was the youngest. Even when I wanted to do something like cooking, my mum used to say, 'Go and study first, after that if you have time you can do'. My mum always said, 'Go and study ... Go and study'. In my parents' place I can sleep as late as I want. Not that I am a sleepy person, but, if I want to sleep, I can. In my in-laws' house, I had to wake up six o'clock sharp. I had to go for a walk with my mother-in-law. After coming back, I had to do all the household chores. I used to help my mother-in-law in the kitchen. While she is cooking, I had to watch her cooking. My mother-in-law always used to tell me how her son is a food loving person, and if food is not cooked properly he will throw away everything. She kept telling me to cook with passion and nicely so that her son will be very happy. Then after everyone had finished with their lunch, I had to clean the area and plates. (Jahan, Interview, 2014)

Jahan performed completely different sets of daily routines and attitudes before and after her marriage. As a new daughter-in-law, in this social environment, a woman's social position drops considerably and constraints are placed upon her behaviour. Kinship studies undertaken

in South Asia note that women who are married to close-kin are relatively free from behavioural constraints as daughters-in-law compared to women who marry complete strangers (Karve, 1993). However, as Madan (1990) argues, a woman's position in her husband's family is similar irrespective of marriage practice.

A doctor in Banglore may marry his father's sister's daughter, or perhaps his own sister's daughter, which is something that his colleague in Chandigarh cannot do; yet the position which this woman will occupy in her husband's home may not be different from that of the Chandigarh doctor's wife ... It would be a rash person who would maintain that the position of a woman who marries her first cousin rather than a stranger, and goes to live in her mother's brother's home is better. (Madan, 1990, p. 68)

Marriage migration that entails moving a considerable distance from the natal home only adds to the level of challenge for women, it does not create it on its own.

Tara's case, in contrast to that of Jahan, exemplifies typical village exogamy. Born into an Indian middle-class family, Tara was brought up in Mysore, a state in Karnataka, South India. She commented that she and her older brother and sister enjoyed pampered lives growing up in their parents' home. Like Jahan, as the youngest, she felt that she was the most pampered of the siblings. Tara's marriage was arranged. But, unlike Jahan, when Tara married she moved from Mysore to Tamil Nadu. Mysore and Tamil Nadu are two adjoining states in the southern part of India. Language is one of the main factors that separate these two states apart from the national state boundaries. The official language of Tamil Nadu is Tamil and Kannada is the official language of Mysore and they are quite different languages, with different scripts. When Tara got married and moved to Tamil Nadu, she had to learn a different language. Initially, Tara had difficulty communicating; but, over time, she successfully learned Tamil and ceased using her own Kannada language. Thus the move away from her natal home provided Tara with the extra challenge of learning a new language. In recounting her new role of daughter-in-law, Tara's account echoes a number of Jahan's

experiences. Tara felt that her life had been overturned. Everything in her in-laws' household operated in unfamiliar ways:

Actually after marriage and with in-laws, your life is totally different. I feel ... you don't have much freedom. There [in her parents' place], any time, you can sleep or wake up, you can do your work but here [in her in-laws' place], you can't do like that. Here you have to get up at a certain time, do household chores. Even to call or speak with someone [her parents] you have to look for a time. Whenever it suits, then only you can call or chat. Totally different compared to my parents' place. After marriage you have to take into consideration your husband's wishes, and interests. Certain other things like your in-laws have to be given greater consideration. You have to take into account what they like and what they don't like. Also you have to be able to create a balance between your relation with your parents and with your in-laws. For example, you have to give greater importance to your in-laws than your parents. (Tara, Interview, 2014)

Jahan and Tara's narratives revealed that marriage is itself a migration for women, often entailing a new and different family environment. If Jahan's and Tara's narratives of marriage are compared with migrating to a new country, a number of similarities emerged. Australia's immigration policies, its regulatory regimes and practices, all place restrictions on women who travel here on a dependent spouse visa. They limit women's behaviour in terms of how many hours she can work, and whether she can access health care facilities or not. Similarly after marriage, after migrating to the husband's home, different social hierarchies, gendered norms and values shape and restrict a woman's behaviour in new and various ways. Frequently, after assuming her responsibilities as a daughter-in-law, a woman cannot continue with the work that she was doing before marriage. For example, Jahan wanted to complete her education and pursue a career, but the responsibilities that were placed on her in her new home made it almost impossible for her to concentrate on and complete her study. Although her in-laws told her that she could study, she simply was given no time to herself, let alone to study:

After marriage, I wanted to complete my study. But my mother-in-law said, 'You can stay with me and do your study'. In the meantime they wanted me to do household work. I had to take care of my paralysed father-in-law, my husband's nephew was living with us, and I had to look after him. You know, Nila, to study you need that mind, space and

concentration. It was very difficult. I didn't have that freedom in my in-law's house.  
(Jahan, Interview, 2013)

Marriage migration often creates a profound discontinuity in a woman's life cycle. This discontinuity can be experienced in everything from loss of control over basic everyday decisions (such as when to wake up in the morning, to whether one can rest or take a nap in the afternoon, make a phone call to one's parents), to major aspects such as whether one can study, undertake training, or continue with one's career. Major decisions regarding what these women want to do with their lives must be referred not only to their husbands, but also to their in-laws. In other words, women have to take the whole group into account when contemplating what they want to pursue in life. A few women do manage to take these changes into consideration, and to continue with the activities that they were engaged in before marriage, activities that include the pursuit of careers. But, for many, managing such discontinuities becomes impossible. The transitional nature of women's lives in their places of birth renders temporary, and retrospectively highly emotional, everything associated with their lives prior to marriage – the love and affection they received from their parents, as well as the way they lived their lives, and enjoyed a capacity to study and work and indulge some leisure.

### **An Incoming Stranger**

After this many years, they [her husband's family members] still see me as someone from outside. (Jahan, Interview, 2013)

In this part of the interview, Jahan was relating how, even after spending almost 15 years with her husband's family, she still feels like an outsider. Just as migrants are typically viewed as strangers in a host society (Thapan, 2005), a newly married woman is frequently viewed as an outsider in her new home (Dyson & Moore, 1983; Kakar, 1988; Minturn & Kapoor, 1993; Jeffery, 2014). Although her new home and family members are equally strange to the

woman, she becomes the stranger, as she is the newcomer to the family. In his classic paper entitled *The Stranger*, Simmel wrote:

A stranger is a person who comes today and stays tomorrow. He is, so to speak, the potential wanderer: although he has not moved on, he has not quite overcome the freedom of coming and going. He is fixed within a particular spatial group, or within a group whose boundaries are similar to spatial boundaries. But his position in this group is determined, essentially, by the fact that he has not belonged to it from the beginning, that he imports qualities into it, which do not and cannot stem from the group itself. (Simmel, 1950, p. 402)

We could have a more fitting description of the destiny of women as an item of 'exchange'. In their study of kinship structure and women's autonomy in India, Dynson and Moore (1983) argue that since a newly married bride comes from another group, she is regarded as a threat by her new family (also see Kakar, 1988; Gupta, 1995). Her behaviour is closely watched and she is re-socialised in the new family so she can be seen to identify her own interest with those of her husband's kin.

Jahan experienced a difficult time during the first five years of her marriage. Describing her life after she married, she said:

In my in-law's house, it was very difficult. I didn't have any freedom. Whenever I say something, my in-laws never listened to me. They listened to my sisters-in-law but not me. During my initial days, when I lived with my in-laws at their house, I used to work hard but they used to complain to my husband that I did not do things according to their way. And my husband used to believe them. You know, if someone keeps telling you one thing for a number of times, you would start believing on it, don't you? With my husband, since my in-laws were telling negative things about me, he used to get very angry with me. (Jahan, Interview, 2013)

As an outsider, Jahan initially struggled to gain the trust of her in-laws. Her inability to identify a common interest with her in-laws initially put her relationship with her husband in jeopardy. In her study of attitudes towards strangers in early Hebrew culture, Greifer (1945) observed:



Antagonism to a member of another cultural group is not so much due to the individual per se, but rather as a reaction to the implied threat to the culture of the “in”-group. (Greifer, 1945, p. 740)

As an outsider, a newly married wife’s status and sexuality personifies the biggest competitive challenge to a son’s loyalty and affection for his house (Gray, 1982; Kakar, 1988). Studies show that authority over the newly married bride is epitomised and most often exercised by her mother-in-law (Gray, 1982; Kakar, 1988; Sharma, 1980). Although both mother-in-law and daughter-in-law are related to the family through marriage, there is a very distinct variation in terms of the power that these two women hold in the family. Often the relationship between a woman and her mother-in-law is fraught with enmity. Karve (1993, p. 58) notes that the rivalry between a mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law is ‘the rivalry of two generations of women between whom, in the course of life time, power is transferred from the old to the young’. Thus, every attempt is made to contain the newly married bride and re-define her as a daughter-in-law in the new family. Gray (1982, p. 222) observed that

the unscrupulous adherence of a mother-in-law to the rights and obligations of a family hierarchy is an attempt to limit the sexual “weapon” of a wife through controlling her daughter-in-law’s relations with all members of the household, especially with her son.

Settling into a new family is not easy. Frequently, a new wife suffers from isolation, home sickness, and frustration (Jeffery, 2014). It often takes years for a newly married woman in South Asia to feel fully at ease in her husband’s home (Sharma, 1980). When a woman provides a family with an heir, that is, a son, her position in the household becomes more secure. She becomes an insider as she has performed her function, providing for the continuation of the family generation. Often by this stage a woman’s bond to her natal member of the household is considered stronger than her links to her brothers. And, as a woman ascends the scale from mother to mother-in-law and eventually to grandmother, she can exercise far more power and control over domestic decisions and family matters.

## **Migration, Home and Belonging**

The typical middle-class South Asian woman, who has been the focus of my study, is caught in a very ambiguous state of being neither in one space nor another. South Asian women are born into one particular space that they call 'home' for a certain period of their young and adult lives. In their places of birth, their lives are replete with indulgence, freedom, and love and affection. While their father may regard them as temporary, women develop a premarital-habitus wherein they are deeply attached to their natal families and assume this is home.

Brah, who discusses home in the context of migration, defines 'home' as:

the lived experiences of a locality. Its sounds and smells, its heat and dust, balmy summer evenings, or the excitement of the first snowfall, shivering winter evenings, sombre grey skies in the middle of the day ... all this, as mediated by the historically specific everyday of social relations. (1996, p. 192)

For immigrants, as Brah (1996, p. 192) argues, 'home' becomes a mythic place of desire, 'a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of "origin" '. When I asked my women respondents about their 'homes' they nostalgically talked about their homes before marriage. And, as with Brah's migrants, for my respondents, after marriage 'home' is 'a place of no return'. As Brah (1996, p. 193) further contends, the experiences of social exclusion often inhibit a person from proclaiming a place as 'home'. This too is applicable to women as wives. The sharp curtailment of freedoms makes it much harder for women to experience their husband's home as their home.

Efforts have been made to re-vision migrants' 're-settlement' in terms of Bourdieu's notion of a habitus as a virtual pattern of expectations and orientations that has been instilled in people through long-term engagement with embodied social practices. Migrants arrive with such a habitus already instilled in them. As Noble (2013, p. 343) states, 'Resettlement entails the transformation of the embodied capacities of migrants, and the formation of a new set of bodily capacities which – for some – never quite becomes the dispositions of the citizen who "belongs" by birth'. South Asian women often find themselves plunged into just such a situation after marriage, one that splits their lives in two. The internal embodied emotional

attachment that they hold for their natal homes, and the greater freedoms they enjoyed as daughters, in what is possibly a different village, a different region, a different language, all stay with them as a set of dispositions, leaving a residue of intensified longing. Married women's longing for their natal home and kin are illustrated in various women's folklores in South Asia (see Srivastava, 1991; Skinner et al., 1994). Consider the following example from the 'monsoon song' (*savaan*) genre, which expresses a married woman's longing for her natal family:

The shower of the month of savan does not please me, as my brother has  
not come from my parents' home to fetch me.

The swings must have been put out again in my parents' courtyard, and all  
my friends must be swinging on them.

O my dear father, why have you forgotten to invite me?

The clouds are pouring rain outside in the courtyard, and inside me is  
pouring down the rain of tears.

O my dear father, why have you married me off so far?

(Srivastava, 1991, p. 303)

At the same time, their situation may be described as what Sayad (2004, p. 58) alludes to as 'the temporary that lasts'. Yet Sayad is not describing married women, but Algerian emigrants domiciled in France. Their feelings of being outsiders are forced and re-enforced by two complementary facts: on the one hand they are external to the receiving society; on the other, they have departed their land of birth. Both Algerian migrants and married women in fact enjoy very limited freedom in terms of returning to their place of origin or leaving the group they have entered. Yet from the point of view of the receiving group, the stranger enjoys, as Simmel (1950) puts it, the freedom to come and go and is therefore regarded with suspicion. Above all, the in-marrying woman is marked by qualities that belong to a different habitus, not that of the husband's group. The in-marrying woman and the migrants in a new society are both destined to be regarded forever as Jahan puts it 'someone from outside'.

In the cases of the women I interviewed, not only had they left their natal homes to become outsiders in their husbands' homes, they had also left their home countries to travel to Australia. The two experiences have, as I have tried to explore, many shared dimensions. As a result, they overlap and combine to make these women quintessential temporary sojourners in both societies, a form of temporariness that lasts forever.

## **Migration and Racism**

Whether subtle or acute, racism affects hearts in similar ways.

(Senator the Hon. Concetta Fierravanti- Wells,  
Symposium on Racism and Women, Sydney, 17 October, 2013)

The experience of estrangement, of living as a stranger, is conditioned heavily by the attitudes of the receiving society or community. Mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law and the husband's family wittingly or unwittingly convey to the woman, a sense of living as a stranger in her husband's land. What has been described as racism similarly accentuates and structurally shapes the experience of living as a stranger in a new country like Australia. But is Australia racist or multi-culturally welcoming? Australia's multicultural policy statements suggest that in multi-cultural Australia, the general population has learned to embrace cultural differences, contributing to the cohesion of Australian society (DOSS, 2014). At a time when the political leaders of some European nations (France, Germany, and the UK) have been critical of multiculturalism (see Dunn & Nelson, 2011), Australia's approach to multicultural policy embraces shared values and cultural tradition and recognizes that the multicultural character gives Australia a competitive edge in an increasingly globalised world (DOSS, 2014). Australia's multicultural policy principles describe Australia as a place wherein all participate on equal terms, access opportunities, accept cultural diversity, recognize the right to practice their own cultures, and work together to build a nation free from ethnic ghettos or separateness from the community at large (DOSS, 2014).

There is no denying Australia's sociological multiculturalness compared to some countries in Europe. In effect, Australia is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse societies in the world. The 2011 Census identified in excess of 300 different ancestries among the Australian population, the two most commonly reported being English (36%) and Australian (35%). A further six among the leading ten ancestries reflected Australia's European heritage. The two remaining ancestries were Chinese (4%) and Indian (2%). Today, Australians speak more than 200 different languages including some 40 Aboriginal languages. Apart from the English language, the most commonly used languages in Australia are Chinese (predominantly Mandarin and Cantonese), Italian, Greek, Arabic and Vietnamese. There is also religious diversity: some 61 % reported affiliation to Christianity; 7.2% to non-Christian religions; and, 22% reported no religion (ABS, 2011).

Australian multiculturalism is not simply about the multiculturalism of an empirically existing diversity. Australian multiculturalism is also about ideologies and attitudes about organising a diverse society to be a just one. Multiculturalism has been strongly implemented in national and federal policies since the 1970s. In adherence to its multicultural policy, Australia provides its communities with the freedom to maintain and practice their cultural traditions within the democratic and legal framework of the country. This means that different communities can continue to practice their native languages, rituals, religions and cultural values as long as they remain committed to Australian values and observe the civic responsibilities of an Australian citizen (DOSS, 2014). Reflecting on Australian multiculturalism, Kolehmainen puts it:

In Australia over time the term 'multiculturalism' has come to refer to the demographic reality of cultural diversity, a set of policies and policy orientations, as well as a concept which articulates a normative ideal or ideals about society. Multiculturalism has served a variety of goals over the years, including, the pursuit of social justice, the recognition of identities and appreciation of diversity, the integration of migrants, nation-building, and attempts to achieve and maintain social cohesion. (Kolehmainen, 2010, p. 2)

Such an overt ideology of multiculturalism is belied by Australia's long racial history. The origins of Australian racial attitudes can be traced back to the settler colonialism with which a colony was established in 1788. From the very beginning the racial attitudes of white Australians towards Aboriginal people and policies on racial question in Australia were formed within the context of 'Social Darwinism' which implied the fittest survived and the weakest were eliminated (Jupp, 2002, p. 7; see also Yarwood & Knowling, 1982). Up until 1901, Aboriginal people were excluded from pensions, employment in post offices, from enlistment in armed force, and from maternity allowances (Korff, 2015). In 1901, Australia observed the White Australia policy. Under this policy, non-European migrants – especially Asian immigrants – were restricted from entering to Australia and newcomers were curtailed from rights and services (Lepervanche, 1984; Jupp, 2002, p. 10). Apart from immigration policy, 'White Australia' also maintained its inequalities towards Aboriginal people that were set in the colonial period. There was a widespread expectation that Aborigines would either die out or their culture would be 'bred out' under 'White Australia' (Jupp, 2002, p. 9). For most of the reign of the White Australia policy Aboriginal people were excluded from the vote. They were allowed to vote in state elections only in 1965 (Australian Electoral Commission, 2006). As Jupp (2002, p. 8) says, because Aboriginal people were regarded as a dying race, they were seen as posing no threat to the Australian Government. In the 1970s, the Whitlam Labour government dismantled the White Australia policy, implicitly acknowledging a previous history of racist immigration policy.

There have been numerous critics of multiculturalism since the time of its implementation. As early as 1984, Blainey argued that multiculturalism posed a serious threat to the Australian national identity (Blainey, 1984, cited in Vasta, 1993). While many fought to value multiculturalism as a way to combat extreme forms of nationalism and racism (Castle et al., 1988, cited in Vasta, 1993), the notion of social cohesion based on an overarching set of values continues to equate those values with Anglo-Australian culture, institutions and nationhood (Vasta, 1993, p. 222). In fact, Vasta has argued that the animosity towards a

perceived threat to the dominant cultural values posed by multiculturalism has been one factor that has kept racism alive in Australia (1993, p. 222).

The rosy picture of multiculturalism in Australia as portrayed in its multicultural policy is yet to be achieved. As Mellor (2003) observes, despite the numerous changes made to multiculturalism as policy since the time of its inception, the broad array of racist attitudes, beliefs and actions towards non-Anglo immigrants have yet to be eliminated. Hage (2014) argues that racism, specifically the anti-immigrant racism, mostly post-Second World War racism directed towards immigrants in Australia often takes the form of feeling swamped and overwhelmed by supposedly overwhelming numbers. He refers to this as ‘numerological racism’, a ‘racism of numbers in the sense that it always comes with the category of “too many”; “there are too many Vietnamese”; “there are too many Asians”; “there are too many Muslims” ’ (Hage, 2014, p. 233).

In their empirical study of racism entitled ‘The Challenging Racism Project’ Dunn and colleagues argue that ‘everyday racisms’ are more prevalent than institutional forms of racism in Australia (Dunn et al., 2009). Their survey report shows that almost a quarter of Australians experience ‘everyday’ forms of racism in shops, restaurants, at sporting events, or in the form of disrespectful treatment, or name-calling, all experienced on the basis of ethnic identity. They argue that the burden of racism is unevenly distributed across cultural groups with non-Anglo-Australians experiencing higher rates of everyday racism (Dunn, et al., 2009, p. 2; Dunn & Nelson, 2011). In their study of racial discrimination in the Australian construction industry, Loosemore and Chau (2002, p. 98) also find very high rates of everyday racial experiences by Asian-Australians, taking the form of ‘racist name-calling’ (66%), ‘racist jokes’ (67%), ‘racist material’ (64%), ‘segregation’ (56%), ‘offensive gestures’ (49%) and ‘physical abuse’ (56%). The experience of racist behaviour constructs fearful social environments that can deprive people of their freedom of movement, expression and affiliation (Loosemore & Chau, 2002; Dunn et al., 2009). The effect of racism on health

directly goes to the core sense of self, thus diminishing mental and physical health (Begg et al., 2007; Paradies, 2006, pp. 895-6, cited in Dunn et al., 2009).

In October of 2013, I attended a symposium titled 'Racism and Women' organised by the Immigrant Women's Speakout Association (IWSA) in Sydney. IWSA is an advocacy body which represents ideas and issues related to immigrant and refugee women in NSW. The symposium guest speakers included government ministers, the President of Australian Human Rights Commission, the President of the Anti-Discrimination Board NSW, and the Chairperson of Immigrant Women's Speakout Association, a peak body for non-English speaking background women. The planned outcome of the event was to prepare recommendations to be given to the State and Federal Governments to address racism against women. The audience included representatives from Aboriginal communities, community service workers, various government and non-government organisations, and a few university students like myself. Above all, there was a substantial number of migrant people from non-English speaking backgrounds. Due to the time limit, it was impossible for everyone to speak. But those who got a chance shared how they had been affected both physically and psychologically by racial discrimination. I mention just a couple of instances. A migrant woman from China burst into tears on the podium when she described how she was mistreated by her supervisor (an Australian woman) in her workplace (a food processing centre) when she went to report her back pain, which occurred while she was at work. She said that the supervisor ignored her complaint and asked her to complete her work. Otherwise she might lose her job. Fearful of losing her job, the lady continued her work, and ignored her back pain to such an extent that it eventually resulted in serious back injury. After the injury, the processing centre neither employed her, nor was she given any monetary compensation. Instead, she said, she had to spend a large amount of money from her own pocket for treatment which dragged her family to its financial edge. A nurse from the Philippines recounted how she was excluded and avoided by her work colleagues simply because she was Asian. She was the only Asian childcare worker employed at the childcare centre where she



used to work. Her work colleagues often excluded her from their team. Most of the time she was made to work alone in the kitchen while the other childcare workers teamed up to take care of the children at the centre. The extent to which she was excluded by her colleagues used to make her feel frustrated and depressed. One day when she was randomly accused of stealing food from the kitchen, she could no longer bear the insults and resigned from the job.

The above stories convey racism that can be subtle, covert and perhaps unconsciously and unintentionally perpetrated. Racism can also be overt and intentional. But, nevertheless, in all cases, racism exercises a profound effect on the target's self-esteem and identity. This highlights the point that Senator the Hon. Concetta Fierracanti-Wells made when said: 'whether subtle or acute, racism affects [the] heart in similar ways'.

My respondents recounted numerous similar experiences of racism. They occurred in government offices, in employment in the private sector, at children's schools, while travelling on public transport, or doing the grocery shopping. Sita came to Australia in the 1990s. Sita lived in Hornsby, a suburb which was home to a predominantly white-Australian community in the 1990s and which still remains so today. Sita never built close relationships, either with Anglo-Australians or with immigrants from South Asia. For a while after her arrival in Australia, for almost 3 months, Sita and her family lived isolated lives. It was only when her children (her 13 year old daughter and 9 year old son) started school that she came face-to-face with Anglo Australians. She still had no friends from her own ethnic background. Hornsby is well known for its good primary and secondary schools and this was one of the reasons she decided to live there. At the local school that her son attended, the majority of students were from Anglo-Celtic backgrounds. Sita's son, the only non-white student in his class, had a very hard time at school. She told to me:

He was just 9 years old, and he struggled a lot at school. Not so much with his study but integrating with the other Aussie children. And because he was the only South Asian in the class, he was neglected by his teachers. My son cried a lot. In his school which was full of Aussie kids, initially he struggled with language. He could not understand what the teacher was saying. But his teachers were not kind. They never understood that this child

went to a completely different school in a different country till this period. They never tried and gave him [her son] that little bit of extra attention which could have helped him adjust and integrate with other Aussie class mates easily. Academically, he was two standards above. In year 4 he could do year 6 math. So that was not the issue. Since he was the only South Asian in the class, he was neglected everywhere. In the sport field, among all Aussie kids, this kid was so small. There was a lot of bullying by these Aussie kids who were bigger than him: the teacher did not do anything. Thus my son struggled a lot for a year. Then we changed the school. We repeated his year 4. In his new school, there were other South Asian children and he was able to make friends and he settled well after that. (Sita, Interview, 2013)

In effect, the length of time that Sita's son's discomfort was ignored by his teachers made Sita believe that her son was intentionally being ignored as he was the only South Asian in the class.

When her son settled into his new school a few months later, Sita found a local job, working in a bank as a teller. On her first day at work, when she went to her counter to prepare to serve the customers, she was verbally attacked by a work colleague, who she described as an 'English' woman. The latter had worked as a teller at the same bank for the past 22 years. The woman accused Sita of coming to Australia to take her job away from her. Not knowing how to respond to her colleague's racist remarks, Sita went to the restroom, cried, and then returned as if nothing had happened and started serving her customers. But, then she found that the customer she was serving rejected her because she was not like the white ladies on the other counters. She overheard an elderly lady in her eighties saying 'I will not have my money counted by that lady'. Sita felt devastated and humiliated. The last incident took place at the front counter while the manager was there. He reacted immediately, condemning the customer's racist comment. The customer was told she would not be served by any other teller, Sita served her.

In another case, Sita was abused randomly in a public place (the Sydney metro).

The day after Australia Day in 2007, I was working in the Parramatta office. I got on to the train, normal as every day. At 5:30 p.m. I was on the train. There were two young girls sitting opposite to each other, in two three-seater seats. That means two girls in six seats. They hardly had any clothes on. And the clothes they wore were not even

appropriate for any public place. They had pins, piercing everywhere in their face and body. I just stood on the side. I didn't ask for anything. Then one of girls, she said, you want to sit here then open your mouth and ask. I didn't say anything. Then she started to abuse ... she said go back to where you came from, go back. Why are you here? Then I said shut up and don't make nuisance of yourself. There were people in the train but no one supported me. And this girl when she heard me speak English, said oh! You speak English? Do you? And she started abusing again. Then I left that place and went down because I could not get out of the carriage and I just went down. They came there also. So next station I had to get off. When I got off the train, I immediately went to the station master and asked him to register a complaint. Then he said he cannot and I have to ring a number. Then immediately I came home and I gave them a call. There I made a formal complaint. Next day I went to work and told my manager and colleagues what happened the other day. Then on that day at 10 o'clock, it was Richard Glover on the show, my manager called the radio and told about my case and Richard spoke about my experiences and said this is not accepted in Australia. We (she meant South Asian immigrants) have come here; we haven't accepted a single cent of dollar or any kind of social fund. We've been very productive and contributing and totally integrating into the community and there is no reason for us to be penalized like this. I did nothing wrong. I did not even ask that lady to move and give me space. There was no need for her to belittle me in public. So I made a sort of noise about it. I also wrote to united Indian organisation. I spoke on the radio as well. Nothing happened but I conveyed my message that this sort of behaviour is not accepted. (Sita, Interview, 2013)

Unlike Sita's previous experiences of racism, her experience in the train shows that migrants can be abused at random and that some members of the young generation can be equally as prejudiced towards migrants as their older counterparts.

Like Sita, Sassa, who also came from India, spoke of multiple encounters of racism in Australia, encounters that occurred during her initial days of migration to Australia when she was very new to the place. When I asked her about her experiences of racism, Sassa recalled her memories:

It happened to me even before I started at work. When I first arrived, very first experience was, I went to Franklins and I went wearing thongs [a type of footwear]. After I finished shopping and came to checkout, the lady at the counter said to me 'what about that you are wearing, put that as well or pay for it'. I said, 'I was wearing it' and, she said, 'you must have taken it from the shelves'. I said, 'I was wearing it when I came here'. She could not believe me. That was a bit of demeaning ... she was clearly implying that I stole it ... I am 100 per cent sure that the lady did that because I was of different colour. She did not even apologize. I felt that I had to prove myself for something that I did not do.

And another time it was in a bus. A lady was sitting next to me. I was returning home from the city [Sydney CBD]. Throughout the way the lady was saying things to me and I had to put up with it. I could not defend myself. I just pretended I did not hear anything. I got off the bus and just ignored her. (Sassa, Interview, 2013)

Vina, a mother of two from Sri Lanka, shared her encounters of racism through her children's experiences:

I haven't faced any such incident but my children have. One day when my daughter was walking in the foot path, somebody going on a car yelled at her. She has experienced people calling her 'Blacky'.

Vina continued:

One day my son came crying from his school. When I asked him what happened, he told me 'mum I wish I was white ... I wish I was white'. His friends have been teasing him in school for being black. I did not know what to do. So I told him how black colour is the superior colour and that is why white people go and sunbathe [laughs]. And that his friends are teasing him because they are jealous of his colour. The next day when my son was teased, he turned around and called them [his friends] Milky Way kids [Laughs]. (Vina, Interview, 2013)

Anupama, who was from Nepal, recollected her experience of racism as follows:

I was on my way to work ... I used to work in Malabar ... I had to take bus to get to work. I still remember, it was a bright sunny day. So, when I got into the bus, I took out my sunscreen cream and put it into my face. Then, all of a sudden person from the back seat started shouting at me. He was saying 'Bloody Indians'. He said 'Bloody Indian, looking at mirror and staring behind'. He was yelling so bad that I could not stay in the bus. I went to the driver and asked him to stop the bus. I got off and waited for another bus and went to work. While I was getting out of the bus, the man was still shouting. I was very scared at that time. (Anupama, Interview, 2013)

Unlike the above experiences of overt racism, Nina, a 37 year old mother of three, has experienced racism in a rather indirect way:

I have not experienced anything bad. Nobody has ever come to me and said anything. But, sometimes when we [herself and her three children] go to the park – I don't know who they are- but people speak too loud and too harsh. They don't use good language. Not directly to me but you can feel that they are targeting basically us. And most of the time people do not want to talk to you. As soon as we arrive in the park, people tend to go

away. Such things make me feel that they [implying non-South Asian people in general] do so because we are from South Asia or because of our skin colour. Such behaviours make me question myself: if we are welcomed in this place at all? (Nina, Interview, 2013)

The racism experienced by my respondents constitutes a coherent complex of different kinds of verbal and physical behaviours, and discriminative attitudes towards migrants. Their narratives suggest that the apparent differences, often in bodily features such as skin colour and in language, instigate quick judgment of and prejudice towards migrants, often culminating in a racist situation. And as migrants, the women often feel powerless when dealing with racism and racial encounters. But Sita's attempts to let the broader community know that racism is unacceptable tell us also that with the passage of time, migrants develop more sense of agency when dealing with racial prejudice.

## **Migrants and Adjustment**

My women respondents used the word 'adjustment' as something uniquely the burden of women as in-coming brides, to describe their changed lives after marriage:

For boys, they don't need to leave their homes and go and live with other people. Girls have to go and live with other people at other people's homes and totally start a new life whereas boys, from start to end, they are in their own place. There is no need for them to adjust. They live their own lives. They don't need to come and adjust with our parents; instead, if they don't like it, they can just boldly say, no I don't like. It's always on the girl's side who has to adjust. Even when they talk to their son-in-law, a girl's parents have to give respect. They have to see whether he is in good mood or not. If men do not talk to their in-laws, that does not matter. But for girls, they have to call and talk to their in-laws. Make sure they are happy. Boys, they take it for granted. They are like happy-go-lucky ... they do not have to worry about their wife's parents. (Tara, Interview, 2014)

According to Tara, adjustment is a gendered phenomenon, a notion attested to by a number of studies on South Asian kinship (Khanna & Varghese, 1978; Grey, 1982; Kakar, 1988; Kaur, 2004, 2012). As Kaur (2004, 2012) notes in marriages in South Asia, the burden of adjustment falls upon women who are introduced into a new environment. Adjustment is a

code word widely used in South Asia as short form for learning new skills in pleasing one's husband and in-laws. In Jahan's case it means learning how to cook in the way that her husband is used to – that is, the way his mother cooked for him. Adjustment also involves compromise with women's personal expectations regarding their lives. Only through tolerance, cooperation and self-sacrifice can a woman adjust herself to others living in her husband's home. To again cite Jahan's case, it meant giving up her study, not complaining about her in-laws' unpleasant behaviour to her husband, and silently following their orders pertaining to the household.

This chapter has sought to show that marriage as migration replicates and anticipates many of the issues that are normally reserved for discussions of migration to a new country. Among my respondents, the disappearance of the familiar family network, the need to familiarise with a new environment, and constant calls for self-sacrifice came up twice in their narratives – first in relation to marriage, and second in relation to their migration to Australia. For many the only solution to such challenging circumstances – in both cases – was 'adjustment'. Sita, voicing her opinion about how migrants should adjust in a foreign land, said:

'Be a Roman while you are in Rome'. Don't have your own expectations. Fit in. (Sita, Interview, 2013)

In this section, I will focus on showing how the particular form taken by adjustment, initially as a married woman, in turn shapes women's everyday lives when they arrive in Australia. Some aspects of the habitus required for the women specifically as wives, and established by marriage, neither shift nor change after migration. After migration to Australia, the gendered ideologies that demarcate household work persist. It is usually the women who perform most of the household tasks and do most of the cooking. Women often accept their culturally prescribed roles as wives, which are as much about cooking as they are about domestic management, for example, keeping the house clean, buying groceries, being the primary caretaker of young children, and keeping the family happy. In Jahan's case, she was the sole

caretaker of her family of six members (four young children and a husband). She cooked for the family, prepared the children for school, did the washing, and kept the house clean. When asked whether her husband helped her with the household chores, she answered:

Oh! He does nothing around the household because he does not know how to do. (Jahan, Interview, 2013)

As Jahan was not doing any paid work, from her perspective, involving herself in domestic duties seemed an equal division of labour between husband and wife. But my research revealed that in situations where both husband and wife were working, it was often the woman who was expected to do most of the household chores.

Sita, who as we saw before, compared the division of household work between herself and her husband in India and Australia as follows:

In India my husband used to do 5 per cent and I used to do 95 per cent. After coming here [Australia], the share of household work has gradually shifted to 35/65. I do most of the household tasks. I have been managing house from India and it has been the same here as well. It works in our situation. (Sita, Interview, 2013)

Sassa, the mother of two and a full-time working woman, described her household dynamics as follows:

I do the cooking because he has never done that in his life and I am used to doing it from India so it is not a big deal for me. But he does the vacuuming and he also takes the garbage out. (Sassa, Interview, 2013)

Lia, 29, works full-time at a community organisation. Describing the division of labour in her household, Lia said:

My house is a typical one. It is me who mostly does the household chores. It's when I am sick, my husband does things. But if I am alright, I have to do everything. He will do some stuffs ... he will throw the garbage, but all the major stuffs – cooking, cleaning, laundry – I am the one who has to do. (Lia, Interview, 2013)

The values and traditions central to gender roles came out quite explicitly from a few South Asian-born men whom I interviewed. Ejaz, a 45 year old migrant from Pakistan, came to Australia as a dependent of his wife. Ejaz's migration do not represent the way the majority of my women respondent's husbands migrated to Australia. Ejaz's wife was born to a Pakistani immigrant family in Australia. Ejaz runs a successful real estate business in western Sydney. He has four children and his wife is a stay-at-home mother (according to him). While talking about the division of labour in his household, Ejaz not only described how household work was arranged in his home, he volunteered his justification of the gendered division of labour:

I don't help my wife in the household chores. She does everything. She stays at home. I am working and running 3-4 companies. I am working hard. I am working hard at this side. So ... She never asks me to do anything. She is doing what she is doing. This is like, my wife is not working. She will work if I ask her to work. Then, it will be like same whatever you said [referring back to my comment regarding men sharing the household work], and then I have to be ready to do 50 per cent of all the household work. My wife is not working because I don't like her to work. If she works, she can make money thousand dollars or two thousand dollars a month or so ... but I don't want that you know. What I like is when I go home, she make nice food for me. That is my preference.

If wives work and if families have kids ... then the kids do not have any future. Money is not everything. Support can be different things. Give moral support ... look after your man ... you know ... provide nice food ... look after the kids. If both parents work, by the time they get back to home, they are too tired. Who will play with kids? Work here is not like Pakistan. When you say you work from 9a.m to 5 p.m, then its full-time work. You can't hide behind the desk and finish your shift and come home. It's hard work. (Ejaz, Interview, 2013)

On another occasion, the traditional gender roles were evident when Ram, a 37 year old man from Nepal talked about how decisions are taken in his household:

I make most of the outdoor decisions where as my wife makes indoor decisions. She is the boss inside the house. Basically, when it comes to heavy expenses, I make the decision ... I am supposed to be the head of the household ... because it's the way it works. (Ram, Interview, 2013)



Like Ram, 36 year old Shyam also came from Nepal. While answering my question regarding household decision-making, Ram referred back to Nepal and India and the patriarchal society back home:

Our society [referring to Nepal and India] is a male-dominated society. Although we have come to Australia, I grew up in Nepal and India [Shyam spent most of his childhood in India. His father is an ex-Indian army employee from Nepal]. These are male-dominated countries and one cannot change in one or two days. So in a male-dominated household, man takes the decisions and I am the head of my household. (Shyam, Interview, 2013)

The men's adherence to the traditional ideologies regarding masculinity and femininity further reinforces the notion that it was women who had to compromise within situations and 'adjust'.

On the other hand, there are elements of a 'habitus' established after marriage that also alters after migration. Some of these are quite crucial changes that enhance the migrating couple's autonomy (Vega, 1990; Gilbertson, 2009) – and these have particular implications for women. Migrating to Australia usually means leaving behind the extended family to live in a nuclear family. My women respondents immediately stood to gain both bargaining power and decision-making power in the family from this one crucial change. There was far less pressure on them from family members and relatives regarding their everyday behaviour. Many of my respondents considered that this structural change has given them more freedom which is not surprising given their description of living with their husband's family. For some, it has enabled them to ask their husbands to help them with the household chores. Diya, who shared her perceptions of women and their education in Pakistan, described her freedom and household dynamics in Australia as follows:

I feel more independent here in Australia than back home. There is a culture back home that when you get married, you have to live with your in-laws. Which, I never wanted. That was a major factor in my life to get married with my husband. So, as soon as I came here I felt independent ... Men are comparatively flexible here compared to Pakistan. They don't have people looking over them. They don't have their parents judging over things they do with their families and wives. They are more adaptable and more flexible

that way. They listen to their wives over here as compared to if they were back in Pakistan. (Diya, Interview, 2013)

Like Diya, Sita feels independent and free in Australia. According to her, by not having anyone to impose cultural constraints upon her, she gained much more autonomy over her actions after migration:

I am more free in Australia than in India. In terms of my dress: what I wear does not matter to anybody else. In terms of having an occasional drink ... I go out a lot. Every month I will look for a new movie, if there is a book opening or author in town. I will go and attend that. If there is an art exhibition, I will go and attend. During Sydney winter festival, I take three days off work, and go and spend all three days there. Mostly I get company and go there with friends but there are days where I don't get anyone, then also, I just go there, sit all day and enjoy. I will eat lunch in the train. I would sit in relaxed fashion which I would not have done in India. Here, I do what I want. I drive, I come home late. We have girls-only get together every six weeks. Both as a woman and as a person, I am free in Australia. (Sita, Interview, 2013)

Like Diya, Banu also came from Pakistan where women's mobility is dictated by a number of socio-cultural and religious factors. She had found that freedom of mobility in Australia has provided her with a deeper sense of independence. Banu compared her mobility in Pakistan and Australia during our talks together:

I used to get escorted by my two brothers whenever I had to go out of my house in Pakistan. There are restrictions placed in places. Women cannot go everywhere as they want. For example, as a woman I cannot even imagine going to court. It's really hard. It's a men's world. But in Australia culturally I feel safe. My kids used to get sick in the middle of the night. I put them in the car, take them to the hospital without even a fear of something wrong will happen to me. I can't even imagine doing that in Pakistan. No, it's not safe. I feel independent and free in Australia. I feel the freedom of mobility and security as a woman here in Australia. (Banu, Interview, 2013)

It is not just that women feel free to move about: women feel more secure moving freely day or night. This sense of security gives them a sense of freedom in Australia.

Sulochana, a 35 year old mother of two, came to Australia in 2003 from Sri Lanka. Due to her very shy personality, Sulochana spoke slowly and often avoided eye contact during our conversations. Despite her shy nature, for Sulochana the feeling of independence comes from the fact that she makes her own decisions:

I was brought up in a traditional background. I went to university in my country [Sri Lanka] but I never mingled with men. So, when I came to Australia, it was hard for me to go out and speak with people. Still today, I feel hesitant to speak with men but I have to speak with them anyway. I have to go out and do shopping. So it started slowly. Before, if I have to do any work or take any decision, I used to ask my husband, my mum and my dad. But now, I take decision on my own. I drive and go for grocery shopping. I don't even need my husband to come along with me when I go shopping. I speak with people. I do things myself. (Sulochana, Interview, 2013)

The descriptions of greater autonomy and freedom show that for my sample of women, the fact of only having to deal with a husband's demands rather than his demands as well as those of his mother and family made their workload and level of decision-making much improved. They had in any case broken with the world of familiarity and home already at the time of marriage. Comparatively, the situation in terms of domestic responsibility and roles was more favourable with the removal of surveillance and continuous expectations. Husbands went out to work whereas mothers-in-law did not. The women had already learned the tasks of domesticity and could perform them with ease. As Sassa put it:

If I were in India, I would not have done so many things that I have been doing here in Australia. In that way I am happy here. In terms of household work, taking care of children, I am so used to doing it so I just do it. The most important thing for me is that he [her husband] is not fussy, he does not put demands on me, he has given me full freedom to go and seek whatever I want to do. He doesn't cook but he is flexible. So what do you think I want? It is about compromising. In India, I was used to doing all those things by myself. So it is not hard. (Sassa, Interview, 2013)

So women who had already been called to give up familiar surroundings and peoples and 'adjust', found it in some ways easier to adjust a second time to a new society. On the other hand, of course, there were challenges specific to being a stranger in an entirely new society

and culture where previous ‘adjustment’ were of little use. Women had left behind not only their husband’s parents but their own family and friends. When they needed support, there was no one. Sita reflected on the sense of loneliness:

At times it can get very lonely here in Australia. You [she meant herself] have your family to fall back on, your mother, your sister, friends, and your mother-in-law perhaps. Your female relatives are important to you. Back home, you consult with them. Any health issue, pregnancy, menopause, for the first time, it is very confronting. You don’t know how to deal with it. Back home you had that help that support. Here you have to deal with that on your own. If you went to a doctor, somebody would go with you. Here you do it on your own. (Sita, Interview, 2013)

So if going to a doctor on one’s own could be experienced as liberating, for other women and perhaps on other occasions, the same task could feel lonely and un-supported.

\* \* \*

This chapter has sought to highlight the complexities of South Asian women’s married lives. Notion of gift and prestige are intertwined in the deeply entrenched gender norms and social values concerning male superiority and patrilineage. Women are born and raised to be the one who is destined-to-move. Once they realise that destiny, they become temporary sojourners, continuously negotiating with the challenges and recreating their identities and selves according to the different places to which they move. More often than not, their sense of themselves as individual is compromised as tradition requires them to function in the wider interests of both family and society. In the next chapter, I consider the timing of migration, with a focus upon migration and maternity.

## Chapter 5

### Maternity

#### Introduction

My career is my kids, my family, and my home.

(Banu, Interview, 2013)

‘When I came to Australia, I had my eight-month-old with me’, Banu said to me in 2013 when I met her for the first time at her home in Kellyville, Sydney. Thirty-six year old Banu migrated from Pakistan in 2004. She had then been married for a year and eight months. At the time I met her, Banu had already been in Australia for more than ten years. She had three daughters, the eldest was eleven years old, and the youngest just six months. A graduate in mathematics and physics, she had thought of joining the Army Reserve for work when she first arrived. But by the time of her interview, she had completely given up the idea of work – beyond, that is, working for her household. She said she would not even think about paid work for at least another six years, after her youngest daughter started school. Her perception of her work within the family as a career comes across quite strongly in her statement: ‘My career is my kids, my family, and my home.’

As I started meeting increasing numbers of women for individual interviews at community centres and other informal gatherings, I encountered a variety of experiences of migration. Some were stories of increased prosperity, others of economic decline and failure compared to their original careers. Many of these stories were not unique to their individual narrators. As is evident from Chapters 2 and 3, much depended on the timing of their arrival in terms of their personal life cycles in Australia. Yet as a fellow South Asian, certain patterns in these women’s lives sounded very familiar to my ears. These patterns concerned the entry of women’s lives into maternity and what that meant in terms of their subsequent life

experiences. Within these women's narratives, a particular pattern of homogeneity emerges: a woman marries, then migrates to her husband's home. She then either migrates to Australia and has children, or has children and migrates to Australia. In either case, the three 'Ms' – marriage, maternity and migration – succeed one another in a very short span of time.

My research revealed that South Asian women's extensive involvement in maternity and motherhood following migration has not only precluded them from labour force participation for an extended period of time, but has strengthened their preconceptions regarding a woman's role as a wife and mother. The intersection of marriage, migration and maternity reinforces women's domesticity in the migratory household. In order to provide an overarching framework for understanding, I will concentrate on feminist debates which have found key linkages between the social organisation of women's reproductive roles and a distinctive consolidation of gender inequality and subordination.

### **The Social Organisation of Maternity and Female Subordination**

Whitehead (1979) defined women's subordination as 'the relations between men and women within the social process as a whole [such that] the way those relations work to the detriment of women' (see also Mackintosh, 1984, p. 4). Exploration of the relationship between women's reproductive role and socio-economic subordination have been at the core of feminist discourses and women's movements ever since their emergence in the Western countries.

Some of the strongest early connections were made by feminist theorists who drew upon the theoretical approaches associated with Marx's materialist conception of a capitalist society. Feminists attempting a rigorous application of Marxist theory argued to the effect that the reproductive role of women, which generates, maintains and reproduces the labour force – although important – does not directly produce surplus value in terms of profit for capitalism. As a result, women's household work such as cooking, cleaning, childbearing and rearing is

not accorded economic value of the kind that is accorded to wage work in a capitalist society (Vogel, 2013; Rubin, 1975; Young et al., 1984).

However, other feminists have argued that the understandings of ideologies of gender differentiation have to widen beyond the Marxist material process to include areas of sexuality, if we are to understand women's subordination in society. Rubin (1975), for example, traced the links between sexuality, marriage and kinship, and capitalism to locate the structural oppression of women in kinship systems, and, in particular, the gender division of labour and compulsory heterosexuality. Arguing for the specific relations which organise subordination, Rubin asked:

What is a domesticated woman? A female of the species. The one explanation is as good as the other. A woman is a woman. She only becomes a domestic, a wife, a chattel, a playboy bunny, a prostitute, or a human Dictaphone in certain relations. Torn from these relationships, she is no more the helpmate of man than gold itself is money ... (Rubin, 1975, p. 158)

The argument that gender is a social construct and motherhood a cultural set of practices is reiterated in the works of many feminist philosophers (Irigaray, 1974, 1977; Ortner 1974; Butler, 1993; Cornell, 2002, cited in Devasahayam & Yeoh, 2007). Devasahayam and Yeoh provide a detailed discussion on how these feminist philosophers have used cultural, political, and structural approaches to argue that gender differences have been socially constructed. In this section, I restrict my discussion to some basic feminist arguments concerning motherhood and reproduction.

Household tasks are referred to in the literature as 'reproductive' tasks (Beneria, 1979, cited in Mackintosh, 1984). Mackintosh uses the definition provided by Edholm and colleagues (1977) as

the production of people: not merely the bearing of children (which might be called biological reproduction) but also their care and socialisation, and maintenance of adult individuals through their lives, processes which create individuals to fit more or less into

the social structure of society, and ensure the continuation of that society in the next generation. (cited in Mackintosh, 1984, p. 11)

Feminists writing and engaged in activism in the 70s and 80s argued that the reproductive burden limits women's abilities to participate in wider society and pursue their self-actualisation (Young et al., 1984; Sangha & Gonsalves, 2013; Krishanraj, 2010). This was also a period when there was a marked rise in women's labour force participation in the West, especially after the mid 1980s. According to Hattery (2001), the rise in women's labour force participation in the US in the early 1970s was not only influenced by the earlier women's movement, but also by deindustrialisation, and the rise in the expectations of young individuals and families. Similar trends have been noted by Devasahayam and Yeoh (2007) regarding women's labour force participation in Asia towards the late 1990s. The rise of women's labour force participation in Asia, especially around the beginning of the twenty-first century,<sup>19</sup> was a result of the increasing necessity for dual incomes in a family to meet the rising costs of living, and the increasing aspirations of women to build their careers (Devasahayam & Yeoh, 2007). As an increasing number of women entered the labour market, a shift in traditional gender roles started emerging. Studies, at least in Western countries, show that as a result, women's and men's contributions to the domestic labour, although not equal, became more so (Craig, 2006). Nevertheless, the changes that occurred were largely in women's behaviour, not in men's (Baxter, 2002; Bianchi, 2004, cited in Craig, 2006). The growth in women's labour force participation has not been accompanied by the significant engagement of men in domestic responsibilities. The gender imbalance still slants towards women, who continue to shoulder the major share of household work and care-giving responsibilities (McDowell, 2014; Craig, 2006).

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<sup>19</sup> According to the International Labour Organisation, Bureau of Statistics, the female labour force participation rate in developed Asian countries such as Singapore and Japan was 55.5 per cent and 49.3 per cent respectively in 2000. In less developed countries such as the Philippines also the female labour force participation rate was marked at 48.3 per cent in 2000 (Devasahayam & Yeoh, 2007).



The requirement that women do maternal work and other domestic work has consequences for their participation in paid work and the wider society (Ho, 2010; Salaff et al., 2007; Purkayastha, 2005; Hirao, 2007; Becker & Moen, 1999; Manderson & Inglis, 1985). For example, Blair-Loy's (2003) study of women employed in high executive positions shows that because higher-level jobs often demand a focused loyalty, women were constantly balancing their worker and maternal identities. Becker and Moen's (1999) study of parents in dual-income households shows how couples cope with the spill-over effects between work and family by reducing family commitments. Employing a life course approach, Becker and Moen found that women disproportionately scale back their work as they assume the greater share of care work. Hirao's (2007) work on contemporary Japan explores the experiences of Japanese women negotiating their worker-mother identities in the context of a state with a strongly vested interest in increasing the country's fertility through policy measures. Although the policies were put in place with the objective of reconciling work and family conflict, Hirao argues that in practice, the labour market structure and gender roles in households have remained unchanged. As a result, parents, especially mothers, are overburdened as they are primary nurturers, caregivers and educational agents for their children in the family.

Migration adds its own share of challenges, often enforcing women to continue with their maternal duties. Salaff and colleagues' (2007) work on highly-skilled first generation Chinese immigrant women in Canada details a number of reasons that have led Chinese mothers to engage in intensive mothering. In the main, in Canada, the lack of social support, particularly support from kin in taking care of their children, compelled first generation Chinese women to take on the mothering role. In this way, Salaff and colleagues argue that female domesticity was being reinforced in immigrant households. As regards Australia, Ho (2010) makes a similar argument. In her work on first generation Chinese women migrants, Ho observes that domestic responsibilities often put constraints on married women's participation in the labour market. The lack of family social support in Australia means that Chinese women often eschew their labour market roles and shift their energies towards the domestic sphere after

migration. My master's research on the Nepali migrant community in Sydney corroborates Ho's findings. In the Nepali community women are overburdened with domestic and childcare responsibilities, while supporting their family by doing unskilled work (Sharma, 2010). In order to ascertain how South Asian-born women actually navigate their lives as women, wives and mothers in Australia, I now recount details of the ethnography I undertook in Sydney.

## **The Community Centre**

As part of my field work, I spent one year among migrant women from South Asia participating in a programme at a community centre run by not-for-profit organisations. As the objective of this thesis was to understand the low levels of labour force participation of South Asian migrant women, visiting the community centre was a conscious decision I made during my field work. My objective was to speak with women who were not working at that time. I want to stress once again that this research is not an attempt to represent all South Asian migrant women in Sydney. This study primarily focuses on South Asian-born women who have been unable to pursue careers, and on the challenging reproductive responsibilities women shoulder after migration.

Many circumstances made these particular centres very useful places to get to know women with South Asian backgrounds. The two community centres I approached came under the jurisdiction of the Holroyd City Council, the local government authority of Holroyd City. Holroyd City Council caters for community centres in different suburbs within the council's range. These community centres are hired by two not-for-profit community organisations that work actively in the interests of migrants and refugees during their settlement process and beyond. These organisations, which were operating in the western suburbs of Sydney (Parramatta, Toongabbie, Westmead, Wentworthville, Pendle Hill, Blacktown), were located in Wentworthville and Toongabbie, two suburbs heavily populated by migrants from South Asian backgrounds. Almost all of the participants in these community centres were South

Asian-born women. I visited the centres on Mondays and Tuesdays, the days when there were programmes especially for young mothers from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

The majority of the attendees were young women, while there were just a few elderly women. The elderly women had been in Australia for more than twenty years and were either living with their children, or living alone in community houses provided by the government. Many of the young women had one child of school-going age, as well as a younger child. During the time that the women participated in the centre-run session (two hours), a carer would look after the younger child. The programs ran during the school term. This made it easier for the women to attend as they could bring their younger children along to the sessions while their school-aged children were attending school.

### **Getting to Know the Women**

Initially, when I first started visiting these community centres, I tried to engage with the mothers by participating in their weekly tasks set out by the community centre. The community centre offered numerous services with the aim of developing friendships, and preventing isolation and depression. They encouraged women to be more confident in their abilities as well as to learn new skills that could lead to sustainable self/professional employment. Their services included a workshop on positive parenting, a yoga and Zumba fitness class, a sewing class, knitting and painting classes, and last but not least a cooking class. But, when speaking with the women participants, I found that women rarely had time to practice the skills they learned outside of the community centre. Some of them used to come with the task they had started the previous week, unfinished.

During the initial weeks, when I first started attending, women were involved in a traditional food recipe session. Every week, two to three people volunteered to prepare various recipes specific to their own countries of origin, and to bring samples of the food to the centre for everyone to taste. That session continued for the next two to three weeks. During the last

week, a dietician gave a talk about healthy diets, provided recipe books, and prepared a few healthy snacks for everyone to try and enjoy. I joined the food preparation session, seeing it as a chance to introduce myself to the women. When the female organiser approached me and asked if I would like to prepare a dish for the following week, I instantly agreed.

Over the period of one year, I became very close to most of the women, many of whom knew each other through the community centre. Some became very close friends. The centre functioned as a good venue for these women to come together and talk, and to enjoy relief from their busy and never-ending household duties. Prisa, who I will talk about in detail later in the chapter, said, 'Visiting the community centre gives me a break from my never-ending household responsibilities'. Prisa had made some good lifelong friends in the community centre, beside her own husband's family circle in Sydney. Although some of her friends at the centre were from India, they were not from the same region from where Prisa originally came. Nevertheless, Prisa felt that she shared some commonalities with her friends as a fellow South Asian.

The friendships formed by the women were not limited to the centres. They used to meet away from the community centres during their free time and sometimes went shopping together. They would also often linger at the centre after they finished their sessions, planning what to wear the following week. Some days they arrived wearing sarees, while at other times they all wore the traditional *kurta*. In many ways, the centres had become venues in which women could share their cultural interests and tastes in food and clothes with fellow South Asians.

Although I was introduced initially as a researcher from Macquarie University working on South Asian communities in Sydney, the women never viewed me as a researcher or an outsider intruding into their community. From the very beginning, they felt comfortable speaking to me. This was evident in the way they shared jokes with me, teased their friends in front of me, and even commented on my personal appearance and my dress, if they felt so

inclined. They embraced me as one of them and, in many instances, expected me to follow their plans. For example, one week a few ladies decided to wear sarees during the next week's programme. I was present when they were discussing their mode of dress. Unfortunately, on that day I had to go to the university straight from the community centre meeting and did not wear a saree. That day, when the women arrived at the centre, the first thing they asked when they saw me was: 'Why didn't you wear a saree'? My smooth transition into becoming one with the women at the centres can be attributed to my South Asian background and stage in my life cycle as a young mother. I not only looked like some of them, but also shared the South Asian cultural values with women in the centre. As Essed (1991) has argued, being an insider can provide a rich basis for information collection. It certainly helped me to socialise with the women and to put my questions easily to the participants.

These women were new migrants: most of them had arrived after the year 2000. Many had their own houses, and a few owned apartments, indicating a privileged social status in the context of Sydney's housing market. Others lived in rented apartments with their families within a two kilometre radius of the community centres. All of them had young children for whom they were the sole caretakers. In that sense, they were fairly well settled in Australia.

During my early days when I was not well acquainted with the women at the centre, from the ways in which they spoke about doing volunteer work at the centre, and how some previous participants had been able to secure jobs at other organisations, I assumed that they were all full-time working mothers. Many of them had offspring; so, I thought that they must have taken short-term maternity leave from their work. But to my surprise, when I started getting to know them better, I found that many of them had never worked in Australia.

My research revealed that at the time of migration, migrating couples tend to be either recently married or newly married with young children.<sup>20</sup> When the time came to settle down migrants who had lived in Australia for a lengthy period of time – usually the husband-to-be and in rare cases the wife-to-be – travelled back to the home country to find a prospective spouse. When successful, they married and returned to Australia.

The data on the marital status of my respondents at the time of their migration shows that 40 per cent of the women were newly married at the time of their migration, and, 35 per cent of them were recently-married with at least one young child (see Appendix 3).

Among those couples who had married in their country of origin prior to migrating, job prospects for the male partners (and more rarely the female partners) brought them to Australia. The male migrated first, and his spouse and children joined him after a few months. As regards the recently married couples, the spouse who had been living in Australia returned to the country immediately after the wedding, the partner would remain in the home country until their visas were processed, then join their partner.

After migrating to Australia, couples with young children focused on settling their families. I use the term ‘settling’ to imply finding accommodation in a good and practical location. The findings of my research are in line with the findings of studies done on other different migrant communities in Australia which argue that settlement of immigrants in any area is highly influenced by the pre-existing ethnic concentration (Chiswick & Miller, 2004; Wulff & Dharmalingam, 2008; Massey & Parr, 2012). Women at the community centre often alluded to the large South Asian community presence in Toongabbie and its surrounding suburbs when they talked about the reasons they came to live in the area. Prisa, for example, said that by living among South Asians she did not feel isolated, especially during traditional festival seasons:

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<sup>20</sup> Recently married: Those couples who were married for 5 years or less at the time of migration. Newly married: Those who migrated within a few months to one year after marriage.

When we were buying our house, we looked around in quite a few locations. But they were all in western suburbs. We wanted to live among South Asian community. You get along with them [fellow South Asians] quite well. That does not mean that we [implying all migrants from South Asia] don't get along with other people [implying people of Anglo-Celtic background]. But we [South Asian] have cultural similarities. We have religious celebrations, traditional festivals which we celebrate in our countries and we want to celebrate here too. And if we live in South Asian neighbourhood, we can celebrate it together. We celebrate Diwali together with our neighbours here.

The other thing is language. When my parents come from India, they don't speak English and language becomes a big problem. But here [in her locality] most of our neighbours are Tamilians [people speaking Tamil] and my parents can go out, speak with people, and make friends. (Prisa, Interview, 2014)

Many of the women I met outside of the community centre emphasised various other practical aspects of their everyday lives when they talked about the reason to choose to live the place where they were living. Many of them emphasised access to school and public transport facilities as the primary factor determining their residential location choices. Yet for them also the ethnic community presence, such as one's family members, friends, or the general South Asian community, was equally important.

Sita, the mother of two who recounted her experiences of racism in Australia (see Chapter 4), said that her children's school was the primary reason for choosing to settle in Hornsby:

As soon as we came, finding school for our children was an important issue. People who previously had been to Australia told us [back in India] that Hornsby was good for schools. Apart from children's school, the train facility in Hornsby was good as it lies on the main northern line. My husband used to work in Chatswood back then, and for him Hornsby would be nearer. Beside that we has a distant friend who used to live in Mount Colah, which is also in northern Sydney. Thus we lived in Hornsby. (Sita, Interview, 2013)

Nina lives in North Parramatta. When I asked her the reason for choosing North Parramatta, she emphasised the Indian community presence in the locality:

When we moved to Australia we lived with my husband's friend for a couple of months. He had a house in Parramatta. It is little more Asian here. You can see a lot of Indians moving around. In that way, culturally it feels very comfortable here. So we lived in this area. (Nina, Interview, 2013)

Lia, a migrant from Pakistan, lives in Mount Druitt, a western suburb of Sydney. For her, living in Mount Druitt not only means living with and among people from her country of origin, it is also a matter of being able to manage the practical aspects of religion, such as specific items for shopping and cooking daily meals:

My brother and all my community people [she meant her distance relatives] live in Mount Druitt. So when we [she and her husband] came to Australia, we decided to live in the area. The other thing is we have our biggest mosque in the area and we like to live near our mosque. Also there are halal shops, halal grocery stores, and halal takeaway shops. And with all these requirements, it is hard to adjust just in any other areas. (Lia, Interview, 2013)

In the settling process, women with young children often stay at home caring for their children while their husbands concentrate on finding jobs. Women rarely think about their personal careers during their children's formative few years: they wait until their children are old enough to go to school.

Among newly married couples, after their arrival in Australia, having a child is of the utmost importance. Da's study of Chinese migrants reveals that having children is often seen by Chinese migrant families as a sign of successful settlement in Australia (Da, 2003). For many newly married South Asian couples, producing a child as soon as possible after marriage not only signifies their successful settlement, but as I will soon show, it is also a cultural requirement. For now, I wish to show how the timing of marriage, migration and maternity proceeds simultaneously in my respondents' life cycles. I start with the case of Prisa.

One day, after finishing the session at the centre, Prisa invited me to her house. She lived only two blocks from the centre in a single-storey house with a big backyard and large double lounge rooms. The entrance had a very colourful garland attached to its upper edge along with a big picture of Ganesh, the elephant-headed god of the Hindu pantheon, and big brass lamps on the both sides. As soon as I entered the house, Prisa asked me to take a seat, then she went



inside to change out of her traditional blue saree, bangles and earrings. She came back wearing a t-shirt and trousers. The Prisa of a few minutes before, and the Prisa a few minutes after she had changed her attire, were two representations of the same woman for me. At one moment she was a traditional Indian woman – an ideal Indian wife – evident in her traditional dress and makeup. Within seconds of changing into her t-shirt and trousers, she became more of a Western woman for me. The notion of being Indian that I perceived in Prisa's dress style may have had something to do with my own upbringing in South Asia, that is, my personal understanding of South Asian dress codes, values and the meanings attached to them.

Prisa came back into the room, sat on one of the sofas, and we started the interview. She seemed both interested in and enthusiastic about my research. Her reaction was not unusual; I found all of my informants enthusiastic when they spoke to me.

Prisa migrated to Australia in 2001 following her marriage at the age of 24. She came as a dependent of her husband who was an Australian citizen. She was in the final year of her bachelor's degree in computer science in India when she married. After finishing her studies, she joined her husband in Sydney. Initially, the couple lived with Prisa's in-laws, who were also from India but had migrated to Australia in the 1970s.

Prisa began her new life by familiarising herself with Sydney. For the first month or two she explored the city, the shopping malls, and interacted with her husband's relatives who had already settled in Australia. Equipped with a bachelor's degree from India, she validated her qualifications with the requisite professional body soon after her arrival in Sydney. Within three months of arriving, she began her career as a volunteer at a migrant resource centre, a position arranged by her mother-in-law. Prisa's mother-in-law is active in the Indian community in Sydney and that might have affected Prisa's orientations. After two months of volunteering at the centre, she took a job as an administrator in an office. However, after working for fewer than three months as an administrator, she opted to leave the job when she became pregnant. After having her first baby, she did not re-enter the workforce because there

was no help upon which she could confidently rely. Compounding her problem was the fact that her child had special needs. So she decided not to return to work. After three years, just as she was contemplating returning to work, she became pregnant with her second child. As a consequence, she completely put aside the idea of working. It has now been more than 10 years since she last worked outside of her home. She has no plans to work anytime soon in the near future. However, when her youngest son becomes less reliant on her, she plans to re-enter the workforce.

I will now contrast Prisa's case with another case study in which the timing of migration was quite different. Unlike Prisa, Nanditi migrated to Australia when she was 10 years old with her parents who, at the time, had been recruited to work as government officials in Australia. During the 1970s, many people from the Indian sub-continent migrated to Australia as government officials and diplomats. Typically, they were drawn from the upper classes in India. They did not require visas and migrated on 'white passports'<sup>21</sup> to their countries of destination. Nanditi's father was one of these upper class Indians who migrated to Australia as a government official. Nanditi undertook her schooling at one of the high schools in the northern suburbs of Sydney. Even though she was technically a first generation migrant, due to the timing of migration, she looked and sounded to me like a second generation migrant. Nanditi regrets her parents' decision to migrate to Australia because she has never been able to accept Australia as her 'home'. However, she feels good about her achievement as a 'very senior executive', her confidence stemming from the fact that she has had the opportunity to learn and become established in Australia like an average Australian-born person. Nanditi married, but, within less than five years of her marriage she divorced, leaving her with a one-year-old child to care for. Fortunately, she was able to continue working as she had her mother, father and an unmarried sister to help look after her child while she was working.

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<sup>21</sup> White Passport: Indian Official passport (White cover) - Issued to individuals representing the Indian Government on official business. It is a Type "S" passport - S stands for Service.

Unfortunately, her child had some health issues during childhood which have persisted. But, Nanditi has never had to give up her career to stay at home to look after her child because of her family's support.

When comparing Prisa's and Nanditi's cases, a number of similarities emerged. They are both first generation migrant women in Australia. Although Prisa was married and Nanditi was divorced at the time of their interviews, both of them were mothers of children who have health issues. There is also some form of kin support in both cases in Australia. However, despite the similarities, their career development proceeded quite differently for Prisa and Nanditi after migration. While Nanditi never gave up her career to focus on maternity, Prisa had already given up her job not once, but twice because of maternity at the time of our interview. A number of factors contribute to the differences. I will address them in turn as I proceed with the chapter.

The stage in a person's life cycle is very crucial in migration, especially when she or he is required to learn new behavioural patterns. Timing determines how easily she or he will adapt to local modes of behaviour and dispositions. Whereas a child will emulate new behavioural patterns easily, an adult may find her or himself struggling to adjust to a new environment.

This takes me back to my discussion of language and accent in Chapter 2. In Prisa and Nanditi's cases, the timing of migration determined how severely the disruption of re-location would impact on their lives – in this case their ability to adopt to Australian English.

Although Nanditi re-located to a different place of living, she re-located at a time in her life when she could easily adapt to Australian English. As a result she had never encountered problems involving her language skills. By contrast, Prisa and my other women respondents who migrated as adults, encountered numerous challenges concerning their English language. Specifically, they came under scrutiny for having a different accent. As a matter of fact, Nanditi herself finds other Indian migrants' English less satisfactory and is inclined to doubt the value of their qualifications.

Of particular relevance of the timing of migration is the fact that unlike Nanditi, Prisa came to Australia as a married adult. She not only had very limited time in which to acclimatise herself to the Australian environment, she was also required to function as a South Asian married woman. The responsibilities and expectations placed on a married woman change the entire prospect of jobs and employment after migration.

Prisa spoke about becoming a mother immediately after migration. Many of the respondents to whom I spoke shared similar stories of being a mother when they talked about their migration experiences.

Jas, another informant, who I have introduced in earlier chapters, shared her experiences:

I came to Australia under spouse visa. My husband was here for 18-20 years already around that time. So he was well settled when I came. In fact, one of the reasons why my parents married me to him was because he was in Australia. Within a year I was in my own house. By the time we moved to our house I was pregnant with my first baby and soon after we moved in, I had my first baby. Then I stayed at home with the little one because I didn't have much help, neither from my parents nor from my in-laws because they were in India. I have been very lucky from the very beginning. My partner has been very helpful from the very beginning. There was no pressure for work, you do this, and you do that. He always said you take your time and whenever you are ready then you can start thinking about it ... My first priority is my family. (Jas, Interview, 2013)

The specificity of the timing of motherhood as immediately following migration seemed to preclude many of my newly married respondents from participating in the labour market for a fairly lengthy period of time after migration. In many instances, when I asked specific questions about women's work such as: 'Have you ever worked in Australia? What was the last work that you did in Australia?' women who had worked previously would answer me in a way that suggested that they did not remember the last job they had. Others would look at me in a slightly hostile way and ask: 'How would you even think of work and ask me that question when I have my kids to look after?' Some would respond adopting a superior tone and body language, saying: 'Why would I need to work when I have a husband who is an excellent provider for my family?'

Shakshi, 30, was a mother of two boys aged four years and seven years at the time of my conversation with her in 2013. I met Shakshi at the community centre. She used to drive her eldest son to school and bring her younger son along with her every time she came to the centre. At the time, Shakshi's husband, an engineer, was working in Canberra. For this reason, the family was living apart. Every weekend he travelled to Sydney so that the family could spend time together. Shakshi was planning to relocate to Canberra, to be with her husband. She was waiting for her son's school to finish for that year. Later, I heard that she did in fact relocate to Canberra with her two sons. Shakshi, who came from India, had a bachelor's degree in computer science. When I asked her about her work, she replied:

NS: Where did you use to work?

Sh: Where?

NS: Previously?

Sh: No, I have never worked.

NS: Why?

Sh: How can you expect me to work when I have two kids to look after?

NS: How old are your babies?

Sh: Babies?? ... [She laughs] ... they are not babies ... My elder one is seven and younger one is four and he is playing there in the other room. My husband is working. He works in Canberra. Soon I am going there too.

NS: What is your academic background?

Sh: I am a graduate in computer science.

NS: How long have you been in Australia?

Sh: Eight years. I am thinking of finding some work in the community sector.

NS: Why in the community sector? Don't you want to work in your profession?

Sh: No, I am not interested in that sector anymore.

Banu, who I introduced in the beginning of the chapter, provided very typical answers to my work related questions:

NS: Where do you work?

Banu: Oh! I never worked. I have worked with my kids in their schools and that is pretty much what it is. I am lucky and I am blessed enough that I never had to work. My husband is a good provider. I don't need to go out to bring money to put food on the table.

NS: What do you think about your career?

Banu: I have a very old fashioned answer. My career is my home, my family and my kids. I don't see by not having a career I am losing anything ... I am aware of the fact that people would say things like 'Oh! What would you do when your kids are grown up and gone?', then I will tell them go and get yourself useful. Do volunteer work: there are plenty of things to do. And you know what? I am that kind of person who would love to stay at home.

It was not only those women who had children soon after migration who stayed at home to look after their babies. As suggested earlier, as a recently married couples, many women migrated with young children. Under these circumstances, women put their careers on hold because they had to look after their children after they migrated to Australia. In fact, women in such situations took a break from work several times. Sita, reflecting on her life story, told of how despite having to abandon her career many times due to familial responsibilities, she knew that she would resume it one day. But how soon was a matter of uncertainty.

My husband's job brought us to Australia. My husband did a course in SAP [Systems Applications and Products] in mid 90s when there was no SAP in India. He did it from Germany. Back then, SAP was just establishing in Australia. So he applied for PR, got the PR. He came and within three month time we also came. When both of my children were born, I was a stay at home mum. I resigned from the job to be with them at home. I put my career on back corner because of my children. Then I started working in a college but we had to come to Australia. After coming here I knew that I would not sit quiet, find something for myself but how soon, I didn't know. The apprehension was there. When we came here, my daughter was 13 and my son was 9. I was very much concerned because of my daughter. Her age was very challenging age and I was concerned about her settling down in a new community. (Sita, Interview, 2013)

Prisa's story seemed exceptional at first: her child's health required special attention. But by comparing her story with Nanditi's story, one can see that if women are provided with a supportive environment, they can continue with their careers together with motherhood. But if women are left without any supportive alternatives, imagining work beyond motherhood can

be daunting. Having said that I must also stress unlike the majority of my women respondents, Nanditi's story, on the one hand is a case of being a single parent needing to work and on the other hand as a divorced, she does not have to manage the demands of her husband and his family. Motherhood is a central fact of female existence, for as Krishanraj (2010, p. 7) states:

It is not the fact of mothering that makes women vulnerable, but their social construction, the implications for women flowing from the meaning attached to the idea of motherhood, and the terms and conditions under which it is allowed to express itself.

## **Marriage and Maternity in South Asia**

A simple statistical calculation within my sample of 40 women interviewees showed that 32 women (80 per cent) conceived their first child between two and three years of marriage. The remaining 8 (20 per cent) included women who were: (a) childless; (b) had their first child in the first year of marriage; (c) or after the fourth year of marriage. The precise timing of migration in a South Asian-born woman's life cycle as a newly married means that she involves in motherhood soon after migration to Australia. This specific pattern of pregnancy following migration among South Asian communities in Australia is influenced by the cultural expectations regarding fertility in relation to timing of marriage in South Asia.

In South Asia, motherhood is seen as the respectable woman's main role. A woman is mandated to be childbearing soon after marriage. Marriage is not an aim in itself in people's lives in South Asia. As Donner (2008, p. 91) notes, 'marriage is a part of life's course and a precondition for parenthood which cannot be imagined outside of marriage in South Asia'. Examining the role of women as mothers in ancient India, Bhattacharji (1990) makes the point that within the ritual context of the wedding itself, prayers offered on behalf of a bride emphasise bearing children and, more specifically, a son. In turn, the bridegroom prays for

children, grandchildren, servants and pupils, garments, blankets, gold, food, and safety. As

Bhattacharji observes:

Marriage was primarily for the male child and since there was no guarantee that a single wife would deliver a male child the bride-groom takes no chances but prays for many wives in the presence of the newly-wedded wife, who was socially conditioned to be reconciled to such a prayer because sons were essential for the continuation of the line, and for the preservation and multiplication of wealth, safety and prosperity.  
(Bhattacharji, 1990, p. 50)

Even today, conception is expected within a couple of years of marriage. A recent study undertaken in Bangladesh and India found that newly married couples have little freedom to avoid birth in the first years of their marriage (Sethuraman & Duvvury, 2007). In their study of contraception use to delay first pregnancy among young married women in India, Jejeeboy and colleagues (2013) note that as pregnancy is expected as soon as possible after marriage, neither family elders nor health care providers attempt to facilitate contraceptive use among young married couples. In their exploration of a girl's schooling and transition to marriage and motherhood in Pakistan, Bhatti and Jeffery (2012) note that more than 80 per cent of ever-married women surveyed in the Research Consortium on Educational Outcomes and Poverty project became mothers by the second year of marriage; and, over half of the ever-married women aged between 20 and 29 had their first child within a year of marriage.

In more recent times, nuclear families in which both husband and wife are equally educated, plan important aspects of their lives such as pregnancies in great detail. They take into consideration various factors including their financial situation, their ability to send their children to good schools to provide them with quality education, and many more ancillary factors. Nevertheless, for a newly married woman, pregnancy continues to be a marker of her respectability in her husband's family (Kakar, 1988; Madan, 1990; Sharma, 1980; Uberoi, 1993; Philips, 2005; Johri, 2013). Family and society invariably put pressure on a newly wed



couple to bear children for the continuation of the lineage as their duty (Sangh & Gonsalves, 2013).

Paradoxically, if pregnancy occurs too soon after marriage, the daughter-in-law will be looked upon negatively. Questions will be raised regarding her high appetite for sex. Conversely, if she fails to conceive for a few years, people will start doubting her fertility. Thus, the timing of pregnancy is a matter of great importance as well as deep anxiety, not only for the woman, but also for her natal family (Donner, 2008). Having said that, I am not simply arguing that in South Asia women are the victims of culture. Abu-Lughod (1991) has raised important questions regarding the tendency of ethnography to produce generalising accounts of culture which commonly present non-Western cultures in particular, as static, discrete, homogenous and timeless. She asks us to include in our ethnographies: the connections between different societies, the reality of sociocultural change, the different positions through which people experienced culture, and the contradictions involved in the course of everyday life (also see Abu-Lughod, 2008). She argues that anthropologists should situate discourses of contemporary inequality in terms of past histories. In keeping with Abu-Lughod's argument, I explore below how the general cultural constructions of gender in South Asia selectively entrenched some aspects of male authority over wider groups and classes during the colonial period. Yet this was also a period that made the status of women a consciously debated question.

Earlier 19th century writings, for example those of Kailashbasini Devi who wrote about motherhood in *The Woeful Plight of Hindu Women*, observe that:

The expectant mother thinks incessantly till the time she gives birth: 'If only the Good Lord grants me a boy child, how happy I'll be, how my kin will love me' But if, as fate may have it, a girl is born, the mother takes a look and sinks into unspeakable gloom-what is more-is often moved to tears, a sign of utter misery, and the kin show great distress ... Lord have mercy! Are we so low that the time of our birth and death are equivalent? (Bhattacharya & Sena, 2003, p. 26)

These narratives emerged as part of the nascent criticism of patriarchy aimed specifically at the devaluation of girls in pre-colonial Indian society. The colonial period gave rise to intense debates surrounding the reformulations of women's position in South Asian societies.

Women's roles as mothers and wives were thoroughly politicised during this period (Ram, 1998; Sarkar, 2001; Donner, 2008; Bagchi, 2010). The largest body of studies on colonial history and societal reform in India focus on Bengal. When writing about Bengal, historians such as Sarkar (2001) and Chatterjee (1993) have argued that in the face of a new powerlessness in the workplace and public sphere, home became a vastly expanded sphere of affective importance for Hindu men:

The household generally, and conjugality specifically, came to mean the last independent space left to the colonial Hindu. (Sarkar, 2001, p. 198)

At the same time, in their self-defined role of reformers, the colonial powers not only viewed women in South Asia as victims of culture and cultural values, they tried to liberate Indian women. But their norms were themselves a particular form of male supremacy that they derived from their own culture (Liddle & Joshi, 1985; Ram 1998; Donner, 2008). Liddle and Joshi (1985) argue that the British never showed interest in women's position for its own sake: rather, the critique of gender inequality also consolidated the structure of imperialism:

The issue of female inequality was used by the British government to legitimate foreign rule ... British had an interest both in maintaining women's subordination and in liberating it ... By maintaining women's subordination, the British could show that India was not yet fit for Independence. By liberalising women's position, they demonstrated the Western Culture's superiority in relations between men and women. (Liddle & Joshi, 1985, pp. 73-74)

In the process of subjection to these contradictory reforms women were both freed up in some ways but also subjected to new styles of subordination. For example, the British liberalised laws enabling widow remarriage, raised the age of sexual consent, prohibited female infanticide, and forbade child marriage. At the same time, they introduced a law which

allowed a man to sue his spouse for refusing to honour the sexual obligations of marriage. Under this law, women were forced to stay in the marital home, even to endure an unhappy marriage. Refusal would risk custodial penalties (Liddle & Joshi, 1985).

Bengali middle-class men responded in similarly contradictory ways. While they fought for the education of girls, women's education did not mean that they were being equipped to go outside to work or to contribute to their families as one of the primary income earners. There was no question of a woman becoming independent. Rather, the objective of her education was to make her better equipped to observe her due responsibilities as a wife and mother. Bhattacharya and Sena (2003) analyse some of the concerns that were raised by respectable society in the mid nineteenth century regarding women's education requiring reassurance that education enhanced a woman's ability to fulfil her duty as wife and mother:

What basis is there for the notion that on being educated a woman would turn wanton and shun family duties? Is learning such a vile thing that associating with it makes a woman fall into evil ways? And why should she neglect housework? Would she, on being educated, turn less affectionate towards her husband, children and other kin? ... Also, what magnetic force resides in learning that would draw a woman out into the world? Also, what evidence is there that women would crave for freedom? Till now, women of no country have achieved freedom, why then would Bengali women seek it? ... If one could be liberated by educated and travelling about as one wished, then women of Europe would have inducted themselves long since into high positions in government, thus enhancing the glory of their nation. (Bhattacharya & Sena, 2003, p. 26)

Among upper class Hindus and affluent Muslims, *purdha* (seclusion) started to become more popular (Donner, 2008). Chatterjee (1993) describes the ideology of two domains – the *ghar* (inside) and the *bahir* (outside) – that became widely accepted in India's urban areas by the end of the colonial period:

Applying the inner/outer distinction into the matter of concrete day-to-day living separates the social space into *ghar* and *bahir*, the home and the [outside] world. The world is external, the domain of the material; the home represents one's inner spiritual self, one's true identity. The world is a treacherous terrain of the pursuit of material interests, where practical considerations reign supreme. It is also typically the domain of the male. The home in its essence must remain unaffected by the profane activities in the material work – and women its representation. And, so one gets an identification of social

roles by gender to correspond with the separation of the social space into *ghar* and *bahir*. (Chatterjee, 1993, p. 120).

This separation of spheres and the demarcation of women's place as women's quarter within the household, 'set the stage for a rich cultural life' and space wherein women could move freely, but limited women's autonomy. It rendered them dependent through seclusion; furthermore, it taught young women how to prioritize the authority of older females and their male relatives' needs over their own desires, giving rise to a new dynamics of power relations between senior and junior women in the family (Banerjee, 1989; 1990; Karlekar, 1993; Bhattacharya, 2003, cited in Donner, 2008, p. 48).

Engels (1996,) who examines Bengali women's political activities, their class-specific existence as daughters, wives, mothers and widows and their education and employment opportunities, argues that despite the changes in women's education, and the rising age at marriage, the older patriarchal structure remained unchanged. In fact, the ideologies of motherhood for middle class became further generalised across classes within the modernising process in South Asia. Working-class women, who were employed and already had some form of economic autonomy, were deemed deficient mothers as they failed to comply with the emergent cultural interpretation of the 'ideal' mother (Donner, 2008). Jolly (1998, p. 4), whose particular focus is on the concept of modernity and medicalisation in birth practices, writes:

"Improving" or modernizing maternity thus not only meant the medicalization of pregnancy, birth and the postpartum period but also the discipline of mother love itself.

Jolly further argues that under such Eurocentric projects of modernity in Asia and the Pacific, women were often required to adopt new mothering practices such as feeding a child only at regular intervals, and focusing on discipline rather than maternal affection while bringing up children which often deviated from traditional maternal practice. According to Jolly 'the new

forms of “rationality” applied in maternity proclaimed traditional forms of mother love as sloppy, deficient or irrational’ (Jolly, 1998, p, 4).

In contemporary India, increasing numbers of middle-class women are embracing high-tech education and entering the labour force. In their examination of marriage, education and employment among middle-class Tamil Brahman women in south India, Fuller and Narasimhan (2013) note that in middle-class families young women are brought up and educated as equal to sons and are often encouraged by their families to work outside their home. Not only that, but because of emerging employment opportunities, an increasing number of educated middle-class unmarried women are allowed to leave their natal home before marriage and migrate to cities and urban centres. As Pothukuchi (2001) notes, cities like Bangalore have experienced the highest amount of autonomous middle-class female migration seeking education and employment opportunities in recent decades. The burgeoning number of working-women’s hostels has emerged as a result, making Bangalore the largest city with hostels and guest houses (Pothukuchi, 2001, p. 366). The data from India also show a complex set of negotiations is being made by Indian middle and lower middle-class women as they move towards greater labour force participation while at the same time contending with expectations of marriage and maternity as the dominant goals of a woman’s life (Radhakrishnan, 2008; Vijakumar, 2013). Bowan’s (2015) thesis on paying guests in urban south India shows that this complex negotiation often leads to the view, adopted by women themselves, of working lives as a temporary phase or at the very least, as one where the continued existence of a career depends very much on the wishes of husbands and in-laws, and therefore not as something that can be planned. Drawing on interviews with software engineers in Silicon Valley and Bangalore, Radhakrishnan (2008) also argues that the emerging discourses surrounding Indian women still rely on the ability of professional women to strike a delicate balance between an ‘Indian’ home life and a ‘global’ professional life as an IT specialist. In achieving such a balance, Radhakrishnan notes, even the most driven of professional women in her research are not ambitious in their profession, if this is to take

place at the expense of their roles within their families. Under such circumstances, even women who are entrepreneurial and aspirational often regard their workforce participation as an interim feature until they get married. In her recent analysis of contemporary translational IT workers, Radhakrishanan's (2011, p. 79) informants spoke positively about women's empowerment and equal opportunity in the workplace, but suggested that 'this empowerment could go too far, just as becoming "global" becomes undesirable when it mimics the west or threatens existing notion of a good women and a good family'. This highlights the importance of balance and compromise, especially for women, in efforts to find an 'appropriately Indian' way of being modern. These materials mesh well with the statistics and ethnographic findings of my sample. For my informants the collective needs of children and family in Australia place a limit on their personal ambitions of successful careers.

### **Mothering in Sydney: Migration and Maternal Work**

Among my respondents, women are the primary carers of their children in the immigrant household. Their identity as mothers is intertwined with the needs of their family to such an extent that they often feel a deep sense of duty and obligation. They understand their role as a mother as one of providing selfless service to the family, and as putting their own career ambitions last. Although the actual practice of childbearing and childrearing takes place in Australian structures, the beliefs relating to women's reproductive roles are part of a South Asian cultural habitus, as these have evolved over colonial and post-colonial modernity.

Through the act of carrying a child in her womb and giving birth, a woman attains motherhood. Pregnancy, childbirth, and lactation naturalise motherhood. Feminist scholars argue that the reproductive burden limits women's abilities to participate in wider society and pursue their self-actualisation (Young et al., 1984; Sangha & Gonsalves, 2013; Krishanraj, 2010). Feminists such as Ruddick claim that maternal work can be done by anyone who is committed to doing what the work entails.

Whatever difference might exist between female and male mothers, there is no reason to believe that one sex rather than other is more capable of doing maternal work. A woman is no more, a man no less “naturally” a mother, no more or less obligated to maternal work, than a man or woman is “naturally” a scientist or firefighter or is obligated to become one. All these kinds of work should be open to capable and interested women and men. (Ruddick, 1995, p. 41)

One reason why reconceptualization is needed is because the exclusive requirement that women do maternal work has consequences for women’s participation in wider society (Ho, 2010; Salaff et al., 2007; Purkayastha, 2005; Hirao, 2007; Becker & Moen, 1999; Manderson & Inglis, 1985).

Migration adds its own mode of entrenching intensive models of maternal work for women. Much of the parenting and childrearing literature produced in the Indian sub-continent describes joint families and multiple caretakers of children as a wide spread phenomenon (Kurtz, 1992; Seymour, 2004). Kurtz (1992, p. 58), in his review of the literature addressing childrearing in different regions in India, observes that:

... accounts from all regions speak of joint families, multiple caretakers, and rules of restraint on parent-child interaction in front of elders. Even where joint families do not predominate, nuclear families are reported to locate (in close proximity to) relatives in order to approximate joint family participation in childrearing.’ (see also Donner, 2008)

Many of my respondents said that when they arrived in Australia they did not have extended families living here. New mothers tend to call upon their parents for assistance, both during their pregnancy and post-delivery. But parents cannot always come and help for long stretches. Visa restrictions determine how long they can stay as ‘visitors’. Parents tend only to come for short periods of six months to a year. In some cases, parents, particularly elderly parents, are reluctant to migrate even if they are permitted to stay for a longer period of time. So, the absence of kinship ties leave women with few alternatives for distributing maternal work over a group.

Jas, to whom I alluded before, for example, could neither call upon her parents, nor on her in-laws for assistance with childcare. As a result, she felt compelled to give up the idea of work. She had little option but to stay at home and look after her children.

Prisa called upon her mother both times after the birth of her sons. Her mother visited her for six months each time. She helped Prisa to take care of her new born babies, and with the general household chores. This temporary parental support, while of assistance to Prisa during her postnatal recovery, made little difference to her career recovery because when Prisa's mother returned to India, Prisa had no option but to fill the gap with her own maternal work.

Nanditi, to whom I referred earlier in this chapter, suggested that her ability to continue her career un-interrupted – despite being a single mother – lies in the fact that she had her parents to help her during the time she was raising her son.

I was my son's primary carer and I still am [Nanditi's son is 27 years old and lives with her]. But I should make it very clear that without my mum, dad and my younger sister (who was unmarried for most of the time that I was raising my son) I could not have worked. (Nanditi, Interview, 2013)

Nanditi stressed that parental support enabled her to continue with her career. However, her ability also came from the fact that she was a child migrant. In contrast to the majority of South Asian-born women in my research for whom marriage and migration coincided, Nanditi grew up in a nuclear family, getting used to Australian social norms from the early years of her life. Also the fact that Nanditi had her own parents who had gradually re-socialised themselves with Australian values, unlike Prisa, who only had her parents-in-law.

Therefore, it is the particular family network that a woman has around her that seems to matter. As I suggested in Chapter 4, a woman has very different relations with her natal and affinal kin. A woman's relations with her affinal kin is structured far more on hierarchy. Under such circumstances, having her husband's family network in Australia for support may not always make her situation better. In fact, having in-laws to stay can prove an extra burden.



Jahan, the Bangladeshi mother of four who was given a hard time by her in-laws (mother-in-law and sisters-in-law) during her initial years of marriage in her affinal home, shared her experience of having her sister-in-law in Australia during her third delivery:

When I had my third pregnancy, it was twins and my other kids were very young. In the meantime I needed some help, and my sister-in-law came to help me. But there was not much help. Instead I had to look after my four kids, my husband, my kitchen and [my] sister-in-law. That was during my three months after delivery and between three to six months it was very hard. (Jahan, Interview, 2014)

Chaya, a 34-year-old mother of two sons from Nepal called upon her parents – as well as her in-laws – for childcare when she had her first son. Chaya explicitly drew a comparison between when she had her parents stay with her as distinct from having her husband's parent's staying with her.

Having your in-laws is not same as having your parents, you know. I work, I come home so late. When I come home, nothing is done and I have to do everything. I do the cooking and [the] rest of the things as well. I don't say anything. At least they have looked after my kids. They [in-laws] don't understand. When I have my mum and dad, it is so different. (Chaya, Interview, 2014)

Similarly, Jaya, the mother of a 17-year-old daughter, called upon her in-laws to take care of her daughter when the daughter was two years old. A number of Chaya's experiences echoed what Jaya described as her situation:

My in-laws stayed with me for five months and that was the most terrible five months of my life. During those days, my husband had to travel overseas for his work quite often. Most of the time, it used to be me, my daughter and my in-laws at home. At that time I used to work in North Sydney and by the time I get back home [Jaya's house is 35 kilometres west of North Sydney) after work, sometime it used to be 8 p.m. in the evening.

During that time my in-laws used to help bring my daughter home from childcare. Apart from that nothing used to be done. Despite coming from work late, I used to prepare dinner. Most of the time they [her in-laws] used to be watching TV. Although they had no clue what was coming on, what the TV characters were talking about, still, they would be sitting in the couch and watching TV, waiting for me to come home and prepare dinner. As soon as I was at home, they would say, 'Oh! We did not do anything in the kitchen, thinking that you would come and do it by yourself'. My in-laws do not eat leftover

foods. So I had to cook everything fresh. After coming home, I used to go straight to the kitchen, cook dinner and do rest of the chores. Oh! I used to miss my parents so much at that time. (Jaya, Interview, 2014)

Therefore, loss of extended family networks upon migration and restrictions placed on visitor visas to Australia means that young mothers were often reluctant to seek extra support from families back home when they needed it most. Even if they get help from their natal family members, it does not necessarily alter a woman's situation, that is, enable her to get back into the labour market because their presence is very temporary.

### **Formal Childcare Services**

In Australia, subsidised formal childcare facilities are available for families with young children. Through the enactment of the *Childcare Act, 1972*, the government has provided the basis for childcare funding and subsidies in Australia (Irvine & Farrell, 2013; Logan et al., 2013). The main purpose of childcare funding and childcare subsidies is to provide support to working parents and, more specifically, to increase the labour force participation of mothers. Apropos of subsidised childcare facilities, the basic underlying assumption of the Australian Government is that affordable childcare services will increase the usage of childcare facilities, eventually enhancing women's labour force participation (Buckingham, 2008; Andrews et al., 2014).

Connelly (1992), who examines the effect of childcare costs on married women's labour force participation, argues that the lower rate of labour force participation among mothers of pre-schoolers was entirely attributable to the high cost of childcare. Adopting a similar line of argument, a more recent study by Breunig and colleagues (2012, p. 14) suggests that increased childcare costs have had an inverse effect on married women's employment, by extension causing women's average hours of paid work to decrease. The basic primary argument of these studies supports the government assumption that women will work if childcare is cheaper and easily available.

However, there are studies that support the opposite hypothesis that childcare costs do not overtly influence women's decision-making regarding labour force participation. Teal (1992), in his analysis of series of surveys data provided by Australian Bureau of Statistics on childcare arrangement and data on childcare centres provided by Department of Community Service and Health, suggests that childcare subsidies would not be an effective means to increase women's labour force participation. This was given more weight by Rammohan and Whelan's (2005) work which examine the relationship between maternal employment decisions and childcare costs using the HILDA (Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia) dataset. Their results show that the childcare costs do not overtly influence women's decision-making regarding labour force participation. A more compelling counter argument comes from Buckingham's (2008) comparative study of childcare costs and female labour supply. Alluding to the 'crowding out' of the informal care sector, Buckingham (2008, p. 4) argues that increases in government childcare subsidies do not necessarily increase new families' enthusiasm to use childcare facilities. Instead, Buckingham notes, subsidised childcare facilities encourage families who are already using child services to change to formal childcare from informal childcare services.

The above mentioned studies are quantitative and based on the overall Australian population. Or the evidence they have reached conclusions using 'the elasticities', that is, the underlying notion of demand and supply of childcare in co-relation with the change in price. By contrast, the findings of my research are in line with sociological studies focused on specific immigrant communities and their preferences regarding formal childcare services. Studies by Manderson and English (1985), Soriano (1995) and Da (2003) show that in Australia, migrant families often do not use childcare services. The reasons given by these studies include lack of reliable information about formal childcare services, lack of availability of culturally specific childcare programs, and a general distrust of childcare centre services.

In my research, the use of childcare services does not realign when women's labour force status changes to one of paid work. None of the women who I met in the community centre used childcare services. As I mentioned earlier, the women who attended the centre were taking care of their children by themselves. They used to bring their young children (five years or below) along with them and carers (provided by the community centre) used to take care of the children while the women took part in centre activities for two hours. And, among my women respondents outside of the community centre, not every woman in the labour market sought or depended on childcare facilities. Decisions whether to use or not to use childcare services were influenced by factors such as individual family's preferences and attitudes towards parenting and use of childcare of services.

Jahan did not send any of her four children to a childcare centre. When she had her first baby a year after she arrived in Sydney, she did not have a full-time job. She was working part-time at a restaurant. In fact, the temporary nature of the job was a repercussion of her pregnancy soon after her migration to Australia. When the baby arrived, Jahan and her husband decided that Jahan should leave work. As her husband had a full-time job, finance was not an issue for the family. So, Jahan stayed at home to look after her first baby. Within the next four years Jahan had two more deliveries: she gave birth to twins and a daughter. When I met Jahan even the youngest of the four went to school. When I asked her the reason for not sending her children into childcare, Jahan said:

When my first one arrived, my husband wanted him [newly born baby boy] to be more home-touch [she meant raising him in a more homely environment]. So I stayed at home to look after him ... I did not send any of my other children to childcare. I don't like childcare centres. Every family is different here [Australia]. They come from different backgrounds, have different ways to raise their children, teach different things. If my children are with me at home, I can teach my children what I have learned from my parents. We can pass on our culture and traditional practices to our children. (Jahan, Interview, 2013)

Jahan's case highlights the fact that lack of availability of culturally-specific childcare services can discourage migrant families from using childcare services. Nevertheless, as a part of decision-making, Jahan's case also shows that the timing of pregnancy soon after migration shapes a woman's labour force status. And a woman's labour force status in turn significantly influences family decision-making regarding the use of childcare services. Jahan did not have a full-time job. The manual nature of her job implied that the job she was doing prior to her delivery may not have had any economic significance for the family finances. As a result, when she had her babies, she gave up any idea of work and became a full-time mother.

Similarly, Chaya, to whom I alluded earlier, opted not to send her two sons to childcare facilities. Her main reason for not using childcare services was to avoid any possible health hazards. Often children contract communicable diseases such as measles, chickenpox, hand, foot and mouth disease and head lice at childcare facilities. But unlike Jahan, Chaya worked full-time as an IT consultant. So, an alternative solution to taking care of her sons had to be found, that is, other means of care for her sons. Chaya arranged informal childcare at her home by inviting her parents and in-laws from Nepal every alternate year.

Diya, the Pakistan-born doctor, sent her daughter to childcare from the time the toddler was one year old. When I met her, Diya was not working. As a medical doctor from Pakistan, Diya had registered her degree with the Australian Medical Council. She was applying for jobs in medical sectors, but has had no success. Irrespective of her work, for Diya, sending her daughter to childcare served the purposes of socialising her child with other children of the same age group, building her confidence, and enabling her to become independent. However, due to the lack of availability of culturally specific childcare services, Diya initially struggled to find a suitable childcare facility.

At the moment my daughter goes to a childcare facility run by people from Islamic background in Guildford. The children who come there are mostly from Arabic background. I got to know about the facility through my friend and I decided to enrol my daughter there [in the childcare]. Actually I looked at so many childcare facilities. And the most important thing about this childcare facility is that they serve halal food which is

a requirement for us. If I put my daughter in any other childcare, the food she can eat is vegetarian. I don't want my child to be in a place where other kids are served something else and she is served something different. (Diya, Interview, 2013)

From the above examples, it becomes apparent that for migrants, to use or not to use childcare facilities can be influenced by a number of factors. Often decisions were shaped by parents' personal attitudes towards childcare services. In cases where women are working, some form of childcare service has to be provided. But where possible, families often choose informal care provided by grandparents over formal childcare services. Further, the lack of availability of culturally specific childcare services means that some women are reluctant to use the existing childcare services, preferring to look after their children at home. I will now turn my focus to the sexual division of labour in migratory households in the sphere of childrearing.

### **Sexual Division of Labour in the Area of Childrearing**

The research included some exploration of the sexual division of labour and its relevance to childrearing among my respondents. It revealed that the fathers assumed some responsibilities. For example, they arranged their older children's attendance at sporting classes, entertainment and outside excursions. But, in the areas of day-to-day caring of both the young and older children, for example, their physical care, picking up and dropping them off at school and childcare facilities, helping them with their homework, and engaging with staff at their children's schools, men showed little involvement. They were exonerated from participating in day-to-day childcare duties because of their work. 'He is a very busy person. He comes home very late. When he comes home he plays with [the] children' Jahan said, when she talked about her husband's involvement in childrearing at home.

Nina, a mother of three, referred to her husband's involvement in her children's day-to-day activities in similar terms:

My husband helps me, at least he shares with me what he can do. But he has got a full-time job. So he remains very busy. When he comes home from work, he goes straight to the kids and I get time to finish my household chores. (Nina, Interview, 2013)

In Prisa's case, her husband's relatively minimal involvement in their children's day-to-day caring activities became quite clear when Prisa said that her husband did not know everything that was happening in her sons' lives:

I spend more time with my children. I am at home when they come back from school. I help them with their studies. I know what is happening with my sons at their schools. I am in touch with their friends, and their friends' parents. So I know everything that is happening in my kids' lives. With my husband, he is never going to know all that [her children's everyday affairs]. He works full time. But he looks after them when I am not at home, during weekends. And my kids love to be with their dad. (Prisa, Interview, 2014)

The internal sexual division of labour was not realigned when the women's labour force status changed to one of paid work. Among my respondents, women were frequently found to be extensively involved in their children's day-to-day activities, even when they were working. Kusum, a working mother of two children, described the struggle she faced managing care and paid work with little support from her husband. Kusum explained that her husband was generally supportive of her in her everyday life. He helped her with the children during the weekends, and sometimes did the grocery shopping if she was very busy. He occasionally managed to pick the children up from school and their childcare centre if Kusum was delayed at work. But, nevertheless, coping with the everyday details of life is not an easy process. Because Kusum's husband has a demanding job of his own, he often cannot take full responsibility for a task. Thus, on a typical day, Kusum said, she drops her son off at his school in the morning, then drops her daughter at the childcare centre. Following this, she commutes 45 minutes to her office. After finishing work, she picks her son up from his school, drops him off at his after-school tuition class, and then picks her daughter up from the childcare centre. In the evening, when her children are at home, she helps her son with his homework, prepares dinner, and, if by that time her husband is not back from his office, she

puts the children to bed as well. Apart from her day-to-day tasks, Kusum is also responsible for her son's extra-curricular school activities. She attends school parent-teacher meetings. And, if her daughter suddenly becomes ill at the childcare centre, it is Kusum who rushes to collect her. While juggling her paid work with her care work, Kusum often feels tired and overburdened by her responsibilities.

In the same way, Sassa, a mother of two who works full-time, took complete responsibility for her two growing children after migrating to Australia. But, because she has had to manage her time and work to accommodate her childcaring responsibilities, Sassa feels that she has missed out on her career development opportunities.

Back home, men would have absolutely no involvement in childrearing. If they have, they have very limited involvement. Same was the case with my husband. He does not have a clue about ... how to raise a baby ... my husband never changed nappy or anything like that. When we came to Australia, my husband started his job and I stayed at home to look after my young children. After my babies started going to school, I chose to go to public service, thinking that in public sector I do not have to work long hours and I can have flexitime, and that way I don't have to compromise my time towards my growing kids. But in hindsight I also think that I did not challenge my own self. If I would have challenged myself, I could have been to a very different level compared to what I am now in terms of my career. I think that I have not done what I was capable of doing and could have been in a very different level career-wise compared to what I manage to be if I had chosen my career according to my capacity then. (Sassa, Interview, 2013)

For Sassa and Kusum, the cultural norms of a sexual division of labour in the areas of childcaring and childrearing required that they should take full responsibility for their children's day-to-day activities despite their full-time work commitments. Meanwhile, husbands concentrated on their own career development. As the women had to accommodate their careers within their childcaring responsibilities, their career development took second place to their husbands' careers. Sassa particularly felt that she has missed the chance of developing a career according to her intellectual capacity.



## **Mothers: Work and Aspiration**

South Asian-born women encounter numerous challenges in their migratory journeys, both inside their country of origin and following their migration overseas. Migration within their countries of origin, in the form of marriage, brings its own challenges shaped by the socio-cultural structure and hierarchy of patriarchal and patrilineal societies within South Asia. Upon their migration to Australia, women encounter a different culture, the culture of a Western society. However, as Ortner (1972, p. 5) notes, ‘the secondary status of women in society is one of the true universals, a pan-cultural fact ... [even if] the specific cultural conceptions and symbolizations of women are incredibly diverse and mutually contradictory’. In her historical analysis of women’s position in Australia’s cultural tradition in the later 1980s, Schaffer argues that Australia in the colonial period of white settlement was a deeply misogynistic society. Suggesting the dominant norms of Australian culture as masculine, Schaffer writes:

The differences between men and women, “real” Australian and others, at the most fundamental level, are not those marked by biology or politics, history, country of origin or socialization, but by systems of meaning embedded in language and social practices. Further, the meaning ascribed to men and women through the categories of masculinity and femininity also operate symbolically in language to establish the “place” of the feminine as juxtaposed to the masculine in culture ... [categorisation] as in father sky to mother earth, colonial master to the plains of promise, native son to the barren bush, contemporary Australians to the red/dead centre. All of these equations reproduce the ‘perfect’ couple: masculine activity/ feminine passivity. These are common-sense, taken for granted, everyday meanings. They reproduce the idea that man/masculinity is the universal cultural norm and women/femininity is the other, the adjunct, an object of desire for man. (Schaffer, 1988, p. 14)

It has been almost three decades since Schaffer published her study of women’s position in the Australian cultural tradition; but even today, many of her descriptions of women’s position in Australia hold true. Despite the various changes of law, attitudes, rights and opportunities – which have definitely broadened the horizon for women in Australian society – masculine bias still has its stronghold in the society (Cerise, 2008; Evans & Kelley, 2008; Ho, 2010). Today, women in Australia are better educated and there are more women than

men with completed university degrees. Forty-five per cent of Australian-born women in year 2011 obtained at or above bachelor's level of qualifications compared to only 30 per cent of men in the same category (ABS, 2011). Despite this, women who work full-time in Australia earn 16 per cent less than their male counterparts (Cerise, 2008). It is still the women who substantially curtail their labour force participation after having children (Craig, 2006; Evan & Kelley, 2008; Ho, 2010). Juggling their paid and unpaid responsibilities, Australian women are seriously disadvantaged in the sphere of career development opportunities.

Thus, when South Asian-born women migrate to Australia, many of the pre-existing challenges they faced in their country of origin as women are reinforced. They find already familiar patterns of gender bias in work practices as well as the types of jobs in which women are expected to predominate. Labour force participation statistics reveal that in excess of 40 per cent of South Asian-born women are not in the Australian labour force compare to just 15 per cent of South Asian-born men. Among women in the labour market, clerical and administrative workers comprise 21 per cent, while a further 16 per cent work as community and personal service workers. Over a quarter (28 per cent) of South Asian-born men who are in the labour market are employed as professionals, and another 14 per cent were employed as technicians and trade workers. Overall, 6 per cent of South Asian-born women in the workforce work as managers compared with 11 per cent of men (ABS, 2011, see also Chapter 2 in this thesis). As migrants, women face new forms of discrimination. Linguistic bias and racism are among other forms of discrimination that South Asian-born women encounter.

Yet, despite all of these challenging factors, Australia provides South Asian-born women with a place where they feel a new sense of independence. As I suggest in Chapter 4, for women who no longer live in a joint family setting, the shift to a nuclear family structure after migration allows greater autonomy to take part in household decision-making. No longer a subject of scrutiny by her husband's kin group, she experiences not only freedom of mobility, but the ability to undertake tasks without first having to seek the permission of her affinal kin.

Increased personal autonomy gives rise to a higher level of confidence and feeling of independence in women.

For my small group of middle-class women, migration and involvement in motherhood have coupled with putting their career on hold for an extended period of time. Inevitably, women have to accommodate their work around the responsibilities that come after they become mothers. In fact, we have already seen that migration has actually reinforced some of the urgency of being stay-at-home mothers for some women. But having said that, my research also shows that women have not been swallowed up entirely by motherhood in terms of their horizons of hope. With the new sense of autonomy and feeling of independence, many women in my sample aspire to work. The anthropologist Appadurai (2013) conceives ‘wants’ and preferences for commodities in the wide sense of terms – physical goods, marriage, work, leisure, respectability, friendship, health – as derivative of an individual’s aspiration to the good life. These aspirations are not a feature of the individual as an atomistic entity. Rather, according to Appadurai, aspirations to the good life are formed in interactions and in the thick of social life.

Work figures as an aspirational horizon for many of my women respondents. I will begin with the case of Jas who lives in a north-western suburb of Sydney. She has a family of four. Jas started working five years after her migration to Australia. At the time of her interview, Jas was working part-time, three days a week, as a family support worker at a community service centre. Jas’s husband worked full-time and was the primary income earner in the family. With a mortgage to pay and two young children, one going to school and the other in a childcare centre, along with increasing living expenses, Jas’s husband’s income was only enough for the family to meet their regular expenses. Therefore, in order to attain financial security such as saving for the future, Jas had to work. As she put it, ‘Any form of income is better than no income. It would be a big support for the family finance if I also work.’ For Jas, to work was not just a desire to work but also a financial imperative.

Like Jas, Diya's work and earnings definitely added to her family's finances and provided financial security; however, Diya found work more important for a woman's independence. Although at the time of her interview Diya was not working, for her Australia provides an environment that allows women's aspirations to work to flourish, unlike in Pakistan, where she originally came from. Thus she is determined to find a job:

Over here [Australia] I think women feel like they need to work. They are more independent that way. Over there [Pakistan], there is a culture that likes you to stay at your parents' house and study. When you get to a certain age, you get married. Then you go and live with your husband and raise kids. And there is no compulsion on you to work. If you want to work, the culture there, it has gotten easier over the years. Before that there weren't many women in the work place. Now, like, if you want to work, you can. Over here because there is no set culture, like after you finish you study, you get married and have kids. So women obviously they are more independent. They have to support financially, so they have to work here. But over there, it is more like a man's thing that they have to work. For women, it's like if they want extra money for whatever reason, they can work. Over there it is the thing, like, as a woman what you can do is study and marry, whereas here a woman can do whatever she wants, whenever and however she wants in the long run. (Diya, Interview, 2013)

Tara's case was different again. Tara originally came from India. The mother of two children, she had never worked and had never thought she would ever work in her lifetime before she migrated to Australia. When asked why she thought she would never work in her lifetime, she said that it was the way she was brought up:

I was brought up in such a way that if it is a girl, she does not need to work. It is only the boys are meant to work and I grew up in that atmosphere. And initially, I was so kiddish that I wanted to be a housewife' [followed by laughter]. (Tara, Interview, 2014)

Tara thought that if she were still in her home country, her initial thinking about being a housewife – about which she now laughs – would not have changed. But, after coming to Australia, when she saw that friends she knew from her country of origin were working, she was inspired to work too. Tara said,

After I came to Australia, when I saw my friends are working, I felt like working. After coming here I got the passion. When I looked at my friends, I felt like they have become

super talented, and they were like, they don't want to waste their time. Thus, I was inspired by them. And I see that work would enable me to understand the world better. I can take bolder decisions. Things like finance, I can have my say on those matters. (Tara, Interview, 2014)

In Tara's opinion, work would enable her to perceive the world differently. She was inspired by the thought that – like her friends – work would help her to discover a different person within herself, who would understand things in her surroundings differently. Tara saw work as an opportunity to cultivate better personality and confidence in a person.

Banu, who I introduced at the beginning of the chapter, has never worked in Australia and describes herself as a typical mother who loves to stay at home. But, when I asked her about her future plans, she contradicted herself when she said, 'I am thinking of joining a course so that I can update myself and look for jobs once my little one starts school so that I can keep myself busy'.

Like Banu, Shakshi, the mother of two who moved to Canberra because of her husband's job, has never worked (after finishing her study, Shakshi got married and was busy taking care of her two children). She said that she has even lost interest in her field of study. Shakshi has a bachelor's degree in computer science from India. But when I asked her questions regarding her future plans, she said that once her youngest son starts school, she wants to find a job – not in the field of computer science but in community services – and start working.

Jahan spoke of her willingness to work despite having very limited time:

Normally I am very crafty girl. I like to do knitting and love arts and crafts. I am doing two/three voluntary works at the moment. I go to migrant resource centre, and community centres. I teach participants in the community centres simple knitting and painting work. So now, if I get anything within my available time - which is between 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.- I would like to work [she meant paid work]. But after 2 p.m., I have to pick my kids from schools. After 2 o'clock, I have to be at home with them. (Jahan, Interview, 2014)

During my interview with Prisa, she sounded quite content when she said it was more important for her to be at home while her sons are growing up. She was happy that she was able to take care of her young children's needs, provide them home-made dinners and lunches. In that way, Prisa thinks that she is spending quality time with her family, helping her children do better in their lives, and creating a good family bond. In hindsight, she also thinks that a career is equally important for women. So, she wants to work. And, like Banu, Shakshi, Tara and many other women who participated in my research, Prisa is hoping to do that after her younger son starts high school.

Therefore, the ways in which my respondents looked at time beyond and expressed their interest to join the workforce in the future, suggests that migration to Australia has provided South Asian-born women with aspirations to work. For some, their work aspirations stemmed from the requirement to become financially secure as a family in Australia. For others, it was a means of becoming independent as a woman. Yet others described work as a means to keep them busy at a later age when their children grow older. And the entry to the workforce is very important for women's long-term wellbeing.

Appadurai also argues that the navigational map of poor people consists of very few combinations of nodes and pathways that will lead them to their aspirations. In making this argument, Appadurai shows that although poor people are capable of aspirations, their capacities to aspire is constrained by a smaller stock of meaningful experiences that relate aspirations to commodities. Moreover, poor people have fewer opportunities to experience how a choice of a commodity influences their fundamental wellbeing. As a result, the poor's navigational maps consist of very few combinations of nodes and pathways for aspirations to commodities (Appaduria, 2013, p. 189). The actual navigational map open to the women I interviewed was similarly quite constrained. As Mincer and Polachek (1980) note, the gap in labour market participation years because of childbearing, and childrearing for women can last for five to ten years in their life cycles. Such discontinuities in turn affect women's ability

to equally participate in the labour market alongside their male counterparts, as well as women who do not have children, thus disadvantaging mothers by seriously reducing their ability to accumulate human capital, and to exploit their earning capacity (Mincer & Polachek, 1980; Budig & England, 2001; Gupta & Smith, 2002). For that reason, in her study of the effect of children on women's wages, Waldfogel (1997, p. 216) notes that a woman with a child suffers a 4 per cent wage penalty compared with a woman with no child and the penalty rises to 12 per cent if she has two or more children in her life time.

It will require a longitudinal study to see what happens to my respondents after their children go to school and how their initial lack of labour force participation affects them economically in a long run.

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The first point to note from this chapter is that the process of migration is followed by the women's involvement in the primary role of reproduction: this involves having children and taking care of associated domestic responsibilities. For my respondents the precise timing of their migration, marriage and maternity came together to derail their labour market entry and the maintenance of their professional capacity. Furthermore, the sexual division of labour in the area of childrearing in migratory households has reinforced cultural values pertinent to women's roles as mothers, which are already highly developed in South Asia. Having said that, my research also shows that women are not completely swallowed up by motherhood in terms of their horizons of hopes. A majority of them alluded to opportunities arising from labour force participation in Australia, and spoke of their willingness to work in future. On a personal level, the women's acceptance of and willingness to participate in the labour market indicated that migration has provided them with aspirations to work, which for some would have been denied them in their home country. It is also indicative of the fact that the whole problem of low labour force participation of South Asian-born women in Australia is only

temporary – to do with women's present stage of life. A longitudinal study is needed to see what happens to women after their children go to school.



## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

In order to establish empirically the reasons for the labour market disadvantage of South Asian-born women, the thesis has taken an in-depth qualitative approach and explored multiple ways gender shapes women's lives not simply as 'migrants' or 'workers' but in their totality. In his book *The Suffering of the Immigrant*, Sayad writes that in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of a migratory phenomenon, one must look into its twin components: emigration and immigration (Sayad, 2004). According to Sayad, 'before becoming an immigrant, the migrant is first an e-migrant and ... the sociology of migration must therefore start, not from the receiving society, but from the structure and contradictions of sending communities' (see also Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2000, p. 173). Sayad describes immigration as:

To immigrate together with one's history (immigration itself being an integral part of that history), with one's traditions, ways of living, feeling, acting and thinking, with one's language, one's religion and all the other social, political and mental structures of one's society – structures characteristic of the individual and also of society, since the former is no more than the embodiment of the latter – or, in a word, with one's culture. (Sayad, 2004, pp. 3-4)

Sayad's comprehensive approach is in keeping with the main strategy that I have implemented in this thesis to answer the question of why South Asian-born female migrants in Australia are more economically disadvantaged than their male counterparts despite being equally qualified. In keeping with Sayad's suggestion, I have presented women's lives as migrants in Australia while giving equal emphasis to the cultural construction as well as the gender norms and social practices that have already shaped their lives as women in South Asian countries, tracing how the two come together and affect women after their migration. I

have done so in order to signal the fact that South Asian-born women are quintessential migrants who are *born* to be those destined-to-move. In making the argument, the thesis situates itself within the wider debate of women's marriage and migration, which seeks to show that women become migrants by virtue of marriage. As married migrants in transnational migration schemes, women's ability to exercise their agency is constrained by political-economic processes and by the cultural construction of gender, sexuality, class, race and ethnicity (Palriwala & Uberoi, 2008, p. 50).

In the process of answering the question of why South Asian-born female migrants are economically disadvantaged in the Australian labour market, this thesis has shown that a combination of structures and events shape a woman's migration and her decision-making. More importantly, for a South Asian-born woman as a gendered subject, her agency in terms of participating in the Australian labour market is compromised because of the gender inequalities that exist both in structures of the host society and in her country of origin. Some of the inequalities are in the gendered assumptions regarding women migrants which are built into Australian institutional practices and policies, while other gender biases are present particularly in the way women's lives are shaped in South Asia. Yet others are concerned with social biases on the part of language speakers belonging to the majority group in Australia. The concept of conjuncture is used by Bourdieu in social science to describe the 'context of action' at a point in time and the way the context shapes the individual's agency and outcomes. When the inequalities unfold simultaneously in women's lives, the interactions of these structures seriously limit women's choices, allowing them little space for agency.

For women, migration precedes arrival in Australia. Women become migrants by virtue of marriage. Therefore migration to Australia after marriage constitutes a form of double migration for women. I have emphasised that both these forms of migration constitute overlapping patterns of challenge and marginalisation for women. They move from their natal home to live in their husband's homes, and they move again from their home countries to live

in Australia. These are not simply points of comparison. They double up, overlap, creating a pattern of repetition as well as difference in the lives of South Asian women migrants. In both the situations their experiences of migration entail being treated as outsiders or strangers in the receiving families or society. As an outsider, with a limited support system, a woman bears the burden of adjustment in the new environment. In South Asia, women adjust to different social hierarchies, gendered norms and values governing their behaviours as the daughter-in-law in the husband's home. Once in Australia as migrant women they must adjust themselves all over again to Australia's immigration policies, its regulatory regimes and practices. More often than not, migration to Australia exaggerates the enormity of settlement issues through mechanisms of exclusion and marginalisation that involve linguistic and racial discrimination. The issue of linguistic biases that women encounter after migration to Australia is not the lack of competency in the English language that literature on migration often addresses, but is a form of ethnic prejudice against the unassimilated accent that symbolises the 'ethnic other' according to Australian standards. The experiences of racism can be both covert and overt, and women feel a sense of powerlessness in dealing with racism and other forms of discrimination in the host society. It should be emphasised that the women I interviewed discussed not simply their own experiences of racism but those affecting their children at school. Given the centrality of their role as mothers in Australia, what happens to the children is experienced by women as something that is directly affecting their own lives.

The patterns of migration also entail certain important divergences between marriage and migration to Australia. Migration to Australia also provides women with feelings of independence and empowerment. This occurs precisely to the extent that the kinship patterns of living with the husband's kin group are broken by this second migration. As women generally do not live in extended families in Australia, they feel less pressured with regards to their everyday behaviours, and feel independent in terms of household decision-making.

The implications of the overlapping experiences of migration in South Asian women's life cycles are complex to say the least. The earlier experiences of marriage migration do not seem to ease the settlement process for women in Australia. As women have to negotiate with many new forms of challenges, their previous adaptations do not necessarily empower them. Moreover, since South Asian women have already been displaced, they have fewer personal resources to deal with another relocation to Australia. Having said that, migration to Australia does allow women a prospect of forming a nuclear family, which is relatively agential and empowering. The shift from a joint family setting to a nuclear family in Australia allows women to take part in household decision-making. No longer a subject of scrutiny by their husband's kin group, women experience not only freedom of mobility, but also their ability to undertake tasks without having to seek permission from their affinal kin. Increased personal autonomy gives rise to a higher level of confidence and feeling of independence in women. Therefore the patterns of migration not only overlap, they also diverge in ways that are both debilitating and providing new sources of agency. The agency is closely correlated to the extent that the kinship patterns of living with the husband's kin group are broken by the second migration.

We have examined another great social force shaping the lives of South Asian women. A South Asian woman is mandated to childbearing soon after marriage. This again overlaps and shapes what demography shows to be the case about the *timing* of South Asian women's migration. The demographic density of South Asian women migrants is greatest among young women who are newly married, and so the specificity of timing of migration in women's life cycles (which are culturally shaped forms of time and experience) means many of them have babies soon after migration. As women, they spend a major part of their economically active period of life in re-settling, negotiating the new social environment they enter after marriage, bearing babies and taking care of them. They lag behind in terms of career development. For many, even imagining a life beyond the immediate present becomes unthinkable. Although they may feel freer without their husband's kin, being a new mother in Australia without

kinship networks also reveals certain constraints to this new-found agency. The lack of availability of family support, precisely at the time when the work of mothering is greatest, leaves women without any alternatives to staying at home and looking after their children. In such circumstances women perceive their present situation as inevitable and one over which they have limited control. Nevertheless the fact that many women, while contemplating their future, alluded to opportunities that are available in Australia and their willingness to work, is indicative of the idea that the issue of low labour force participation of South Asian-born women might be a temporary issue – to do with the present stage of their life cycle. This would require a longitudinal study to track and establish.

In order to pull all the above mentioned threads together, and make sense of what they mean for migrant women, let me provide the story of Parul that I took from my field work.

Parul is a 36 year old medical doctor from Nepal. She worked as a medical practitioner in Kathmandu, Nepal, before she migrated to Australia in 2005. Parul began her migratory journey with her marriage. Once she got married she moved from her own home in Kathmandu to live with her in-laws in the same city. Parul's husband had arrived in Australia as a student and had secured permanent residency in Australia when he went to Nepal to get married. So soon after marriage her husband came to Australia while Parul stayed back with his parents in Nepal until her Australian immigration visa was finalised. Once in her in-laws' house, Parul's social world got shifted. As a doctor, she worked at a hospital during the day taking care of patients whereas as a daughter-in-law at home she had to take care of her in-laws and husband's extended family members. From waking up early in the morning to preparing dinner after she got back from her work, it was Parul who had to make sure that everybody in her new family were well taken care of. But when she was granted a visa (as a dependent spouse), Parul migrated to Australia to reunite with her husband after almost a year of her marriage. Once she arrived in Australia, as an overseas doctor, Parul started preparing for medical exams in order to register her degree with the Australian Medical Council. This

process took almost two years. In 2007, she passed all the exams and successfully registered her medical degree with the Australian Medical Council. In the same year she also received her Australian permanent residency. As a permanent resident and with medical registration in Australia, Parul thought she had finally opened the door to opportunities in Australia. With her medical degree registered, she was able to apply for jobs in the medical sector, and with permanent residency there were no more visa restrictions imposed on her should she want to re-skill herself.

She started to apply for jobs in various medical institutions, such as hospitals and general practitioners' surgeries in Sydney. But as she had no local experience, and it had already been more than three years since she last worked as a doctor – which was in Nepal – she struggled to get a career break in Sydney. In the meantime, it had already been more than three years since her marriage, and pressure was building upon her and her husband from their families to have children. Then before Parul could find a job in her field, she became pregnant with her first child. Her pregnancy delayed her job search. Once her first daughter arrived in 2008, with no childcare help available and given the fact that she did not have any formal work, she stayed at home and looked after the child. In the meantime, she called upon her parents as well as her in-laws to assist her with childcare but very little help was forthcoming. In fact when her in-laws came to live with Parul, her workload increased. From making breakfast in the morning to dinner in the evening, Parul had to take care of her in-laws needs, the way she did when she lived with them in Nepal. When Parul's daughter turned two, Parul started sending her to childcare. Once her daughter started going to childcare, Parul had some time for herself. She slowly started applying for jobs again. But as the gap in her employment in medicine was already more than five years, all of her attempts were unsuccessful. Then in 2012, Parul again became pregnant. When her second daughter arrived, Parul became even busier than before. Throughout this whole process, Parul's husband was very supportive to her. He was a computer engineer with a demanding job working for a multinational company. Whenever he had time out from his demanding work, he helped Parul with household chores

and took care of the children. But with his demanding job, he did not manage to take significant responsibility for day-to-day activities at home. It was Parul, with no help around, who worked full-time at home. Parul is still trying hard to find a job in her field. In the meantime she has done a medical course in order to upgrade herself in the field. But as the number of years increases so her chances of getting a job declines. Now the question is: Would it have made any difference if Parul had gained paid work earlier?

Let me go back and assume that Parul had been able to find a job soon after she registered her medical degree in Australia. This would have meant that she could have established a career before her daughters were born. With an established career, on the one hand Parul might have been more satisfied with her career life. Having two beautiful daughters and an understanding husband, she might have been happy with regards to her family life as well. However, despite finding a job, Parul's situation might have remained the same or even worse in a number of aspects. Considering the gender division of labour inside the house, the domestic responsibilities might still have fallen primarily on Parul's shoulders. With very little help around, Parul might have been working like a machine – as some of my women respondents describe their lives.

The question is: How can we address such complexity in South Asian migrant women's lives? As Parul's story shows, it is neither simply a matter of providing jobs for women, nor does the solution lie in simply asking women to stay at home and take care of children. The thesis also shows we cannot be romantic about 'kin support'. A great deal of difference is made to the woman's workload, especially as a new mother, depending on whether the woman has her own parents or kin, or whether it is her in-laws.

Yet more complexities need to be considered which do not emerge if we simply regard South Asia as a purely cultural region. Even within the limitations of my data, significant differences emerge if we compare female migrants born in India with those born in Nepal. Let

us consider again the census statistics on labour force participation for women born in Nepal as against those born in India.

**Table 27: Labour force participation of South Asian-born populations by gender (full-time and part-time)**

Country of Birth	<u>Men</u>		<u>Women</u>	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
India	124,041	76	68,622	52
Sri Lanka	30,983	70	22,234	53
Pakistan	11,511	65	3,197	26
Bangladesh	12,194	76	4,911	41
Nepal	11,508	79	6,988	69

(ABS, 2011)

We see in Table 27 that labour force participation of Nepal-born women is almost 20 per cent higher than Indian-born women in Australia. But this is also not a sufficiently nuanced framework to consider the data. We need to look more closely. The data in the individual occupational categories shows that there are twice as many Nepali women working as service workers and labourers as Indian women, whereas in managerial and professional categories, there are twice as many Indian women as Nepali women (See Table 28).

**Table 28: Country segregated occupational attainments of South Asian-born women migrants in Australia**

Occupation	India %	Sri Lanka %	Pakistan %	Bangladesh %	Nepal %
Managers	6	6	7	4	2
Professionals	33	31	33	23	19
Technicians and Trades Workers	5	5	4	5	5
Community and Personal Service Workers	14	16	16	23	30
Clerical and Administrative Workers	21	25	23	14	7
Sales Workers	10	7	12	16	15
Machinery Operators and Drivers	1	1	1	1	0
Labourers	10	9	5	14	20

(ABS, 2011)



This distinctively divergent pattern of labour force participation of Indian and Nepali women in Australia could have many reasons and it requires ethnographic field work to uncover some of them.

For example, in my field research done both during my PhD and during my master's research, I found that the majority of Nepali women were open to any jobs as long it provided them some form of access to the paid workforce soon after their arrival to Australia. They tended to start at the lowest level and re-build their career upward. This particularly applied to those Nepali women who accompanied their husbands to Australia. Such women seemed to have no choice but to accept whatever jobs were available to them in order to support their families while their husbands pursued their education/career (Sharma, 2010). By contrast, the Indian-born women were not as prepared to simply accept any kind of work soon after their arrival to Australia. They tended to wait until they found a skilled or professional job relevant to their field of study.

These differences are not reflections of different skills bases. Both Nepali and Indian informants had successfully assessed their qualifications within the required professional bodies in Australia after migration. Furthermore, there are no distinctive variations in the level of qualifications and skills obtained by Indian and Nepali informants in my sample. The data seems to suggest that the variation of labour market participation between Indian and Nepali women is purely shaped by attitudes towards working below the level of professional qualifications. Nepali women are ready to put aside their prior training and take any job whereas Indian women are not. Having said that I must emphasise that the difference in timing of arrival of Nepali and Indian women to Australia has greatly influenced women's attitude to work.

Another difference emerges from my data. Newly married women from India tend to become mothers relatively soon after marriage compared to newly married women from Nepal. Within my sample of fifteen Indian women, fourteen of them conceived their first child

between first and second year of marriage, whereas only one woman had her first baby after four years of her marriage. Among Nepali women the marriage and maternity pattern was slightly different than that for Indian women. Among fourteen Nepali women, fifty per cent conceived their first child between one and two years of marriage whereas the remaining fifty per cent conceived only after four years of marriage. As a result, for the majority of Indian women, the precise timing of their maternity so soon after migration plays a greater part in keeping them out of the labour market than it does with Nepali women who predominantly focus on work after migration.

Here once again we face the complexity of causal connections. We see different attitudes on the part of women to taking up types of work which may be 'beneath' their level of training. We also see different orientations to maternity. While attitudes to maternity and marriage are fairly commonly shared across the region, nevertheless we see differences in the way women from different regions respond to these pressures. How these two sets of divergence interrelate would need further exploration: for example, Do women from India have babies earlier because they are waiting for the 'right jobs' appropriate for their own skills, to come along?

Yet other factors need to be taken into account in interpreting my data. The women I interviewed were in different stages of their migratory lives in Australia. Here again, regional differences emerged. The majority of Nepali women were comparatively new and recent arrivals. They were still in their initial phase of settlement in Australia. Whereas the majority of Indian informants were migrants of long standing and many were well settled in Australia. This reflects the fact that immigration from Nepal is of comparatively recent origin in this country, as compared to immigration from India. If we look at the longitudinal data on South Asian immigration to Australia, Indian immigration can be tracked back to the 1920s through the census whereas Nepali migration can be traced only after the 1970s (See Chapter 2, pp. 34–42). During the 1970s when Nepali people had just started migrating, there were already

more than 25,000 Indian-born people living in Australia and the population has since been increasing. Nepali migration started increasing significantly only after the year 2000. The difference in origin of Indian and Nepali migration to Australia was evident in my respondents' year of arrival. While the majority of my Indian informants arrived in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s, only one of my Nepali informants arrived in the 1990s. The majority of Nepali women arrived in Australia after the year 2000. The difference in period of arrival means that migrants encountered different immigration policies, and different economic and labour market structures in Australia. South Asian migrants of the 1960s and 1970s were especially sought after for their ability to operate within the technologically advanced Australian economy. Many of the migrants who arrived at that time were either government representatives or had secure jobs offered to them in areas in which they were qualified. They were valued for their skills in government service, private enterprise, university instruction and large corporations, and generally held white collar jobs. Usually ranked in the middle and upper socio-economic levels of Australian society, they could afford to live in the cities' more affluent suburbs. Whereas more recent arrivals are highly likely to migrate on student visas. As international students, most of them have to pay high university fees as well as meet their everyday living expenses in Australia. There are those who migrate under the country's skilled migration scheme but do not necessarily have jobs offered in their areas of qualification. In many cases the urgent need to support their own families financially and to find a place to live forces migrants to take whatever jobs are offered, jobs that may require less knowledge-based skills and more manual skills. Women have had to juggle household work, childcare (where necessary) and low-paying jobs to provide extra support for their families.

Considering that the majority of my Indian women were early arrivals, and many of their husbands were offered a job in their field of expertise prior to migration, the women were less pressured by the immediate financial necessity to support their families after migration. And their perceptions towards work developed accordingly. Whereas the majority of my Nepali

informants were recent arrivals and most of them had arrived as dependents of their husbands who came under student visas. Nepali women not only had to support their student husband, they also had to support their families financially on a day-to-day basis after migration. As a result Nepali women had to focus on work and take any job available to them.

Following up on these kinds of considerations and taking a more comparative approach between the different regions as a priority in future research would provide useful challenges to the idea of a homogenous cultural gender identity as well as providing important insights into the needs of different groups of women.

Since this thesis was undertaken partly in response to the initiative from community organisations wanting research that would show them areas of social problems to be tackled, I have taken a step somewhat unusual in an academic thesis, and suggested a few strategies that could be adopted by both the Australian Government and the South Asian community itself in order to help women's access to the paid workforce.

## **Recommendations**

The migrant women who shared their experiences in this study have left their countries of origin to settle in Australia. As first generation migrants, the process of rebuilding their lives in Australia is influenced not only by cultural expectations that they have brought from their countries of origin, but also are shaped by immigration policies, and broader social and cultural practices encountered in Australia, or a juxtaposition of both. Given the enormous structural, cultural and historical forces shaping settlement experiences, it is difficult to come up with specific policy initiatives that can be commensurate in their effects. However, a double-pronged approach is more fruitful than pursuing a single track. We need to raise awareness of how ideologies of being good mothers and wives can themselves be forces that limit women's potentialities. On the other hand we also need to support women in what they are doing – that is, in their activities and lives as wives and mothers. Each of the points

addressed below is itself a complex amalgam of different social forces. I have tried to pull out a few threads that might be tackled through policy and community sector initiatives.

### **1. Reduce bridging visa period**

This thesis shows that South Asian women do not typically migrate on their own.

They are more likely to migrate as dependents of their male partners. In Chapter 3, I have shown that apart from the Australian skilled immigration policies, which tend to privilege the entry of men as independent migrants, there are also gendered socio-cultural practices that are prevalent in migrants' countries of origin, which influence the decisions of how one can and should migrate. The ramifications of the gendered nature of migration means that men's careers automatically take primacy while women's careers becomes a secondary priority. Under such circumstances, the Australian Government can improve the situation of women in general and South Asian women's in particular, by better addressing the rights of dependent visa holders and the inequalities they experience. By maintaining openness in terms of facilities and opportunities available to dependent visa holders, the government can facilitate labour market integration. The government can support retraining or re-skilling processes for dependents in order to enable them to use their skills in the Australian workforce. One strategy is that the Australian Government could shorten the bridging period (for the dependents of permanent residents there is a two-year bridging period before they receive their permanent residency) – at least for those whose spouses have already acquired permanent residency in Australia. This delay unequally falls on women, and further exaggerates the timing of cultural pressures for new wives to support their husbands and become mothers. In the face of the enormous structural, cultural and historical factors shaping South Asian women's settlement experiences, what I have just suggested might have a marginal effect. It has been included since several women in my study stated that it would have made a difference in their lives and they have specifically asked me to put this recommendation in my thesis.

## 2. Address racism

Some of the problems encountered by migrant women in finding suitable employment and in some cases in maintaining their jobs, stem from the discriminatory attitude towards South Asian migrants in the Australian labour market. As shown in Chapters 3 and 4, migrants are discriminated against in terms of their race and language in their everyday lives in Australia, despite the country's strong anti-discriminatory laws under the Australian Human Rights Commission. Migrants can feel a real sense of powerlessness when dealing with racism, and often migrants tend to avoid or ignore the problem in order to escape from racist situations. Most of the time, they do so because they are unaware of the rules and laws that might help them to challenge racism, which are already in place. But even such awareness may not completely eradicate the problems.

Investigating the spheres of racism and anti-racism in contemporary Australia, Dunn and colleagues (2009) argue that racism cannot be completely overcome. They believe that erasing racism would virtually require the erasure of ethnic differences, which is neither possible nor preferable. Under such a situation, instead of implementing one-off intervention projects aimed at erasing racism, Dunn and colleagues suggest that everyday racism needs everyday anti-racism (Dunn et al., 2009, p. 10). Individuals need to be empowered with methods to confront racism, especially rhetorical strategies and discursive materials:

We need rhetorical tools that have everyday comprehension at the street level, in the changing room and in the school-yard. These could be, for example, anti-racism catch phrases that are nationally endorsed, easily deployed; and that rob common sense racism of their power. (Dunn et al., 2009, p. 10)

Drawing on Dunn and his team's recommendations, Ho (2015) suggests that active strategies need to be implemented at school level to teach students to confront racism within their communities in the same way that they are currently already being taught

to identify and confront bullying. Ho (2015) argues that a mutual recognition of and respect for the presence of others should be one of the main policy strategy to deal with every day racism. As schools are one of the most significant social sites for cross-cultural engagement, especially for young people and their families, Ho (2015) makes several recommendations aimed specifically for schools as sited of anti-racism initiatives. First, she recommends culturally interactive programmes at schools such as liaison between teachers, and parents drawn from the different communities should be encouraged. Second, schools should incorporate ‘critical socio-cultural studies’ in their curriculum and support students to study their home language. Third, she recommends that by encouraging students to visit each other’s schools in various geographical locations they can come to recognise the everyday reality of cultural diversity and understand that different groups within communities may have different needs.

### **3. Culturally appropriate support for work-life balance**

We have seen that, frequent migration creates numerous interruptions in the training and working lives of women. Moreover, after migration to Australia, women’s employment opportunities are constrained by their involvement in motherhood and maternal responsibilities (see Chapter 5). Investigating similar circumstances in her research among Chinese immigrant women in Sydney, Ho (2010) suggested family-friendly government policies and organisational practices in order to assist parents to balance paid and unpaid work. Supporting Pocock’s (2003, p. 244, cited in Ho, 2010) concept of building a new ‘work/care regime’, Ho recommended that expansion of high-quality and affordable care for children, more flexible workplace arrangements in terms of working hours and leave, and greater job security for part-time workers would allow for greater integration of work and care across the life-cycle. In connection with this, in Chapter 5 we have seen that migrants often feel reluctant to use childcare services for cultural reasons. Under such circumstances, the government

must make it mandatory for every childcare service to offer a culturally specific option for people from culturally diverse backgrounds in order to encourage the use of childcare services.

The recommendations that I am suggesting below are value statements to inform public debate rather than recommendations for policy.

#### **4. Equality in unpaid household duties**

This thesis shows that there is work to be done within South Asian communities in Australia, in terms of cultural and ideological awareness raising of the various expectations that are placed on women as wives, mothers and as migrant wives and mothers. Equal participation in work in the labour market is only possible if there is equal participation in work at home. The thesis shows that there is a gendered division of labour especially around domestic work and childcare work. Often, South Asian women migrants take the full responsibility for reproductive work in a family. A woman's ability to participate in the labour market is inhibited by the lack of support for women in domestic responsibilities. Thus in such situations, an equal sharing by women and men of the burden of unpaid work could enhance women's capacity to participate in the labour market.

#### **5. Attitudes about marriage and childbearing**

As this thesis shows, maternity following soon after migration creates a huge barrier by delaying South Asian women's participation in the Australian labour market. This specific pattern of pregnancy following migration among South Asian communities in Australia is influenced by the cultural expectations regarding fertility in relation to timing of marriage in South Asia. Therefore, to enable women to participate in the workforce, the community should embrace an open-minded attitude with regards to cultural ideologies of marriage and maternity. What this means for South Asian women is that after migration, women need to be given more room to decide just how



they wish to integrate maternity into their lives, particularly in relation to timing.

Awareness needs to be raised allowing women to consider whether they wish to become more established in the workforce before they decide to have children.

These are just a few policy recommendations that emerged following the research, and are offered to both the Australian Government and South Asian communities in Australia in order to initiate a dialogue to address the issue of women's labour force participation and economic empowerment. This thesis also has implications for academic study of women and migration. By showing how marriage as migration maps on to what is more conventionally recognized as 'migration', in this case migrating from South Asia to Australia, the thesis forges fresh ground for the integration of studies of racism, multiculturalism, and settlement with issues usually reserved for studies of kinship, gender and South Asia.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Religious Affiliations

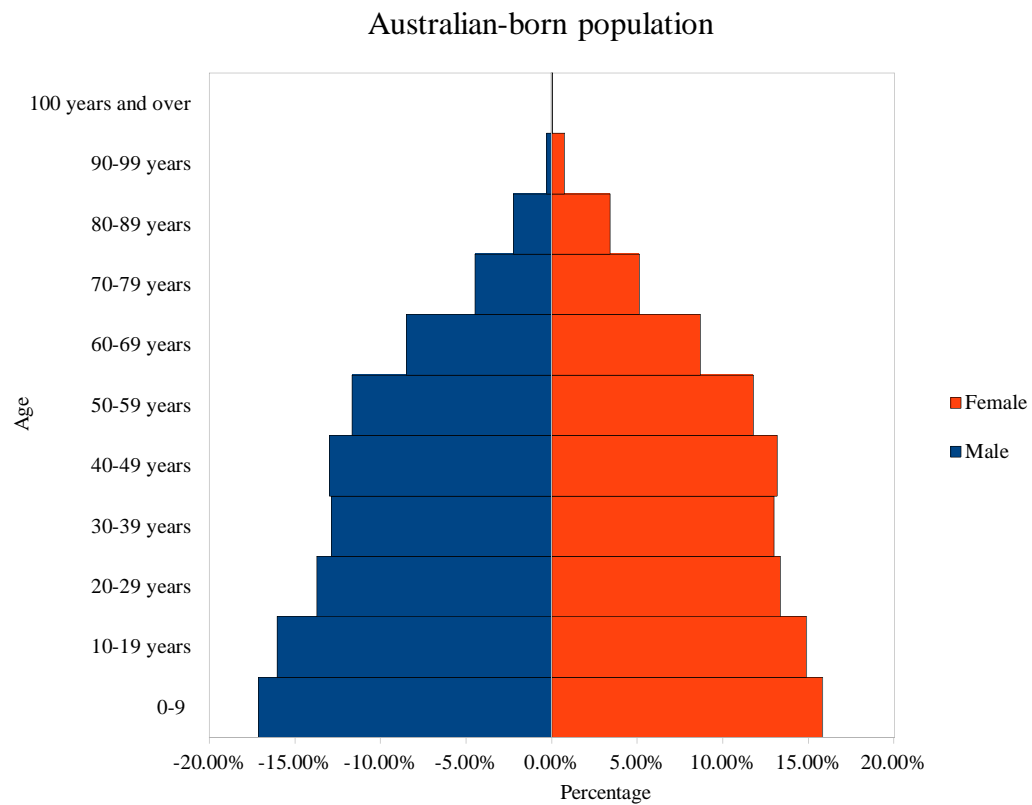
**Table 29: Religious Affiliations of South Asian-born populations in Australia**

Place of Birth	<u>Religion (%)</u>						
	Buddhism	Christianity	Hinduism	Islam	Judaism	Other Religions	No Religion
India	0.4	24.3	48.5	3.5	0.1	20.4	2.7
Sri Lanka	38.8	37.5	18.1	2.7	0.0	0.1	2.8
Pakistan	0.0	7.3	0.7	89.4	0.0	0.9	1.7
Bangladesh	1.1	3.2	7.1	86.9	0.0	0.0	1.7
Nepal	13.5	2.4	81.1	0.2	0.0	0.2	2.5

(ABS, 2011)

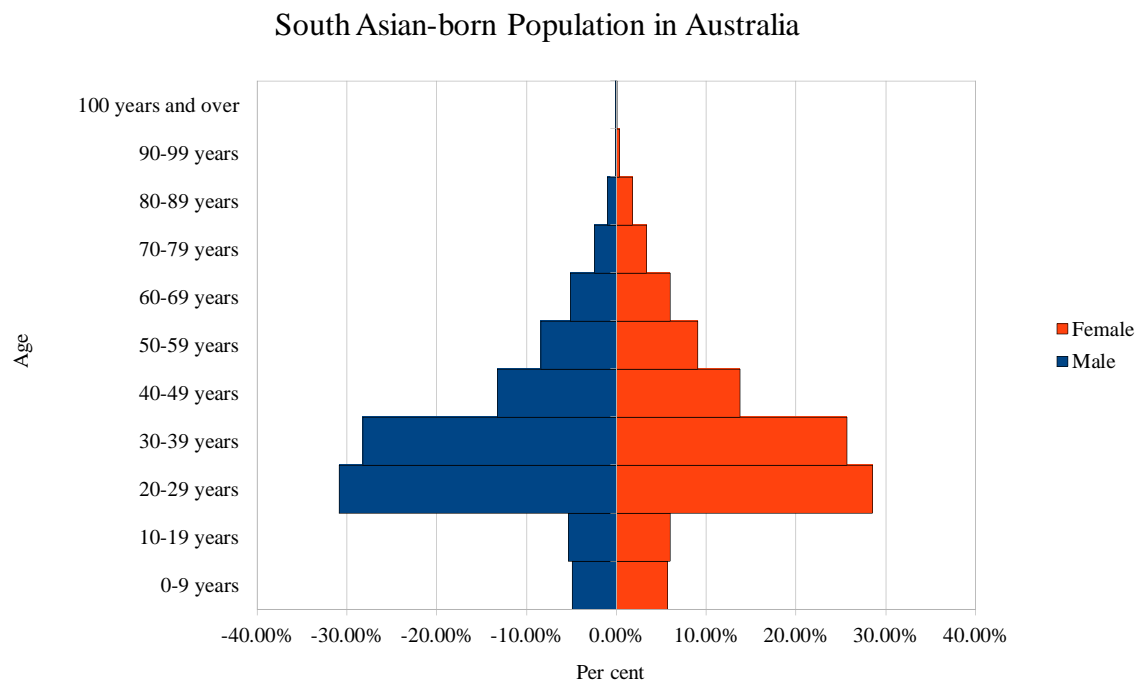
## Appendix 2: Population Pyramids

Chart 8: Australian-born Population



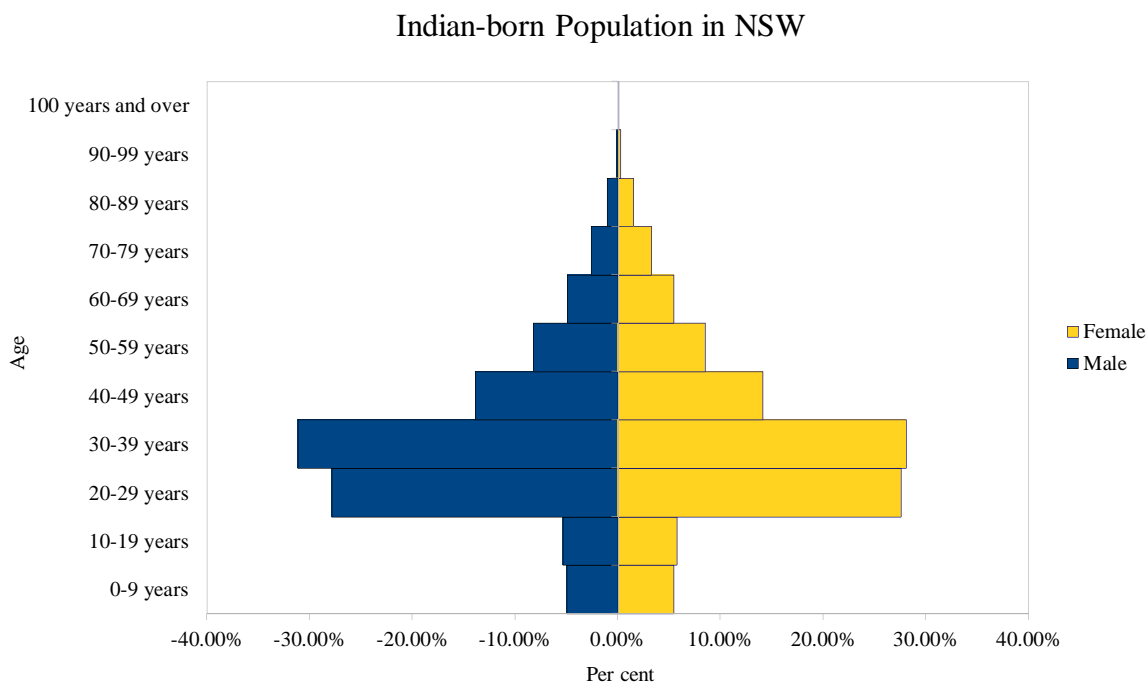
(ABS, 2011)

**Chart 9: South Asian-born Population in Australia**



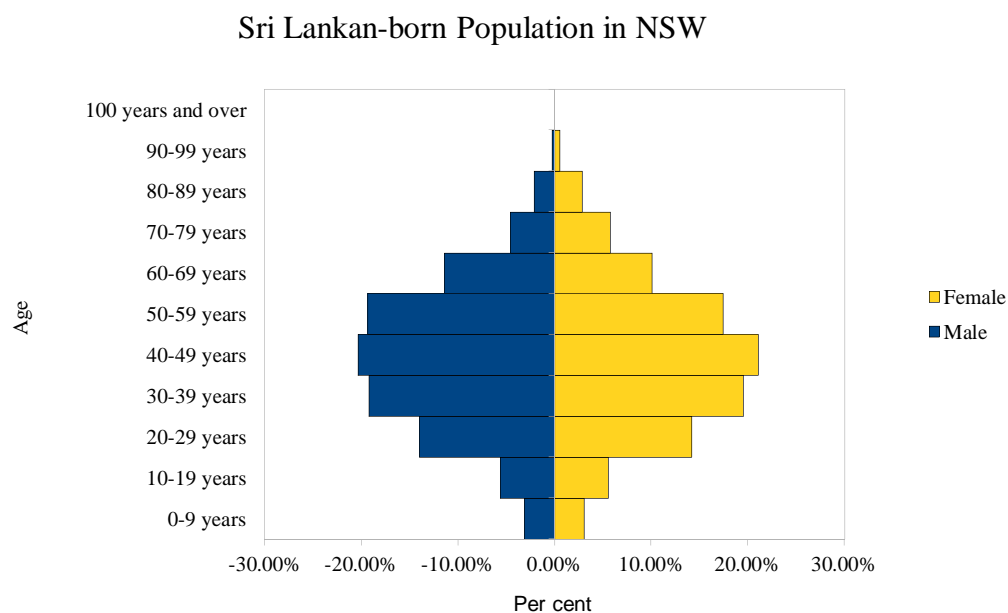
(ABS, 2011)

**Chart 10 Indian-born Population in New South Wales**



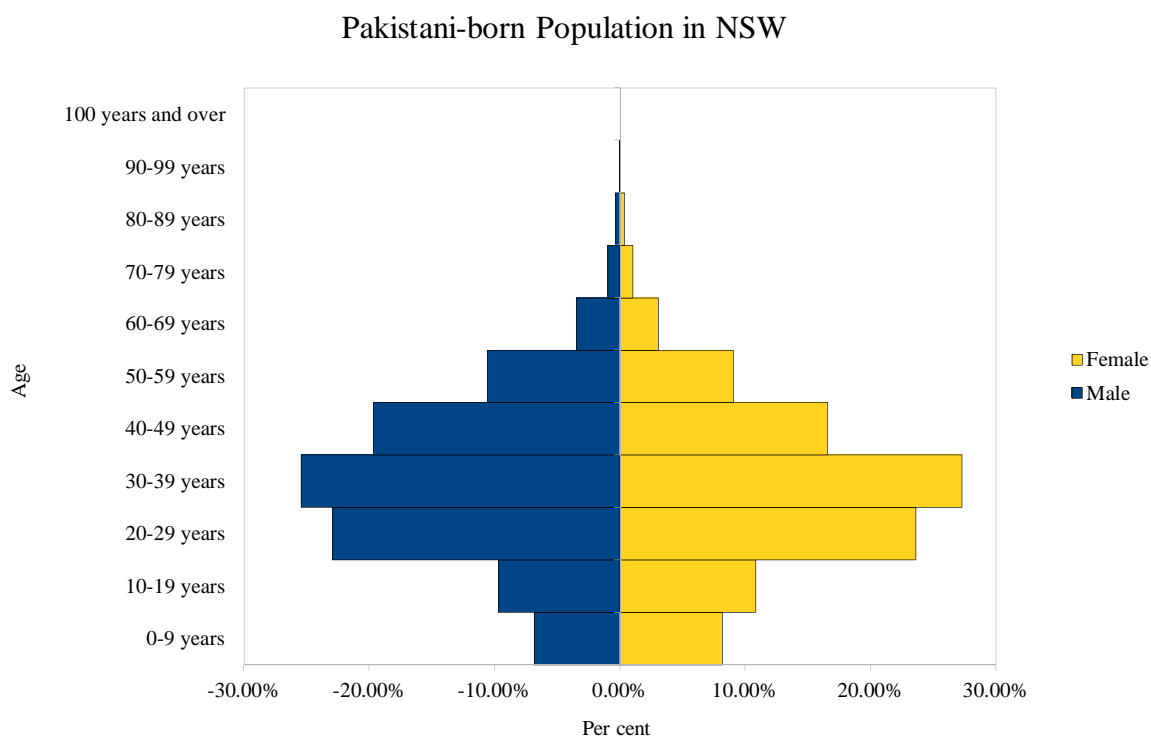
(ABS, 2011)

**Chart 11: Sri Lankan-born Population in New South Wales**



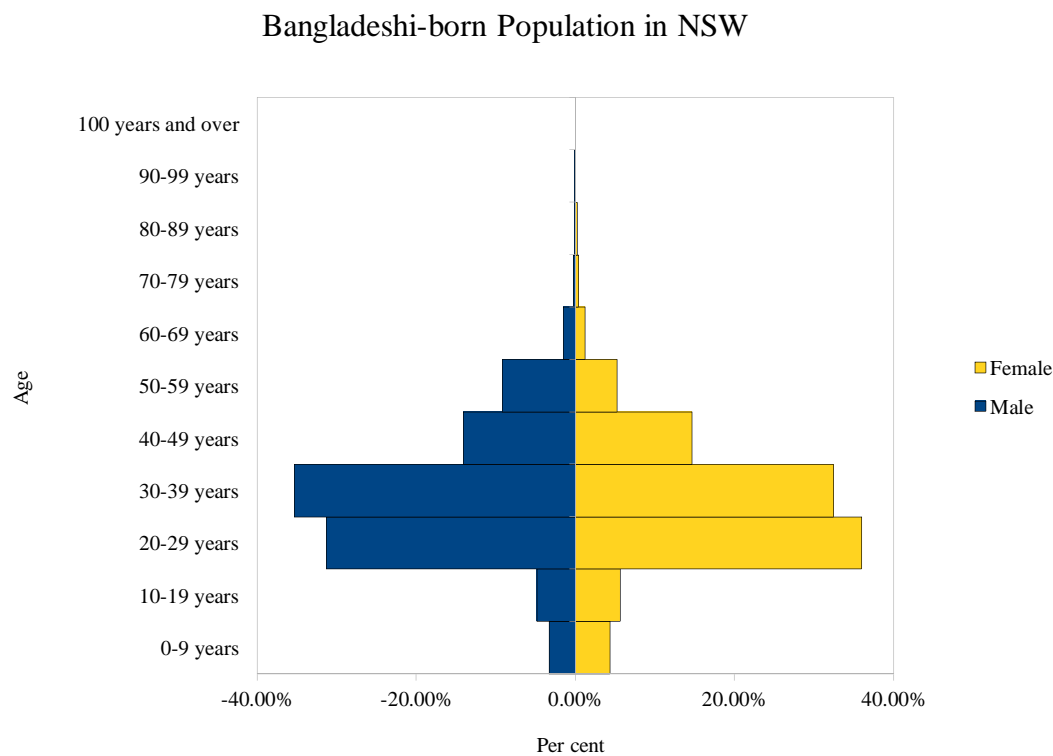
(ABS, 2011)

**Chart 12: Pakistan-born Population in New South Wales**



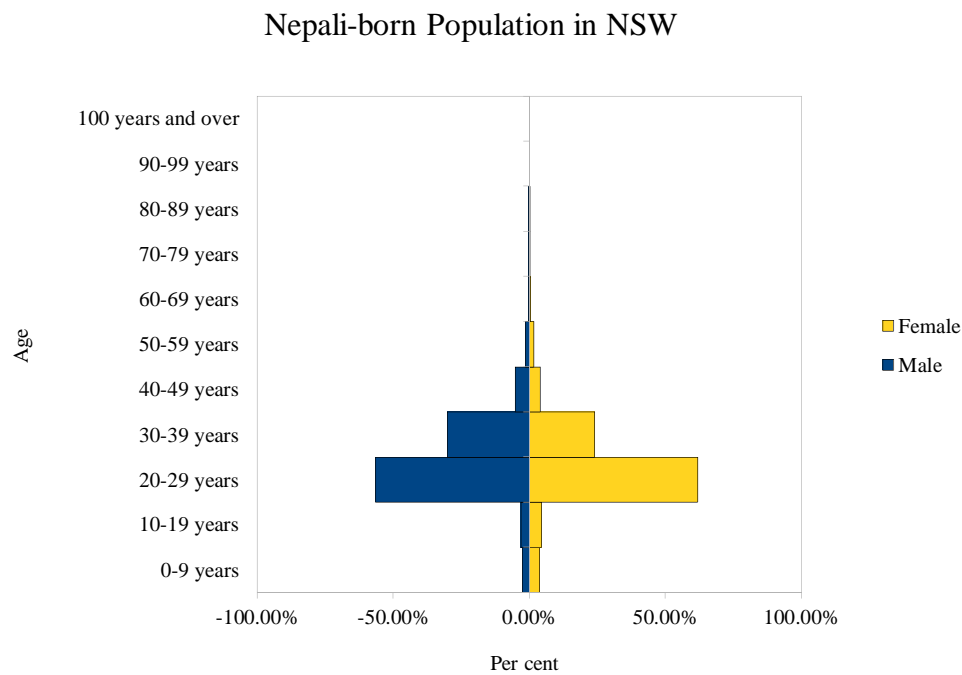
(ABS, 2011)

**Chart 13: Bangladesh-born Population in New South Wales**



(ABS, 2011)

**Chart 14: Nepal-born Population in New South Wales**



(ABS, 2011)



### Appendix 3: Demographics of Respondents

**Table 30: Demographics of the South Asian-born Women Respondents, 2013/2014, Sydney**

S. No.	Name of the respondents	Country of origin	Year of migration	Age at migration	No. Of children	Migration visa	Relationship during migration	Had kids (years after marriage)	Education level before migration	Working at time of interview
1	Nanditi	India	1972	10	1	Dependent child	n/a	2	N/A	Yes
2	Sassa	India	1980	27	2	Spouse Dependent	Recently married with one child	2	Master in Biology	Worked and Retired
3	Vina	Sri Lanka	1983	23	2	Spouse Dependent	Recently married with one child	3	Diploma in Montessori and Primary Education	Yes
4	Anupama	Nepal	2008	28	1	Student	Recently married with one child	2	Bachelor in Education	Yes
5	Prisa	India	2001	22	2	Spouse Dependent	Newly married	1.5	Bachelor in Computer Science	No
6	Shakshi	India	2008	23	2	Spouse Dependent	Recently married with one child	2	Bachelor in Computer Programme	No
7	Jas	India	2001	25	2	Spouse Dependent	Newly married	2	Master in Psychology	Yes
8	Nina	India	2010	32	3	Spouse Dependent	Recently married with one child	2	Master in Economics	No
9	Banu	Pakistan	2004	26	3	Spouse Dependent	Newly married	1	Master in Physic and Mathematics	No
10	Jahan	Bangladesh	1998	21	4	Spouse Dependent	Newly married	2	Diploma in Geography	No
11	Amita	India	1990	22	2	Born Here	n/a	2	Mphil in Sociology	Yes
12	Diya	Pakistan	2007	23	1	Spouse Dependent	Newly married	2.5	MBBS	No

S. No.	Name of the respondents	Country of origin	Year of migration	Age at migration	No. Of children	Migration visa	Relationship during migration	Had kids (years after marriage)	Education level before migration	Working at time of interview
13	Sita	India	1995	29	2	Spouse Dependent	Married with young kids	2	Master in Educational Psychology	Yes
14	Gina	Nepal	2007	26	2	Spouse Dependent	Newly married	2.5	Bachelor in Computer Science	No
15	Kusum	Nepal	2003	26	2	Spouse Dependent	Newly married	4	Master in Accounting	Yes
16	Parul	Nepal	2003	27	2	Spouse Dependent	Newly married	3	MBBS	NO
17	Anuja	Pakistan	2006	29	3	Skill Migrant	Recently married	1.5	Master in Management	No
18	Moti	Nepal	2006	26	2	Spouse Dependent	Newly married	2	Bachelor in Education	Yes
19	Lia	Pakistan	2009	27	0	student	Newly married	n/a	Master in sociology	Yes
20	Jaya	Nepal	1998	32	1	Spouse Dependent	Recently married with one child	1.5	Bachelor in architectural Engineering	No
21	Sulochana	Sri Lanka	2003	24	1	Spouse Dependent	Recently married with one child	1.5	Bachelor of Commerce	Yes
22	Anita	India	1998	26	2	Student	was engaged at the time of migration	2	Bachelor in Commerce	Volunteer
23	Bhawana	Sri Lanka	2008	63	0	Refugee	n/a	n/a	Master in Library Science	Volunteer
24	Brinda	Sri Lanka	1987	10	2	Child dependent	n/a	2	N/A	Yes
25	Tina	Nepal	2007	26	1	student	Newly married	3	Master in Education	Yes
26	Sanju	Nepal	2007	28	1	Spouse Dependent	Recently married with one child	2	Master in Sociology	Yes
27	Chaya	Nepal	2006	25	2	student	n/a	4	Bachelor in Computer Science	Yes

S. No.	Name of the respondents	Country of origin	Year of migration	Age at migration	No. Of children	Migration visa	Relationship during migration	Had kids (years after marriage)	Education level before migration	Working at time of interview
28	Hira	India	1974	33	3	Spouse Dependent	Recently married with one child	2	Master in English and Education	Worked and Retired
29	Maya	India	1982	32	3	Spouse Dependent	Recently married with one child	2	Master in social Science	Yes
30	Sarita	India	1983	25	3	Skill Migrant	Newly married	4	Secretarial course	Worked and Retired
31	Sumitra	Nepal	2010	35	2	Spouse Dependent	Recently married with one child	1.5	Bachelor in Social Science	No
32	Rani	India	2000	22	2	student	n/a	1.5	Bachelor in Accounting	No
33	Nita	Nepal	2005	26	2	student	n/a	1.5	Master in Accounting	Yes
34	Gita	Nepal	2008	29	1	Spouse Dependent	Newly married	3	Master in Public Health	Yes
35	Suayna	Nepal	2005	24	1	student	Newly married	4	Bachelor in Management	Yes
36	Nayan	Nepal	2008	25	0	Spouse Dependent	Newly married	4	Bachelor in Marketing	Yes
37	Kanta	Sri Lanka	1972	26	4	Spouse Dependent	Married with young kids	2	Bachelor in social Science	Volunteer
38	Kamala	India	2009	26	3	student	Recently married with one child	2	Bachelor in Social Science	Yes
39	Devika	Sri Lanka	2008	75		Dependent parent	n/a	2	Dental science	No
40	Tara	India	2008	27	2	Dependant	Recently married with one child	1.5	Master in Computer Science	NO

## Appendix 4: Sydney Suburban Distribution

**Table 31: Distribution of South Asian Migrants in Different Suburbs of Sydney**

Suburbs	<u>Country of Origin (number)</u>				
	India	Sri Lanka	Pakistan	Bangladesh	Nepal
Central Coast	772	166	77	63	28
Sydney - Baulkham Hills & Hawkesbury	4811	2660	562	257	61
Sydney - Blacktown	15349	3602	2596	1538	483
Sydney - City and Inner South	2897	525	300	1750	1113
Sydney - Eastern Suburbs	1580	379	161	429	172
Sydney - Inner South West	7044	809	2796	6797	5044
Sydney - Inner West	7444	2258	323	664	3082
Sydney - North Sydney and Hornsby	6714	1334	396	276	1203
Sydney - Northern Beaches	1397	174	68	62	233
Sydney - Outer South West	3198	555	642	1885	163
Sydney - Outer West % Blue Mountains	2522	800	488	177	169
Sydney - Parramatta	24006	6339	2720	1565	2645
Sydney - Ryde	4414	1707	306	318	229
Sydney - South West	4777	686	983	427	173
Sydney - Sutherland	948	135	90	77	70
Total	87873	22129	12508	16285	14868

(ABS, 2011)

## Appendix 5: Weekly Income by Country of Origin

**Table 32: Weekly Incomes of South Asian-born Migrants from Respective Countries of Origin in Australia**

Weekly Income (annual)	Country of Birth (%)				
	India	Sri Lanka	Pakistan	Bangladesh	Nepal
Negative income	0.6	0.7	0.9	0.7	0.5
Nil income	14.3	11.9	21.9	17.9	9.9
\$1-\$199 (\$1-\$10,399)	5.3	6.8	9.5	7.4	4.1
\$200-\$299 (\$10,400-\$15,599)	6.4	8.2	10.1	7.6	8.0
\$300-\$399 (\$15,600-\$20,799)	7.9	7.4	7.7	8.1	18.1
\$400-\$599 (\$20,800-\$31,199)	11.4	10.3	10.5	13.7	21.9
\$600-\$799 (\$31,200-\$41,599)	12.7	11.2	9.5	13.5	17.6
\$800-\$999 (\$41,600-\$51,999)	10.1	10.1	7.0	9.5	8.8
\$1,000-\$1,249 (\$52,000-\$64,999)	9.2	9.7	6.4	7.1	4.8
\$1,250-\$1,499 (\$65,000-\$77,999)	6.9	6.9	4.8	4.9	2.7
\$1,500-\$1,999 (\$78,000-\$103,999)	7.7	8.4	5.9	5.2	2.4
\$2,000 or more (\$104,000 or more)	7.4	8.6	5.9	4.4	1.3

(ABS, 2011)

## Appendix 6: Weekly Income by Gender

**Table 33: Weekly Incomes of South Asian-born Peoples by Gender in Australia**

<b>Weekly Income (annual)</b>	<b>Male (%)</b>	<b>Female (%)</b>
Negative income	0.4	0.8
Nil income	7.2	23.1
\$1-\$199 (\$1-\$10,399)	3.8	8.7
\$200-\$299 (\$10,400-\$15,599)	6.2	8.8
\$300-\$399 (\$15,600-\$20,799)	8.0	8.9
\$400-\$599 (\$20,800-\$31,199)	12.1	11.5
\$600-\$799 (\$31,200-\$41,599)	14.3	10.3
\$800-\$999 (\$41,600-\$51,999)	11.3	7.7
\$1,000-\$1,249 (\$52,000-\$64,999)	9.9	7.3
\$1,250-\$1,499 (\$65,000-\$77,999)	7.5	5.0
\$1,500-\$1,999 (\$78,000-\$103,999)	9.3	4.7
\$2,000 or more (\$104,000 or more)	10.0	3.2

(ABS, 2011)

## Appendix 7: Weekly Income by Country of Origin and Gender

**Table 34: Weekly Incomes of Migrants from Respective South Asian Countries of Origin by Gender in Australia**

Weekly Income (Annual)	Country of Origin (%)									
	<u>India</u>		<u>Sri Lanka</u>		<u>Pakistan</u>		<u>Bangladesh</u>		<u>Nepal</u>	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Negative income	0.4	0.8	0.5	0.8	0.7	1.3	0.4	1.0	0.4	0.7
Nil income	6.9	23.6	6.7	17.2	10.9	38.0	7.4	32.4	6.9	14.3
\$1-\$199 (\$1-\$10,399)	3.3	7.9	4.2	9.4	6.5	13.8	3.9	12.2	3.0	5.8
\$200-\$299 (\$10,400-\$15,599)	5.4	7.7	6.9	9.6	9.1	11.7	5.7	10.3	7.1	9.4
\$300-\$399 (\$15,600-\$20,799)	7.6	8.4	5.8	9.1	8.5	6.6	8.4	7.6	17.9	18.5
\$400-\$599 (\$20,800-\$31,199)	11.8	10.9	8.7	11.9	12.5	7.5	14.9	11.9	22.1	21.5
\$600-\$799 (\$31,200-\$41,599)	14.5	10.4	11.9	10.4	12.1	5.6	16.7	9.2	19.3	14.9
\$800-\$999 (\$41,600-\$51,999)	11.7	8.0	11.3	8.8	8.9	4.2	12.5	5.5	9.8	7.3
\$1,000-\$1,249 (\$52,000-\$64,999)	10.3	7.9	11.2	8.1	8.1	3.9	9.3	4.0	5.3	4.1
\$1,250-\$1,499 (\$65,000-\$77,999)	7.8	5.8	8.6	5.1	6.2	2.6	6.8	2.2	3.2	1.8
\$1,500-\$1,999 (\$78,000-\$103,999)	9.6	5.2	11.5	5.3	8.1	2.5	7.5	2.0	3.1	1.3
\$2,000 or more (\$104,000 or more)	10.6	3.3	12.8	4.2	8.5	2.2	6.4	1.6	1.7	0.5

(ABS, 2011)

## Appendix 8: Ethics Approval

9/26/12 Macquarie University Student Email and Calendar Mail - Approved- Ethics application- Ram (Ref No: ...



NILA SHARMA <nila.sharma@students.mq.edu.au>

### Approved- Ethics application- Ram (Ref No: 5201200592)

1 message

**Ethics Secretariat** <ethics.secretariat@mq.edu.au>

Wed, Sep 26, 2012 at 10:58 AM

To: A/Prof Kalpana Ram <kalpana.ram@mq.edu.au>

Cc: Dr Fei Guo <fei.guo@mq.edu.au>, Dr Amanda Wise <amanda.wise@mq.edu.au>, Mrs Nila Sharma <nila.sharma@students.mq.edu.au>

Dear A/Prof Ram

Re: "South Asian communities in Sydney: Gender, employment and wellbeing"  
(Ethics Ref: 5201200592)

Thank you for your recent correspondence. Your response has addressed the issues raised by the Human Research Ethics Committee and you may now commence your research.

This research meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). The National Statement is available at the following web site:

[http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/\\_files\\_nhmrc/publications/attachments/e72.pdf](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/e72.pdf).

The following personnel are authorised to conduct this research:

A/Prof Kalpana Ram  
Dr Amanda Wise  
Dr Fei Guo  
Mrs Nila Sharma

NB. STUDENTS: IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP A COPY OF THIS APPROVAL EMAIL TO SUBMIT WITH YOUR THESIS.

Please note the following standard requirements of approval:

1. The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).
2. Approval will be for a period of five (5) years subject to the provision of annual reports.

Progress Report 1 Due: 26 September 2013  
Progress Report 2 Due: 26 September 2014  
Progress Report 3 Due: 26 September 2015  
Progress Report 4 Due: 26 September 2016  
Final Report Due: 26 September 2017

NB. If you complete the work earlier than you had planned you must submit a Final Report as soon as the work is completed. If the project has been discontinued or not commenced for any reason, you are also required to submit a Final Report for the project.

Progress reports and Final Reports are available at the following website:

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ui=2&ik=85df29f743&view=pt&search=inbox&th=13a0015678569fb2>



[http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how\\_to\\_obtain\\_ethics\\_approval/human\\_research\\_ethics/forms](http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/forms)

3. If the project has run for more than five (5) years you cannot renew approval for the project. You will need to complete and submit a Final Report and submit a new application for the project. (The five year limit on renewal of approvals allows the Committee to fully re-review research in an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).

4. All amendments to the project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee before implementation. Please complete and submit a Request for Amendment Form available at the following website:

[http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how\\_to\\_obtain\\_ethics\\_approval/human\\_research\\_ethics/forms](http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/forms)

5. Please notify the Committee immediately in the event of any adverse effects on participants or of any unforeseen events that affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

6. At all times you are responsible for the ethical conduct of your research in accordance with the guidelines established by the University. This information is available at the following websites:

<http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/>

[http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how\\_to\\_obtain\\_ethics\\_approval/human\\_research\\_ethics/policy](http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/policy)

If you will be applying for or have applied for internal or external funding for the above project it is your responsibility to provide the Macquarie University's Research Grants Management Assistant with a copy of this email as soon as possible. Internal and External funding agencies will not be informed that you have final approval for your project and funds will not be released until the Research Grants Management Assistant has received a copy of this email.

Please retain a copy of this email as this is your official notification of final ethics approval.

Yours sincerely  
Dr Karolyn White  
Director of Research Ethics  
Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee