The Chutney Generation

Fiji Indian Migration, Match-making and Media in Sydney

By Asha Chand
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I, Asha Chand, declare that the work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original and my own work except as acknowledged in the text. This material has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

Signed: _________________________________________________________

Asha Chand

September 30, 2011
This stopover in my journey of academic life allows me to reflect on and record the contributions of friends, associates and family who have enlivened this work.

My sincere thanks go to my supervisors Associate Professor Hart Cohen and Professor Lynette Sheridan Burns in the School of Humanities and Communication Arts, whose insights and questions challenged and drove my passion for this research. I am hugely indebted to them for their guidance on this work.

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This thesis is dedicated to my late mother (Veer Mati) and grandmother (aaji, Raj Pati), who taught me the value of education and hard work, not knowing how to read or write themselves.

Asha Chand

September 30, 2011
Foreword

Chutney is often made to be eaten fresh and provides flavour to bland main Indian dishes such as rice and dhal. I grew up living on chutney in Fiji. Aaji (paternal grandmother) would whip up chutney in no time, using a flat and a round stone (sil and lodha) to blend the freshly picked ingredients. She was creative, occasionally using peanut or sesame seeds, if the harvests were good. Under the shade of our giant mango tree, she would share her latest creations with women from the village.

Sometimes I would sit and watch her in sheer amazement as her hands played acrobatics with the stones. She sought perfection in her blending and would roll the long, round stone with vigorous energy. Her garland of seven gold sovereigns hanging from a black chord, her most prized possession, would bounce off her tiny chest against the rhythm of her hand movements.

Lo chikho (here, taste) she would announce out of the blue. I would stretch out my hand with an open palm and she’d place a small drop from her mountain of chutney into the ocean of my palm. On more occasions than not, her chutneys kicked me off my squatting position and sent me reeling with a burning pain in my mouth. Teeta, teeta (chilli hot) I would scream, my own echoes vibrating in the deafness as fire puffed out of my ears, tears in my eyes. Sometimes I would plough my dry, cracked mouth in sugar. Other times I would dip my mouth in a bowl of water. Sometimes jumping and screaming helped. Oblivious to my pain, aaji would ask ‘chatak hai’ meaning, does it have enough chilli and salt?

The stone chutney maker, indeed an icon of many village homes, sat majestically on a ledge outside the kitchen (which was a separate building joining our house), in a waist-high position and was kept covered with a big lid from an old cooking pot, a large stone holding down the lid. When I left my mother’s home after marriage, aaji brought me a stone chutney maker from the depths of the Ba River in Fiji (my home town). I kept it in my new home in Suva city. Its use was few and far between, yet, I revered it.

Chutneys brought delight to our senses as chocolate and other treats do to a modern day child.
Abstract

The twice displaced Fiji Indian community in Sydney, what I will call here the ‘chutney generation’, is the largest in the world outside of Fiji. The community inhabits a space where it has adapted to creating a new blend of cultural and social traditions; the clearest demonstration of this being the mobilisation of these concepts around marriage. This work, combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies, explores the traditional and modern intersections of media, migration and their influence on marriage in the maintenance of the Fiji Indian identity in Sydney. Through considering the work of cultural theorists Arjun Appadurai (1996, 2004, 2007), Benedict Anderson (1983, 2006), Neil Postman (2000), James Conroy (2004) and Victor Turner (1969), among other scholars, this research presents the range of media impacts upon the views of arranged marriage, a common practice of the community in Sydney. In this process it promotes a significant understanding of the community in its acceptance of this age-old tradition against a backdrop of migration, modernisation and multiculturalism. This thesis also considers the influence of Bollywood on the community’s ideal and celebration of marriage, which in today’s Australia reflects much complexity as traditional societies meet modern and contemporary ones, all juxtaposed against globalisation and the modern media. The flows from such intersections create a multitude of ruptures in society, fragmenting and dismantling some, while sustaining others in creative and new ways. *Vivah*, the Hindi word for marriage, means what supports or carries. The word has created a metaphorical journey for the community into the modern world which challenges its identity, values and morals, which are deeply entwined with marriage and Hindu wedding rituals. This cross-disciplinary research captures this tide of change through the cultural clustering of the community, while analysing how arranged marriage, which has parental approval as an important component, (known to the east as a way of life and to the west as narrow and backward), works through western and diasporic frames for the Fiji Indians. It documents how the community frames its moral universe around marriage as a rite of passage, and how group cohesion within its networks propels gossip, especially to ostracise those who are not married. While the acts and ideals of marriage feed the community’s bonds of kinship, they also create a level of fear and anxiety among those who are single, their parents and families.
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction and Overview

The age-old practice of the Indian arranged marriage has been revived in the 21st century Sydney environment as members of the Fiji Indian community use the new media technologies to locate one another for marriage as well as recreate their social networks which also facilitate marriage. While this phenomenon has created a new kind of community pluralism based on a desire for a better life in a modern city, this thesis, built on the question, do media, migration and marriage provide markers of a new Fiji Indian identity in a different environment, explores why Fiji Indians have returned to traditional marriage practices in Australia.

Media, migration and marriage are three of the world’s most powerful forces that have unleashed their influence on the way we live, interact, socialise and continue to multiply the human race. These forces, operating alone and as combined influences, have shaken and propelled the world into a melting pot of identities and communities that mushroom and sometimes fade faster than one can bat an eyelid.

Faced with the fascinating challenges of the communications explosion, the Fiji Indian communities in Sydney are building their networks through both migration and marriage within the community and across the Tasman in Auckland. They are also interspersing new concepts of the modern world with historical traditions in order to enrich weddings being performed in the new century. Their country of origin, Fiji, a dot on the world map, is no longer an island as globalisation has shaken the traditional social fabric and usurped the traditional way of life.

The media plays a pivotal role in the community building process and in many spaces: in the home, at the local and national levels and in transnational spaces. Globalisation, migration and the changes these global phenomena have brought in, especially through the influence of visual media such as Bollywood, have in turn helped the Fiji Indians’ strengthen their communities in diverse cities like Sydney and Auckland.
This research analyses a range of media-induced impacts upon views about arranged marriages within the Fijian Indian migrant community. The study is significant for the understanding it brings to the community in its acceptance of the age-old tradition of arranged marriages against the backdrop of the western, modern and multicultural world. This study also contributes to our knowledge of different migrant experiences, the hybrid transformations of migrant family relations and additionally enhances our knowledge of transnational media flows. It achieves these by working on three levels of media analysis; the national; the local and the transnational (including film – especially Bollywood films – television, the Internet, mobile phones, radio and print). Migration, media and marriage, like the three physical places, Fiji, Auckland and Sydney, thus form a triangular map inside which there is a lot of movement and in all directions as the community attempts to keep its special identity amongst a whole range of other global forces which disrupt and disturb identity and culture when faced with the dynamics of constant change and upheaval.

The migrant Fiji Indian community living in Sydney and Auckland is also extending across the globe through marriage and migration, using the media as facilitator. With the help of advancements in communication and media technologies, people from this narrowly defined community, still seek out people of similar history and background to take to the altar. The community is narrowly defined because of its small size in multicultural settings like Sydney and Auckland. Statistics New Zealand identifies them as Pacific islanders, a term they detest because they look down on indigenous Fijians and any other communities similar in physical looks, including Pacific islanders. In Australia they are identified as Fijians, another label which causes them discomfort because they do not look Fijian and because Fiji’s political system gives them a second class status as ‘kaiIndia’, which in indigenous Fijian means ‘belonging to India’. They do not want to be totally Indian either as they are detested as a casteless society by their mainland Indian counterparts alongside whom they live in Sydney and Auckland. The caste system inherent in India’s social structure has long lost its application to Fiji Indians as all communities lived together, first on the ships that carried them for more than three months on their indenture sea journey and later when they lived in coolie lanes (cheap housing for labourers) in Fiji. As a result they also intermarried. They want to be called Fiji Indians as this label gives them their own place and identity in a global environment where there are so many others defined as alien to the mainstream society.
Fiji officially imposes disabilities on its Indian population over land ownership. This in turn has fuelled contention over land tenure as the indigenous Fijian community closely identify themselves with their land. The *Vola ni Kawa Bula*, commonly known as the VKB, is the official Fijian register of native landowners, known in English as the native land register. By law all indigenous Fijians are entitled to become members of the VKB. Government owns 8.4 percent (153,884 hectares of which 79% is leased) of land known commonly as crown land while 83.40 percent (1,519,956 hectares, of which 28% is leased) of land is owned by the natives. The remaining 8.2 percent (149,081 hectares) is freehold land. The collective ownership of land by the indigenous community has caused a rift between the Indians and Fijians as the Indo-Fijians produce over 90% of the sugar crop but must lease the land they work on from the Fijian owners instead of being able to buy it outright.

Since the 1987 coup Fiji has been grappling with out-migration, especially of the educated elite Indian community that once provided a backbone to the country’s prosperous sugar industry and other businesses. This painful brain drain, lapped up by neighbouring Australia and New Zealand who need the skilled workers, has caused an economic and social vacuum in Fiji. The Australian government, in its 2008 Budget, announced a 20 percent increase in migration numbers (from 159,000 in 2007–08 to an estimated 190,300 in 2008–09, in order to deal with labour shortage). While the economic ills in Fiji are being fought with national and foreign affairs policy changes, the most recent being an attempt in 2011 by the Bainimarama government to allow dual citizenship for those who have migrated to help boost investment and economic activity, the social grid is recognised and negotiated with a plethora of intersecting plans around migration. The Indians are taking a new track by choosing to migrate and many put their lives at risk attempting to do this. Migration provides a new beacon of hope and salvation for those trapped in a cycle of hopelessness because of the political and social undercurrents. Fiji witnessed ‘great waves’ of outflow of skilled human resources during the 1980s and 1990s and again after May 2000 (Mohanty 2001, 2002). The total official outflow from Fiji was more than 91,000 between 1987 and 2004. Unofficial independent sources, however, estimate the figure to be more than 100,000 (Bedford 1989). The permanent emigration process is dominated by Fiji Indians at 89 per cent (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 1987-2004). The realm of civic life, local and national agendas have turned full circle as a result of the political and racial crisis crippling this island.
‘paradise’. Those living in Sydney use their networks and positions of power, established through economic and financial safety, to sponsor families and friends to migrate from Fiji.

**Impacts on the institution of Indian (Hindu) marriage**
The institution of marriage, once sacred and an accepted way of life has not been spared in this global tide of change. The new demands on lifestyles means marriage is no longer seen as an important choice for millions of people across the globe and many are delaying the commitment or are opting out of it altogether. This phenomenon is a sign of the times, a reality that has either jolted or jilted many. In 2008 the average age for Australian men at the time of marriage was 32 while for women it was 30 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009). Affluence, social status, quick communication and the changing landscape of the workforce, particularly for women, has contributed to couples ensuring strong financial security before they say ‘I do’.

**Influence of the media**
The media’s influence on the way we live has been exponential in the last 50 years. The media has become the sources of information on the immigration policies of host nations such as Australia. Those who have migrated to Australia use the media to locate partners for marriage from within their networks. This research considers the influence of the media as an agent and forum that facilitates migration and marriage while presenting all other social deviances that have resulted from the intersections of the media, migration and marriage.

**The beginning of an idea**
This research is a result of my own inquiry (as a Fiji Indian journalist and academic living in Sydney) and fascination with the way the Fijian Indian identity has evolved in the face of fierce exposure to multiculturalism in Sydney. Cultural and symbolic identities are challenged when the community is faced with the dynamics of information, media, communication and travel.

Specifically evaluating the age-old practice of arranging marriages through a changing landscape, this research records the Fiji Indian community’s unique history as a twice displaced people, from India to Fiji as labourers under the British indenture system which began in 1879 and then their flight from Fiji to Sydney and Auckland as a result of two coups
in 1987 and one each in 2000, 2006 and 2009. I must acknowledge at this point that there is a similar migration to Vancouver, Canada and San Francisco in the US. In the case of Sydney, the Fiji Indians’ clustered settlement in cities such as Liverpool and Blacktown has given rise to their own exclusive media outlets and businesses such as spice shops, fashion houses, real estate agents, travel agencies and mobile mechanics. There are also a number of professionals of Fiji Indian heritage including teachers, lawyers, doctors and dentists who have established their own new media networks. Media allows populations in local, national and transnational spaces to communicate in cheaper and quicker ways. Exposure to the global environment has provided greater access to different media settings and communication flows (telephone, fax, text messaging, mobile phones, emails, Skype, Bollywood movies and the Internet generally).

There is a repeat of this pattern of settlement in Auckland, where almost entire villages from Fiji have clustered into their own space. People from Navoli Village on the outskirts of Ba Town in Fiji have recreated their neighbourhood in Manirewa, Auckland. A comparative analysis of the community in Auckland, with Sydney’s Fiji Indians adds international significance to this work. In many instances Fiji Indians see Auckland as an entry point to Australia. They first migrate to New Zealand and then move to Australia which offers better opportunities for employment. Also many Fiji Indians living in Sydney first moved to Auckland and then onto Australia after obtaining their New Zealand citizenship.

Simultaneous with their clustered living, media consumption and socialising, the Indian tradition of arranged marriages has become a facet of a customised common culture, an accepted way of life for the community in Sydney. Newspapers published for the Indian audience are a vibrant feature in the two settled cities. These and many of the other Indian media invariably carry a section with matrimonial advertising. The advertisements, and easy access to the media they appear in, help the Indians to 'locate' one another. At the same time they pose difficult questions about ‘otherness’ – of Indians in relation to Australians and Kiwis and internal ‘otherness’ of Fiji Indians in relation to Indians from India and the subcontinent. For Indians from the mainland, the centuries old Indian caste system is still intact. Fiji Indians, on the other hand, are a casteless society as a result of the indenture system in which all communities lived together in coolie lines (cheap housing for labourers) and intermarried. Their laid-back Fijian lifestyle was and is distinctly different from the realities of India’s caste system. A majority of the Fiji Indians do not know their Indian
heritage, thus cannot trace their castes. This situation causes the Fiji Indians to seek members of their own community in marriage.

The media also provides a social forum for these migrants through stories and advertisements on events such as mass religious celebrations, Bollywood performances and entertainment (mostly singing and dancing) by Indian artists living in Sydney and Auckland. The media facilitates a close connection amongst the community through a chain of ethnic newspapers, magazines and community radio. Any vacuum is filled up by other forms of media such as the Internet, sites such as www.fijilive.com, Bollywood movies, mobile phones and television. Fiji’s national daily newspaper, The Fiji Times, is available through a chain of spice shops or Fiji shops, in the two cities. It is also available online. The print version of the newspaper may be a week old but there is a ready market for it in Auckland and Sydney. In regards to the site www.fijilive.com it is amongst the most comprehensive forms of media that keeps the community connectedness alive. People of Fiji Indian heritage settled in Auckland and Sydney have created their own email networks, in some instances with former work colleagues from Fiji, in order to keep one another updated on news and political developments in Fiji. Some such groups are former students of the University of the South Pacific who organised a reunion in Sydney in 2006. Further, former Fiji Lands Department workers in the two cities have their own email network and they participated in some interesting exchange when their former colleague, who migrated to Australia after the 1987 coup, returned to Fiji as the permanent secretary for the department.

Among its various services, the media includes a matrimonial section through which migrants, as well as those living in Fiji, solicit marriage partners or initial friendships that later lead to marriage. Some of the advertisements are initiated by parents of eligible bachelors, spinsters or people in the three physical spaces of Sydney, Auckland and Fiji who are ready to be married.

Radio is also significant for the community. Tuning into the radio for entertainment in the form of songs – Bollywood (songs) as well as traditional bhajans and kirtans (religious) – is a practice born in Fiji and carried through to Auckland where there is the 24-hour Navtarang and Tarana Radio Station as well as to Sydney where there is half a dozen radio stations serving various Indian demographics. Fiji is made up of more than 300 small islands. Now
and in the past radio has been the best means of communication and especially during hurricanes and cyclones which the tropical country is prone to. My own childhood memories of Fiji are centred on how the radio would be turned on full blast in the mornings in order to cover the radius of the clustered neighbourhood. Several families tuned into one radio because buying batteries for the radio was expensive. As ‘Cyclone Bebe’ raged in 1972, people from my village sat huddled together under the veranda of our house tuned into the radio for news on the hurricane. My grandmother tuned into the radio every morning for death notices. This was the only way to find out about relatives who had died because there was no other means of communication, not even telephones. Radio has also proven advantageous in comparison to other media for those who still communicate using their own dialects or Hindi generally. News thus became the message that was most important to them as radio catered for the users of the many dialects as well as Hindi.

**Research context**

This research also evaluates and maps the cultural spaces (both real and imagined) of Fiji Indians in a transitional and transnational mode. It explores the new identity formation of a community challenged by western concepts and the modern era, by involving their history, life, memory of life, imagination of the motherland, experiences in Fiji and their present landscape in Sydney and Auckland (for comparison).

The Fiji Indian cultural space in Sydney is created through a journey in time. This journey began in India from where their ancestors were taken to Fiji by their British masters as indentured labourers. These labourers transferred the barren land into lush cane fields. Their next generation and generations after that became trapped in the country of their birth, were given second class status and denied access to land ownership or political power. Many Indians virtually worship and nurture land and see it as ‘mother’ earth, one of the five forces of nature that sustains human life. The five coups in Fiji caused the Fiji Indians to begin looking for opportunities outside Fiji. Migration to neighbouring Australia and New Zealand paved a way out of the troubles in Fiji for the community. They thus began their flight out of Fiji under mounting fear of an uncertain future and the fear of eviction from their farms and the country.
The community building processes in Sydney has provided an interesting field for this thesis. The concept of chutney (explained in chapter two) was used to curate an exhibition and bring the community together through a common forum. In first establishing the family and social network and working through their various layers, the community has created its own voice through the various news media and strong social groups for celebrating special events on the Hindu calendar. In Sydney, these media and social networks in turn provide a strong foundation for community, entertainment and business circles. More importantly, the social forums and community gatherings create a rich environment for soliciting marriage partners for oneself, families and friends. Word of mouth networking in closed societies like the Fiji Indian community has seen the survival of arranged marriages for more than a century. This study investigates the various layers of this practice whereby the migrants use the media to either directly ‘locate’ Indians or to locate their social forums. Participating in these forums, in various capacities – as a guest at weddings, parties or entertainment events – have all added richness to my research and highlighted the complexities of a migrant’s experience in a unique way. In regards to promoting marriage the media plays the role of facilitator at many levels within Fiji Indian circles with discreet advertising as well as the provision of information on celebrations and mass meetings. Bollywood movies are consumed religiously and as a result enhance the appeal of the Indian family structure, and in turn the acceptance of arranged marriage, especially by the younger generation.

**Arranging marriages in an era of no infrastructure**

In the days of no infrastructure in Fiji village elders rode on horseback from village to village in search of a match for the men and women from their clan. Spreading the word that these young adults were ready for the next phase of their lives was a difficult task. Lack of roads meant that the elders either walked or rode on horseback. Sometimes these men would be gone for several weeks and when they returned they would bring news of possible matches. While the head man was gone, other families in the village would tend to his cattle and farm and assist with any other needs of the family such as supplying food and vegetables.

Most marriage proposals were accepted based on the information provided by these head men. There was always parental and family involvement in decision making about marriage. ‘There wasn’t much room for choice, especially for women’.
When the actual wedding ceremony took place the rituals would last for three days, which also meant that the groom’s party would take residence at the bride’s home for a few days. As infrastructure developed and transportation became easier through bus services and private vehicles, the method of arranging marriages began to change. First, close families of the bride visited the would-be groom’s home. If all was well, including matching the couple’s birth/zodiac signs, the groom’s family would be invited to the bride’s home. The boy would then ask for the girl’s hand in marriage. In many instances, the bride did not get a chance to see the groom at all. If she was lucky, she would get a glimpse of him when he visited her home with his close family, which predominantly included senior female members of his family such as older (married) sisters, sisters-in-laws and paternal aunties. In one interview in 2003 a woman said, ‘I just had a glimpse of him when he visited my home in Nawaka, Nadi, Fiji to officially ask for my hand … I was earlier told not to look around me and act shy … well, that’s how good girls behaved in those days’ (73 year old Fiji Indian Sydney woman, celebrating her 50th wedding anniversary in 2003). Also in that year in another interview a woman said: ‘I saw him for the first time on my honeymoon. I had a lot of trust and faith in my father, older brothers and brothers-in-law who arranged my marriage. I knew that my father was making the best decisions for me’. (Personal interview and Blacktown Advocate and Blacktown Sun, December, 2003). Further, a 71 year old Fiji Indian woman living in Auckland said:

My younger sister and I got married on the same day to two brothers. While we were being carried in our doli (home-made carriages carried by four men), we had to stop to drink water from a creek. For the first time I was able to look at my husband. I was excited but confused because I could not tell which one was my husband, the two brothers looked alike. My husband was older of the two brothers. When our marriage was arranged, my husband’s older brother, his father and another man from our village who facilitated this marriage visited my father’s home to ask for our hand. This was followed by a second visit by his older sister, mother and sister-in-law. They asked many questions about my sister and me but the one that I remember well is my mother trying to show off to them by saying that we both had a pair of chappals (sandals). We were very poor then so owning a pair of shoes was a big deal. My sister-in-law (husband’s oldest sister) who also lives in Auckland now, wasted no time and said that none of the girls in their village (Bulabula, Ba) wore shoes. So when we went to our
new home we did not take our shoes with us. We rarely visited our mother’s home at Moto, Ba as there were no cars then (Personal interview in Auckland, June 2006).

Arranged marriage in my family
Both my husband’s grandmother and my grandmother (paternal) were married at age 13. My grandmother, Raj Pati, was married to Ram Sundar who at the time of marriage was 40. Her three children were aged six, five and three when he died of a stroke. The fourth child was born a day after her father’s funeral. Raj Pati worked hard to raise her children and rejected some proposals, arranged through her families, to get her remarried to much older men. She introduced her young children to farm life before they turned 10 and this helped her establish her family at Tavarau, Ba, Fiji. Her eldest son and my uncle, Kishori Lal, widowed, lives in Drasa, Lautoka, having returned in 2004 from Vancouver, Canada where he lived for seven years. He did not like living in Canada. Her second son, Hari Prasad, (my father) widowed in 2009, lives in Blacktown, Sydney with his 55 year old son, daughter-in-law and adult grandchildren. Raj Pati died in Fiji in 1996, a few months after her first overseas trip to Sydney to visit her son. Pati’s other two children; Hari Deo lived in Edmonton, Canada when he passed away and her daughter, Leela Wati, lived and died in Fiji. Her youngest daughter-in-law lives in Edmonton, Canada. Pati’s grandchildren, therefore, are living in Sydney, Auckland, Vancouver and Edmonton.

Dhunuk Dei (my husband’s paternal grandmother) was married at 13 to a 35-year-old cook who had arrived in Fiji with his indentured labourer parents:

When I was married, I did not have any understanding of what was involved. My world was very small where the village playground and our home environment was all I thought existed. I thought my father was running out of food that’s why he was getting me married to a cook. I looked forward to good meals in my husband’s home. When I was taken away as a new bride to live with my husband, I asked him to wait, when he opened the window of our home and asked me to come inside the house. I yelled out; “wait, let me play” as I was playing with other children my age. On my honeymoon night, I screamed and cried as I was not prepared for what happened. I now feel that I was raped (2003).

In the first year of her marriage Dei gave birth to a boy. Every year for the next 14 years, she gave her husband a child. All her sons lived at Bulabula, leasing a fair portion of the village as a clustered settlement of immediate and extended families. Two of her four daughters
returned to the family estate to establish their homes after they were married. Dei passed away at the age of 96 at her home in Bulabula in late 2003. From the age of 22 one of her sons lived in London with his British wife. He died in 2008. A son lives in Auckland while another son, who migrated to Toronto, Canada, to live with his son, returned to Fiji in 2003 and lives in Ba, away from the family’s home in Bulabula. Her eldest daughter lives in Auckland while another daughter lives in Melbourne. More than a dozen of her grandchildren and great grandchildren live in Auckland while several others are living in Canada, Australia (mostly Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne), London and Fiji. Two of her widowed daughters-in-law live in Auckland while one lives in Christchurch. Her family heritage is still rooted in Bulabula, where one of her widowed daughters-in-law lives with her own family. Several of Dei’s grandchildren, great grandchildren and their children still live in Bulabula. Only one of Dei’s children, her youngest daughter, who was also widowed, and did not have a child of her own, lived in Bulabula until she died in 2010. She was being looked after by her youngest brother’s son. Ironically, only the cement foundation of her oldest daughter’s home remains among thick bushes in a far section of the village.

My parents Hari Prasad and Veer Mati were married in an arranged match, on December 18, 1953 when they were 19 and 15. My eldest sister, 57, older brother, 54 and youngest sister, 42, like me, all have had arranged marriages. My brother and eldest sister live in Sydney with their families while my youngest sister lives in Vancouver, Canada. My eldest sister’s son had an arranged marriage to a woman from our village in Fiji while her daughter married a Fiji Indian man she met at university in Sydney, in a love-match. My brother has two sons, one of whom is married to an Irish Australian woman. One of my two daughters was married in 2009 in an arranged/love match while the other one will be married in a Hindu ceremony in December, 2011. Both my daughters met their husbands through common friends before they began dating.

The importance of extended family

When marriages were being arranged, women with extensive knowledge of the extended family and experience of family life usually led the match-finding team because they were better positioned to gauge if a girl would make a good wife and fit into the boy’s family without disrupting the status quo. These female relatives would also grab any chance to ask the girl questions. The girl’s family would also be prepared for such situations by ensuring
that their girl had constant company of her own in older (married) sisters and sisters-in-laws or even paternal aunties. Some of the obvious questions were whether the girl could sew, milk a cow or even read and write. Knowing how to cook a variety of Indian food, including sweets in bulk, was an expectation so these questions were not asked. The latter questions were mainly asked if the girl’s family was small, comprising of only a few brothers and sisters with no extended family living with her.

Smaller families prompted questions, such as whether the girl would be able to cope with the cooking and cleaning for a larger family if she had not been exposed to these in her father’s home. Problems were anticipated if the girl did not live in an extended family where she would have learned to share her space with others. And if she knew how to sew, milk a cow, read and write and had worked on the farm she was seen as an asset to her new family.

My mother had said she knew how to sew when her marriage was arranged in 1953 and one of the first things she had to do when she arrived as a bride in her new home was to stitch a pair of trousers for my dad’s uncle. My dad’s maternal grandmother had commanded that the new bride do this because she had told her husband’s aunties that she could sew when she first met them when her marriage was being arranged. Now I understand why my mother, who passed away in November 2009, saw sewing as a special craft.

In the Indian social structure the fabric of family is vital and therefore members of the extended family network used to carefully investigate the compatibility of the partnership prior to marriage. A girl’s potential as a wife then was evaluated in terms of beauty/education/family background and most importantly by character; and her social life was under constant surveillance to ensure chastity. A boy’s eligibility was gauged through the work he did (income he earned), how many brothers and sisters he had (the fewer brothers the better and if he was the only son, he was given high ranking as there was the financial benefit of inheriting). In the traditional Indian family structure, sons, and not daughters, inherited their family wealth. Girls were and still are paid their dues through the dowry system at the time of their marriage. Over the years there has not been as much emphasis on the ‘character’ of a boy as there is for a girl. The belief was that a good wife would be able to keep her husband at her side at the same time focus on his family. In those early days, the extended Hindu family was an accepted norm. Many families lived in separate houses in one
big compound, ate out of a common kitchen and shared other facilities. In many cases, the
girl’s aunts (mostly paternal) and her mother would make an open declaration that their
daughter would make adjustments to her life to fit into the new family when the possibility of
marriage arose. This assurance was taken to heart and seen as written on stone. Once married,
the girl had to honour her mother’s promise. She would remain quiet during family or
personal feuds and even during times when she could speak back, because her mother had
taught her ‘tolerance’. Many Fiji Indian women, in their 40s, 50s and 60s, living in Sydney
and Auckland, have reflected on their lives as new brides in an extended family environment
in Fiji, where on many occasions, they remained ‘silent’ to keep the status quo and peace in
the family. Many have also spoken about their then belief that one day their situation would
improve, giving them more power in their marital and family relationships:

I could not say much or speak out my opinion or views back then as I did not have much
choice or status. I was one of many daughters-in-law and if I said something that my
husband’s family did not approve of, matters would get worse. I could not go back to my
father’s home as this would have brought shame to him and my family and that stigma is
there for life. So I had to choose wisely and think of all the other family members before I
could think of me (Auckland woman, 55, personal interview, June 2006).

The woman in the above quote was referring to domestic situations where she remained quiet
and did not make a stand on issues, no matter how important these were to her. And because
a majority of the women did not work outside the home in those days, it was a mother’s sole
responsibility to prepare her daughters for family life before they were married. Marriage
failures would mean psychological blame and mental torture for mothers as the failure would
be seen as their personal failure. The failure of one family member’s marriage impacted on
the entire extended family, and to some extent had a direct negative bearing on siblings,
especially female ones, wishing to get married.

If all went well (in most instances it did), the boy’s family would give the girl some money,
jewellery or clothes to ask for her hand. Otherwise the two families came together at the
girl’s home on a set date for the chekani (engagement). The girl’s family would also present
the boy with gifts and then present gifts and money through an official wedding ritual called
tilak by visiting the boy’s home a week before the actual wedding ceremony.
Uusually, before engaging the girl, the boy’s family would send out their secret agents (family representatives) to ‘investigate’ the girl. Among several methods would be a visit to the girl’s family on the pretext of wanting to know, say, if the father was selling his pair of farm bullocks. If the host family did not own bullocks, they would immediately know the purpose of the visit. The Fijian hospitality requires that no matter who visits your home, the least you do is offer them a place to sit and rest. Offering *sarbat* (sweet juice) usually made by mixing sugar and water with a pinch of lime or passionfruit or any other fruit one may have in the home/backyard has over the years been accepted as common courtesy. If nothing else was available for poorer families, a bit of tamarind paste, which is a must-have for Indians as it is commonly used for cooking main Indian dishes, in a sugar/water solution served the purpose well. And while the visitor sat down to sip his juice he would discretely examine the surroundings. It was also common for girls, for whom the family was seeking partners, to bring the *sarbat* as their father saw this as an opportunity to let visitors know that he had a girl ready to be married. It was and is not unusual for the visitor to ask the girl’s age and if her marriage has been arranged. These questions about age and marriage are common today, however, the space can no longer be singled out as a private setting because women and their families are frequenting other social occasions such as entertainment events, prayer meetings or weddings in Sydney, Auckland and indeed Fiji. Asking people from within the community if they know of a man or woman of marriage age is not being frowned upon in the Fiji Indian community in the three countries. (I have lost count of the number of times I have been faced with this question about my children, from people I have barely met).

As it has also been a cultural practice to offer food (lunch) if the visit was close to lunch-time this visitor would stay for lunch and, through conversation and observation, pick up a lot of information which would then be analysed and translated to the boy’s family in the process of matching the girl to the boy. Sometimes it took several such visits to a girl’s home (if practical) before a final partnership in marriage was arranged. Although these visits eventually became common knowledge in the village (gossip and news flow fast in close-knit communities), the girl’s family would keep trying until a match was finalised. A common belief among many Hindu Indian families has been not to reject the first proposal that comes for their girl, especially if the match is compatible. The refusal of the first proposal is seen as a bad omen. (The Bollywood movie *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) emphasises this aspect of the Indian culture in a scene when the main female character refuses a proposal and then
contemplates the consequences). This belief is also challenged in the current age of communication as boys and girls meet numerous partners through exposure to a globalised world. The strict upbringing of children in an Indian family, minus all the trappings of socialising, was common a few decades ago. If a girl’s character is tarnished once, the belief is that the cracks will always be there and she would have to live with humiliation for the rest of her life. Boys having affairs before marriage, to some extent, has been tolerated and accepted by Indians. However, if he makes a woman pregnant, he is pressured by the family to marry her. The dowry system cannot be separated from a Hindu wedding even today, although there have been numerous changes in this practice. These are recorded in this research through the rituals performed today and their explicit/implicit meaning.

History of indentured labour in Fiji

To provide a fair understanding of the Fiji Indians’ unique identity building process one has to go back in time and get an appreciation of the community’s history as a twice displaced people. The community is in transition. Some 60,000 Indians were taken to Fiji from India under the British indenture system which began in 1879 and continued into the late 19th and early 20th century (between 1879 and 1916) to work on plantations. There were some 87 voyages made by 42 ships that brought Indian indentured labourers to Fiji. Of these ships, 27 were sailing ships and 13 were steam ships. Leonidas was the first ship to sail from Calcutta. The voyage to Fiji was the last for a ship named Syria as she ran aground on the Nasilai Reef, only four miles from shore, at 8.30 p.m. on Sunday 11 May 1884 with the loss of 59 lives. A total of 60,965 passengers left India but 60,553 (including births at sea) arrived in Fiji. A total of 45,439 boarded ships in Calcutta and 15,114 in Madras. Sailing ships took, on average, 73 days for the trip while steamers took 30 days. The shipping companies associated with the labour trade were Nourse Line and British-India Steam Navigation Company (Lal, 1992).

From the early 1900s, Indians had also started arriving in Fiji as free agents. Many of these migrants paid their own way and had previously served in Fiji or other British colonies or had been born in Fiji. Among the early free migrants, there were religious teachers, missionaries and at least one lawyer, Mani Lal Doctor. The government and other employers brought clerks, policemen, artisans, gardeners, experienced agricultural workers, a doctor and a school teacher. Punjabi farmers and Gujarati craftsmen also paid their own way to Fiji and in later years formed an influential minority amongst the Fiji Indians. Some of their descendents
(Punja and Sons, Tappoo brothers, Motibhai Patel, to name a few) own multi-million dollar businesses in Fiji with their influence spread across Australia and New Zealand.

These free agents brought with them much of the Hindu wedding traditions in the form of jewellery and clothing which they often used as trading items that they sold to Indian farmers. Popular among this jewellery was the British gold sovereign, which today is an heirloom inherited by children from their parents or great grandparents, especially during marriage ceremonies.

Some of the indentured labourers left Fiji at the end of their contract while the majority remained in Fiji. Those who decided to remain in Fiji were given small plots of land to farm on a lease. They were poor but they created their own space by investing in schools, temples and other infrastructure such as building roads and establishing piped water systems. Government initiatives came later. A new meaning was given to their identity when the third/fourth generation Fiji Indians became politically active and began claiming their rights in their homeland. The Indians were never given national heritage in Fiji or called Fijians. They always remained *KaiIndia*, Indians, Indo Fijian or Fiji Indians.

Heritage, in the Australian context, is about identities: cultural and social, lived and daily practiced and reflecting a fluid multiplicity.

These identities are, of course, shifting and constantly moving in the face of physical and emotional change that people experience. When Fiji Indians look back, the road to a Fiji that was once home is dusty and blurred. They cannot locate that home, as the physical landscape of the past has dramatically changed, as has their emotional connection to the place, with a divided allegiance complicated by where they are at (in Sydney). In their new homes they have created a new space where identities are negotiated, mapped, lived and experienced against a backdrop of multiculturalism. However, they all maintain some sort of tenuous link with Fiji.

Fiji’s once vibrant sugar industry was founded on the backbone of these labourers, known as *girmityas*. *Girmit* in Hindi literally means, ‘you fall you die’. The term refers to an agreement these labourers signed to leave homeland India and to work in the conditions, in Fiji many times atrocious. The *girmityas* left their homeland in sorry circumstances, to escape poverty,
destitution and discrimination. They also wanted to build a new life for themselves and their children in a new, far flung place (Lal, 2007).

A small minority of the indentured labourers returned to India at the end of their term. Those who decided to remain in Fiji at the end of the indenture era were given second class status. Even those (of Indian heritage) born in Fiji during and after the indenture period was over, are referred to as KaiIndia (which in Fijian means ‘belonging to India’). Since many Indians began their life in Fiji as farmers, they naturally became attached to the land. Land was what sustained them in times of hardship. Coming from India where nationalism was explicitly expressed in song, dance, music and later Bollywood movies, the Fiji Indians also began giving their plots of land a ‘mother earth’ status and engaging in worship of it with a similar level of passion as that expressed by Asian Indians towards their land. Many Bollywood movies such as Mother India and Ek Bigha Zameen, (One Acre Land) are based on the land as the thematic essence for survival.

The National Archives of Fiji has 60,965 immigration passes of Indians who arrived in Fiji from India during the indenture era. These passes are the only document that contains comprehensive data on the demographics of the indentured labourers. Each pass contains the migrant's depot number, sex, name, caste, father's name, age, district of origin and registration. The National Library of Australia in Canberra has also stored this data on microfilm.

Coup Culture in Fiji
The 1987 coup, staged by then brigadier general Sitiveni Rabuka, who later became Fiji’s Prime Minister, ousted the first ever Indian dominated government of Dr Timoci Bavadra. Since the coups Fiji has gone into crisis mode as the economy has fallen as a consequence of low returns on the almost barren sugar farms and the large-scale migration of skilled and professional Indians. Fiji, which once enjoyed an international reputation for the quality of its sugar to the European Commission, is today buying sugar from India to replenish supply at home. Fiji’s interim Prime Minister, Commodore Frank Bainimarama, has also called on the Fiji Indians who live overseas to return to ‘their home Fiji’, to help the country ‘get back on its feet’. A few Indians, including the permanent secretary for Lands, in 2008 an Australian Fiji Indian, have returned to serve the country.
Since the coups of 1987, some 120,000 Fiji citizens, mostly of Indo-Fijian descent, have left the Fiji shores to settle overseas, choosing Australia and New Zealand as top destinations (Lal, 2007). Their flight from Fiji has taken place under a condition of crisis. Those who have settled in Sydney are better educated and better situated, having left their homeland, crisis-torn Fiji, to escape discrimination, racial prejudice and to build a better future for themselves and their children. The two crossings (from India and Fiji) have contrasting features and are products of different eras and historical conditions, but both deal with people of similar heritage and ethnic background. By examining members of this community’s history in India, their memories of life and experiences in Fiji and their present life in Sydney, this research explores the new ways of identity formation in a community in a transnational space. Its cultural space in Sydney is dynamic and in flux.

Social practices of cultural invention are the norm when Fiji Indians living in Sydney mobilise their Indian history, their lived Fijian experiences and cultural practices and the physical Australian environment to create a home in a diverse and multicultural environment.

Creating the community networks
The twice-displaced Fiji Indians’ sense of having an in-between existence as Indians, Fijians and Australians/Kiwis has created a whole new space which challenges the core fabric of their identity. There is cultural continuity in community living, and in living in clusters. People are keeping the homeland traditions of socialising through regular meetings where many of the Indians who are Hindus have formed Ramayan mandalis (religious groups) to recite the Holy Ramayana each week in the homes of members. At the end of the parvachan (preaching), in many instances by a common man who has the ability to read Hindi and explain the content using Fiji Hindi and English, men group together and drink kava, the official name of Fiji’s national drink. Kava or grog, to a large extent, has become a social ill in Fiji, as well as Sydney and Auckland, and has contributed to binge drinking. Kava is also used internationally, especially in the US and Japan to make anti depressant pills. While men are engaged in grog drinking, the women form their own networks and get engaged in conversation. Much merry making and sharing takes place and the children, especially teenagers, establish their own social networks of people to ‘hang out with’. So while the parents and elderly migrants create their own groups, the children who end up being exposed
to the same people almost every week form strong bonds and unconsciously begin their own social networks.

These networks extend into much larger communities as friends outside this network (including other Australians from diverse backgrounds) are introduced to the group. As the network expands, so does the need to move out of the private home environment into a bigger space. The Indian parents/grandparents in many instances are not keen to allow free socialising of their children. As much as they adapt to this need in a western society, they still attach their own values to any form of socialising.

Another way the Indians add new meaning in their new spaces is through establishing their own nightclubs where remixes of music from the past and present is played to the fast beat of western and African music. Also common are regular stage performances by local artists and artists from India, especially Bollywood stars. The Indians’ social and economic significance as a society has translated into mass celebration in an open forum where there is no fear of being attacked. Unlike Fiji, where the Hindu temples, other places of worship, and in many cases Bharatiya (Indian) schools were attacked at the height of the military coups and later when racial tension was high, the Indians in Sydney enjoy a unique space which is also shared by their counterparts from India as well as other Australians, many of who also come from non Anglo Saxon backgrounds. Sydney attracts more than a third of those migrating to Australia and the city’s population is expected to soar to more than five million by 2021. Sydney is experiencing population growth at more than a thousand people a week. On yet another front, the Fiji Indians are ‘stamping their mark’ on Sydney, especially Western Sydney, with a vibrant culture reflected in the many spice shops, specialist costume and jewellery shops, Hindi radio, ethnic Indian newspapers, various forms of entertainment in Hindi movies being screened at local theatres, stage performances, other Bollywood performances and sport. The Hindi feature film is a phenomenon unique to the Indian Diaspora. What Hollywood is to Western Europe, the Bombay Hollywood ("Bollywood") is to Indians. The impact of this Diasporic fiction on the Fiji Indians’ ‘arranged marriage’ is yet another facet of a way of life for the community. Newspapers published by the Indian community flourish in Sydney and they invariably carry a section with matrimonial advertisements. These advertisements in newspapers, magazines, websites and personal sites such as ‘MySpace’ and ‘Face Book’ help Indians to ‘locate’ one another and share in the
celebrations or events being organised. There is similarly the case in Auckland and there is a cross-cultural exchange of events and programs across the Tasman and the Pacific in multiple directions. The community creates a visible meaning through a plethora of dress codes, the celebration of festivals and even the claiming of specific spaces to unwind such as nightclubs. Their social and cultural relevance adds new meaning to place and culture. The journey begins in the home environment, in local suburbs and towns and extends to defined settlements and landmarks (shops, radio stations, musical/entertainment shows) as their new country is encountered. These spaces are testimony to a dynamic and diverse community, evolving from a restricted past into a modern metropolis which freely gives its identity meaning.

Chapter summary

While providing an understanding of the relevance and need for this research, this chapter has presented a background to the Indian community in Fiji, especially in relation to the modes of travel and communication when marriages were being arranged in the days after the end of indenture in 1916 (mainly in the 1940s and 50s) when Fiji was still a British colony. Seventeen years after gaining independence in 1970, Fiji was faced with its first military coup in 1987. This historic and political event changed the destiny of Fiji Indians as they began migrating in droves. At the time of the coup, the Indian population in Fiji was at 52%. In 2011 it has dwindled to 38% of the total population of 883,125. The Fijian population is at 51% while others account for 5% (National Statistical office: Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics, 2011). (See appendix 1 for migration patterns).

Sydney has the largest settlement of almost 40,000 Fiji Indians outside of Fiji. This research presents the complexity of the community as it negotiates its position in a global and multicultural space by evaluating some of its social habits and traditions in order to frame an understanding of the practice of arranged marriage in the community.

The questions about arranged marriages have, for some time, intrigued many people, especially those who have only been exposed to the western ideals of marriage, or have held the view that arranged marriages are only a part of the eastern culture and ‘backward’. It provides a platform for understanding various other dynamics such as community building in multicultural spaces, networking, consumption of ethnic media by migrant communities in
cosmopolitan, western cities like Sydney as well as the steadfast Indian family values which are portable assets. Understanding the media’s role in community building by facilitating arranged marriages, helps provide an understanding of why certain cultural practices have been reinforced despite a dynamic shift towards modernisation. The research also records changes taking place in the field of communications and the impact these have on the institution of marriage. Additionally it records changes in the Hindu wedding ceremony. Most notable is the community’s adaptability in using the new media to arrange marriages.

Chapter Two presents the community’s third space as a ‘chutney generation’, borrowing and mixing its Fijian, Indian and Australian identities to create a new paste of civilisation.
CHAPTER TWO

Identity formation in a liminal space

This chapter uses chutney\(^1\), an Indian side dish, as a metaphor to describe the Australian-Fiji-Indian community whose Indian customs and traditions have to a large extent been retained despite the challenges of daily life in a modern, multicultural environment. Such an environment forces a fusion of identities and cultures as exposure to new experiences facilitates the improvisation of social habits and practices. The chapter provides an insight into the community dynamics by exploring its negotiations, yearnings, borrowings and transformations as well as the new and spicy creations that have blended into Sydney’s multicultural stew pot. At the same time this chapter raises awareness, in Australia and internationally, of the unique blend of Indian, Fijian and Australian practices that have become a way of life for this diasporic community that is changing, complex and contradictory simultaneously.

The term chutney has special relevance to Fiji Indians who not only savour the dish but also live the word in their Australian space. Chutney, which evolved as a tradition and spread from India to England and beyond, was used as the theme of a three-month exhibition, in Sydney tracing the journeys of Australian-Fiji-Indians and their lived experiences. The community expresses itself in a loud and colourful manner in Sydney. This observation helped me as curator of the ‘Chutney Generations’ exhibition at the Liverpool Museum. (See Appendix 2 Chutney launch DVD and Appendix 3 for Chutney catalogue).

Fiji Indians’ state of ambivalence in Sydney

I get my grog, Fiji fish, spices and vegetables every week at the local Fiji Mart. So how can I be totally Australian and not a bit of kaiviti (Fijian) and kaiIndia (Indian), (a 50-year-old Australian Fiji Indian living in Sydney for 20 years).

It is a matter of acquiring a taste and developing your taste buds. Mine are used to the hot and spicy foods which I eat almost every day. My evening meal has to be roti (Indian

\(^1\) Chutney is an Indian side dish made with zest and creativity. It adds sparkle to food. Common ingredients used for making chutney are tamarind, mint, coriander, tomato or mango, but really the possibility of ingredients is limitless. These ingredients are ground with chillies, salt, onion, garlic and other herbs and spices into a tangy flavour. Chutney is also used as a dip. New ingredients have been added to chutneys, and its role, like the instability of humanity, has changed over the years. The physical process of mixing and blending causes a fusion of flavours in such a way that there is no single identity, only our sense of taste to discern variabilities.

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bread) made out of Desi atta (flour) and spicy curries. I enjoy my evening meal after a few bowls of grog (says the man, oblivious to the changing Sydney landscape that has become a United Nations on a plate).

Australia is my home. I came here when I was two. All I can remember is about my life as an Australian. My friends are Australian like me. They grew up in this place although their heritage is Chinese, Italian, Turkish and English. Their parents, like mine, are putting a lot of pressure on them to be like other people from their country of birth. I can’t understand why my parents and other families keep talking about Fiji so much. I go to Fiji for cheap holidays at resorts, but my parents always want me to visit all the relatives there (a 21-year-old Australian university student of Fiji Indian descent).

While this nostalgia sums up the feelings of some 29,000 Australian Fiji-Indians living in New South Wales (ABS 2009), it also captures many of the essential ingredients for this research while at the same time exhibiting some of the losses, gains, mergers and new creations of the community. Although the ABS’ 2011 statistics were not officially available at the time of submitting this thesis, unofficial records have put the Fiji Indian population at 40,000 in NSW.

To put these ideas into context, the exhibition, launched on December 16, 2006, presented the colour and vibrancy of the community in Australia while the public programs in February 2007 captured some of their essential flavours through chutney making classes, a public forum titled ‘The Hybrids of Culture and Identity in Multicultural Sydney’, sari draping and Bollywood dancing classes as well as henna and tabla workshops. I led the public forum with an introduction on the concept of chutney as a metaphor for the Fiji Indian community and during this focused on the multicultural issue of assimilation. I also presented an overview of the community’s spirituality which has a strong foundation on values. These ideas were also presented from other perspectives through the words of internationally renowned researchers. Professor Brij Lal (of Fiji Indian descent) of the Australian National University spoke on “Diaspora of The Twice Banished” and Professor Bob Hodge, who presented his research on “Detention and Border Work in Multicultural Australia”. Also Shalini Akhil, author of Bollywood Beauty, a Melbourne based writer and stand up comedian of Fiji Indian heritage, presented ideas from her book which reflect the challenges faced by migrants in multicultural environments, while lawyer and migration agent Avi Kumar (of Fiji Indian descent) presented his views on music and how migration has strengthened connections with fellow Fiji Indians through music which crosses cultures and borders. The three hyphenated identities (Indian, Fijian and Australian) of the community were the main ingredients for chutney. These, combined with tradition, language, dress, collection of heritage items,
consumption of media, food and music brought in a ‘salsa’ of flavours for mixing and blending.

The exhibition

The exhibition featured some of the live expressions of the dynamics of the community such as dance, music, and film, as well as community demonstrations of weddings, daily life and cultural spaces. It linked cultural research with a broader influence of the arts and social spaces in order to promote an understanding of community issues. A highlight of the exhibition was the farming corner which featured a cane field. The farm life was recreated with a blend of items (billy-can, cane knife, farmer’s hat and hoe, kerosene lamp) and emotions (verses from a girmit song). The sugar cane stems came from a Sydney Vietnamese family. The hat, billy-can, hoe and kerosene lamp were brought from Fiji by people when migrating. A mat made out of sugarcane manure bags (a hand-me-down from my mother-in-law, Saras Pati who now lives in Auckland, New Zealand) presented a personal story of my struggles, hopes and dreams of the past when my world revolved around village life only. A majority of the adult Australian-Fiji-Indians spent a lifetime on such mats, known as paal, using them for sleeping, sitting, protection from the sun and wind, as well as for cleaning and drying grains like rice and lentils. In Sydney the paal is a picnic mat, spread out for backyard socialising and merrymaking.

A collection of musical instruments like the dholak (Indian drum) which was situated under the sugar plantation spoke volumes about the continuity of the traditions of song and dance, which were brought from India to Fiji in 1879 and then to Australia at the height of coups beginning in 1987. Music, like some ingredients of chutney, provided balance in the Indians’ lives and neutralised the feelings of loss and grief during the indenture era, and then later during episodes of racial discrimination in Fiji and then later in Australia. With its power to heal and stir emotions, to cross all borders and boundaries, music, like chutney, has become an integral part of the Fiji-Indian heritage. For the young it is Bollywood, for the older migrants it is the traditional songs, bhajans and kirtans (devotional music). Lyrics of the indenture song, written by Divakar Prasad of Brisbane, Australia, are a tribute to the hard work of Fiji’s indentured labourers. Indra Chinappa of Sydney gave it voice when she sang it at the launch of the Chutney Generations exhibition.
Life for the Fiji-Indians is not complete without kava, thus the kava section, in the middle of the exhibition hall, made a bold statement about every other aspect of life which tends to revolve around this ‘brew of life’ for the Australian-Fiji-Indians. Serving kava to Fijian chiefs and special guests was a practice of the past. Kava, originally an indigenous Fijian drink, is consumed at many Australian-Fiji-Indian gatherings such as prayer meetings, weddings or death ceremonies, with a sense of religious zeal. The tanoa (a large wooden bowl made of dakua wood and used for mixing kava) rested on tapa cloth (Fijian art). In Australia, large mixing bowls have replaced the tanoa which is now commonly used as a fruit bowl.

The wedding corner, spices section, chutney corner (with the stone chutney maker, mortar and pestle surrounded by fresh mint, garlic, chillies, salt as well as rows of bottled chutneys, made by women from the community in Sydney) and the screening of jhumka (a film) all told the stories of the past, of change, borrowings, yearnings and new creations, all denoting the dynamics of chutney. Affluence in Australia has meant that the community observes important occasions, such as weddings, with much pomp and ceremony. Henna artist Prabha Jogia’s story of the changing landscape in henna works where the younger generation from Sydney’s multicultural spaces demand for contemporary designs, not only for weddings but also for baby showers and other celebrations, presented yet more diversity and complexity, causing a fusion of the past and present. The popularity of henna at the exhibition and in Sydney generally demonstrates a global appreciation of the art.

Although there are several scholarly studies on emigration from Fiji, presented as books, journal articles and collections of short stories, the visual representation of the community was missing. This community has been marginalised to some extent because of the size of Fiji only a dot on the world map and the small numbers of these migrants (compared to other migrant communities) in Australia. They have also been seen in the shadows of mainland Indians, mainly because of physical looks while they are different in their cultural practices, language and lifestyle. (The aspects of difference and the role of the ethnic media in promoting divisions have been presented in detail in chapter six).

The liminal space of the community

In a physical sense the exhibition demonstrated how the Fiji-Indians, in a short time, have established their home in Sydney and indeed Australia. However, at an emotional and
sometimes subconscious level, the community is neither fully settled in Sydney nor has it fully left homeland Fiji. They are in an in-between space, explicitly demonstrated through their cultural performances at the launch and the exhibition. This space is referred to as a threshold (the sill of a doorway) by a number of anthropologists such as Arnold Van Gennep and Victor Turner (Van Gennep 1960, Turner 1969) and as a ‘third space’ by Homi Bhabha (1994). This sill has to be crossed when entering or leaving a house, and it therefore evokes images of passages, crossings or change.

For Australian-Fiji-Indians, this threshold marks a point or time when they make a choice about moving on or keeping what they hold close to their hearts. The change is not definitive. Many of them are caught in between these spaces and therefore do not have a clearly defined existence in each situation, be it the way they live in their home environments, their social or educational spaces or their life in the communities, ethnic as well as multicultural.

To gain admission into the Australian space means to submit to the accepted norms (or rules) that are in force in that time and space. So in the work environment, they speak in English, report to work on time and follow the culture (expected behaviour) of the work environment. However, when entering their Fiji-Indian space, they change to suit that environment, ensuring that they speak in Hindi, don Indian fashion and jewellery, arrive late at meetings and parties because they are ‘on Fiji time’ reflecting the laid-back Fijian, Pacific islander lifestyle.

On the other hand, the Indian social structure decides who is included or excluded from their network and these decisions are constantly changing with each situation – for reasons of political, religious or social rankings and affiliations. This spatial structure then influences the group’s social interactions and relationships within and outside the group, while social status is negotiated at the threshold, either through acceptance or rejection. There is again a degree of in-between in both as acceptance can be marginal, not real or complete. A similar condition could apply to rejection which may not be total.

Threshold thus evokes a sense of entering and leaving. In more concrete terms, it denotes passages and change in the way people live and create their identity in a new home. These passages, physical as well as emotional, negotiated through time and circumstances, mark the points at which they make decisions about their identity.
Even if people choose to move on, the new space is not fixed or permanent because they are soon are at another threshold and change is incorporated (sometimes without them knowing or feeling it). The young adults especially are under pressure from parents wanting to keep some of their old ways and practices ‘intact’. There are situations where the transition from an old lifestyle to a new one, an old social position to another, are hampered, for example, by little or no understanding of the significance or practical reasons behind a practice. Thus the transition cannot be completed fully or successfully. These young adults, like their parents and grandparents, are caught in-between stages of change; thus they do not hold clearly defined positions within their social system or network. They sometimes feel marginalised, excluded and without identity or influence.

While outsiders can be located outside a social structure and may not have the intention or ability to re-enter the space, marginals, according to Turner’s (1969) study, are ‘simultaneously members of two or more social groups whose social definitions and cultural norms are distinct from, and often even opposed to, one another’ (p. 233). Stonequist (1965, 1937) describes a marginal as an individual who through migration, education, marriage, or some other influence, leaves one social group or culture without making satisfactory adjustment to another and who finds himself or herself on the margin of each but a member of neither. The Australian-Fiji-Indians are indeed in an in-between space which Homi Bhabha refers to as the ‘third space’. Describing this space Bhabha emphasises the need to think beyond borders and boundaries to a liminal space which is revolutionary and engaged in a continual process of translation. There is thus never an original or essential meaning, rather one that is imitated, simulated, copied or transformed. These processes create the ‘third space’ (Bhabha, 1994) With the Fiji Indian migration, this space is what I call ‘the Chutney Generation’, which is neither in Fiji, India or Australia, but rather a blend of all three and more.

Bhabha says that translation engages in a continual process of hybridity which is an ambivalent and discursive moment and one which refuses to be faithful to any of its origins. ‘The transformational value of change lays in the rearticulation, or translation of elements that are neither one nor the other but something else besides which contests the term and territories of both’ (1994, p.5). The Australian-Fiji-Indians live with a blend of identities and
cultural borrowings (as presented through the Chutney Generations exhibition and programs) from their past and present spaces, which are not faithful to any one single identity at a time.

Van Gennep, on the other hand says, the life of an individual in any society is a series of passages from one age to another or from one occupation to another. Whenever there are fine distinctions among age or occupational groups, progression from one group to the next is accompanied by special acts, like those which are involved in an apprenticeship for a trade. For the Australian-Fiji-Indians this passage is the creation of their third space. The movement of people and goods through migration and globalisation means that the world today is governed by change. These changes impact on human life either in stages or through the process of transitions. For some Australian-Fiji-Indians, these changes take place without their knowing or feeling them. Others go through a process where every aspect is felt or lived, especially in the case of physical and lifestyle changes they experience. In his work Stephen Castles (2003) points out that culture, identity and community often serve as a focus of resistance to centralising and homogenising forces in the context of globalisation. He says:

These have become central themes in debates on the new ethnic minorities. First [...] cultural difference serves as a marker for ethnic boundaries. Second, ethnic cultures play a central role in community formation: when ethnic groups cluster together, they establish their own neighbourhoods, marked by distinctive use of private and public spaces (p. 39).

Through their networks, the Fiji Indians have created a strong sense of community living where individuals and families band together to help out fellow Fiji Indian migrants during special occasions such as weddings, social gatherings and in times of sorrow such as a death in the family.

Liminality, third space and the in-between stages resonate with the works of social theorist Arjun Appadurai who calls the transitional stages ‘ruptures’ (1990, 1996). The common history and political strife of Fiji Indians creates a sense of belonging. The common journey and the tension in the community of knowing and experiencing both worlds, but not really leaving one nor arriving at the other, makes their space in multicultural Sydney a unique blend, a ‘chutney’. The community is in constant negotiation at the various levels of its position in its social and cultural spaces - be it in a nightclub for the younger generation or at a Fiji Indian wedding ceremony. Van Gennep distinguishes between the stages of life as three phases of: ‘separation’ (from an old situation), ‘transition’ (passage) and ‘incorporation’ (new situation) (1960, p. 11).
For Fiji Indians the physical separation from Fiji takes place through migration. The emotional level of separation from old habits and lifestyles in Fiji contributes another layer to the codes of separation. Transition into the new physical environment takes place simultaneously alongside the emotional transition of establishment in the Sydney space. ‘Incorporation’ for the community becomes a challenge because many find they have not fully separated from Fiji and the life that was, but they are required to transition and be incorporated into their new environment. They are indeed a bit of everything, however not a full bit of anything.

Indian identities, and connection with India, are fluid and imagined since a great majority have never been to India and cannot trace their ancestral identities. However, they feel connected to India through Bollywood movies which they vigorously consume while adopting fashion trends from these. Manas Ray (2000) says that:

> The cult of Bollywood that the Fiji Indian reproduced in Fiji is not a case of mimicry, since repetition is inscribed in the very mode of being of Bollywood. If Bollywood is made the mainstay of cultural life (which to a very large extent is the case with Fiji Indians), it will of necessity repeat its entire cultural ecology - its “insiderism” (p.161).

This ‘insiderism’ constructs a sense of mythological nationhood with very tenuous links with the actual geography of a nation. Hence living in the realities of Fiji and participating in the life of Bollywood is not a case of split existence, since such a split is postulated on a divide between the real and the imagined, ‘something that Bollywood disavows’ (p.161).

Bollywood has indeed become a means of cultural copying for the community, especially at Hindu weddings in the community’s affluent Sydney spaces. Sydney wedding planners, as well as fashion house owners, claim to be selling wedding decorations and Indian fashion copied from the sets of Bollywood. (These are explored in detail in Chapters six and seven).

On the other hand, connections with Fiji are real and lived. These are also revisited or reinforced with many of Sydney’s Fiji Indians making several visits back home to Fiji. In 2009 Liverpool-based travel agent Guru Dayal Charan, of Guru’s Travel, recorded ‘substantial’ growth in travel to Fiji by the Indian community in Sydney. Fiji’s national airline, Air Pacific, offers special fares to Fiji during the Sydney winter school holidays and for the long Christmas break. Flights in and out of Fiji were doubled in 2004 because of high passenger numbers. Other airlines like Jetstar, Qantas and Virgin Blue (Pacific Blue) offer
discounted airfares and hotel accommodation in Fiji. Other Sydneysiders are also able to experience the laid-back Fijian lifestyle by making Fiji, only three hours by plane, a holiday destination.

These frequent visits (for some, as many as four in a year) makes letting go of the Fijian way of life even more difficult. With each visit, they reinforce their values, their identity and recall aspects of Fiji such as fresh fish and other food items.

Thus the Fiji Indians in Sydney live with a blend or combination of practices from each of their three identities – Indian, Fijian and Australian and these are constantly negotiated but never completely resolved. Helped by prosperity and modern technology, the community is able to remain connected to the physical spaces they have left as well as with other people of Fiji Indian descent living in other parts of the globe.

**Chutney’s blend in music**

Chutney, also a contemporary Indian-Caribbean musical genre, displays influences from diverse sources. The East Indian Chutney Music came to the Caribbean with the first indentured labourers in 1845. When the indenture system was abolished in 1917, fewer than a quarter of the Indians returned to India while more of them exchanged their passage to India for a grant of land.

One view, by Tina K Ramnaire (1996) is that Chutney shows are presented and are gaining popularity in London, New York and Toronto – metropolitan centres where Indian-Caribbeans have settled. There are some musicians in India who perform chutney by incorporating Caribbean popular forms into their repertoires (Manuel, 1995, p. 217).

Ramnaire argues that chutney means different things to different people. She says that ‘Chutney’’s emergence as a popular genre is interlinked with issues of the place, status and changing roles of Indians in the Caribbean. In discussion of these issues, the emphasis has been placed on ethnicity and “culture” (p. 5).

In the case of Fiji Indians, perhaps a more suitable descriptor for the word would be in applying Glassie’s (1995) reference to Chutney as a tradition, where ‘tradition is a temporary concept, inherently tangled with the past, the future, with history’. The community uses many
elements of its past traditions in its practice of Hindu wedding rituals. These are also tangled with what the community borrows from its new media platforms as well as from the sets of Bollywood movies, all of which are easily available in Sydney.

The generation of Fiji Indians living in Sydney hold onto some elements and traditions of their past (common history, lived Fijian experiences, their Indian cultural traditions during marriage and other occasions) while living in their present multicultural Sydney environment, with a concept of the kind of future they want for themselves and their children. This whole process of negotiation within themselves, their children, communities within and outside their networks, at the local, national and global level produces a Chutney Generation that has no clear and defined identity but a mixture of their various identities, at various levels, from various places.

In his book *Midnight’s Children* (1981), Salman Rushdie refers to the realities of India, his country of birth, by using the term ‘chutnification’. When chutney, the edible product, is made individual tastes of the fruits or vegetables being blended become homogenised during preservation by the use of salt, sugar and vinegar. In *Midnight’s Children* Rushdie uses chutnification to explain his treatment of history, based on India awaking to life and freedom, in 1947, after independence from Britain.

**Framing cultural meaning**

Bhabha sheds light upon the ‘liminal’ negotiation of cultural identity across differences of race, class, gender, and cultural traditions. Bhabha argues that cultural identities cannot be ascribed to pre-given, irreducible and scripted historical cultural traits that define the conventions of ethnicity. Bhabha says that the negotiations of cultural identity involve the continual interface and exchange of cultural performances. As a result, these produce a mutual and mutable recognition (or representation) of cultural difference. This ‘liminal’ space, Bhabha argues, is a ‘hybrid’ site of producing cultural meaning, rather than just the reflecting on culture:

> Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively. The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation (p. 2).
Further, he says:

It is in this sense that the boundary becomes the place from which something begins its presenting in a movement not dissimilar to the ambulant, ambivalent articulation of the beyond that I have drawn out: 'Always and ever differently the bridge escorts the lingering and hastening ways of men to and fro, so that they may get to other banks....The bridge gathers as a passage that crosses (p. 5).

Bhabha's liminality model engages in cultural productivity by enabling a way of rethinking ‘the realm of the beyond’ (p. 1). Liminality not only pertains to the space between cultural collectives but between historical periods, between politics and aesthetics, between theory and application. Discussing a museum instalment by African-American artist Renee Green, Bhabha describes the exhibit's post-modern stairwell (which, apparently, connected the exhibit's upper and lower halves) as a ‘liminal space, in-between the designations of identity (that) becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white’ (p. 4). The Fiji Indians are in a similar situation, connecting their present with the future through various expectations which are built on past experiences or models.

According to Appadurai, ‘the new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order, which can not any longer be understood in terms of centre-periphery models (even those which might account for multiple centres and peripheries)” (1996, p. 6).

Pierre Bourdieu (1977), in his notion of habitus, presents cultural competence and improvisation as core features of the non-conscious schemes that people attain through experience. These, he argues, provide a basis for situationally competent action and improvisation. Bourdieu refers to habitus as something historically patterned, yet open to adjustment, in relation to the changing conditions of the social field. ‘It is a concept particularly useful for approaching the subject of agency in diasporic cultural practice and reproduction’ (in Vertovec, 1999).

Appadurai, while also suggesting the notion of habitus, proposes a reworking of the concept in relation to the general change in global conditions of life-worlds: ‘put simply, where once improvisation was snatched out of the glacial undertow of habitus, habitus now has to be
painstakingly reinforced in the face of life-worlds that are frequently in flux’ (Global ethnoscapes, 200).

**Family values at the threshold**

For the Australian-Fiji-Indians, being at the threshold, or being neither here nor there, or in between Australia, Fiji and India, can also be a symbol of division, a division which determines social structure and people’s sense of being an insider or outsider. How much of the social and cultural space do they enter and how often is this done? For example, some Fiji Indian families keep aside their weekends to socialise in the exclusive Fiji Indian spaces where there is Ramayan recital, hymn singing, grog drinking, to name a few. On the other hand some families participate in such events on a much smaller scale and spend time with their Australian friends at bars, pubs, in sporting activities or at barbecues. This transition is a literal and figurative point of passage, of change, where they can either step over the threshold and enter a whole new world, leaving behind their past, history, lived Fijian homeland experiences and imagined connections (mostly through Bollywood movies) with motherland India. The Fiji Indians also simultaneously imagine Fiji as a place of nostalgia on one hand and a debauched place on the other, thus their transnationalism as a third space of liminality becomes an ambivalent existence. With such a change, they are indeed at the threshold of a new life, or new beginning, which means they are separating from a familiar situation and entering a new and different stage in life, taking different responsibilities and gaining different rights. However, as they do, when entering a home, be it their own or as guests in someone else’s home, they take off their shoes. It is a combination of the Fijian as well as Indian customs. In Australia, many of them do not practice this while others keep this tradition, even though it may not be relevant or practical to do so which is the case in winter. Fiji’s 1987 coup leader, Sitiveni Rabuka (an indigenous Fijian commoner who became Prime Minister in 1990), was the centre of much media debate and criticism when he met with the Queen without his shoes on in London in 1997, before the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Edinburgh. Thus, Fiji Indians taking off their shoes, to some extent signifies they are leaving behind some things of their present and past, when they enter a new space (future). And while they leave their shoes behind, they take a lot more (themselves) into the future or unknown space.
Evolution of the Indian extended family

For the youth, many of who were born in Fiji and raised in Sydney, threshold can be interpreted with a psychological meaning, symbolising a point of departure from what their parents may value as important, to creating their own space. The change that comes about as a result of exploring their Australian space puts young Fiji Indians through experiences far removed from their parents’ lives and sometimes provides them with new found power, something foreign in the Fiji Indian social structure. An example of this is the importance given to socialising in multicultural Australia. In Fiji children have strict threshold stages with children being carefully cared for by mothers, paternal grandmothers and other immediate family members. In Australia on the other hand, children as young as a few weeks old are left in the care of childcare workers. Work demands on families also means that in March 2006, Sydney saw the opening of a 24-hour childcare service. The next stage, teenage years, should only be dedicated to educating the individual; removed from the social element, which is an accepted norm in Australian life. In Fiji the third, householder stage sees the individual married with children, taking on the responsibility of raising a family. It is the parents’ responsibility to see children married. And once these children are married, according to the Hindu religious belief, a man and woman should begin to detach from all material trappings and prepare to live the life of a hermit, giving away his/her wealth and inheritance to his/her children and grandchildren, preparing the soul for a better life after death. These children and grandchildren, especially sons and grandsons, take on the responsibility to care for parents and grandparents in their old age. This is the reason for close-knit family ties and the evolution of the Indian extended family. This is, in essence, the fabric of the Indian social structure. It is important to note that these are Hindu values which are often not achieved and essentially remain as goals or aims.

Migration invariably precipitates the transnational networks of the Fiji Indians in Sydney who remain tied to their family and kinsfolk while creating strong feelings of obligation and loyalty within families. This level of bonding is visible through the many forms of socio-cultural exchanges, such as participation in Hindu festival celebrations, weddings and prayer meetings, especially by the younger generation of Fiji Indians. The community also translates the transnational resources it encounters into objects of affluence such as building/buying homes, other investments, building temples, sponsoring festivals and rituals, in an attempt to establish social structures.
Turner refers to structure as a ‘social structure’, a differentiated system of mutually dependent institutions and structural positions which may or may not be hierarchically ordered (1969, p. 166). He suggests looking at the symbolic and emotional impact of the structures of society. Turner argued that cultural performances and ideas of cultural artefacts become experiences that bring out what may be inaccessible. These performances and artefacts can be in the form of music, theatre and artwork. Describing these as experiences, Turner suggests that such experiences create a sense of living through, thinking back and wishing forward, all of which sit well with the Fiji Indian diaspora in Sydney where the community is actively engaged in recreating itself. Turner, in many ways, breaks away from anthropology because he is more interested in what happens outside and between these structures.

Van Gennep, through the *Rites of Passage*, uses the concept of ceremony when discussing the crossing of the threshold stages; ‘For every one of these events there are ceremonies whose essential purpose is to enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another which is equally well defined’ (1960, p. 3). Indeed, the Fiji Indians celebrate each little step they take in life, with pomp and ceremony. These include celebrating a woman falling pregnant, when a special ceremony is held where the mother-to-be is showered with jewellery and clothes to mark this special threshold position in her life. In Fiji, this event is no longer observed in the majority of cases, but in Sydney celebrating this has become a major social event. Affluence in Australia has helped revive this celebration to a grand scale. For the youth, continuity with all the traditional observances and keeping pace with their Australian lifestyle can sometimes become too overwhelming. The exposure to new experiences and environment provides opportunities for growth and development, not so much as dependent Fiji Indians but more as independent Australians.

For the Fiji Indians, threshold represents liminality, a border that links three different stages of existence. First as Indians and this does not change much because it is to do with physical looks, build, skin colour. Next as Fijian in their lifestyle, which to some extent is subconscious behaviour in the form of grog drinking, laid back and community style living. And then third, the Australian way of life which is a cultural mix from the multicultural context but with a more western approach. This is mostly lived in the work environment where there are defined points of border crossing, the rules of accepted behaviour in a work
space. All these provide a link between the cultural stages of life and the different periods of immigrant experience.

Each passage marks a change or development in time or status. For the Fiji Indian housewives who are now working in Sydney, this change alone is a passage of time and status. Although working outside the home may have empowered them, they feel a sense of loss of control on the home front which at one time was their sole domain. And many of them are still in the in-between space. In *The Rites of Passage*, Van Gennep (1960) argues that in this territorial passage, non territorial transitions (in-between spaces) cause times of crisis, more so an unstable moment in time rather than a psychological one. This instability is caused in the in-between space for the Fiji Indians. For the young people who have adapted to the Australian social scene, leaving home at night, especially for girls, becomes a situation of crisis. Parents clinging to their Indian values and Fijian lifestyle, where children are not allowed out of sight for fear of the unknown, have a crisis to deal with as their children feel ‘left out’ of the social environment.

**Dealing with third space crisis**

To deal with this crisis, the parents and children, to some extent have reached a compromise, arriving at a ‘third space’, where children go out together in groups, with people known to their families and circles, to socialise. They may go to the movies or even hire out a night club in Sydney for an evening. They create their own space in Sydney by blending in some of their parents’ and communities’ hopes with their real need to socialise and interact with the Sydney youth. Some such events have included: *Hot n Spicy*, including *bhangara*, hip-hop, rnb and Bollywood music at the Minc Lounge on George Street, Sydney. At other specially organised social events, the young people dance to a blend of western, eastern and African music. Other venues for these events include especially hired night spots such as Purple Haze in Bossley Park. The Indian students’ association at various Sydney universities organise a joint Bollywood fashion show and dance event at the Hills Centre in Castle Hill.

Studies by cultural anthropologist Mary Douglas (1966) are also based on the in-between state. In a departure from Van Gennep’s, Turner’s and Bhabha's approaches to liminality, she focuses on deviances, disturbances and anomalies as the underlying systems of classification. She argues that liminality represents a deviation from social or cultural norms and she uses
her pollution theory to provide an understanding of the liminal stages. She argues that the human mind needs to classify and symbolically organise that which is perceived as reality to be able to interpret and act accordingly. In her book *Purity and Danger*, Douglas explains that some things, seen to have special religious significance are seen as sacred while others are viewed as ‘polluted’. Prohibitions on touching, using or even seeing certain foods, objects, animals, plants or people, may be rooted in a belief that such things are too ‘good’ for humans to have contact with or that they are ‘dirty’ or ‘polluting’. She argues that the word ‘taboo’ refers to either of these conditions, which are not easy to classify or separate. Douglas suggests that society sees things as ‘taboo’ when they don't fit neatly into its classification of the world. Things which exist at the borders of society, or on the boundaries between categories are perceived as possessing both power and danger, either may be stressed, depending on the conditions.

Douglas, like Van Gennep, Turner, Bhabha and Appadurai, to some extent is interested in the in-between space where something is located ‘ambiguously’ between two different categories. She argues that this confusion of categories is seen as pollution, a concept which represents a reaction to protect cherished principles and categories from contradiction. Australian Fiji Indians make an attempt to cherish some of their beliefs such as the chastity of daughters before marriage, in accordance with Hindu customs and traditions. Exposure to a modern western society where sex before marriage is an accepted norm, to a large extent is the ‘polluted’ environment they find themselves in.

Turner, in reference to Douglas, says that what is unclear is unclean. For the elderly Fiji Indian migrants, this ‘polluted’ space is what they do not understand or accept about the multicultural Australian space, while for the youth, it is the space which does not have clear views of their Indian heritage or its relevance to their life in Sydney. Young people have to deal with such situations and develop a strategy to cope in a multicultural environment where there are competing priorities, to fit into the school, work and social environments while maintaining a happy home life, fulfilling some of the expectations of their parents and grandparents as well as the larger Fiji Indian community. Castles argues:

The relationships and institutions which make up the community are initially based on individual and group needs. However, as economic enterprises, cultural and social associations, and religious and political groups develop, a consciousness of the community emerges. The process is in no way homogenous; rather it is based on struggles for power,
prestige and control. The ethnic community can best be conceived as a changing, complex and contradictory network. It is most intense and identifiable at the neighbourhood level, but is in turn linked to wider networks at the national level and beyond. Ethnic communities may take on a transnational character, and provide the basis for communicative networks which unite people across borders and generations (pp. 210-211).

Symbolic capital and social networks

The Fiji Indians also host immediate family as well as extended networks of family and friends when they arrive in Sydney to settle. It is common practice among the Sydney community to host migrant families for several weeks or even months when these families or friends arrive. Other close networks of the host family pitch in to help in whatever way they can, from helping with finding a rental property, babysitters, setting up bank accounts, medical benefits cards, getting a driver’s license, finding work to settling children in school. Help in these small areas in turn leads to an unconscious establishment of strong community networks where children of Fiji Indian heritage end up attending the same school, while parents and families work together in certain factories or other work environments such as hospitals. Those who are helped, for ever become indebted to their hosts. So there is a repeat of the pattern as new migrants arrive and the networking becomes much stronger.

Many families who were unknown to one another in Fiji have established strong social bonds through the system that has been established in Sydney. Once the community network is established, members begin working through its various layers where they may first set up a religious group, known mostly as Ramayan mandali (where they group together and recite the holy Ramayana). This then spins off into other areas of active connection such as entertainment circles where birthdays and other events are celebrated. The groups also form into sporting circles where they play soccer at the local level on weekends and go back to compete in Fiji or tour New Zealand and compete against Fiji Indian migrants settled there. In a similar way entertainment groups, those singing bhajans (hymns) or Bollywood songs, form special stage performing groups who tour not only the main cities of Australia such as Melbourne and Brisbane, (even Hobart) but also take tours of New Zealand, Canada or the US. Similar groups formed in these host countries also tour Australia. These events are advertised in the ethnic Indian media and through billboards and posters in spice shops as well as through emails and websites.

The networks formed in turn lead to opportunities for businesses such as spice and Indian specialty shops, real estate, bank clientele, hairdressers, makeup artists for weddings and
special occasions, wedding planners, decorators, caterers and even motor mechanics. People who provide such services use the ethnic media and their local spice shops (about 150 in Sydney) to market their businesses by leaving business cards and contacts which are on display or available as business cards for customers, at the check-out counter. The shop owner or salespersons at the counter in the spice and specialty shops also reinforce community and identity by providing the latest news from Fiji or to informing people of some social event in a private home or somewhere on the Sydney social scene.

The spice shops have a visible presence in suburbs like Blacktown and Liverpool where a majority of the Fiji Indians have settled. These shops do a considerable trade, especially during the Hindu festival months. Indians buy their groceries in bulk, rice and flour in 10kg bags and other items like lentils in large quantities. The Australian supermarkets, to a large extent, have not kept pace with the buying habits of the migrant community. To top it all, there is the IndiaBiz, an exclusive Indian business directory for the states of New South Wales (NSW) (within which Sydney is the largest city) and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). This directory has a listing of businesses from Fiji Indian, Indian, Sri Lankan and Pakistani heritage.

Word of mouth networking in closed societies like that of the Fiji Indians, has, seen the establishment of closer relationships which in turn has helped to build strong foundations for the survival of many cultural practices such as arranging marriages. This networking has been the case because these people come from a small place (Fiji) where everyone is related or connected in some way and therefore socialise within their own groupings,

Affluence and the all embracing Australian policies, which are better than those in Fiji, have allowed this community to celebrate even the smallest event in their lives on a grand scale. Some of the events high on the agenda in their social space include celebrations of baby naming and the shaving of birth hair ceremonies, birthdays, graduations, engagements and weddings.

The community has used its social capital imaginatively in a world which has thrown its members into multiple affiliations. Each migrant Fiji Indian thus becomes a rishtedaar (family or relative), encompassing not only true relatives, but others ranging from those from the neighbourhood and local villages back in Fiji to those only distantly known in Sydney. A
migrant from Fiji thus enters into a world of wider connections which is a real and reinvented ‘third space’, allowing a lot of fluidity through the avid performances of comradeship.

The community has a history of being marginalised, first as indentured labourers working for the British lords and later as tenant farmers on Fijian owned land. Even when their social status improved through education and wealth, the Fiji Indians have been kept away from leadership positions. Fiji’s first ever Fiji Indian Prime Minister, Mahendra Chaudhary, was removed from his position at gunpoint in 2000 at the height of a coup, as was the first Fiji Indian to be deputy, Harish Sharma, in the 1987 coup. In Australia, the community is competing for various positions politically and socially against a much larger group of other migrants, (some in much larger numbers) as well as Anglo Australians. And although they live in a multicultural, westernised city, they are still clinging to their Indian as well as Fijian cultural habits. This, to some extent is explained through their social networks, which is common among migrant groups, while some of their cultural practices are a reflection of their need or want to keep these identities safe.

This thesis thus uses the real and symbolic meaning of threshold existence (liminality) popular with scholars like Arnold Van Gennep (1908, 1960), Victor Turner (1974) and Hamid Naficy (1993) to demonstrate how the community negotiates its position of in-between or third space, as defined by Homi Bhabha (1994). The community is in constant negotiation at the many levels of its position in the social, cultural and physical spaces, be it the night-club environment for the younger generation or at Fiji Indian weddings. Ethnographic observations, as well as discussions among community members about such liminal spaces, help present an understanding of a community caught in the tide of change and liminal spaces. As presented earlier in this chapter, Van Gennep distinguishes between the stages of life as three phases of separation (from an old situation), transition (passage) and incorporation (new situation). These phases apply to the realities of life for the community in Sydney where there is no complete separation, transition or incorporation. The three descriptors do not even work in the order of Van Gennep’s classification because in some cases incorporation happens before transition or separation. In some cases there is no stage of separation as many Fiji Indians live in transnational spaces where they have a second home or business interests in Fiji, or Sydney or simultaneously in both. Thus Turner’s theory of the liminal condition is ‘necessarily ambiguous’ because it eludes and ‘slips through the network’
of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Naficy, (1993) using the case study of Iranians in Los Angeles, presents a compelling reality of how the community uses ‘fossilized representations of home and the past’ to become an ethnic group. Naficy says; ‘Outsiders, sometimes even insiders, will have difficulty recognising these boundaries because of their abstract, simulacral nature and their dispersal across many media’ (p. 34). The Fiji Indians in Sydney are adopting an approach similar to the Iranians’ in the US by recreating themselves by blending their past into their negotiated existence in a new home.

Voigt-Graf (2008), while discussing the secondary migration of Fiji Indians to the Pacific Rim countries, argues that in the process of this migration the Fiji Indians’ relationship to India and the sub continent Indians has changed; ‘Indo Fijians have created transnational spaces that are centred on Fiji and that largely exclude their ancestral homeland India’ (p. 82). While this thesis argues that social networking and affluence in their new home, (supported by an extensive study of media consumption habits including Bollywood movies as well as Indian fashion, jewellery and food/spices among the migrant community) has indeed brought India closer to the community, faster, easier travel and communication also means Fiji Indians have a ‘real’ link with India. Fiji Indians are consuming and copying Bollywood more than they did in Fiji. This is evident from the more than 150 Asian spice shops, a majority of which sell or rent Bollywood movies as well as other ‘Indian’ consumer goods. Bollywood movies are also screened across settled Indian suburbs like Liverpool, Fairfield, and Blacktown. The community’s physical ‘Indian’ looks is also evident. Although Fiji is still homeland, India will always be motherland. This was aptly put by popular Hindi radio (Madhurima) announcer, producer and owner Jai Prasad;

I have become more Indian than Fijian in Sydney because there are my physical Indian looks. I often get asked which Indian state I am from, I smile and walk away because I am from Fiji but Fiji is something I am not as proud to belong to as India, mainly because I speak Hindi and practice the Hindu religious traditions and culture. With the advent of technology, I have really endowed myself with a lot of knowledge on Hindu traditions and culture which I am proud of. I have inherited these as an Indian, not as a Fijian. I am also based in Liverpool, the heartland of Fiji Indian settlement anywhere in the world and I have seen my fellow migrants copy Bollywood themes at weddings, prayers and all forms of celebration. Some have even reformed the way they pray and conduct important rituals. There is an awakening of their Indian identities, especially since the western media is also focusing on Bollywood’s colour and glitter. Many Fiji Indians are now making that trip to India with cheaper and faster travel from Sydney. The Indian culture is suddenly making a fashion statement on the streets of Sydney and Fiji Indians are basking in this glory. Who would not? (Personal interview, 2008).
Prasad’s allegiance to India has a lot to do with his physical looks which are those of an Indian. While he prides in this, coupled with the popularity of Bollywood which is associated with India and Indian, the mistreatment of Indians in Fiji has caused the community a lot of pain and resentment towards their Fijian identity. The modern media has also brought the Indian identity, its culture and religious rites, closer to the Indian masses.

Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the emotional, psychological and physical manifestations of the Fiji Indians in their liminal space. While many demonstrate their nostalgia and longing for home and roots, they cherish their status as Australian citizens and the socio-economic mobility offered through migration.

As a prelude to the detailed complexities of the various spaces the community occupies, the chapter has presented the processes of constant negotiation within the community’s networks for various reasons. The community has, however, built a strong map of its space in Sydney and is networking with other Indians with similar history and background in Sydney and across the globe to extend these networks. In the process, they attempt to retain some of their identity while others are blended into other identities; which in turn gives birth to the chutney generation.

The chutney generation thus demonstrates deep interactions and adaptations to the new environment, the borrowings and the changes that are shaping their cultural identity which is grounded not in archaeology but in retellings of their past, their present and aspirations of the future. Identity for this community, like many other migrants, is a continuous production, a rupture which is always in process. This process can be likened to the blending of ingredients to make chutney. New ones are added while some old ones are taken out to change the flavour, making it hot or spicy or sweet or tangy, according to taste. Chutney’s relevance to the past, present and future has not been lost despite the upheavals, twists and turns in the community’s physical and emotional journeys. The community’s existence weaves a common thread with members within their networks as well as other migrants whose voices echo the pain, trials, senses of loss and gain, among many other mixed feelings. Fiji’s ongoing political crisis, in the form of five coups in 23 years, keeps adding doses of new and fresh reminders similar to the new ingredients of chutney, of a home they have left behind,
yet one that lingers in their memory as they yearn to know about the goings on there as well as remain connected to its physical and cultural conditions.

Chapter three presents the theoretical framework of this thesis.
CHAPTER THREE

Theoretical Framework

Introduction:
This chapter adapts Appadurai’s theory of ‘scapes’ to consider how migration and media facilitate the age-old practice of arranging marriages in the Fiji Indian community. The vectors that connect to the dot that is Fiji on the global geographic map are traced through migration, marriage and the media, using their many layers; cultural, physical, real and imagined. The community is experiencing dynamic shifts and changes in its use of the media as well as the concepts of arranged marriage, both of which are characterised by migration to Sydney where the bulk of my research has taken place. Framing this research around these three world forces; migration, marriage and media, helps to understand the community’s identity formation, community building and networking through the media and marriage. This research also provides an understanding of the intersecting forces affecting migration, media and marriage in an ever porous and permeable global cultural economy, while building on chapters one and two that have presented the Fiji Indian community as a transnational group in Sydney’s multicultural space.

The imagining of homeland (Fiji) takes place in Sydney through identifying with a common, eventful past which was characterised by the indenture system (remembered mostly through folklore and the sufferings) and the political strife during and after the coups in Fiji. This common history and political strife creates a sense of belonging and a separate identity among the Fiji Indian migrants. This study thus presents the common journey and the tensions in the community of knowing and experiencing both worlds and not really leaving one or arriving at the other, as demonstrated in chapter two. For the fourth and fifth generations of Fiji Indians living in Sydney, the concepts of a common history and shared past does not apply. Their experiences are felt in a more real sense as they read stories in the media about Fiji’s political and racial discrimination. They also get to experience some of the tension as they live in extended family networks where someone they know is affected by political or social problems in Fiji. This research presents ways in which this new generation of Fiji Indians creates or keeps its identity in a multicultural setting.
Background

Appadurai’s work helps to frame a theoretical case for the dreaming or imaginings of Fiji Indian migrants who live in Sydney and who at some stage in their lives, either as children or adults, felt that they were caught in a vicious cycle of helplessness in Fiji. They felt stuck in farm life where many lived hand-to-mouth as they had no alternatives to get out of the situation. Their parents, or they themselves, were poor as the land brought little return in the form of income. The small earnings got chewed up by dues paid to the Fijian landowners who leased the land to them. Subsistence farming and cash-cropping helped many farmers survive. The stories of such survival are popular in the scholarly works of academics such as Brij Lal (2007, 2010), Vijay Mishra (1979, 2007) and Satendra Nandan (2001, 1999).

Through education, persistence and hard work, the Fiji Indians generally overcame hardship on sugar cane farms where there was little or no government support to sustain them (The Girmitya 2). Appadurai (1990) sees the complexity of the current global economy as something to do with fundamental disjunctures between economy, culture and politics. He proposes an elementary framework for exploring such disjunctures through the relationship between ethnoscapes (people), mediascapes (images or representations), technoscapes (information), finanscapes (capital) and ideoscapes (ideologies).

Ethnoscapes create the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers and other moving groups and persons. These persons constitute an essential feature of the world, and appear to affect the politics of and between nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree.

This is not to say that there are no relatively stable communities and networks, of kinships, of friendship, of work and of leisure, as well as of birth, residence and other filiative forms. But it is to say that the warp of these stabilities is everywhere shot through with the woof of human motion, as more persons and groups deal with the realities of having to move or the fantasies of wanting to move (p. 7).

Appadurai says that these realities and fantasies function on much larger scales as people in small villages (e.g. in India) think of not just moving to the cities or other states but across to other countries. Thus, as international capital shifts and production and technology generate different needs, the countries shift their policies on such populations. Australia, as the host nation of the Fiji Indian migrants, keeps updating its immigration policy, the most recent (2010) was to encourage highly skilled professionals and trades people to fill the vacuum in
labour shortages. In turn, the moving groups can never afford to let their imaginations rest for too long, even if they wish to. This movement of people applies to the Fiji Indian community which is always on the lookout to move out of Fiji. Those who have migrated to Sydney do ‘not let their imaginations rest for too long’ as they work towards getting their families (immediate and extended) reunited in Sydney. Many families and individuals send back remittance to families in Fiji so that they can educate themselves or improve their skills to suit the immigration needs of the host country which is Australia (Lal, 2008: personal interview). The mass media, especially the ethnic Indian media, as found in audits of their publications circulated in Sydney, feeds information on the skills requirement via advertisements initiated by migration agents as well as media producers who target their audiences with the relevant information.

Appadurai presents imagination as an individual’s way of forming concepts and ideas. This imagination, he says, exists in our everyday lives, influencing our decisions and thought processes to the point where we form ideas based on what the media presents as ideals of society. This imagination is fuelled by technology and media (Appadurai 1996), ‘[o]rdinary people have begun to deploy their imaginations in the practice of their everyday lives. This fact is exemplified in the mutual contextualizing of motion and mediation’ (p.229). Appadurai’s reference to this imagination, built on Benedict Anderson’s (1983) *Imagined Communities*, refers to an individual’s way of forming concepts and ideas. Media thus influences the Fiji Indian imagination to believe in the possibility of a better life and this acts as a catalyst for immigration. In *Modernity at Large* (1996) Appadurai portrays the media as an immediate influence on the imagination and argues that mass media encompasses all forms of communication: television, films, books, magazines, newspapers, radio, and the Internet. These sources of media spread ideals, specifically aimed towards certain people and societies. Appadurai presents television and film as depicting societal expectations, realistic or idealised, through fictional works which often use stereotypical characters. These characters portray expected societal roles, while bearing stories and possibilities which in turn spread the idea that a person can overcome hardships or misfortunes (Appadurai 1996). These representations by the media, along with societal expectations influence the individual’s imagination in how they mould their thinking, behaviour and actions.
Imagined and lived identities

In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson’s work proposes that the concept of nation is a performative and enacted space rather than a fixed state. In this space one tries to engage in the roles of belonging and foreignness. This space, therefore, can be best understood through the codes of belonging that shift the changing identities. These codes of belonging are exhibited through their cultural practices such as organising large family and community gatherings to celebrate religious festivals, and lifestyle habits such as drinking kava (grog) which they copied in Fiji from native Fijians. Anderson argues that the nation (Fiji) by necessity might be thought of as an ‘evolving fictional construct’. Indeed Fiji has become a fictional construct for the community which engages in emotional flights back to Fiji where a majority of the migrants spent their childhood or adult life. These migrants relate stories of indenture, (from their imagination or folklore), the political upheavals in Fiji (which many experienced first-hand) and their individual or collective experiences of dealing with discrimination in Fiji. New media technologies facilitate and promote this level of imagination in a real sense, allowing them to also share these through multiple mediums. Anderson’s notion of the nation was born through the rise of distribution and printing techniques through the printing press. As a vehicle for modernity this mechanically produced material which changed how people related to a sense of place and other locations, making intimate and immediate the events that happened in far-away places. Anderson suggested that the ‘production, representation and identification with nation-state are constructed on both individual and collective levels’ (cited in Hjorth, 2007, p25).

This thesis takes Anderson’s influence of the ‘printing press’ into the realm of the 21st century new media environment where the imagination is expanded into reality and lived experiences, producing a new breed of Fiji Indians who by becoming producers and consumers of such media, are making an effort to recreate and maintain their identities in a global space. Hjorth, uses the rhetoric of ‘prosumers’ (producer plus consumer) to define the new ‘imaging communities’ (2007, p. 26).

For Fiji Indians in Sydney, the cartography of the new media environment, including Bollywood films, has deeply affected its ways of localising and personalising the imagined
notions of home, place and belonging. The emerging communities of Fiji Indian ‘prosumers’ are indeed remarking their borders, creating many cultural maps for identity formation; a far cry from eroding national boundaries and borders. Anderson (1998:29) provides a conceptual basis for consumers of visual media to see themselves as communities. Although technologically deterministic through its structure, its communicative content creates culturally constructed collectives among Fiji Indians. The media technologies can point to the formation of such communities without really being able to predict the ‘nature’ of such formations. The imagination for the Fiji Indians connects the community to the material, affluent space that they live in which in turn provides endless opportunities for collaboration and establishing social norms, with yet more potential for transformation.

**Identity formation through religion**

For the Fiji Indians much of the ‘imagining’ of motherland (India) in Fiji in the years after indenture took place through folklore and Hindu religious books such as the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*:

The *Ramayana* in its simplified version of Tulsi Das’s *Ramcharitmanas* functioned as a binding force in the fissiparous environment of indenture. It provided a nostalgic identification with motherland and also acted as a vehicle to relativise worldly realities by means of transcendental promises (Ray 2000, p. 144).

The Hindu epic *Ramayana* tells the story of Ram and Sita as the ‘perfect’ couple. Ram is the incarnation of Lord Vishnu who took human birth and married Sita (Goddess Laxmi) to lead an exemplary human life. His father, King Dashrat of Ayodhya had three wives and abdicated his throne for his younger son Bharat, to grant a boon to Bharat’s mother Kekai. Ram, the eldest son, was heir apparent and his mother was Kaushalya. Dashrat asked Ram to relinquish his right to the throne and seek refuge in the forests for 14 years. Ram accepted this without hesitation, to keep his father’s word. Sita accompanied him to the forest and experienced many trials and tribulations, to the extent that she was abducted by demon king Ravana. She remained a faithful wife and Ram rescued her with the help of his faithful allies and an army of monkeys, led by the monkey God Hanumaan. After Ram was given back his throne, some of his subjects questioned the chastity of Sita. Sita, who was not born, but was found dressed up as a baby princess in the fields, by King Janak, pleads to the mother earth to take her in her (earth’s) abode to prove her chastity. Sita therefore sacrifices her own life to prove her purity (Sri Ramacaritamanasa: 72 A-B. p. 1026).
For the indentured Indians the story of Ram and Sita initially became a means of remembering their heritage and past through the retelling of folklore and recital of the holy book, *The Ramayana*. The story of Ram and Sita has also been played out, with variations, in hundreds of Bollywood movies since time immemorial, with an underlying theme of an honourable, duty-bound son, husband, and father, keeping the status-quo with a faithful and obedient wife, daughter-in-law and mother, always staying by her man, whatever the vicissitudes of the plot. Gokulsing and Disanayake, in their 1998 study, agree that ‘mainstream Indian films are often based on one or both of the two great epic stories, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*’ (p.17). Noting the intensity of fan adoration, they also suggest that the popular Indian cinema has evolved into a distinctively Indian mode of entertainment by ‘imaginatively amalgamating music and dance’ (1998, p. 10).

Appadurai’s (1996) imagination and dreaming, in many ways provided a means of overcoming obstacles (just like Rama and Sita were conceptualised through imagination from folklore, tales and recital of the holy books) of the indenture era and later in a politically unstable climate for the Indians.

In examining media and communications in the South Asian religious diaspora, Marie Gillespie (1995) produced a most valuable ethnographic study of the role of transnational television and film in the formation and transformation of identity among young Punjabi Londoners. Reminiscent of the triadic relationship, of fractured memory, desire and multi-locality, Gillespie evaluated the transnational ties such media creates between India and its diaspora. She argued that watching episodes of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* serve to secure the conservative values of traditional South Asian culture. This viewing also prompts cosmopolitan admixtures of South Asian and other cultural streams among younger, British born and raised Asians. In Sydney, the two epics, available in video and DVD formats, via the Internet and the chain of Indian spice shops, some of which carry Indian and Hindi movies, have a similar impact on the Australian Fiji Indians.

Appadurai (1996) also argues that ‘electronic media give a new twist to the environment within which the modern and the global often appear as flip sides of the same coin. Always carrying the sense of distance between viewer and event, these media nevertheless compel the transformation of everyday discourse. At the same time, they are resources for experiments
with self-making in all sorts of societies, for all sorts of persons. They allow scripts for possible lives to be imbricated with the glamour of film stars and fantastic film plots and yet also to be tied to the plausibility of news shows, documentaries, and other (Appadurai, 1996, p 229). The sheer multiplicity of the forms in which they (cinema, television, computers, and telephones) appear and because of the rapid way in which they move through daily life routines, electronic media provide resources for self-imagining as an everyday social project.

Appadurai also explores the combined effect of such media on imagination as a feature of modern subjectivity. He argues that electronic media decisively change the wider field of mass media and traditional media,

“[t]his is not a monocausal fetishization of the electronic. Such media transform the field of mass mediation because they offer new resources and new disciplines for the construction of imagined selves and imagined worlds’ (p.3). This argument sits well with the community, especially the young adults who are exposed to the modern media environment, are technology savvy and thus can construct their own meaning of the religious texts and movies.

This is a relational argument, says Appadurai because the electronic media mark and reconstitute a much wider field, in which print mediation and other forms of oral, visual, and auditory mediation might continue to be important. Presenting the effects of ‘telescoping of news into audio-video bytes through the tension between the public spaces of cinema and the more exclusive spaces of video watching through the immediacy of their absorption into public’ he says that the new, electronic media (whether associated with the news, politics, family life, or spectacular entertainment) tend to interrogate, subvert, and transform other contextual literacies (p. 3).

These processes, argues Appadurai, make implicit the theory of ruptures that take media and migration as interconnected diacritics. ‘The theory of a break or rupture, with its strong emphasis on electronic mediation and mass migration, is necessarily a theory of the recent past (or the extended present) because it is only in the past two decades or so that media and migration have become so massively globalized’ (p. 9). He expands on this by saying that migration and media have become active across large and irregular transnational spaces where everyday cultural practices transform the work of the imagination (p. 10):
We cannot simplify matters by imagining that the global is to space what the modern is to time. For many societies, modernity is an elsewhere, just as the global is a temporal wave that must be encountered in their present. Globalization has shrunk the distance between elites, shifted key relations between producers and consumers, broken many links between labour and family life, and obscured the lines between temporary locales and imaginary national attachments” (pp. 9-10).

This argument applies well to the Fiji Indians who have been able to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor through education. This ‘level playing field’ has meant that almost every family unit in Fiji has a next of kin or close relative living in Sydney or another city in the world (Lal, 2008).

Appadurai also sees modernity as more practical and less pedagogic, more experiential and less disciplinary than in the 50s and 60s, when it was mostly experienced (especially for those outside the national elite) through the ‘propaganda apparatuses of the newly independent nation-states and their great leaders, like Jawaharlal Nehru, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Kwame Nkrumah, and Sukarno’ (pp. 9-10).

The exponential growth in the new media technologies has further enhanced the capabilities of this level of dreaming to be turned into realities through community networking and migration for the Fiji Indian community. Again, the media and technology facilitate these acts. The mass media’s impact, especially of mediums such as the Internet and Bollywood movies has caused the imagination to reach into everyday thought process, influencing the community’s aspirations and their actions on these. The mass media has generated the common ideals, causing people to strive for similar goals. These goals promote the Fiji Indian ‘dream’ of settling in Australia, facilitating the migration of entire family and community networks, similar to the ‘American dream’. Appadurai (1996) presents the idea of dreaming by emphasising the role of the media in immigration while describing what he termed the ‘American bug’, spreading romantic aspects of America across the globe (p. 2). He describes media and immigration as ‘interconnected’, and says that media has a major role in the appeal of immigration (p.3). He argues that, through media, ‘The imagination ... creates ideas of neighbourhood and nationhood, of moral economics’. (Appadurai, p. 7) He emphasises the appeal of wealth and opportunity in the United States that are portrayed in the mass media. Mass media, through its global availability and portrayal of opportunity in America, inspires the imagination to form itself accordingly. Mass media’s impact on the imagination promotes immigration, emphasising the possibility that lies in the United States. Thus, imaginations
across the globe form the ideal that immigration brings wealth and happiness, thus providing families with better opportunities. The most significant forms of media spreading this ‘dream’ are the ethnic Indian media, print, radio and Internet sites which either facilitate education and knowledge on migration through stories, advertising on migration, education opportunities or provide a means to network with fellow Fiji Indians settled in Sydney (See appendix 4: Advertisements). Thus are born hub communications sites where the community meets for socialising and to find marriage partners.

The Internet, other forms of new media and quick means of communication means that these social networks facilitate the sharing of ideas and ideals. In a similar way, the Internet allows universal availability of news within the community, through mediums such as www.fijilive.com which has provisions for networking and locating families and friends through Fiji Pixshare, Fijichat, Fijidating, Fijiforum and Fijiblog. A 2010 addition is the myfijigang link which has been described as the Face Book for Fiji Indians (Gaunder, 2010). Ethnic Indian newspapers, such as Indian Link, Masala Times, Indian Post and India Times, Navtarang have an online presence, providing ordinary people the opportunity to engage with issues of migration at a personal level. Other vibrant forms of media, such as the Fiji Times (Sydney print publication) has its own niche market to which it provides stories from Fiji as well as advertisements on social events which help locate members of the community. The media thus provides opportunities for social networking.

**Background to migration from Fiji**

Fiji’s population in June 2008 was at 931,741. Indigenous Fijians made up 54.8% of the population while the Indians were at 37.4%, Chinese and Europeans at 7.9%. These statistics demonstrate how the Fiji Indian population has dwindled from being at 55% of the population in 1987 when the first coup was staged.

The current large-scale migration of Fiji Indians (40,000) to Sydney, (rough ABS, 2011 stats) can be understood as a result of Fiji’s unstable political and social environment. (See Lal and Pretes 2001, Lawson 1991, Robertson and Sutherland 2001). These scholars present their views, shaped through a specific historical and colonial context of migration (See Kelly 1991, Lal 1992).
Scholars (Chetty and Prasad, 1993, Gani, 2000, House 2001, Mohanty 2001, Naidu 1997, Sharma 2001) from within and outside Fiji have analysed the steady increase in emigration since the coups of 1987 and 2000. These studies have adopted a macro-approach based on quantitative methods. Lal, internationally recognised for his early work on Fiji Indians, discusses the arrival of the Indians in Fiji as indentured labourers and their plight during their sea journey as well as the poor living conditions in Fiji. Other scholars (Reddy, Mohanty, and Naidu 2004) have discussed the ‘brain drain’ suffered by Fiji as a result of mass migration. Migration issues, particularly, the outflow of human capital and loss of skilled people, is a major concern in Fiji:

Fiji witnessed waves of outflow of skilled citizens, largely professionals, including architects, engineers, accountants, teachers and medical professionals after the military coups and the political upheavals of 1987, which continued through the 1990s and accelerated after the coup of May, 2000 (Mohanty 2001).

Statistics show that more than 120,000 Fiji Indians, twice the number that arrived in Fiji between 1879 and 1916 as indentured labourers, have left Fiji in search of a better life (Lal, 2007).

Official statistics presented by Mohanty (2002) indicate a loss of 76,000 Fijian citizens to migration, with an annual average of 5000 people between 1987 and 2001. Unofficial independent sources estimate the total at more than 100,000 for the period (Bedford, 1989, Chetty and Prasad, 1993).

Reddy, Mohanty and Naidu (2004) aggregate the number of migrants in 2000 to 5200 which accelerated to 6300 in 2001. The three scholars also argue that female migrants dominate the migratory process in Fiji, making up 52 percent of the total Indo Fijian emigrants between 1987 and 1996. However, in the professional category for the same period, males accounted for 64 per cent while women were at 36 per cent (Mohanty, 2001, p. 60). Australia absorbs almost 40 percent of all migrants from Fiji and the majority of them settle in Sydney (Lal 2007). An academic from the University of the South Pacific, Robbie Robertson warned in 2005 that by 2022 Fiji’s Indian population will dwindle to 20 per cent of the total population (Radio NZ international).

While these statistical findings present the reality of the migration from Fiji, they do not account for the interactions, negotiations or expressions of Fiji Indian people in transnational
spaces in Sydney. This thesis analyses the dynamics of community building, social networking and home creation for a community on the move, which is also attempting to keep the Fiji Indian identity unique in the most settled multicultural city in the Pacific rim. It also presents some raw accounts from people who have migrated and their sense of loss and gain in a blended environment where there is more threat to their identity as Fiji Indians than what they faced in Fiji where the only ‘other’ were Fijians. The Fiji Indians’ use of new media and technologies to locate one another for socialising, networking and for marriage also frames an understanding of why and how the community is keeping its identity in a global space.

**Bollywood and identity**

In Sydney, Bollywood is taking on a new significance in the lives of the migrant Fiji Indians as the city is fast becoming a site for making Bollywood movies. Both *Chak De India* (2006) and *Heyy Babby* (2007) were shot in Sydney. Mishra, (2006, p. 3) argues that the reception reflects ‘a late modern entry of India into a global capital’ and the accumulation of vast amounts of capital in the hands of diasporic Indians. The consumption of Bollywood thereby becomes a method of establishing community ties, helps towards cultural maintenance of identity, as well as shapes pride of this identity in a new home. Mishra also argues that the diaspora informs Bollywood’s imagined space, ‘[f]or many the space occupied by the new diaspora; the space of the West; is also the desired space of wealth and luxury that gets endorsed, in a displaced form, by Indian cinema itself’ (Mishra, 2002, p. 236).

In his analysis Brian Hu (2006, online) presents recent Bollywood as aiming to help the diaspora imagine the concept of ‘Indianess’ by presenting ‘the villain who needs to be saved from western corruption to the new Indian aristocrat.’

To understand this memory of roots and construction of images through song, dance, dialogue and the Bollywood stars, this thesis presents the themes of two Hindi movies, *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) and *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (DDLJ), and argues that these help enhance the processes of imagination and dreaming while also framing the contours of the maps of cultural continuity that frame the ideas around being Indian. The movies’ rich themes about the fabric of family, extended family networking and the role of arranging marriages, and how these three are facilitated in ‘public spaces’ such as weddings, help to
provide an understanding of how copying Bollywood has become ingrained in the lifestyles and social spaces of the community in Sydney. Indentured labourers and their Fiji born children first used Bollywood films to remain connected with India. This imagination played a vital role in understanding the Indian culture while providing a primary source of entertainment for the community.

Today, these movies provide a rich source of understanding Indian cultural ‘norms’ while entertaining the masses. The influence of films works at various levels – from the private home environment to the local, national and international community.

Fictional films, such as *Pardes*, (1997) *Bride and Prejudice*, (2004) *Hum Saath Saath Hai*, (1999) and *Namaste London* (2007), to name a few, also promote the themes of migration while adhering to the Hindu traditions and customs of close extended family networks. These films also demonstrate common themes of ordinary people, or even the downtrodden, overcoming obstacles and rising above them. These mediums therefore help to transform dream into reality, providing hope and action for those stuck in Fiji while providing possibilities for exploration for those living in Sydney.

Ray also aptly frames the influence of Bollywood in *Floating Lives* (2000):

Hindi cinema’s primary impact in Fiji was to bond through meta-narratives with which all the different groups of Fiji Indians could identify. Historically, the bond between them and India has been one of imagination. With time, as memory of roots, the real India was fading away, film took over the responsibility of constructing an empty, many coloured space through its never ending web of images, songs, dialogues and stars (p.145).

This thesis however presents film, and indeed Bollywood, as a new map of Indian identity creation where consumers and viewers of these electronic forms of media copy the lifestyles, and to a large extent the dramas and rituals, into their new affluent lives in Sydney. It also argues that the two films; *Bride and Prejudice* and *DDLJ*, to some extent, assert and affirm the traditional values and cultural norms of the community while acknowledging that the ‘imagined’ spaces of the community are undergoing dynamic changes as it becomes self conscious of its identity in a multicultural space as well as confident about asserting its cultural beliefs while unashamedly celebrating events of religious significance. Film, especially Bollywood, thus becomes an important connection in helping to inscribe its
communal connectivity while projecting its desires with the concepts of Indianess, identity and belonging.

_Journalism and identity_

Journalism, Adam (1993, p. 45) argues, is a form of expression that is the product of something called the ‘imagination,’ or the spontaneous consciousness-forming faculty of individual human beings. Meadows, (1998 p. 15) argues that this ‘imagination’ is conceived as a property of culture which connects the imagination of individuals to society’s consciousness-forming practices. He further defines journalism as a cultural resource allowing an effective analysis of its role in establishing culture. Culture thus becomes a set of practices enabling the formation of a consensus on dominant ideologies.

Journalism’s editorial priorities have changed with the changing dynamics in communication. Entertainment has superseded the provision of information; human interest has supplanted the public interest; measured judgement has succumbed to sensationalism; the trivial has triumphed over the weighty … traditional news values have been undermined by new values: infotainment is rampant (Franklin1997, p.4).

Franklin argues that news has been replaced by ‘newszak’ which he defines as news converted into entertainment, designed and ‘processed’ for a particular market and delivered in increasingly homogenous ‘snippets’ that make only modest demands on the audience (Franklin 1997).

The ethic Indian media, especially the print publications thus become vehicles for pushing common ideologies about Indian culture and the Hindu religion. An audit of their content, as part of this research, demonstrates that such media carry content demonstrating support of Indian cultural and Hindu religious celebrations such as _holi_ (festival of colour), _Diwali_ (Hindu festival of light) and _raksha bandan_ (a custom marking the bonds of love between brother and sister).

Grattan (1998) says that ‘commercialisation’ has become a core value in journalism. Herman and McChesney (1997) argue that there is a commercial model for communication with the ultimate effect being globalisation. While television journalist Jana Wendt describes
journalism and commercialism as a potent mix, former editor in chief of *The Australian* (Australia’s only national daily), Paul Kelly, says the demands for commercial success are having a negative impact on quality journalism (in Schultz 1998, p. 145).

Economic imperatives thus override any other factors such as ethics or the romantic notion that journalism was born as the fourth estate, keeping the state, judiciary and church under scrutiny as the fourth power. To add to this climate is the possibility that anyone can start a newspaper (Ken McKinnon 2001).

Capitalising on the reality of the coupling of the modern communication era with opportunities for business, many forms of ethnic media, especially radio and magazines, have been established in Sydney.

Anderson’s idea of print capitalism, and Arjun Appadurai’s modern media (electronic media) – which spread knowledge of the same, multivalent symbols through the nation, thus create the basis for an emotional (imagined) communion and are used to explain the vibrancy of the ethnic and new media in framing common identities.

This research builds on this notion to analyse the Fiji Indians’ community building processes. Appadurai defines the following as interdependent dimensions of global flow: ethnoscapes (people), technoscapes (information), finanscapes (capital), mediascapes (images or representations), and ideoscapes (ideologies). Using these five dimensions, this research provides an understanding of how these ‘spaces’ intersect in myriad ways to become what Appadurai terms ruptures. For this research these scapes become contours on the map which establishes the Fiji Indian identity.

Social relations and ‘networks’ are important to the community building/identity creation process of the Fiji Indians who use modern and ethnic Indian media as a foundation for networking. These social networks also lie behind the political, social, cultural and economic activities of the migrant Fiji Indians who have established forums such as the International Congress of Fiji Indians which has representatives based in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. These representatives are mainly professionals (professors, doctors, lawyers, teachers, former Fiji politicians and business owners) who work towards educating the underprivileged youth in Fiji through financial support so that they too can emigrate one day.
The community has built a strong foundation of social networking on a human to human basis as this was how it managed to overcome the trials of the indenture era in the 19th and 20th centuries. As Jayawardena (1965-66) observed, ‘The powerlessness of the coolies made it necessary for them, in order to protect their interests, to form a tight-knit group which, as far as possible, spoke and acted as one united and unanimous body’. The Fiji Indians’ new home in Sydney provides extended opportunities for social networking which is enhanced by the new communications environment. Media Ecology refers to the fact that, a medium is a technology within which a culture grows; that is to say, it gives form to a culture’s politics, social organisation, and habitual way of thinking. This is used to understand the interactions between the media and the community to give its culture a character. Neil Postman (2000) proposes that human beings live in two different environments – the natural (trees, air, rivers) and the media environment which consists of numbers, images, symbols, techniques and machinery which make us what we are.

I propose to draw on this theory to provide an understanding of the media’s role as a reflection of the society it represents. With a ritual view of communication, one understands communication as a process, a process in and through which society is created, maintained and transformed – a process within which the world is made to mean (Carey 1989). A transmission view of communication is concerned with the sending of messages over distances for purposes of control. Messages are viewed as things, things that are injected into the heads of receivers by senders. Media are mere channels for the sending. In the ritual view ‘messages’ and ‘channels’ are experienced by ‘receivers’ - within a complex of previously internalised and enacted cultural experiences. The ritual view, thus, is more concerned with the processes than with the products (messages). The dynamics in the existence and functions of the media have been transformed with new media giving the power of influence to anyone who can use new media technology.

Deuze (2006) discusses participation as the principal component of the contemporary digital culture. He suggests that ‘participation must be seen as a defining principle of digital culture… [with] participatory production within the media system… [adopting] a more interactive or “dialogical” perception of media’ (p. 67). In addition, cultural shifts towards a more inclusive media production process were identified by the American Press Institute, who claim that in order ‘to stay afloat, media companies must re imagine storytelling forms
to vie for consumer attention…and they must react to the consumer’s creation of content with awe and respect’ (Cited in Deuze 2006, p. 67).

In a broad sense, it is clear that people have come to expect media companies to invite them to participate in content creation (Rosen 2005), and barring this, they have also come to find ways of enacting this participation in the multitude of ways they use and make media: ‘this increasingly participatory culture translates itself in the widespread proliferation of networked computers and Internet connections in the home (and increasingly to handheld mobile devices)’ (Deuze 2006, p. 68).

Lasica, (2003) who attempts to provide a reason for the desire to participate in media content creation, says, ‘many bloggers look upon mainstream media as an arrogant, elitist club that puts its own version of self-interest and economic survival above the societal responsibility of a free press’ (2003, p. 71). This analysis of the mainstream (western) media helps understand why the Fiji Indians have seen the need to create their own media. The notion of unfair representation, coupled with the changing communications landscape which allows the generation of all forms of media, has helped create a separate community.

Deuze also suggests that a ‘critical awareness of an increasingly participatory global media culture in multicultural societies can and should be a useful tool in explaining the success and impact of ethnic or minority media’ (2006, p. 264).

The ethnic media producers for Fiji Indians see a vacuum in coverage of news (by the mainstream media) that is important to the Fiji Indian community. There are more than a dozen magazines and half a dozen radio stations targeting the community as their audience in Sydney. Websites like www.fijilive.com and www.desistyle.com, www.shadi.com provide interactive communication for the community.

Rupert Murdoch, the world’s most influential media owner, when addressing the American Society of Newspaper Editors in April 2005, said:

We’re now seeing a revolution in the way young people are accessing news…they don’t want to rely on a god-like figure from above to tell them what’s important. And to carry the religion analogy a bit further, they certainly don’t want news presented as gospel. Instead, they want their news on demand, when it works for them. They want control over their media, instead of being controlled by it (in Beecher 2005, p.67).
This level of exposure and empowerment in the media environment provides the community with opportunities to network in a faster and cheaper communications environment. Yashwant Gaunder, managing director of the Fijilive Group, which owns www.fijilive.com, echoes similar views, ‘[a]lthough Fiji is so small, her people have settled all over the globe. They are able return to Fiji in the networked cyberspaces whenever they choose to. This is the beauty of the communications and technology age’. Such a high level of participation by ordinary people in producing media and communication raises questions about ‘the traditional role [of journalists] as a non-partisan gatekeeper of information, already undermined in the new media environment, is further challenged by…participatory format[s]’ (Singer 2005, p. 180). In his 1963 publication Bernard Cohen argued that the media’s greatest power was not in telling people what to think but what to think about: ‘the world will look different to different people, depending on the map that is drawn for them by writers, editors and publishers of the paper they read’ (p. 13). The level of participation in creating their own media (ethnic as well as new media) means a level of empowerment but more importantly provides an opportunity for networking with people, for the ethnic Indian media.

Migration agents and lawyers, writing columns in the ethnic press about migration, visa categories and skill requirements, and professionals in demand within the Australian landscape, are all examples of how the dynamic has changed in the media environment, allowing consumers of such information the platform by which they decide what to think about. News then becomes what is important to them as prosumers (producers and consumers).

Fiji based media producer, Gaunder argues that the myfijigang link on the www.fijilive.com site is so popular that within a year of creating that link, the site has had more than 100,000 subscribers (in 2010). People of Fiji, especially Indians, who live overseas, as a result, feel a sense of connection with Fiji. Some of their exchanges and sharing of information display that sense of loss as there is a constant yearning for a life that was (Gaunder, May, 2010).

**Marriage and Mediascapes**

Marriage is the supporting pillar of the Indian cultural heritage, for according to the Indian cultural and Hindu religious beliefs, life together for a man and woman as husband and wife
begins only after they are married. This sacred union has been defined since the Vedic period and is religiously followed by Hindu Fiji Indians settled in various parts of the world.

From a religious and cultural perspective, marriage, for a man and woman, is seen as the stepping-stone to start sharing their lives with each other. Therefore, marriage is an important milestone in one's life. The joy and pride of marriage is obvious and that is the fundamental reasoning behind the united family where husband, wife and children live together in harmony.

Thus the wedding function is considered as the biggest occasion in one's life. To make the occasion memorable, the wedding is normally celebrated on a grand scale.

In Hindu dharma, marriage is viewed as a sacrament and not a contract. Hindu marriage is the life-long commitment of one wife and one husband, and is the strongest social bond that takes place between a man and a woman. ‘Grahastha Ashram’ (the householder stage), the second of the four stages of life begins when a man and a woman marry and start a household. For a Hindu marriage is the only way to continue the family and thereby repay his debt to his/her ancestors (Pundit Narayan Bhatt, 2009).

Nancy Netting (2010), evaluating the marital idioscapes in 21st century India, presents an interesting picture of how the tradition of arranged marriage is deeply imbedded in Hinduism, ‘[a]s early as 1500 B.C., Indo-Aryans, who came to dominate the subcontinent and whose religion evolved into Hinduism, believed that people had a responsibility to marry and produce children, preserving the patriarchal family line’ (p. 708).

She argues that by the start of the 21st century, analysts estimated that between 90% (Ubertoi, 2006, p. 24) and 95% (Lall, 2006) of Indian marriages were parentally arranged. A righteous father would choose a husband for his pre-pubertal daughter, ensuring her premarital virginity. Sexual relations did not begin until after ‘menarche’, when the bride was sent to live with her husband and his parents or family.

The bride and groom had to be unrelated, from different villages and almost always of the same caste and subcaste (Fruzzetti, 1994; Rayachaudhuri, 2000; Uberoi, 1994). Under this
system, no sexually mature woman was left unmarried, neutralizing a presumed threat to existing marriages and social order (Netting, 2010).

The Fiji Indian community has found new ways to adapt arranged marriage to their changing socioeconomic realities in Sydney. In the technologically and globally mediated environment of the new century, the community uses marriage as a medium to continue their identity while also using it to facilitate migration. Migration, media and information technologies intersect and play myriad roles in facilitating the continuity of the community which is always in flux in a global environment.

In Appadurai’s words (1996), ‘Marriages become the meeting points of historical patterns of socialization and new ideas of proper behaviour’ (p. 44).

Appadurai’s concept of ‘mediascapes’ refers to the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations, film production studios etc.). Unlike the past, these are now available to a growing number of private and public interests throughout the world as well as to the images of the world created by these media (27). Appadurai further argues that these mediascapes (especially in their television, film and cassette forms) provide large and complex repertoires of images, narratives and ethnoscapes to viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of news and politics are profoundly mixed.

This then means is that many audiences throughout the world experience the media themselves as a complicated and interconnected repertoire of print, celluloid, electronic screens and billboards. Fiji Indians also experience this level of interconnected repertoire of the new media where the lines between the realistic and the fictional landscapes they see are blurred.

Appadurai says that the further away these audiences are from the direct experiences of metropolitan life, the more likely they are to construct imagined worlds which are chimerical, aesthetic, even fantastic objects, particularly if assessed by the criteria of some other perspective, some other imagined world. This argument however, does not apply to the community as it is able to experience much of what the media presents, in its affluent and lived Sydney landscape.
Today’s news media, as a primary arm of social and cultural reproduction, has profoundly affected the ways in which the Fijian Indian community has created its space/identity in Sydney. As noted previously, the massive economic shifts that have accompanied migration and globalisation, have forced certain geographic and spatial shifts. Although the electronic media has emerged as a major channel of communication, linking the community in various geographic locations, the community also relies on the traditional ethnic media for sharing information, especially in relation to seeking marriage partners within the community through classified advertising. The new cinema, on the other hand, for young Fiji Indians has emerged as a particularly salient channel for understanding their identity and the lifestyle or expectations of their parents.

Bollywood movies have also impacted or framed the agenda for promoting arranged marriages among Fiji Indians. *Bride and Prejudice* and *DDLJ* promote the institution of marriage as a sacred union. It is important to note, however, that such communication is profoundly constrained by ideological imperatives and is often realised in paradoxical ways. The work of Cameron McCarthy is helpful here. He has suggested that film and television media ‘address and position viewers at the “centre” of a cultural map in which suburban, middle-class values “triumph” over practices that drift away from mainstream social norms’ (p. 30).

Such films thus reproduce certain stereotypical, or presumably commonsense notions about arranged marriage. In reproducing such supposedly commonsense notions, they construct the ideals of family values, the extended family connections and arranged marriages as the natural process and a lifestyle. At the same time such films are successful in opening up a certain reality to those who live outside of it, for example the members of Sydney’s multicultural community who also see such films on television or in cinemas.

Mediascapes thus refers both to images and to those who control the circulation of those images. With increasing corporate shifts in production and distribution, there seem to be fewer and fewer available social and cultural spaces within which young people can define themselves. Even an art form like rap music, which is often deemed more real than other forms of popular art, is imbricated in dominant cultural imperatives (Appadurai 1996, p. 32). The production and distribution of such art forms have become increasingly consolidated,
with multinational corporations determining more and more what will and what will not be circulated in the public sphere.

Appadurai’s technoscapes present the global configuration (also ever fluid) of technology, and of the fact that technology, both high and low, both mechanical and informational, now moves at high speeds across various kinds of previously impervious boundaries (1997; p. 17).

Technology, in the form of new media allows the community to create its networks which work at various layers to keep its Fiji Indian identity. This thesis presents the media networks and how these facilitate the meeting/s of marriage partners of similar history and background (Fiji Indians). These technoscapes indeed present an information age, where physical labour (of physically travelling to find a match) is being elbowed out by technology. Once a prospective match has been introduced, technology (mobile phones, email, Face Book and twitter) allow couples to communicate more frequently and in real time before they go through the ritual process of marriage. Many Sydney families use Skype to establish visible contact with those families and friends settled in cities across the globe. This is a cheaper and faster means of communicating.

Ideoscapes are also concatenations of images, but they are often directly political and frequently have to do with the ideologies of states and the counter-ideologies of movements explicitly oriented to capturing state power or a piece of it (Appadurai 1996 p. 37). Financescape, which is closely related to technoscape, involves the disposition of global capital, a ‘rapid and difficult landscape to follow as currency markets, national stock exchanges, and commodity speculations move mega monies through national turnstiles at blinding speed, with vast absolute implications for small differences in percentage points and time units’ (Appadurai 1996, p. 23). Indeed, money is moving at faster and faster speeds and increasingly entwining local economies within global flows of capital as transnationals move among countries and cities and can be in various locations in one given time. As a result companies are exceedingly mobile and can access labour anywhere in the world. For Fiji Indians, this works well in sponsoring relatives and members of extended families for migration. Many established businesses owned by members of the community in Sydney sponsor candidates from Fiji while yet others sponsor students and trades people in Fiji to help them skill up, thus making migration a possibility.
Appadurai proposes that globalisation be viewed through these scapes and their interactions of people, images, information, ideologies and capital. He argues that the new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order, which cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models (even those which might account for multiple centres and peripheries).

The suffix Scapes refers to the fluid, irregular shapes of these landscapes which characterise international capital and international clothing styles. Appadurai’s five terms are not objectively-given relations which look the same but are rather deeply ‘perspectival constructs, inflected by historical, linguistic and political situatedness’ (Appadurai, 1996, p.229), of different sorts of actors who can be nation-states, multinationals, diasporic communities, sub-national groupings … even intimate face to face groups, such as villages, neighbourhoods and families. ‘Indeed the individual actor is the last locus of this perspectival set of landscapes, for these landscapes are eventually navigated by agents who both experience and constitute larger formations, in part by their own sense of what these landscapes offer’ (Appadurai, 1990, p. 7).

Appadurai sees these landscapes as building blocks (extending Benedict Anderson) of imagined worlds, ‘that is the multiple worlds which are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe’ (Appadurai, 1996, p.33). He says:

an important fact of the world we live in today is that many persons on the globe live in such imagined worlds (and not just imagined communities) and thus are able to contest and sometimes even subvert the imagined worlds of the official mind and of the entrepreneurial mentality that surround them (1996, pp.229).

The modern media – first the printing press, later electronic media – which spread knowledge of the same, multivalent symbols help frame common identities while advancement in technology/communication creates the meeting space. What Anderson (1983) argued to be imagined communities is in fact becoming real and lived in the case of Fiji Indians who capitalise on opportunities to travel and to meet partners or their own people in chat rooms, through mobile phones, emails, via the Internet and other forms of media/communication, all possible through globalisation and technological advancements.
This meeting ‘space’ is explored with the media’s role as facilitator of all possibilities. This research draws the connections among these scapes into a disjunction relevant to the Fiji Indians while demonstrating how people, finance, ideas and the media travel and intersect in all directions within the community. Similar to Appadurai’s work, for the Fiji Indians the process of drawing such connections will allow for an understanding of the complexities in a changing global environment because Fiji Indians are inclined to draw on these scapes to find common identities and build on social capital. Social capital, a term developed by a number of scholars (Bourdieu 1990; Coleman 1988; Putnam 2000; Portes 1998), refers to the investment of social relations with expected returns in the market place. Social capital stresses the importance of social relations and ‘networks’, and because it relates to collective as well as individual goods (Lin 2001, p. 26), it can be applied to the community building/identity creation process of the Fiji Indians who use the ethnic and new media as a foundation for networking and creating their own space in Sydney.

These ‘social networks’ also lie behind the political, social, cultural and economic activities of the migrant Fiji Indians who have established religious, political, social and sporting associations in Sydney. Social Capital has been criticised (Lin 2001) for being too vague to apply to all things. It needs narrowing down. One important network that the social capital literature has not adequately addressed relates to ethnic communities, particularly in immigration countries like Australia and Canada, and in cosmopolitan cities such as Sydney (Collins and Castillo 1998).

This research shows that the Fiji Indian community in Sydney is built on strong social capital. This social networking has given many people from Fijian Indian heritage a good ‘head-start’ in their new home, especially since the evolution of electronic media, namely the Internet, which has reduced the significance of physical presence or space. For the Fiji Indians, the flows between these scapes are not only about western or other cultural influences but more about their own movement against a backdrop of a search for a better life in a world of advanced communication. The ideas of centre and periphery are thus no longer applicable to this community as the scapes intersect and overlap, changing constantly with the physical, emotional and cyberspace movement of the community.
Ethnoscapes, described as landscapes ‘of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live’, especially applies to the Fiji Indians who are in a transitional space/mode all the time. These people are either fourth of fifth generation adults who are professionals seeking ‘greener pastures’ or elderly parents seeking to rejoin the large Indian extended family network by moving away from the uncertainty of the Fijian farms, or of life in Fiji generally. As a result of the unstable political and social climate in Fiji, the Indians have become an increasingly mobile people. This movement has created a shrinking of the world and a much easier communication space as well as the connectedness with ‘home’. The urban centres where the Indians have settled are already overflowing with a ‘melting pot’ of cultures.

People across the globe are moving across cities for various reasons. This increasing plethora of different peoples, their different voices and perspectives have added to the creation of separate identities. While many people from the Fiji Indian identity have achieved a multitude of success through exposure in the global environment, as many have become stuck in one place, mainly because of cultural limitations and language barriers. One such group is the illiterate parents of ‘professional’ skilled migrants. For the Fiji Indians in cities like Blacktown and Liverpool (in Sydney), these parents who could freely move in their own villages and smaller towns in Fiji, the new experience of having to change trains (unreliable in many instances) causes great grief. Their sons, daughters-in-laws and other family members get caught in the daily grind of work while the parents are stuck at home; either looking after younger grandchildren or children of other Fiji Indians from their network.

Appadurai does not adequately account for this sense of being ‘stuck’. His conception of globalisation directs one toward flows and movements but does little to account for the fact that access to flows and movements is not evenly distributed. Doreen Massey provides a counter balance to Appadurai’s work by introducing the notion of ‘power geometry’ into the condition of globalisation (1995, p.14). In her discussions of power geometries, Massey makes it clear that social categories such as class, race, gender, sexual preference, age, occupation, and so on are among the many factors that greatly restrict one’s ability to participate in global movements. Massey explains how one group’s mobility often contributes to another group's stasis or isolation. A husband's work-related migration, for example, is implicated in his wife's confinement and isolation. Similarly, a single-mother's full-time employment is implicated in the latch-key status of her children.
Appreciating the tension between global mobility and local immobility is crucial for understanding our increasingly multicultural cities such as Sydney and those who have settled in them. Indeed, in the face of declining opportunities and dreams, many children and adolescents of Fiji Indian heritage have articulated their sense of being stuck, both in their overt testimonies and through their radical lack of assimilation into the physical space they occupy. Many have recreated their close-knit Fiji Indian identity by settling in a common zone, such as Liverpool and Blacktown, confining their movement to their immediate neighbourhoods or surroundings. Yet others have continued this pattern into the school system where groupings are being formed, allowing children to be enrolled in a particular school because the transition into the school system becomes much easier as there are many ‘known faces’ of children with whose parents their own immediate family socialises or interacts. A group of families living in Doonside, Woodcroft, Hebersham and Blacktown have shared their experiences of sending their children to Mitchell High School in Blacktown where many of the community’s children seek education.

**Chapter summary**

This chapter has presented a theoretical framework for this thesis while attempting to provide an understanding of the Fiji Indian community dynamics in a new place and a new world. Appadurai’s theory of ‘scapes’ is presented as topological markers for constructing the social and cultural maps which link the Fiji Indian migration, its media and marriage. Such an approach allows this thesis to bring out partial or potential realities not normally visible through the lenses of deep-structure models. Unlike tracings, these maps which are not static because of the dynamics in social and cultural changes affecting the Fiji Indians have been created as essentially unpredictable articulations of material reality. Deleuze and Guattari (1986) suggest that the creation of maps (as opposed to tracings) provides more sophisticated understandings of the development, maintenance, and rearticulation of social institutions. In drawing such maps, also with the consumption and participation in the ideals forged by film, especially Bollywood, this chapter has established a framework, like a boundary to the map, and ‘on the surface’ has created possible realities by producing new articulations of disparate phenomena and connected the exteriority of the community to the forces of media and migration which create potential opportunities for a separate society through marriage in a globalised space. These maps exceed both individual and collective experiences of what seems naturally real. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that after constructing maps, one may then
place more apparently stable tracings back onto them, interrogating breaks and fissures where one finds them. For Fiji Indians the notion of physical geography and links with their past have become fluid, less rooted and more flux. The media for the community has become an ‘agency’ (Appadurai), transforming the everyday into resources for self imaging and identification within the flux. Anderson suggests that the nation thus becomes a fictional construct – an imagined community, ‘a nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship’ (2006, p. 7). Appadurai refers to this as a ‘constitutive feature of modern subjectivity’ (1996, p. 2), where the electronic media ‘offer[s] new resources and disciplines for the construction of imagined selves and worlds’ (p. 3). As a medium for agency, such media, within a chaotic spectrum of change, facilitates the mode of active articulation of selfhood and reinvention of self, as is happening with the Fiji Indians in Sydney. The community has indeed constructed a defined Fiji Indian map within which their beliefs and activities are constructed around narratives of belonging and identity. The modern media facilitates this level of construction which takes place through creative imagination and in real time, opposed to Anderson’s and Appadurai’s imagination. The community combines its work on imagination with real and lived experimentations of their new knowledge on what involves the re-creation and maintenance of its Fiji Indian identity. This takes place in a chaotic space (Appadurai) which compels the transformation of everyday discourse by becoming a resource for experiments with self and societal-making identities within the flux of the everyday. This research looks at the Indian arranged marriage as a basis for maintaining a separate community, using the modern media, communication and migration.

Chapter four is a discussion of the research question and methodologies used for this research and records the challenges the community faces in its journey in a modern environment while attempting to conform to cultural norms and Hindu practices in relation to marriage. This chapter is framed with the new knowledge it brings by evaluating the migration, marriage and use of media by an ethnic community in a global city. The methodology and the research questions provide new dimensions for understanding the vibrancy of small communities in a mediated space.
CHAPTER FOUR

Research questions and methodology

This research combines oral histories and narrative with academic theory to present the identity formation of Fiji Indians through marriage and media. The impetus for this research was generated principally by my own experiences in the arranged marriages of my grandparents, parents, uncles and aunts, brother, two sisters, 35 first cousins, nephews, nieces, some of their children as well as those relatives from my husband’s side, including all his four sisters and two brothers, his parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts as well as their children. A majority of the people I grew up with in my village at Tavarau, Ba, in Fiji also had been through arranged marriages. I began asking questions about these marriages in the early years of my own arranged marriage and the mid stages of my journalism career. Joining academia upon migrating to Australia in 1998 provided an ideal opportunity to look for answers. Thus was born my topic: The Chutney Generation: Fiji Indian Migration, Match Making and the Media in Sydney.

The three issues, Fiji-Indian migration, match-making and the media, are explored through a range of research methods detailed below, including the use of a questionnaire, personal interviews and focus groups. A few of my initial methods did not work as some aspects of migration and marriage are very personal and culturally taboo in the community. My inquiry has also been prompted by the increasing migration of Indians from Fiji to Sydney. Forty percent of migrants from Fiji settle in Australia (Lal, 2009). The marriage and migration equation, to a large extent, is fulfilled by the vibrancy of their ethnic Indian and global media which help to facilitate the two by explicit and implicit means.

The general aim has been to conduct a cross-disciplinary study on marriage, migration and the media in a community that is, like many other populations of the world, faced with globalisation, migration and a dynamic communications environment. Embedded in the matrix of cultural analysis and communication, this research also evaluates the community’s cultural process in a mediated space. Most importantly the research frames an understanding of arranged marriages through media landscapes and migration, as well as community social networking, while attempting to explain why some aspects of seeking partners in marriage
have not changed despite the dynamics of change in a modern environment which is experiencing a global shift in communications. Through qualitative research this thesis also gathers answers to the broad question of how do the men and women who participate in this matchmaking industry explain their own motives. All these questions spring out of the one question that beckons answers: Why do Fiji Indians seek people of similar history and background for marriage?

The specific objectives were:

- To determine the migration patterns out of Fiji to Sydney.
- To survey the experiences of those who are living in Sydney in relation to their Fiji Indian identity, community building and social networking through marriage and media.
- To understand how and why the community uses their ethnic Indian media and other new media.
- To identify the critical factors for successful marital and family life and adaptations.
- To describe the support systems which contribute to the community’s successful adjustment in their new home and in seeking marriage partners within the community.
- To record the changes that have taken place in the ritual space of Indian (Hindu) weddings over several decades. This focus on Hindu weddings helps me to understand the impact of Bollywood movies (majority of which focus of Hindu weddings) on the social spaces of the community while providing comparison of the changes that have taken place.

The essence of this research has been to explore:

- How and why Fiji Indians arrange marriages within the community.
- The role of the media (western and diasporic) in facilitating marriage in the community.
- The means through which the community’s identity building process relates to marriage within its ethnic group in Sydney.
- The negotiations that have occurred between the generations as a result of media exposure, migration and globalisation.
- The way in which the Fiji Indian community has emerged through a mediated
transnational space with reference to the politics of Fiji and its historical link to India.

• The impact of arranged marriages on the institution of marriage.

This study uses a considerable amount of ethnographic material as it weaves together narrative and analysis. This method of ‘thick description’: ‘thinking and reflecting and the thinking of thought (Geertz 1973) provides an understanding of the community building process using media frames and how these media are used to facilitate migration and arranged marriages. Geertz, in his essay titled ‘Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture’ argues that ethnography is not a matter of methods

[do]ing ethnography is establishing rapport, selecting informants, transcribing texts, taking genealogies, mapping fields, keeping a diary and so on. But it is not these things, techniques and received procedures that define the enterprise. What defines it is the kind of intellectual effort it is: an elaborative venture in thick description (p4).

Using the action of winking, Geertz distinguishes the winking from a social gesture, a twitch etc, saying that one needs to move beyond the action to a particular social understanding of the action – winking, as a gesture, the mens rea (state of mind) of the winker, his/her audience and how they construct the meaning of the winking action. “Thin description is the winking. Thick is the meaning behind it and its symbolic import in society or between communicators”

Geertz argues that ethnographic description is interpretive of the flow of social discourse and attempts to rescue the ‘said’ of such discourse from its perishing occasions and fixes it in perusable terms (20). Referring to the data collected through such research, he argued that these are constructions of other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to – which is unknown or unclear, because most of what is needed to comprehend a particular event, ritual, custom, idea, or whatever is insinuated as background information before the thing itself is directly examined. This leads anthropological research to an observational and less of an interpretive activity than it really is. Analysis then becomes sorting out the structures of signification, what Gilbert Ryle (1971) called ‘established codes’. With thick description, the ethnographer is pursuing the more atomised routines of data collection in a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which s/he must somehow first contrive to grasp and then to render. Geertz likened
ethnography to constructing a reading of a manuscript – ‘foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventionalized graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behaviour’ (p. 37).

With Geertz’s approach to ethnography ‘as finding one’s feet’ this research attempts to do so with the Fiji Indian community. As he argues, this research is not based on my ability to capture primitive facts in faraway places and carry them home like a mask or carving, but rather in presenting what goes on in these places. By capturing the ‘behaviour’ and social action of the community the research is able to find how its cultural forms find articulation.

This thesis addresses some of the theoretical gaps in prevailing accounts of migration in the Fijian Indian community while encompassing the role of the media (a reality even for those in the most remote corner of the globe), and marriage (a contested zone of the modern world) in sustaining a community. The thesis explores the cultural challenges and opportunities of a world that is increasingly globalised, diverse and technologically mediated. Anthony Giddens (1990, p. 64) has defined globalisation as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring miles away and vice versa. David Held and Anthony McGrew say globalisation:

denotes the expanding scale, growing magnitude[,] speeding up and deepening impact of transcontinental flows and patterns of social interaction. It refers to a shift or transformation in the scale of human organisation that links distant communities and expands the reach of power relations across the world’s regions and continents (2002, p. 1).

Globalisation thus is a ‘process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organisation of social relations and transactions; assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact, generating transcontinental or inter-regional flows and networks of activity.’ A globalised environment therefore entails a reconfiguration of geography, so that social space is no longer wholly mapped in terms of territorial places, territorial distances and territorial borders. Appadurai (1996) offers a new framework for the cultural study of globalisation arguing that imagination makes the world a shrinking globe. He considers the way images of lifestyles, popular culture and self representation circulate internationally through the media, while simultaneously exploring how we imagine the world and the way this imagination influences our understanding of people who seem to be simultaneously homogeneous and different.
This research generates new knowledge about Fiji Indians in a global context, in relation to the Indian diaspora (especially in relation to their consumption of media, including film and especially Bollywood) and community building through marriage and migration as a tool to foster identity creation as physical borders of national identity become porous and permeable. According to James Clifford, diaspora is ‘a whole range of phenomena that encourage multi-locale attachments, dwelling and travelling’ (quoted in Grossberg, 1996, p. 101). Steven Vertovec (1999) presents three discernible meanings of the concept of diaspora: as a social form, a type of consciousness and a mode of cultural reproduction. Citing Martin Baumann in reference to the historic Jewish experience, he argues that in the diaspora, the process of becoming scattered, the community living in foreign parts, the place or geographic space in which the dispersed groups live become useful in understanding their social relationships which are cemented by ties to history and geography. He thus argues that diasporas are created as a result of voluntary or forced migration from one home location to at least two other countries, consciously maintaining collective identity, institutionalising networks of exchange and communication, maintaining a variety of explicit and implicit ties with the homeland, developing solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement and the inability or unwillingness to be fully accepted by the host society, thereby fostering feelings of alienation, exclusion, superiority or other kind of difference. Appadurai suggests that as ‘electronic media increasingly link[s] producers and audiences, across national boundaries, and as these audiences start new conversations between those who move and those who stay, we find a growing number of diasporic public spheres’ (1996, p. 22).

These interpretations of diaspora are applicable to the Fiji Indians in a globalised context of migration; first to Fiji as indentured labourers (1879 to 1916), followed by their flight to Sydney and other parts of the globe as a direct result of the 1987 and 2000 coups in Fiji. The Fiji Indian diaspora has not detached from its two first identities, Indian and Fijian, while it attempts to recreate itself in Sydney, a multicultural ‘stewpot’.

This research also places culture, some aspects of which the community maintains and negotiates, as a vital dimension of social, political and economic life in its new space. Culture has often been referred to as a ‘hidden dimension’, the metaphor of the iceberg explains that culture at its core is invisible (Weaver, 1993). Formerly the construct of culture only existed in the singular. Today, cultures is talked about as dynamic systems which are constantly
negotiated, thus dealing with a number of icebergs with different locations, shapes, forms and depths which are continuously moving and never resting. Geertz sees culture as ‘public’ because ‘meaning is’ (1973, p. 12). He sees culture as interactive where meaning is always created between people or between people and symbols. Geertz cites Clyde Kluckhohn’s (1949) meaning of culture in *Mirror for Man* as:

the total way of life of a people, the social legacy the individual acquires from his group, a way of thinking, feeling and believing, an abstraction from behaviour, a theory on the part of the anthropologist about the way in which a group of people in fact behave, a storehouse of pooled learning, a set of standardized orientations to re-current problems, earned behaviour, a mechanism for the normative regulation of behaviour, a set of techniques for adjusting both to the external environment and to other men, a precipitate of history (pp.173-174).

This description of culture aptly describes the ways in which the Fiji Indians have adapted to their new environments by maintaining some elements of their past practices while recreating new ones in line with the situational changes they experience in a global city.

Geertz espouses culture as a semiotic concept; that man is an animal, suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun. The interpretive analysis, and understanding of such webs, thus provides meaning. Using these interpretations as foundations of my research, this thesis aims to provide an analysis on the Fiji Indian community’s web; its regulation of ‘normative’ and accepted behaviour, especially in relation to marriage, its attitudes towards pooled learning, living in clusters, providing support networks to extended families and people within the community’s social circles, as it negotiates its position in Sydney. This research also presents the role of the media as a powerful tool of contemporary communications, through its deeper levels of representation of ethnic communities and the new modes of citizenship in a mediated public sphere. These themes provide a useful framing ‘context’ for the fieldwork and other research that has become a part of this thesis.

**Textual analysis of media and its use by the Fiji Indians**

The evaluation of the content in the ethnic media which targets Fiji Indians helps one to understand the issues ‘close to the heart’ of this group. This analysis provides an understanding of the community building process in the home, and mapped social, local and national spaces in a global context. This analysis also helps deconstruct the social networking process of the community through these various spaces. Apart from political stories about the
crisis crippling Fiji, the ethnic media fills a vacuum in the social life of the migrants with the latest information on Bollywood which is consumed ‘religiously’ by the community, other forms of entertainment such as visits to Sydney by Bollywood stars and other cultural performances, the matrimonial section advertising prospective marriage partners as well as other services such as wedding planners, migration agents, fashion outlets, food caterers and special event organisers, to name just a few. Bollywood entertainment features prominently in this media and this aspect is studied to see how the media mirrors society back to itself while the advertising content is evaluated separately to see who is advertising what.

Matchmakers’ clubs/sites, as well as migration agents, feature prominently in almost all forms of media. Auditing the media content has helped in understanding the audience and its role in facilitating the maintenance of a separate community.

The ethnic Indian media in Sydney was studied over a period of time, initially in 2003/04 when I began my research. From mid 2006 to 2009, I began paying special attention to the advertising content of the Indian media, specifically the Sydney Fiji Times and Navtarang, both of which are published/operated by Fiji Indians and target the Fiji Indian audiences. Both publications invariably carry advertisements seeking marriage matches within the community as well as articles written by lawyers and migration agents about visa categories and skills in demand. WWW.Fijilive.com, a website operated from Fiji and linking the Fijian diaspora across the globe, also provides a level of community interaction while facilitating partnerships and marriage (see chapter six for a detailed analysis).

Interviews with the media producers in Sydney and Fiji

The interviews with the media producers provide an insight into their audiences; what they (audiences) want in terms of news as issues that are important to them (news consumers) and how these needs are fulfilled. Journalism practice in the new century is solely dependant on audiences; before journalists put pen to paper, they must know who their target audience is. There is a shift from the power of news (text) to the new power of audiences. Consumers of the media shape the meaning and content of the ethnic media. The online medium, www.fijilive.com, provides an almost instantaneous connection to Fiji for the community spread across the globe through various chat and video forums. The site’s 2009 ‘blogging’ addition, myfijigang, has more than 100,000 mostly Fiji Indian subscribers from around the globe. Owner of the site, journalist and media owner Yashwant Gaunder describes this
connectivity as the FaceBook of Fiji. Editor of the *Sydney Fiji Times* presents an insight into the publication which also provides political news from Fiji. The matrimonial section of the paper is a popular read among audiences, says Kumar. The media producers discuss how and why they have adapted to a new ‘connected’ environment. They also discuss the importance of advertisements seeking marriage partners from within the community.

Jai Deo Prasad of Fiji Indian descent, who operates a radio station from Northumberland Street in Liverpool, provides a commentary on the community dynamics in the city and Sydney.

**In-depth ethnographic analysis of Fiji Indian families in Sydney**

This level of analysis (thick description) paves the way for an understanding of the community’s networking in the migration process - the interactions, negotiations and sense of belonging and of creating a home. An emerging pattern in the spaces of Fiji, Sydney and Auckland is the clustered settlement of Indians. This is a repeat of the indenture era when coolie lanes provided cheap housing for labourers. However, the Sydney and Auckland scenes provide a landscape of affluent lifestyles while also offering a practical approach to dealing with migration issues in more complex and multicultural settings. For example, for working parents childcare is from within the family network and many have easy access to family and community support in times of need. These clustered settlements have in turn provided a rich base for business decisions with the establishment of spice shops, specialty fashion outlets, real estates, restaurants, travel services and other businesses such as wedding decorators, caterers, party equipment providers, to name just a few. All of these networks and social spaces, from private homes to community centers, temples and other public spaces, are used for celebrating important events such as religious festivals like holi (festival of colour) and Diwali (festival of light) and provide a rich environment to seek out marriage partners within the Fiji Indian community. Many of the survey participants tell of their first ‘secret’ meeting at such events.

**Participant observation at community events and functions**

The recordings of these observations bring ‘alive’ the community spirit while adding richness to the research. I have witnessed how family members, especially older women, play a significant role in matching partners at the more than 50 Fiji Indian weddings I have attended...
in Sydney and in Fiji since 2004. Many Fiji Indian families use such occasions as the avenue for the first secret meeting of prospective marriage partners. Some of the survey participants also share details of how they take young single men and women to such celebrations, with the hope of finding a match for them. Towards the final stages of my thesis completion, my husband and I had to deal with numerous marriage proposals for our two daughters (aged 24 and 21 in 2009) whenever they (the girls) accompanied us to weddings, birthday parties and prayer meetings. Another prominent feature at such social events is the drinking of grog (Fijian custom) among Indian men who look forward to this social interaction at every occasion – happy or sad (marriage or death). The ‘merry-making’ that takes place also facilitates the formation of strong social bonds and also creates tensions and rifts among families who become jealous and envious of successful relatives. Chapter eight provides an insight into this level of networking and the role of gossip in the community.

**Interviews with senior members of the community**

As a close-knit society, the Fiji Indian social structure, although not based on the caste system being practiced in mainland India, is still hierarchical where those in positions of power through wealth and specialist knowledge are given due recognition and respect. The Fiji Indians, even if they wanted to, have not been able to sustain India’s caste system because in Fiji the ‘girmitiyas’ were ‘young and illiterate and ignorant of the rituals and ceremonies associated with the caste system. Culture and religion rather than caste became the basis of identity in the new community’ (Lal, 2004, p. 13). This explains why elderly members of the family and priests are respected. However, this is being challenged in the new environment because the younger generation are questioning some of the power and authority over their (new generation’s) own knowledge which is gained through exposure to a bigger and better learning environment. Leaders in the community are an interesting component of this research because they relate their experiences and the changes that are being incorporated into the wedding rituals to make these modern, unique and exotic. What aspects are maintained and what is being overhauled to usher in a new era provides a fascinating backdrop to the modern day weddings and their rituals. Two Hindu priests; Pundit Narayan Bhatt, based in Liverpool and Pundit Sada Nand of Green Valley, Liverpool, who are marriage celebrants and conduct Hindu marriages in Sydney discuss some of their

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2 Girmit comes from the word agreement under which Indian indentured labourers were brought to Fiji. Those who served Girmit were called girmitiyas. In Hindi the word literally means if you fall you die.
experiences of arranged marriages in the community while explaining the significance of rituals. The priests were interviewed in 2009 and 2010/2011 (a revisit) in an attempt to understand the continuity of rituals and the celebration of these on a large scale at Hindu Sydney weddings. Chapter seven is dedicated to this aspect of my research.

Other members of the community who participated in this research include transnational business operators such as Nawal Lal and Jagdish Lodhia, both of whom are also actively involved with global organisations associated with the Indian diaspora. In 2008, during my visit to Fiji, I also interviewed Professor Brij Lal of the Australian National University who was then ‘settling back’ in Fiji.

My next level of research, involving an analysis of the influence of film and Bollywood on the Fiji Indian mindset, regarding marriage, migration and retention of cultural and religious values and norms helps to establish an understanding of the community’s social space in Sydney. This level of research was driven by the numerous posters in the Indian spice shop fronts which portrayed the latest releases from Bollywood as well as social events promoting visits by film stars.

**Film and Bollywood: How they influence the Fiji Indian diaspora**

The Fiji Indians’ consumption of Bollywood, to a large extent, has helped the community continue the tradition of arranged marriages and the rituals associated with Hindu wedding ceremonies. The community, for more than a century had severed links with India because of distance and a financial inability to travel, and was thus was removed from the realities of life in India. Bollywood films provided an ‘imagined’ connection with motherland. Popular cinema or Bollywood helped construct an ‘ideal moral’ universe that is intrinsically connected with their ideas about tradition. The Fiji Indians used Bollywood to remain connected with mainland India until more recently when they began migrating from Fiji in large numbers after the 1990s. To acknowledge this connection and provide an understanding of their social space in their new home, this thesis has a section on the influences of Bollywood, its ideals on family value in relation to arranged marriages as well as fashion and wedding rituals. Affluence and a dynamic communications environment allow the community to imitate fashion and elaborate ‘silver screen lifestyles’ in ‘real’ life. I frame an understanding of these layers of explicit and implicit meaning by presenting a discussion of
certain dilemmas interwoven in and through cinematic narratives, in two popular films with a common theme, namely *Bride and Prejudice* and *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayege (DDLJ)*, both based on the importance of parental consent in marriage. *Bride and Prejudice* has a western take on Indian culture, being produced by Kenyan born Indian Gurinder Chada who grew up in London’s Southhall. *Bride and Prejudice* presents the western stereotype of the Indian arranged marriage as backward, outdated and exclusive to the East, at the same time as bringing out the realities of the lived Indian culture across the diaspora in Britain, LA and India. In 2006 this movie was screened in theatres across some cities in western Sydney as well as in Castle Hill. *DDLJ* is a 1995 Bollywood movie by Adhitya Chopra. The movie was rated by *IndiaTimes* as among the 25 must see Bollywood films while the British Film Institute listed it among the top 10 films. Based on the love story of a young British born man and woman of Indian descent, the film touches the heartstrings of the Indian diaspora with its focus on the challenges migrants face in a modern world in relation to arranged marriage.

Both films feature the conflicts between individual desire and social norms (what Uberoi 1997) calls animating logic of South Asian romance. While many researchers believe that the modernisation of the Indian society would undermine the practice of arranged marriage by encouraging an individualistic ethos while at the same time subverting the rules of marrying within the social unit that have sustained both communal separatism and hierarchical orders, this research demonstrates that to a large extent, the reverse has happened for the Fiji Indian community. This research provides an insight into these phenomena.

Bollywood has become a lifestyle in Sydney which has become a set for some of the scenes in movies such as *Chuk De India*, shot in Sydney in 2006. Manas Ray, in *Floating Lives*, provides an understanding of the cult of Bollywood and how it is inscribed in the social space of Fiji Indians. He argues that film; through dialogue, scenes, images, songs and the actors and actresses, provided the community with some means to construct its connections with India (Ray 2000, pp. 136-84).

Using film to gauge the Fiji Indian community’s identity formation also raises some of the theoretical and methodological considerations about research into the transnational dimensions of cultural practices. It has a useful bearing on thinking about transnational media audiences as sites of discourse and as objects of social research. The notion of cultural field
thus becomes a theoretical framework which reformulates media audiences (diasporic Fiji Indians) as imagined communities. For the community this cultural field is constructed around realities such as the consumption of film and their experimentations with cultural and religious rituals in relation to their identity as an Indian diaspora from Fiji. The community’s existence in a global Sydney space exposes it to transnational media and modernization. Film facilitates the visual copying of fashion, customs and wedding rituals, to reinforce and celebrate their Indian identity, while modernisation exposes them to new ideals in an affluent setting.

Social circles of young Fiji Indians

This largely qualitative study, conducted through personal interviews with 15 young adults aged between 21 and 30 (six males and nine females), as well as participation by 12 young adults at a focus group meeting in Liverpool in February, 2007, focuses on the perspectives of the young adults of Fiji Indian heritage in relation to their social life in Sydney, their use of the new media and their views on arranged marriage. Many individuals from this demography arrived in Sydney with skilled parents at a very young age (approximately three years) while some were born here. All the 15 participants have tertiary qualifications from universities in Sydney ranging in fields from medicine, law; accounting, nursing, teaching/education, business and finance. As this research focuses on the migration from Fiji after 1987, those participating in the field survey were, on average, 26 years of age. These participants were identified because they agreed to participate in personal interviews while filling in the survey questionnaire. The survey asked participants for their views on marriage for themselves, and their own children, born in Sydney and brought up with western/multicultural ideals. Although my hypothesis on their views on marriage was a change from their parents’ and grandparents’ views, in line with the dynamics of changes taking place in their current environment, it is interesting to note that many of the young adults accept arranged marriage as a way of life and a practical approach to some of the current partnership problems/divorce facing married couples globally. Since my initial interviews with the participants by 2011 all except one had been married. The participant who is not married was engaged to a secondary school teacher in Fiji and the arrangement was facilitated by the woman’s family from Calgary, Canada. The couple has set April 2012 for their Hindu wedding in Fiji.
The younger generation’s views on arranged marriage and why they still practice it (if they do) even though there is a better chance of falling in love first, provides insights into understanding the community building process through migration and marriage and how social networking through the media plays a significant role in maintaining this tradition.

I distributed 150 questionnaires among the community in Sydney, of which 97 were returned. The questionnaire served as a first point of contact with members of the community willing to participate in my research. Five members of this sample survey were divorced or widowed both from earlier love (3) and arranged marriages (2), and all of these five people sought to reestablish their lives through an arranged relationship.

Those who said they had an arranged marriage also spoke about how they had arranged their own children’s marriage to Indians in Fiji, Sydney and Auckland. I was able to interview eight families living in extended family units in Sydney comprising grandparents, parents and married adults with young children with an average age of six. These families provided an interesting insight for my research by sharing their stories of marriage, migration and life in Sydney, keeping within the realm of my research aim. Some of the female participants shared their experiences of ‘bringing their sons back on track’ by finding them brides in Fiji who were able to ‘reign in’ the men into being caring and responsible adults.

Gardner (1995) and Ballard (2003), through their findings on Punjabis settled in England, point out that the vast majority of early settlers saw marriage as an instrument that kept their transnational links by arranging their children’s marriage in their ancestral villages. Varghese and Rajan (2010) and these researchers also discuss the Punjabi diaspora’s preference for desi bibis (Punjabi wives) as parent’s preferred Punjabi daughter in laws while men preferred Punjabi wives. This preference, they argue, emerges from the community’s keenness to preserve their culture and women are seen as best suited to this. For this reason they (Punjabis) prefer to have their women stay at home and not work. This is interpreted as seeing home as a pristine space which they maintain. (Chapter Five presents a detailed analysis of the Fiji Indians’ attempts at this level of cultural maintenance in Sydney).
How the research started

This research began in the Fiji Indian spice shops in Liverpool and Blacktown in 2005 when I made arrangements with the shop owners to leave my questionnaire for the research in the first week of October. Regular weekly visits to these shops revealed that those of Fiji Indian heritage had taken the questionnaire. A month later, all the 200 questionnaires had left my domain (the shop counter) but none of the answered documents were returned. I realised that this methodology was not going to work. While in the spice shops, I noticed their windows dressed up with Bollywood posters as well as other notices on entertainment in Sydney. I began attending some of these to observe participants. Soon I began forming closer links with the community and started getting invitations to functions such as prayer meetings, celebrations in private homes and weddings. Although many of the families were happy to talk about how they migrated, many who had arrived in Sydney by paying large amounts of money to migration agents in Fiji, Auckland and Sydney did not want to divulge any information on these issues.

Getting people to talk about their media consumption was not difficult but none of them wanted to talk about marriage or their views on arranged marriage. It was at this stage, almost two years into my research that I decided to revisit a group of Fiji Indian women with whom I had developed close professional relationships while working on a Fiji Indian community project for the NSW Community Relations Commission in 2001. Several meetings allowed some of these women to begin talking about how they managed to migrate through marriage. They also put me into contact with other women with similar histories. Although there is scope for another level of study on migration through inter-marriage, the purpose of this study is to frame an understanding of the Fiji Indian community building by marrying within the community. I soon gave up on the idea of gathering as many participants as possible for my research as I became more interested in people’s stories and the weight these carried in relation to my work. With this new direction in mind, I have been able to trace the migration patterns of families from Fiji to other parts of the world and recorded how they have continued with the Indian tradition of arranging marriages in a complex and western society. A few of the families who became part of this research, discussed the marriage of their grandparents and parents while sharing the realities of this life-changing phase in relation to their own children. These children who have embraced arranged marriages then discuss how they see the future of their own young children. This ethnographic study, combined with
history and reality on the ground, brings a unique richness to this work which has not been captured by any study on migration so far.

While at the outset this study and subsequent research present a positive outcome, I have faced some major hurdles in ‘breaking the ice’ and in effectively communicating with the close-knit community and family units. A number of people from the community, especially men, have been resistant and hostile to the ideas and issues raised. Yet others have questioned the credibility of this research saying, ‘you are trying to portray a bad image of Fiji Indians by discussing marriage as it is a personal domain’. Others have claimed that I was trying to bring disrepute to the community to which I belong, when I should try to help those hapless souls trapped in Fiji’s political crisis and social ills, to migrate to Australia. Some of the migration agents who advertise their services in the media as well as the media producers were unwilling to participate in any discussion for these reasons.

At a later stage in my research, in late 2006 and 2007, I organised focus group meetings, more as a social forum, with some of the women who I realised were willing to speak about or share their experiences. I am drawn to conclude that these women felt empowered at such forums as others began talking about their own experiences. I was careful not to make these meetings ‘official’ so that I could capture the essence of their thoughts and feelings.

Community engagement in Liverpool

I was becoming frustrated as I was faced with a difficulty in accessing the community. It was around this time that I approached the then executive director of the Liverpool Regional Museum, Kon Gouriotis with my ideas for an exhibition. We were able to organise the first ever Fiji Indian cultural exhibition titled ‘The Chutney Generations’ at the Liverpool Regional Museum in Sydney. The three-month long exhibition was launched on December 16, 2006 with much pomp and ceremony involving community participation. All the February 2007 weekends featured cultural activities such as Bollywood dancing and henna painting classes, chutney making, sari draping and an academic forum on migration and values. The exhibition required a lot of community involvement and this gave me an opportunity to break any barriers I was facing in accessing information from the community. As curator I was able to excavate and bring to life, through visual and collective expressions, the Fijian-Indian-Australian identity, which is grounded not in archaeology but in retellings.
of their past and their present through ‘lived’ Sydney experiences and their aspirations for the future.

The relationship between the creative field, dealing with expressive collections and oral histories and academic research, has been a complex one, extending beyond their realm into a variety of other processes such as symbiosis, juxtaposition, alternations, transfers and mergers to an extent that there is no single identity but a multitude of identities effected by a variety of changes and dynamics.

I received numerous accolades from the community and this in turn gave a lot more credibility to my work as a researcher, especially after the *Sydney Morning Herald* rated it the then top exhibition (*SMH*, December 21, 2006, p 26). Women from the community were the first to come forward with positive comments about the exhibition and expressed an interest in my research. Unfortunately, it was difficult to attract active participation from men in any discussions or forums I was interested to facilitate for the purposes of my research, except for those seen as community leaders in their roles as priests, media producers and business owners. It is needless to say that this places a significant, even though not unexpected, limitation on the findings. To counteract this, a multi-faceted strategy was devised to ensure a multiplicity of data sources. Its elements were as follows:

- A review of the academic literature in order to contextualise the migration, marriage and media use/consumption patterns within the broader perspectives
- Statistical data collection on migration from Fiji to Australia
- A summation of the media advertisements seeking partners of Fiji Indian heritage
- Content analysis of advertisements and stories written by migration agents on the migration intake and popular categories on migration in Australia
- A gathering of data in Sydney based on a structured questionnaire, from those willing to participate in the survey. (See Appendix five for the questionnaire)

**The focus groups**

Six focus groups were organised; one each in Liverpool and Blacktown before the exhibition and four while the exhibition was on in Liverpool. Men participated in the first two focus groups, while one was exclusive to young adults aged between 19 and 27. I used these as forums for the exploration of thoughts and feelings about sensitive social and psychological
issues (marriage and migration). Each group had an average of eight participants. Some of my own strengths in such forums were my ability to moderate discussion, a transferable skill from university to community groups, ensuring that participants were not swayed by strong personalities, making the discussions measurable and keeping within the aims of my research, while clarifying my purposes as a researcher. I found that mostly men spoke at the first two forums, although two women (both secondary school teachers) also spoke at the first two sessions, each of which had 10 participants. The most interesting and relevant focus group for my research was the one with young adults on February 7, 2007 where the participants spoke about their experiences and challenges while attempting to keep the status-quo in extended families, that is, living the in-between spaces of the modern and laid back Fiji Indian lives. All the participants agreed that they had a better life and opportunities to progress through secondary and tertiary education and to participate in various leisure activities denied to their parents and past generations. They were all accepting of arranged marriages, conducted through family/friend networks as well as couples meeting via modern media platforms. One participant put it succinctly:

> arranged marriages will become an even more visible part of the Indian diaspora as the world shrinks further and further. Our parents and grandparents used what was available to them then. We are using what is available to us in more creative ways, making sure that the best decisions are made in the given space and time. There is nothing wrong with arranged marriages Fiji Indian style – everyone is looking out for their loved ones by ensuring compatibility (focus group participant, 2007, Liverpool).

Women, especially those aged in their 40s and 50s, and having spent more time in Fiji than Sydney, on the other hand had vivid and nostalgic memories of Fiji. They too were in an in-between space of not leaving Fiji or arriving fully in Sydney. These findings are discussed in detail in chapter five.

**Designing the questionnaire**

I designed the questionnaire so that I could capture the emotions, feelings and stories of the sample survey rather than just gather statistical data which I have been able to locate through the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Fiji Bureau of Statistics. This aspect of capturing the emotion and feelings has been a new and important aspect to my research as it builds on a new field of qualitative data. The preamble to the survey facilitated an in-depth expansion of thoughts and feelings of the participants while qualifying their statements. This level of research, although much less in number (97 returned of the 150 samples from Sydney)
compared to the 200 questionnaires initially sent out in Sydney, has helped capture how three
generations of families in Sydney ‘feel’ about seeking marriage partners for themselves and
their children from the Fiji Indian heritage. Many families use the media to locate partners in
Fiji, Sydney or Auckland while others rely on marriage to overseas partners as a means to
migrate. Community networks, through social forums which are advertised in the media, also
help facilitate this sort of arrangement.

The general questions were about marital status, age, profession and date of arrival in
Sydney. This helped limit my research to a specific historical timeframe - after the 1987 coup
in Fiji - as well as to capture the age and professional status of my subjects.

The guiding questions considered advantages of life in Sydney compared to Fiji, what, if
anything, was missed about Fiji, how many times the participant had returned to Fiji and for
what purposes, how they met other Fiji Indians in their suburb or city, and what media they
consumed. The next set of questions dealt with marriage and how the participant would
classify their marriage, whether they actively solicited partners for themselves or anyone else,
what their view on arranged marriages was, what role did they think the media played in this
regard, if they had children how they hoped to get them married and if there was any
preference for any form of marriage in their family (immediate and extended). The results of
the survey are discussed in Chapter five.

Of the 97 returned questionnaires, around 50 participants agreed to personal interviews by
providing their contact details. I was able to interview in total 36 individuals ranging in age
between 21 and 76. Using the questionnaire as a guide, I realised many of the personal
interviews became interesting as participants began to relax and openly talked about marriage
and migration. Some of the participants even divulged very personal information about
themselves and their families. Thus the questionnaire helped keep my focus while at the same
time provided the springboard for a much deeper level of interaction with the community.

The interviews were conducted in Fiji Hindi and in English and covered the set questions
from the survey to make the participants familiar with what they had initially said. Other
questions covered details on migration, educational and occupational background of parents,
the participant and partner, parents’ and participants’ views on arranged marriage, if and how
this takes place in the family and their own lives, what is good/bad about love and arranged
marriage and if and how the participants used the new media. I did not inquire about previous love relationships or sexual experiences, mainly because these did not serve my research focus; however, I explored general attitudes towards premarital sex and what the participant rated as an important attribute in a marriage partner.

The analysis of participants’ narratives began with the separation of data on arranged and love marriages in order to keep my focus on arranged marriages. Procedures from constructivist grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1999) and thematic narrative analysis (Riessman, 1993), both proposing the power of individuals to make meanings and the influence of historical and social circumstances on these meanings, were used to make the synthesis possible. Charmaz (2000, 2006) and Reissman (1993, 2008) both place the responsibility on researchers to share results with participants, allowing them to help in interpretation. I shared the information by returning to my participants with a second and third round of interviews to gauge the meanings as well as to confirm that my interpretation of their behaviour was accurately portrayed. The return interviews also helped in updating information, especially the changed circumstances of those who were at the dating stage in their relationship and had since been married.

I recorded the interviews on paper and did not use a recording device as this would have been too intimidating for a community initially reluctant to talk.

Drawing on both methods (Charmaz and Reissman), after each interview I made notes on basic issues and themes and improvised on my questions for the next set of interviews. Keeping to Reissman’s (1998, 2008) narrative analysis, I prompted and encouraged participants to elaborate further on their details of narratives, while indicating to them the prevalence of key concepts and themes. This approach allowed the ‘voices’ of participants to be heard.

**Arranged marriage: a socially acceptable norm**

The participants spoke about how the methods of arranging marriage had evolved while the concept has withstood the tide of change. While grandparents and parents had the conventional arranged marriage, a majority of them not meeting until their honeymoon, the younger adults, brought up and born in Sydney, had a modernised ‘arranged’ marriage where
they were introduced initially through family and friend networks and then started to meet, using modern media as a communication tool. For yet others the new media environment facilitated their communication before they met in person.

As a result of their education, a majority of the younger participants were at an average age of 26 before any formal process of finding a partner began for them. Their parents were in their late teens and early 20s when they married while some of the grandparents were married as early as 15.

The families said they still use personal networks, internet sites, newspaper advertisements and mass Indian forums such as prayer meetings, weddings and celebrations to seek partners for people within their families and networks.

Some of the discussions at the time of personal interviews continued to oscillate between the social constrictiveness of parents and grandparents and the liberation and modernity presented through opportunities for the contemporary Fiji Indian adults. The participants compared the progressive and privileged environment of the modern world to the laid back and restrictive cultural taboos of the past which did not allow young couples to even meet or talk. The absence of communication technology and a lack of education created such a situation. The young adults of today have a platform that gives rise to its own cultural ecology. Ray, (2001, p. 147) presents this as the ‘ethnicisation of the nation’ rather than a ‘nationalisation of the ethnic’. He argues that the minority ethnic attempts to create cultural identity and establish a social niche without unsettling a majority youth culture which enjoys its hegemonic position.

For a long time marital unhappiness in the community has been masked by verbal pretenses and engaging smiles, similar to the way ‘good’ girls have been defined by their shy character and chastity. This becomes obvious when the cultural systems and traditions dictate that personal disclosure is uncalled for or that an individual’s ‘izzat’ (character) can become tarnished if their unhappiness or lack of contentment in a marriage is made public.

Marital happiness is a delicate and personal issue. Approaching the participants to describe this state of mind/feeling was difficult. This difficulty became a challenge given that the push factors for migration from Fiji has also caused numerous broken love/hearts as thousands of
migrants chose a partner by arrangement with the ultimate desire to migrate, leaving behind a jilted lover. To avoid the awkward question or details on how they migrated, the survey participants were asked instead to sketch the traits of their dream partner. What would they value most in this partner? Amazingly, a majority of the male respondents said they wanted a wife who had a ‘fine character’ and would keep the family together. The women all had relatively similar answers in that they wanted to marry a man who would ‘look after’ them, was loving, caring and honest. The other popular choice of trait in life partners for the Sydney raised women was ‘respect’ and acceptance of who they are. Men, on the other hand, were more concerned about fine character and family unity. There was an interesting exception to this aspect of the study as neither the women nor the men mentioned children or the desire to have children as part of the equation.

The ‘personal notice’ boards or matrimonial section of the ethnic Indian media, on the other hand, run advertisements with carefully chosen words (see Appendix Six for matrimony advertisements). Common words are ‘Australian citizen,’ ‘Permanent resident’, ‘tall’, ‘slim’, ‘fair’, ‘respectable family’, ‘age’, ‘height’, ‘profession’, ‘seeking Fiji Indian woman/man’. The choice of these words alone leads one to question the role of introduction agencies, including the media, as a facilitator or medium of the message, their marketing methods and reinforcement of stereotyping Indian girls as homemakers. Through these advertisements, the women and men too are exposed and become vulnerable to those who may be involved in sex trade or may be preying on such people to make them victims of their hidden sexual/other agendas. It is my belief that there could be several underlying problems to this form of advertising because there is no scrutiny of who advertises or the wordings of the advertisements. These advertisers and agencies are the modern counterpart of the village marriage matchmaker.

Therefore, in respect of marriage introduction agencies, including migration agents, a clear policy of supervision and regulation would be more appropriate. The media also needs better scrutiny and a code of practice for these forms of advertising. A regulatory policy would require these agencies to be staffed by suitably qualified professionals, who would adhere to the appropriate code of ethics. However, these advertisements and advertorials (advertising disguised as stories) all allude to some of the answers this research has been seeking, that being that the social capital and community networks facilitate not only the existence of a
vibrant community but also provide avenues for migration and marriage which in turn lead to a vibrant ethnic media industry.

Doing fieldwork to add another layer of research

Establishing a framework for fieldwork became important when I realised that data gathering through distributing questionnaires had many limitations. I initially thought that my job as a researcher would be to gather as much ‘hard’ evidence as journalists do, through interviews, to add value to my research. The various phases of the fieldwork helped me to realise that researching on the ‘ground’ helped collect narratives, revealing the interviewees’ perspectives on migration, match making and the consumption/roles of media.

I found that migration provided the best option out of Fiji’s political, economic and social crisis for the Fiji Indians. Fiji Indians have banded together as a collective group through organisations such as the International Congress of Fiji (ICFI) Indians, with representatives in Auckland, Sydney and other settled cities such as Vancouver and San Francisco, to help facilitate opportunities to migrate for those ‘trapped’ in Fiji. Education plays a vital part in the jigsaw puzzle and the ICFI, an organisation made up of academics, business executives and community representatives, provides financial help to the best and brightest children from poor families so that they can get education. ‘I am returning to Fiji to help with the University of Fiji in retirement. That is the only way out (of the political and social problems) and my soul is there’ (Professor Brij Lal, personal interview in Fiji, 2008). The University of Fiji was established in December 2004 under the academic leadership of the Fiji Institute of Applied Studies and the financial sponsorship of the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji, a Hindu religious organisation dedicated to educating the underprivileged. In 2006 Fiji’s Native Land Trust Board (NLTB) signed a 99 year lease agreement for the five hectare space for F$100,000. The university gives two scholarships to children of landowners each year. Academics involved in establishing the venture include Professors Lal, Ganesh Chand and Satendra Nandan, formerly of the University of Canberra. Professor Lal has since returned to the ANU.

The migrant community in Sydney felt that educating the Indians left behind in Fiji provides them with a level of empowerment to facilitate migration, either in the independent, skilled or spouse categories. There are various other Ramayana (Hindu religious book) recital, soccer
or academic affiliated groups that raise funds in Sydney to help Fiji Indians ‘back home’ in
times of natural disasters such as hurricanes or flooding, which Fiji, being a tropical country,
is prone to.

As I began meeting with people and observing their process of communication within their
established circles (Ramayana mandalis) and other larger social circles such as weddings,
birthday parties, wedding anniversaries, celebrations of holy occasions or religious festivals
such as Diwali and Holi, I began to see the importance of this approach. I would not have
been able to determine any hypothesis testing had I taken the road of data collection, as the
method of thick description provided much richer material for analysis and understanding.

Participant observation and interviewing at these forums provided many other layers to my
research where I began to absorb/observe the types and topics of conversations, most of these
beginning with a reminiscence on Fiji and leading up to who was getting married to who and
the subtle way of facilitating the meeting point for prospective marriage partners. Some
participants openly stated that they sought out such mass forums as an opportunity to meet
with singles and to ‘check out’ members of the opposite sex.

At a 50th birthday party in Prospect, Blacktown, a Fiji Indian guest who had travelled from
Tasmania with her husband, had this to say:

it is so difficult to get my son to meet Indian girls from Fiji in Tasmania. I am looking out
for a girl for him and when we come again to Sydney next year, I will bring him so that he
can meet the Fiji Indian girls here. We had a love marriage but then, 28 years ago, my
parents knew I will find a decent Indian boy. With my own two children, this is difficult
because they socialise with those from all cultures. It will be good to have a Fiji Indian
daughter-in-law (May, 2005).

A Fiji Indian woman living in Canberra and visiting Sydney for a wedding said, ‘my daughter
is 27 and my husband and I would like her to be married. It is so difficult to find Fiji Indian
boys her age from good families. Please be on the lookout for any prospective partners for
her’ (Nov, 2004).

I had initially formulated several hypotheses regarding migration, media and marriage that I
thought would explain why Fiji Indians chose Sydney as their stop for building a home. One
hypothesis was that Australia needed skilled, educated, professionals and the Fiji Indian
community could meet that need. The other hypothesis was that helpless young men and
women of Fiji were being exploited and lured into marrying partners from overseas and that this was linked to the broader exploitation of poor countries by their western neighbours; and further that the media allowed this to happen through indiscreet advertising. I assumed this critical position would explain the workings of the three forces (migration, media, match making) and I had to gather empirical data to establish/substantiate this.

Having spent more years of my working life as a journalist than as an academic, I was not satisfied with what I found. The answers somehow did not gel. This is when I began a deeper level of fieldwork, revisiting my interviewees and their families/networks to listen to them. I chose to do this to satisfy my own curiosity and I also wanted to establish credibility in the eyes of my respondents, some of who had interpreted my research as an expose’ on the community. I was faced with a professional challenge as some of those participating in my field surveys remembered me from my days as a journalist exposing corruption in the Rabuka government and highlighting other social issues through the power of the pen. I had to constantly remind my interviewees that the information gathering was not for any public document. This however, also meant more than being there with the participants. I was able to observe the multitude of subtle behavioral patterns while engaging in informal activities such as cooking with my respondents. These entailed participating in celebrations, death rituals as well as other social forums which taught me more than any formal interviews.

During these interviews the term ‘arranged marriages’ or ‘arranging marriages’ became a contested phrase which affected the participants. With this level of categorisation participants began to internalise, while simultaneously resisting the characteristics attributed to the descriptor. Some began defending the term while comparing it to the modern day concepts of speed dating, while voicing their struggles in explaining to work colleagues, made up of a multicultural or modern/western society, how arranging marriage was not ‘backward’ or too old fashioned to be applied in the modern environment.

Migration agency owners who write columns and advertise their businesses in the ethnic media were asked why they chose dating or marriage services and what worked and what did not. What were their perspectives on this form of migration through marriage and whether they had any data or information on the nationalities of people who used their services? These questions became part of the semi-structured discussions and various other questions
arose, resulting in discussions stretching beyond the bounds of advertising into the realm of
the desire to migrate and marriage as an option or medium to facilitate this.

It thus became apparent that at individual and societal levels, migration has become the life-
blood of new beginnings for Fiji Indians who have been in a ‘flight’ mode for more than a
century. The use of oral history has helped understand the patterns of settlement, networking
and remaking of their Fiji Indian identity. Chain migration through family sponsorship,
skilled migration and migration through marriage has helped build the Fiji Indian population
in Sydney. The general literature on migration is divided between concerns with its
motivations and consequences. The decision to migrate has been linked with ‘push’ and ‘pull’
factors and with the establishment of ‘chain migration.’

Keeping to their own clusters and groupings forces children from the community to focus on
their ‘own’ instead of looking outside, so even if the marriage is not arranged, there is an
underlying current of arrangement at work even when they fall in love first.

In November 2008 I returned to Fiji with the intention of capturing some of the changes that
have taken place since I migrated in 1998. The communications explosion has shaken every
corner of the country. The most amazing has been the impact of the mobile phone. While
visiting a family in Tavua, in remote western Viti Levu, I could not help notice how cane
cutters who can barely speak a word of English, carry mobile phones and send text messages.
A cane cutter arrived with his hands covered in soot from burned sugarcane fields and pulled
out a mobile phone to call the nearby shopkeeper to check if he had fresh fish in stock.

A member of the same family lamented on how the mobile technology had become the cause
of all evils in society:

my son was “talking” to this girl via mobile phone. They used to talk everyday and she
would send text messages, making a pledge to look after me. My husband died in 2004 and
since then I have been living with my oldest son. I now want him to be married but it is not
going to happen anytime too soon. The girls these days have become too picky. So this girl
sent him a text message one day, saying that if he really loved her he would have to leave
me in the village to go and live with her in Ba town. My son was very upset and finally
told me after a few weeks. He broke off with the girl but since that time a few other girls
have said no as they all hope to marry someone from overseas. My son will not go
anywhere as he has eight acres of freehold land to farm. Whoever marries him will live
like a princess as I have all modern gadgets and facilities like flush toilets, proper
bathroom, gas cook top and a modern home (November, 2008).
Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the research methods used to gain an insight into the Fiji Indian migration, match-making and the media. Although reading academic research and theory provided background and strong foundations to build my ideas on, understanding oral histories in a new context provided much more scope for expanding these theories. The most significant methods however, were the personal interviews and focus group sessions where I was able to capture the feelings, emotions and narratives from the community, creating a new source of knowledge about a twice displaced diasporic Indian group which, mainly through social spaces, wants to maintain links with its Fijian heritage. Several of the successful academics of Fiji Indian heritage have (in 2011) returned to Fiji to help the underprivileged with education. The community sees education as a means to move out of Fiji. Media watching, to gain insights into the trades and professions in demand under the Australian Immigration policies, is one of many methods for obtaining information for migration purposes in the community.

Collecting data on migration trends from Fiji allowed the research to focus on the settled clusters of the community in Sydney. The Fiji Indians have recreated their own boundaries in Sydney in specific zones such as Liverpool and Blacktown where they have their own exclusive zones, imagined (through media frames, especially Bollywood) and lived through everyday practices of Hindu rituals and other social methods. Within these zones, much borrowing, leaving behind and improvising of cultural practices takes place which the research participants presented as their sense of loss and gain, achieved through migration. The individuals gain much of their social and moral codes from the way of thinking, feeling and believing of their parents and community members who have indeed become a storehouse of pooled learning at a new level. These have in turn become mechanisms for ‘normative’ ways of behaving, believing and thinking, expressed by the new generation of Fiji Indians who are growing up in a space far removed from the realities of the parents’ and grandparents’ lives. Their acceptance of arranged marriage without doubts or questioning is an example of the ingrained acceptance of this social institution. This indeed reinforces the old saying that father and mother know best.

Chapter five presents the findings of this research in graphs and tables while also presenting the thoughts and feelings of the participants in relation to marriage and migration.
CHAPTER FIVE

Research Findings

As a follow-on to the research question and methodologies presented in Chapter Four, this chapter presents the qualitative findings of the research which are presented alongside the narratives of some of the survey participants. Two Hindu priests who are also marriage celebrants, based in Liverpool share some insights on performing marriage rituals for the community. These discussions are framed with some of the theories used in this research to provide an understanding of the community and family dynamics that feed the ideologies of marriage. Results of the questionnaire are presented as pie charts, followed by discussions of the findings to capture the feelings and emotions of the participants. Some of the personal interviews and information obtained through the questionnaire point to interesting quantitative research already available through scholarly work. This chapter presents my findings against a backdrop of statistical trends which point to an interesting dynamic, media and match-making environment, especially in regards to the migration trends of Fiji Indians to Australia.

Although many questions were asked in the questionnaire, data from those that have a direct bearing on the research question are presented with relevant narratives to present the new knowledge that has been captured through this research. The central task of this study was to establish why and how Fiji Indians continue the practice of arranging marriages in an environment where globalisation and new communication technologies provide unprecedented opportunities to meet people from diverse cultures and backgrounds.

In the introductory chapter I presented the migration issues encountered during the indenture era of the late 19th and early 20th centuries which was characterised by the forced migration of people from India to Fiji.

In the years from 1987 to 2009, (which has been the focus of this study) Fiji has experienced an exodus of Indians. The community began ‘fleeing’ the country in droves to settle in Sydney, Auckland and other parts of the world to escape political and social strife. Sydney has been the focus of this study, with a brief comparison with Auckland where I conducted
some research in 2006. Qualitative interviews in Fiji in 2008 took place with a few key people, among them Professor Brij Lal of Fiji Indian descent, from the Australian National University who had, at that time moved back to Fiji. He has since been sent back to Australia in 2010 by the Frank Bainimarama regime. The visits to Auckland and Fiji have helped to frame an understanding of the migration and networking processes in the community. Auckland has been a ‘jump off’ point for many of the migrants who first went to New Zealand and moved to Australia after becoming NZ citizens or residents. The comparison has helped to understand the desire among Fiji Indians to leave Fiji. Qualitative research followed in Sydney, having established a strong platform for communication within the community through quantitative data collection and through focus group sessions mainly in Liverpool and Blacktown. In 2009 Liverpool had the largest population of Fiji Indians anywhere in the world outside of Fiji. Chapter eight captures how Liverpool has evolved as an exclusive Fiji Indian zone through an ethnographic study of the community in its daily lived experiences in the city, while presenting an insight into the processes of social, political, economic and cultural change in their new space.

**Overview of the findings**

**Questionnaire results from Sydney**

Out of the 150 questionnaires distributed among members of the community, mostly at Fiji Indian social forums, at private homes and in local spice shops in Sydney, 97 were returned. The spice shops, which I identified using the Aussie-India business and residential directory (2006-07), had the least returns at 25 out of 60. The social forums were identified using online networks and the advertisements in the ethnic media as well as posters in the local spice shops. As required of those participating in this research; all those responding to the questionnaire migrated to Sydney after 1987. Their professional status ranged from medical doctors, specialist surgeons, lawyers, accountants, chemists, bankers, financiers, business directors, teachers, nurses, computer and Information technology specialists, tradesmen to university students, small business owners/operators, factory workers, hospital maids, childcare workers and administration/office assistants. The age ranged between 20 and 82. A majority of the respondents were from the 35-60 age category. In every response, one partner had either a professional status or a self managed business enterprise.
This data is also reflected in *The Atlas of the Australian People* which, describing the Fiji Indians’ demographic profile in Sydney, states:

The recency of arrival of the bulk of the Fiji-born population is reflected in their age structure, which is predominantly concentrated in the young working age groups. Almost three quarters are aged between 15 and 49 years compared with half of the Australian born group. The recency of movement has meant that much of it has been subject to selectivity based on education and skills. Hence the population of Fijians with higher education is greater than for Australian born (16.4 with 12.7 percent), although the proportion with other post-school qualifications is slightly less. The higher education profile of the Fiji-born is not fully borne out in their socioeconomic status. Despite having the higher proportions than the Australian-born in the highest education categories, they are underrepresented in the managerial/administrative occupations category and substantially overrepresented in blue collar jobs. On the other hand, they have a similar proportion of workers in the professional/paraprofessional categories, reflecting a large number of nurses and doctors who moved to Australia, especially following the first military coup in Fiji (Atlas, 1993, p. 52).

A majority of the respondents to the survey, at 70%, consider better work opportunities as an advantage in Australia. The next most popular advantage compared with Fiji was quality medical care at 15%, welfare benefits and pension at 5%. Other advantages listed were educational opportunities, social life and a modern environment, in that order.

![Advantages of life in Australia](image_url)

**Figure 1**
This pie chart depicts answers to the question: ‘What are considered advantages of life in Australia (Sydney) compared to Fiji?’ This question was asked to gauge an understanding of the ‘attractions’ in Australia (Sydney). The statistical data and academic theory on migration from Fiji present the ‘push’ factors such as political and social problems while answers to this question represent the ‘pull’ factors in Sydney.

In his presentation of the global cultural economy, Appadurai (1990) presents the models of push and pull in migration theory as a ‘complexity of the current global economy’ having to do with certain fundamental ‘disjunctures’ between economy, culture and politics which ‘we have barely begun to theorize’ (p. 296).

As described in Chapter Three, Appadurai used the suffix ‘Scape’, which when combined with prefixes: ethno-, media-, techno-, finance-, and ideo-, offers a new framework for presenting and examining the dimensions of globalisation. Appadurai’s rhetoric helps frame an understanding of the dynamics in the Fiji Indian community in Sydney as there is overlap and connection among the prefixes. Ethnoscape, presented as a landscape of the shifting world in which we live, represents the mobile Fiji Indians who experience the realities and fantasies of this movement. Simultaneous with this movement are the expansions of ideologies (about arranged marriage) while the mediascapes enhance the distribution of these through their electronic capabilities:

What is most important about these mediascapes is that they provide (especially in their television, film and cassette forms), large and complex repertoires of images, narratives and ethnoscapes to viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of news and politics are profoundly mixed (Appadurai, 1990, pp. 298-299).

These, combined with ideoscapes, propelling ideologies about community networking and common history, creates a community that also uses fiancescapes to move money across various platforms with the aim to help families and friends left behind in Fiji. Those who have arrived and live in Sydney enjoy the opportunities to be in paid work, as shown by the 70% of participants in favour of this.

A majority of the respondents at 87% said that they missed the relaxed Fijian lifestyle in their new home in Sydney. Others missed family and friends, at 13%. All those who participated in the survey said they have made at least one return journey to Fiji, with one person returning
every six months since 1992. The reasons for these visits range from attending weddings, family holidays to funerals. A majority had returned to attend weddings. Some participants said they returned for family reunions that have included visits by families from other parts of the world. Younger participants, aged between 20 and 30, said they travelled to Fiji for cheap holidays. It is important, however, to note the age of the sample survey with the majority aged between 35 and 60. These people spent most of their childhood or adult life in Fiji, so letting go of those memories of a relaxed, carefree islander lifestyle, compared to the hustle and bustle of a metropolitan city, with competing demands from work and a new home, in many ways ‘too big’ for the community, can be overwhelming.

The question on how they met other Fiji Indians brought answers ranging from prayer meetings, weddings, social forums, spice and vegetable shops to the internet, universities and nightclubs. On media consumption, a majority uses the media for news on Fiji, entertainment (to also locate social events), seek friends and partners (through classified sections).

![Meeting other Fiji Indians](image)

**Figure 2**

This pie chart depicts the survey participants’ response to the question ‘How do you meet other Fiji Indians in Sydney?’

Prayer meetings are represented as the biggest meeting forum. This result also explains why the community, with almost half the size of the Indian population from the mainland, has
only three small temples for its community. Although Hindu temples accept devotees from all denominations without discrimination on the grounds of identity, these layers work within the Indian diaspora in subtle and visible ways. Personal narratives of those sharing their experiences of arranged marriage also point to prayer meetings and weddings as forums where they met marriage partners. Many of the survey participants also discuss the importance of prayer meetings organised by Ramayan mandalis (groups that recite the Ramayana) as an integral part of their social lives. Yet others discussed how their families see such forums as an opportunity to ‘put feelers out’ about prospective men and women for the purposes of finding a match for themselves or someone they know.

The internet, Face Book and group emails play an important role in facilitating communication, interaction and even meetings within the Fiji Indian community. Those who use these mediums on a larger scale were younger in age, between 19 and 27. This group also frequents the social forums and entertainment venues, to participate in events organised by the diaspora to celebrate festivals as well as functions organised by Indian students’ social groups at universities.

Responding to the question on arranged marriage, 54% of the respondents said that they had settled for an arranged marriage while 27% said they had a love marriage. 19% of the respondents did not answer this question. Some of those who said theirs was a love marriage, during personal interviews explained that they had to approach close friends and families to initiate proposals to their parents. This explains the long held belief in the community that couples do not bring up the questions of their own marriage to families and parents. According to the Hindu social structure, the responsibility to marry children is the first responsibility of parents. Members of the extended family help to facilitate this. Marriage becomes a much discussed topic in homes with adult children ready to be married (Pundit Narayan Bhatt: Hindu priest, Liverpool, 2009).

This view is confirmed by Nancy Netting (2010), details of which are presented in Chapter Three, whose study of arranged marriage in India demonstrates that the duty to marry daughters remains the responsibility of the father. This also explains why marriage plays a significant role as a responsibility of the elders in the Fiji Indian community.
Some of those participants who had an arranged marriage discussed how the arrangement was facilitated. A majority of the participants, whose wedding took place in Fiji more than 25 years ago, barely had the opportunity to meet or speak with their partner before the wedding ceremony. On the other hand, those who have had an arranged marriage in Sydney have used the new media technologies, including mobile phones and Face Book, to communicate with their partners while ‘dating’ them before the Hindu wedding ceremony.

Personal interview and focus group participants suggested that the system of arranging the first meeting of prospective partners by first considering compatibility systematically handicapped those who were not eligible. Women classified those who came under such a category as men not having a secure job or financial security while men presented such women as those in previous sexual relationships or those coming from parents or families stigmatised by divorce.

A group of five women at a Blacktown focus group meeting in 2008 said they met their husbands at the University of the South Pacific, during their tertiary education. Although they ‘fell in love and wanted to get married’, they had to seek out help from an older cousin, uncle or aunty to propose marriage to their parents. A Sydney Catholic High School teacher said: ‘It would have been shameful for me to tell my dad or even my mother that I wanted to get married; let alone tell them that I was in love’ (2008). Those who had an arranged marriage, said the families facilitated this and they fell in love with their partners, over time.

**Hindi cinema reinforces value system**

Hindi cinema reinforces some of these traditional beliefs and ‘fantasies’ in the community. There is a system of values that connects the plot and characters in popular Hindi films. As Nayar says:

> [l]ove, as the end product, the sought-after relationship in a film, is permissible only insofar as it leads to marriage. None of these films ever alludes to a couple’s experience of love for the sake of love alone, or romance for the experience of romance alone. It is always a means to *shaadi*, marriage (1997, p.85).

Nayar also argues that:

> all love relationships inevitably become love marriages or anticipated love marriages in an arranged marriage setting; that is the relationship is eventually approved of by the parents
or parental figure; permission and blessings are fundamentally necessary, and virtually always given on screen (p. 85).

_Bride and Prejudice_ (2004), directed by British-Indian Gurinder Chadda, clearly depicts this mindset when the main female character (Lalita), played by Bollywood screen queen Aishwarya Rai Bachan, has her mother (Mrs Bakshki) ‘talk’ to her about love coming as a later experience after an arranged marriage. She talks to Lalita who has just said no to a proposal to get married to a LA based successful Indian accountant. Mrs Bakshi says, ‘It's too, too much tension for me now. She is happy to let us all be ruined. You must speak to her old man. She wants love to be there from the beginning. Where was the love-shove when we first got married huh? Tell her, tell her that you marry first, and then love grows’. This dialogue hits the heartstrings of Indian audiences who idealise marriage while also reinforcing the value system of respecting parental authority, especially in marriage.

While the question could attract only two answers, one can either have an arranged or love marriage, 19 percent of respondents did not answer this question. This response (not answering the question on marriage) affirms my earlier concerns in Chapter Four (on methodology) that marriage is still a taboo/personal topic among Fiji Indians. For this reason many participants did not want to divulge information on how they were married. It also leads me to believe that another level of arrangement is at work, especially for those wanting to migrate, which is a ‘marriage of convenience’ which is offered by match-making agencies and migration agents. Although these areas present scope for further research, the focus of my research was to determine if and why the community continues with the practice of arranging marriage in Sydney.

The research had its limitations in this regard, as it could not establish how the marriages of those who had someone else facilitating it was made possible. With the love marriages, it also could not be established how or where the couples met.

The other more significant limitation was not being able to establish if those participating in the research had fallen in love with someone else other than their marriage partner. Further research at this deeper level will also help understand the strength of obligations to parents and family by those who are married or are contemplating taking this commitment.
Figure 3

This pie chart depicts the type of marriage the respondents to the questionnaire had.
Except for seven of the respondents all of the respondents said they had solicited partners for people they knew. The seven who did not do so fell in the 20-27 age category. Those who answered ‘yes’ to the question said they solicited partners of Fiji Indian heritage for their children, grandchildren, nephews, nieces and friends’ children. None said they did so for themselves or for anyone outside the community.

Usually older members of the community facilitate such arrangements. A Liverpool based Hindu priest said the community consults him for his religious ‘skills’ in matching compatibility.

![Figure 4](image_url)

There was a mixed response to the respondents' views on the practice of arranging marriages. A majority, at 65%, said that it was good and worked well despite other possibilities in today's modern world. The others, at 25%, voted in favour of love marriage while the remaining 10 percent said both methods worked and failed.
A majority said that the media, especially the new media environment, including telephones (mobile), the internet and Facebook help with communication in a cheaper and relaxed environment while facilitating and promoting the ideals and concepts of arranged marriage.

The respondents were divided on the question of how they would like to see their own children married. 55 percent prefers to arrange their marriage while 30 percent hope that they’ll find their own partners through love. The remaining 15 percent were ambivalent.

A majority (82 percent) of the respondents did not answer the question on whether their families preferred arranged or love marriage. The remaining 18 percent said they supported both.

**Discussion and analysis of the responses**

This questionnaire served as a sounding board to gauge the community’s level of engagement with the research topic. Through this method I was able to establish that arranging marriage is an integral part of the community’s identity building and cultural process in Sydney. It also helped to locate respondents who were willing to participate in personal interviews or in focus group meetings for the research. After the launch of the ‘Chutney Generations’ exhibition in Liverpool in 2006, I was able to initiate focus group meetings, starting in Liverpool where the four February 2007 weekends were taken up for scheduled exhibition events. At these forums, I conducted/moderated discussions on my topic.

A Sydney-born 21-year-old woman, whose father is Fiji Indian and mother an Anglo Australian, had this to say:

> I have been able to pick up on my Australian identity so easily, having been brought up here. I now am going back to my Fiji Indian roots. This is important for me as I look Indian and have very little knowledge about the Indian traditions and culture. I have met a few of my dad’s cousins. They are all lovely people and are more interested to set me up with an Indian boy than anything else. I am really open about this as I know that they will look out for the best for me (Feb, 2007: Liverpool focus group).
I followed up with this woman in 2009. At this time she was dating a Fiji Indian man, who was working in Sydney as an accountant. She was introduced to the man by her dad’s cousin who knew the man. She said:

Although marriage is on our agenda, we have to first find a place of our own. I have completed my tertiary studies and am in full time work. I need to save up enough to afford a good wedding. I am secretly waiting for him to propose ... he is taking his time. We have been dating for a few years now and know that we will settle down soon. I have been to Fiji with him for a holiday and to meet his extended families (Dec 2009).

Through focus group meetings, personal interviews and by locating the Fiji Indians’ networks, this study found 60 men and women, living in Sydney and aged between 24 and 35, who have been married within the community through an arrangement at work by their immediate and extended families or friends. This arrangement has worked as a parallel to the secret first meeting of families, practiced as a common way to arrange marriages in Fiji after the indenture era. The situation in many of the cases which have formed a part of this study was that the families or networks first ‘discovered’ the would-be-bride or groom through their connections within the community. Once information about this person’s ‘availability’ was confirmed, these networks arranged for a meeting of the two prospective partners. This meeting did not always take place in a physical place but rather was arranged via other communications mediums such as the exchange of mobile phone numbers or other means of communication such as email.

A 28 year old man, who married a 26 year old woman in Sydney in 2008, said he was introduced to his wife by a family friend. When he met her for the first time in 2006, they exchanged mobile phone contacts:

I called her first and we began talking about ourselves. We were open minded about the possibility of being together or this whole thing not working out. After the first few weeks of talking to each other on the phone, we began meeting for coffee and later lunch and dinner. We dated for two years. Our families knew about our relationship and were supportive. We decided to get married last year in April (Sydney charted accountant, 2009).

A medical lab specialist, working in Liverpool and who had graduated from a Sydney university in 2004, said she met her husband of Fiji Indian descent through a workmate (also Fiji Indian):

I came to Sydney on a student visa and completed my university studies here. My mother’s family helped me with accommodation and travel expenses during the first two years. At
the end of my studies I was able to get a permanent residency status as I scored more points for doing a science/medical degree. My families were looking for a boy for me to get married to. I was ok with this as I wanted to marry someone from Sydney but of Fiji Indian background. I did not want to go back to Fiji to find a husband as I felt that I had become modern in my thinking and lifestyle. A man living in Fiji would not have matched these changes I had experienced. I was introduced to a few men in Sydney but nothing happened; I was under a lot of pressure from my parents who work as labourers in Fiji, to get married. At one stage I became really worried as I did not seem to hit it off with the men I was being introduced to. I shared my concerns with a workmate who is also from Fiji. She introduced me to my husband (her second cousin) who works as a chartered accountant. We have been married for four years. His parents and two other siblings live and work in Sydney. My parents visit us here or we travel to Fiji as the airfares are cheap. I wanted to marry a Fiji Indian because my parents wanted me to ... they have done so much to get me to where I am. I have never actually questioned or challenged their motives to marry me to a Fiji Indian. This has been an accepted norm in my family as my two younger siblings who married before I did, found partners within our ethnic community. My sister lives in Auckland with her husband and family while my brother is happily settled in Fiji. When I was studying, I never had time to think about finding a boyfriend. All the men I got to meet would party and get drunk. I was too focused on getting my degree as I did not want to fail. I wanted to live here and become an Australian citizen. I had to work in fruit shops and other places whenever I was not studying so that I could pay my fees and other expenses. It was a real struggle but I have cleared all my financial debts to my family. I suppose all along, as I was growing up in Fiji, I was always surrounded by people of Indian background. Here at uni, when I could date, I did not have the time to do this. I do not regret this as I am happily married. My husband and I travel overseas a lot. Since being married in 2006, we have introduced two of his Fiji Indian friends from uni to two of our cousins here in Sydney. The couples are getting to know one another and will be married in 2010. Our marriage is working because we come from a similar background and understand each other as well as our extended families. We have our differences but this is mostly to do with extended family issues which we are able to resolve. I cannot imagine being married to anyone else (Greystanes woman, age 32, 2008).

This respondent’s husband, 36, said:

I met many women at university as well as in the work environment. They were nice and we dated, however, marrying them never crossed my mind as there was always so much to work on in terms of understanding them. A few of the women behaved badly and got drunk on dates, others expected me to be a ‘gentleman’ and run after them. My mummy was always telling me about all these Fiji Indian girls from good families who I could marry as I had a good job. I got to see a few of them but things did not work out. Suddenly I began to feel old and needed to be married. My cousin introduced me to her friend from work. We went out as a group of friends, for dinner one night. I began talking to my wife. Only the three of us knew about this first meeting. My wife seemed intelligent and knew what she wanted. We exchanged email addresses and phone numbers. Soon we began meeting after work. I told my mummy about my wife and my family met her at her uncle’s home in Liverpool. I travelled to Fiji with my family to get married there at a temple in Suva (Personal interview 2008).

The survey results show that young professionals are leaving Fiji for better opportunities in Sydney. All of the 97 respondents to the survey either worked as professionals or had their
partner in this category. This augurs well with Australia’s skilled migration scheme which attracted a majority of Fiji Indian immigrants after the late 1980s.

An analysis of the ethnic Indian media, especially magazines and newspapers, shows that migration agents target their advertisements at those who have the skills to qualify for migration. A few samples of such advertisements are in appendix seven. Some of the agents write regular ‘news’ columns in such media to ‘alert’ the readers on the skills in demand.

This migration pattern, as well as the political and social circumstances of Fiji Indians leading to such a situation, is summed up well by historian, Professor Brij Lal;

Many recent migrants from Fiji, though better educated, better situated, too, leave their homelands to escape discrimination and racial prejudice, to build a better future for themselves and their children. The emigration of Indo-Fijians will continue unabated, draining Fiji of the talents of its best and brightest (Lal, 2007).

The respondents, at 70 percent, saw better work opportunities as an advantage in Australia. This view is reflected in the lack of opportunity faced by the Fiji Indians after 1987 when the racially weighted Constitution favoured the indigenous Fijians in employment, education, political aspirations as well as other areas, including land ownership.

Australia’s Medicare benefits give the Fiji Indian migrants a level of security that is unmatched in Fiji. The welfare and pension benefits are also considered favourably by the migrants. These benefits provide the community with an advantage and takes away much of the financial burden, especially for those living in extended family networks and caring for aged/aging parents and grandparents.

A Blacktown couple in their 70s migrated to Australia in 1992 to join their only son who had settled in Sydney a year earlier. Their daughter, who had migrated in 1989, sponsored her parents, who upon migrating to Australia, began receiving welfare benefits. The elderly couple cared for their young grandchildren while their son and daughter-in-law took up full time work. The Blacktown man said:

I am illiterate but I am valued in Australia. In Fiji, no one cared about me – here I receive special letters for regular medical check up and get welfare benefits. I did not even pay any taxes to this country but I am being looked after so well. My wife cared for our grandchildren in Fiji but did not receive any monetary payments for being a stay at home care taker of the children. I will forever be grateful for this lifestyle I have (age 76, 2007).
The man’s daughter-in-law said she was a housewife in Fiji with no opportunity to progress professionally. Since arriving in Sydney in 1992, she has completed her tertiary education to become a school teacher. Her in-laws live with her family (husband and two children) and help with housework and childcare.

**Qualitative Research**

*Extended family networks*

At a focus group meeting in Blacktown in April 2007, a participant had this to say:

> [m]y husband suggested that we bring his mother over to Sydney six months after we migrated in 1993. I was not keen to do this as for the first time in 10 years of being married I felt liberated, living away from my in-laws and the extended family. However, I also wanted to study and work outside the home and after much discussion, we initiated paperwork to help with my in-laws’ migration to Australia. They came here for a month first and went back, not liking the place. My husband’s sister who had migrated in 1988, then came into the picture and told them to accept her proposal to sponsor them as there was no one to look after them in Fiji. They came here at the end of 1993. I was a housewife in Fiji. Since my in-laws cared for my three children, I was able to study and become a teacher. It has worked well for us as they also received welfare benefits. My mother-in-law cared for my sick father in law in his later years of life. She received a carer’s payment for this. I have been able to take special carer’s leave to take them to the doctors and for specialist consultations. My father in law passed away late last year and now my mother in law goes to live in other parts of the world with families in Canada, the US and New Zealand. My children, one of whom is married, are very attached to my mother in law (Focus group: 2007).

Other participants in this 2007 focus group also talked about their families and how common the goal is among Fiji Indians to help parents, siblings and extended families to migrate. The seven women who participated in the meeting said that they had, at some point in starting a new life in Sydney, also helped another family or individual from Fiji to settle here.

One woman said;

> [w]hen we came here in 1996, we rented a two-bedroom unit in Blacktown. We received some help from my husband’s brother who had migrated a few years before us. We had bought most of our furniture and white goods from garage sales. When we bought our own house in 2000, we gave all the old furniture and other things to a family who had just migrated from Fiji. This family was related to a common friend of ours from Fiji, living in Liverpool (personal interview, 2009).
Another woman said, ‘[w]e always recycle our clothes. I never put them in the bin as I always know someone from Fiji who will be able to make use of the clothes. I do the same with our old sheets, towels and other items, even toilet mats’. She also said:

We initially lived in a two-bedroom unit in Toongabbie when we came here in 1996. Our young children slept on mattresses in the living room for two months as my husband’s sister migrated here with her husband and baby in 1997. How could we not let them live with us as they needed help. Now she lives in a five bedroom double storey house with her in-laws and three children. My children visit her for sleepovers. She is young and relates better than me to my adult daughter. We are happy that we helped them settle in Australia (Blacktown focus group 2007).

While 87 percent of the respondents said that they missed the laid-back Fijian lifestyle, all the respondents had made at least one trip back to Fiji. Fiji is only three hours away from Sydney by plane and the airfares are among the cheapest, as low as $400 return during low travel seasons. Many families returning to Fiji prefer to spend time with their friends and families. The younger participants in the survey preferred holiday resorts and hotel accommodation. The man who returns every six months operates a business in Sydney with branches in Melbourne, Brisbane and Fiji. His trips to Fiji coincide with his other interests in community/education sponsorship programs operated by the Global Organisation for People of Indian Origin (GOPIO). GOPIO is an international organisation networking people of Indian origin from different parts of the world and looking after their welfare wherever they are settled in the world. He is also the vice president of the International Congress of Fiji Indians (ICFI). ICFI’s focus is the welfare of under privileged children in Fiji. Every year up to A$80,000 is provided to these children in the form of help.

Family reunions are also a popular social event in the lives of many Fiji Indians. Families settled in other parts of the world usually make a planned trip back to Fiji to meet up with other siblings or other family members. In 2008 the Baachu family reunion in Sydney attracted a lot of attention among Sydneysiders. The family has an internet site: 

High school social events, as well as special events at universities, also provide opportunities for people of Fiji Indian heritage to meet. In Sydney there is the Federation of Indian Students in Australia http://www.fisa.org.au/ Other internet sites like Facebook and Twitter also provide opportunities to meet those of Fiji Indian heritage. Bulk emailing within the
Indians’ networks is also another popular means to alert the community about social events such as performances and visits by Bollywood movie stars.

There are more than 70 ‘Ramayan manadalis’ (Ramayana recital religious groups) in Sydney (Jai Prasad, personal interview, 2009). These groups organise regular prayer meetings in private Sydney homes as the community has only a few temples. These groups are formed in various suburbs of Sydney. Geography and physical distance of members’ homes are a major consideration when such groups are established. Jai Prasad, who operates Radio MadhuRima out of Liverpool, makes regular announcements on his community radio station about the prayer meetings the Fiji Indians host in Sydney. Sometimes these meetings are open to the public (other Hindus) and attract gatherings of more than a few hundred people. He said:

We also regularly announce details of major religious celebrations such as Ram Naumi (Lord Rama’s birthday), Krishna Janamasthmi (Lord Krishna’s birthday), holi (festival of colour) and Diwali (festival of lights). Fiji Indians are always on the lookout for such meetings and socialising. These occasions are more a social forum than a religious celebration for many people in the community. They drink grog, make lots of food and generally celebrate the affluence they enjoy in Sydney at such gatherings. Many of those attending these gatherings, especially women, deck themselves in fine clothes and jewellery copied from the sets of Bollywood. Dressing up for such occasions in a way awakens their Indianess. Many families use such occasions as an opportunity to look for prospective marriage partners for their children. I witness such behaviour at the fashion shops I visit for advertising sales and of course capture conversations in the community at such events as well as in the shopping strips of Liverpool. Fiji Indians do not hesitate to say “if you know of a boy or girl wanting to be married, please let me know”. (Prasad, personal interview, 2009).

Apart from such religious gatherings, Fiji Indian weddings also attract families, friends and networks within the community. The average number of guests at such weddings range between 400 to 1000. Irene Prasad, a Sydney wedding planner and caterer, said:

I watch Fiji Indians’ behaviour at weddings really closely. I usually stay on at the venue to oversee that my workers do their best to put on a grand show for the bride and groom. The young women of marriage age really deck themselves with finery like Bollywood queens. They gracefully move around the hall, giggle and attract attention. When you get closer to the tables when food is being served, people ask questions like whose daughter is she, how old, what work she does, is the family contemplating marriage for her. In a similar way, boys make their presence known too. It is usually the men who accompany the groom who attract women from the bride’s side. The obvious reason is that the two parties come from separate networks of families and friends and are usually new to each other. I sometimes muse at this as so many Bollywood movies play scenes of couples falling in love at a friend or cousin’s wedding (Irene Prasad, personal interview, 2007).

There is a level of mental preparedness taking place in the heads of those going to an Indian wedding, as demonstrated in the early scenes from Bride and Prejudice where Mrs Bakshi
inspects her four daughters by lining them up prior to them going to a wedding where the groom comes from Britain with an eligible bachelor named Balraj among the groom’s men.

The following dialogue from the movie captures the feelings of Indian mothers, aunts and grandmothers who have a similar off-screen ‘talk’ with their daughters and female relatives:

“Hurry up, you silly girls! We must make sure Jaya meets this Mr Balraj from London before anyone else”.

Lalita: “All mothers think that any single guy with big bucks must be shopping for a wife”.

Jaya: “I’m embarrassed to say, but I hope he is”.

Lalita: “What, shopping or loaded?”

Jaya: “Well, both”.

In response to her younger daughter wanting to wear a low cut blouse, Mrs Bakshi says: ‘[b]ut we want Balraj to look into Jaya’s eyes, not your mames. She is our only hope ... if we do not get the eldest married first, we’ll never be able to marry the rest of you for the shame’.

When the scenes switch to the wedding hall, the bride’s friends run onto the dance floor in their Indian finery and dance to pulsating bhangra (Punjabi music), teasing the men from the groom’s party. The two groups tease and dance. The lyrics are, ‘Oh these pretty girls ... fluttering temptingly like kites without string. These girls are like naked live wires. If you get too close, you’ll get an electric shock of love’.

Many families host the wedding ceremony in Fiji and host a separate reception in Sydney. A Bella Vista woman said:

More than 40 of my immediate family members travelled to Fiji for my oldest daughter’s wedding in 2001. My son-in-law is from Fiji so it was better to have the ceremony there. We returned to Sydney two weeks after the wedding and hosted a reception with more than 450 guests at the Serbian Hall in Rooty Hill. My husband’s sister’s son met his wife at this wedding and they now have been married for five years (personal interview, 2007).
These occasions provide a rich environment for families to meet and discuss the possibilities of finding a match for their sons and daughters. It is also not unusual for members of the community to openly mention to strangers in their community that they are on the ‘look out’ for a prospective partner for people within their networks or for those they know well. One woman in an interview said:

I have been asked at least 15 to 20 times in Sydney, Auckland and in Fiji if I knew of someone wanting to be married for men and women from these locations. These questions became more frequent in situations where there was the visible and physical presence of my son (26) and daughter 21. My husband too has been ‘approached’ on several occasions regarding this matter. I have introduced eight couples through meeting families at weddings and parties. I teach at a Catholic secondary school and was recently approached by a woman who saw my friend’s daughter at a wedding anniversary party we all attended. The young man and woman are dating and I think they will be married soon as both families are happy with this union (personal interview, 2008).

Other qualitative data

Ethnography in Indian spice shops

The more than 150 Fiji Indian spice shops also provide a rich venue for meeting other Fiji Indians. The community buys its groceries, in bulk, especially staple food items such as rice, flour, sugar, lentils, oil and ghee. These are available only in the spice shops in large quantities, such as 25kg bags of rice, and these stores also stock speciality items such as Indian herbs, spices, vegetables, fish from Fiji waters, prayer items, to name a few.

Ethnographic analysis of conversations in some of the spice shops shows that shoppers in these situations easily begin conversations with those around them. These conversations begin with the Fiji Indian style of greeting ‘Namaste, Ram Ram’ and progress to questions like where the person is from in Sydney and Fiji. Since Fiji is a small country, those conversing are usually able to find family connections with others around them. Once this is done, it is not unusual for those who have just met, to begin inviting their new ‘friend’ to home events such as prayer meetings or any other calendar event.

In this age of global communications explosion, the Fiji Indians, like other communities, also use the internet to connect with people of similar heritage. Many virtual communities within this grouping have been formed to remain updated on the goings on in Fiji, and indeed, within the community settled in Sydney. A few such groups are former University of the South Pacific (USP) students, former USP academics, Lands Department workers from Fiji, Natabua High school former students, Jasper Williams former girls. The www.fijilive.com.fj
site also attracts those interested in Fiji and its people from around the globe. (Chapter Six provides a detailed analysis of this site).

Indian Associations and cultural groups at universities also provide a rich forum for those of Fiji Indian descent to meet and socialise. Some of the survey respondents said they met other people from Fiji in other social environments such as night clubs.

The research has found that the new communications environment provides the community with multiple opportunities to meet one another and also to seek out forums using the media, such as Indian ‘melas’ (gatherings), using the media. My ethnographic analysis, as well as the focus group meetings, community forums and the questionnaire, helped gauge the level of interaction within the community. Such interaction takes place in familiar social setting such as weddings and prayer meetings.

**Facilitating arranged marriage**

A Hindu priest living in Liverpool who conducts Hindu marriages as well as other prayers for the Indian community (including those from the mainland as well as Fiji) said:

> I get booked out a year in advance to perform marriages, engagements and prayers in Sydney. Fiji Indians prefer weekends for marriages while those from India rely on the auspicious times according to the Hindu calendar as well as matching the couple’s zodiac signs. During the months of January to November I perform wedding ceremonies at temples and halls. I am also a marriage celebrant and on average take responsibility for about 20 marriages each year. I would say that there is always some kind of family arrangement at work before a Hindu wedding. Sometimes even when couples have been in love, parents need to be persuaded to accept the relationship and families as well as friends fit the role of mediator. Hindu scriptures say that to achieve fulfillment in life, one needs to marry and procreate. In the pre-industrial era, begetting of children was vital for developing the ‘village’ economy through the provision of labour. Children were also the only social security in old age and sickness. For Hindus, a son has always performed the memorial rites after death; thus the obsession with marrying off their offspring. In some parts of India marriages are still arranged at an early age for children, in many cases before puberty. All this has changed in modern cities like Sydney, however, when performing marriage rites, I always get asked to ascertain compatibility through astrology. As someone performing marriage rites in a religious contest, it is my utmost goal to ensure there is compatibility socially, spiritually, mentally, sexually and economically. Our contemporary society is conditioned with romantic ideas of marriage based on love and sex. Love is such a transient condition. There is no guarantee of success (Narayan Bhatt, personal interview, 2008).

Another priest from Green Valley in Liverpool explained:

> Hinduism, as a complete science of spirituality provides an objective means whereby optimum capability can be ascertained in marriage partnerships through astrology. Hindu
marriages are intended to be a permanent arrangement and should only be contracted when there is the highest degree of compatibility. The timing of the wedding is also important as incompatibilities in couples can be improved by timing the wedding well, taking into account the traditional Hindu calendar. The most auspicious months are March to September. Compatibility is the reason why arranged marriages have been popular among Hindus, especially Fiji Indians, even to this day. When evaluating compatibility, families look for such attributes as the man’s ability to support his wife. Support in religious context is to keep her well supplied with anna (food), vastra (clothing) and abushana (ornaments). The woman is also expected to be compatible with domestic virtues, being able to expend her husband’s wealth, social skills (fit in with her new family), spiritually (be able to perform regular prayers or lead these), mentally (be stable in her commitment to the new relationships), sexually and economically (Sada Nand, Hindu priest, personal interviews, 2009, 2011).

Responding to my questionnaire, 56 percent of the respondents said that they had settled for an arranged marriage. This arrangement either took place in Fiji where the couple had been married and lived before migrating to Sydney or in Sydney. The questionnaire did not ask the participants to specify why they had agreed to an arranged marriage. My main reason for excluding this question was to gain a better insight into the issue through personal interviews rather than seek a closed (yes/no) answer on paper. The other more crucial point in this was the difficulty I initially faced in getting the target survey participants to even engage with the topic. Marriage is a personal, and to a large extent taboo, topic among many Fiji Indians. As the aim of this research was to understand why the community had continued with the age old practice of arranging marriage, I did not want to jeopardise my position as a researcher by asking this question on paper and putting off prospective participants.

**Qualitative Findings**

*Tracing generations of families in arranged marriage*

Out of these 56 percent respondents, many agreed to an interview by providing additional information (their contact details) in their response. All, however, said that the arrangement (of their marriage) was facilitated by a third party rather than the couple themselves. One woman said:

I was introduced to my husband of nine years by my father’s former sugar mill workmate from Fiji. My husband lived in Fiji with his widowed mother and worked as a qualified motor mechanic. I worked as a medical lab assistant in North Ryde, Sydney. My dad runs his own business and was keen to marry me to a decent Fiji Indian boy. I had met a few men in Sydney from various ethnicities and never considered any of them as prospective husbands because I knew my parents would help me to find a good partner. My parents had seen/met my husband in Fiji and were making enquiries about him through a family in Sydney. The family in Sydney visited us at our home during a prayer meeting. The woman from this family is my husband’s sister’s sister in law. I also visited them a few times to get to know them and know a bit more about my husband before I met him in Fiji. When I
met him, there was a sort of natural attraction. I liked him and we went out on sightseeing tours a few times. I trusted my parents’ and my own judgement and agreed to marry him. We were married in Fiji in 2001 and I stayed with his family for a few months. By that time my parents had returned to Sydney. I got to know his mother and sisters really well. He came to Sydney with me after three months. We first rented a small unit in Harris Park and then bought our home after a year, in Blacktown (Blacktown woman, 2008).

This woman has been married for nine years. The couple has two children aged eight and four. In 2004 her older brother was married under similar circumstances to a woman from Suva, Fiji’s capital. He was introduced to his wife by his mother’s sister who lives in Nadi:

When I first met my wife, I knew that she would make me happy. She was this shy pretty woman with a fixed smile. The more I got to know her, the more I wanted to be with her. I made a few trips back to Fiji and we finally decided to get married. Prior to meeting her, I had a few flings with women from Anglo Australian background. My mum always wanted a bahu (daughter in law) with a Fiji Indian background. She always encouraged me to go on trips to Fiji. In a way, an ideal situation was created for me to fall in love. I reached a stage when I really wanted to be with my wife and asked my families to get us married. My in-laws were a bit conservative and would not allow my wife to hang out with me. We had our Hindu wedding ceremony in Fiji and a reception/party in Sydney. I have now been married for four years (Bella Vista man, 34, 2008).

In 2010, the couple had two children and was living in an apartment in Blacktown. The mother of the above two respondents, reflecting on her children’s marriages and her own arranged marriage in Fiji, said:

My marriage was arranged by an elderly man from our village. We called him grandfather (not related to us). I was 19 and my husband was 22. Both his parents had died and he had a good job at the sugar mill in Labasa. His family wanted him to get married so that his wife could look after his younger siblings. My father agreed to visit his home and see him. Upon his return to our home that afternoon, my father told my mother that someone was coming to see me the next day. I didn’t know what to think. I went ahead with what my parents asked me to do. I took a tray with glasses of juice and some sweets when the visitors arrived. My husband liked me and my father liked him. We were married four months later. When I came to his home as a new bride, life was tough. I had to do a lot of housework and cook for all his brothers and sisters. They all were educated and a few of them now live as grandparents in Australia. Soon after we migrated to Australia in 1988, we sponsored a few of his siblings to come here. My children were aged six, four and two. One of my husband’s sisters also took her son to Fiji to get married in 2003. Her son and daughter in law have three children and have been happily married for six years. As for my two older children, they did not find anyone here in Sydney. My son brought home a few girls during his university days. They were goris (white). They did not match our expectations of a daughter in law as they were outgoing and party girls. My husband and I wanted a domesticated girl who would be a homemaker first. We have an only son who will take care of our business and the properties we own in Sydney. A Fiji Indian girl from a good family was more suitable. I always reminded my son of our expectation. In the beginning it was really difficult to convince him as he was going out with his group of friends, staying at his friends’ homes or going to the city. After my daughter, who is younger than him, was married, he began to do things with my son in law who had just arrived from Fiji. My husband’s younger brother also spoke to my son several times to remind him of the responsibilities he has. My son also had a long-term gori girlfriend. She cheated on him and this also put him off. For more than a year he did not date anyone. Around this time we were going to my sister’s daughter’s wedding in Fiji. My son came
along and was introduced to his wife by my sister. I now have four grandchildren (two each for my son and daughter). I take care of them during the week when my children work. In the weekends I visit my friends and families. My husband is semi-retired. None of our children live with us. We have such a huge house but it is good for the grandchildren as they have lots of space. Our youngest daughter is also married to a Fiji Indian man who lived in Sydney. They had been in love for several years and got married this year (Personal interview 2008).

Mothers ‘rein in’ their sons through marriage

A Liverpool woman said her 34 year old son had been dating a few Anglo Australian women at different times during his university days:

He would hang out with these gori (white) girls and I would have sleepless nights thinking what I would do if the girl became pregnant. It was so hard for me to accept this lifestyle where the girls would come to our home, eat with us and just be stuck in his room. Sometimes he would leave home after the early hours of the morning to drop off his girlfriend. I prayed so much and saw a pundit (priest) to get help and bring him back on track. People in my community were ‘talking’ about my son and I was ashamed to go anywhere. I asked my families in Sydney and in Fiji to find a good girl for him. At first he would not even hear me out. We got our extended families involved so my older brother and my husband’s younger brother came over and talked sense into his head. We then went to Fiji for my sister’s son’s wedding. My son came along and at that wedding we saw the bride’s younger cousin. She was pretty, well mannered, educated and my son began to show interest in her as I told him that I liked her. We went back to Fiji two months later to talk to her family about the possibility of marriage for my son. In the meantime, my sister had done a lot of mediating for the two families by providing information about both families to each other. Within six months they were married. We went to Fiji for the Hindu wedding and had the reception/party here in Sydney. In the beginning (for three years) they lived with us. This was important as I was able to help my daughter-in-law to understand my son and his outgoing nature. I was also able to enforce the sense of responsibility in my son by restricting him from too much socialising. Since he was married I made sure his wife went with him when he went out at night. Now they live in their own home a few houses away from us, with their seven month old son. I have a really close bond with my daughter-in-law. She comes from a poor family in Fiji and is hard working. She understands our family values and shows a lot of respect to us. My husband especially is really fond of her and our grandson (personal interview, 2008).

Another respondent from Liverpool shared similar stories about her son who has been married for ten years (and has three children) and her divorced daughter:

Our son used to be away from home for days with his Aussie friends. My husband used to be always angry as he had a good job and was well known in the community. Our son was bringing shame to the family. I stay at home and look after my mother in law who is 92 and three nephews who get dropped at our home by their parents who live in the Green valley district, close to our street. These are my husband’s two brothers’ children. My sisters in law work outside the home. We were getting sick of our oldest son’s bad behaviour of getting drunk, not coming home at night and hanging out with his friends. I spoke to my youngest sister in law about getting him married so that he would take up some responsibility. She had her distant cousin’s daughter in Fiji who could be a possible match. We all went to Fiji to attend my husband’s sister’s daughter’s wedding and saw the girl. My son agreed to visit her after much family drama. My daughter in law is a stay-at-home mum. She has three boys, aged, 9, 7 and 5. They live close to us and my grandchildren run across the street to visit us every day. My youngest son dated a girl of Fiji Indian decent whose parents came to Sydney as professionals. She was born here but
speaks Fiji Hindi and is culturally mannered with our traditions and customs. She works as a qualified nurse and they have two children. They were married in 2004 in Sydney. Both our sons live with their own families. Our house with four bedrooms and large living spaces downstairs and a master bedroom with kitchen and living spaces upstairs feel empty at night when everyone, including my grandchildren goes back to their homes. Our daughter, who is our second child, married a man she met at work in Sydney. He also was Fiji Indian but the marriage did not work. They separated for a year and were divorced in 2005. We worry about her as she lives at home with us. She does not want to be married. She is 34 years old and I am asking around within my close families and friends to find a man for her. Perhaps a divorcee without children would be good for her. We read through the advertisements placed by parents and those looking for marriage partners in the local Fiji Times and other magazines. We made a few phone calls but the men are old; in their late 40s with children.

My husband is semi retired and we often travel to Fiji and India as well as the US, Canada and New Zealand for holidays and to visit families who have settled in these places except India. My oldest daughter in law worked really hard to make her marriage work as our son had gone off track with his drinking and bad company. He started to change his ways after their first boy was born. Last year our daughter in law went on a holiday with the two younger boys to the US. Our son looked after the oldest child at night while I cared for him when our son was at work. We often reflect on how we managed to get our son out of trouble at the right time. Marriage helped him come to his senses. There was compatibility in their marriage partnership. Our bahu (daughter-in-law) is hard working and keeps the family together. She is committed to the relationship and comes from a good, educated and caring family in Fiji. She sometimes sends us home cooked sweets and food via her children who spend a lot of time at our home. I don’t think any Anglo-Australian girl would have been able to put up with my son’s bad behaviour in the earlier years of their marriage. Today our daughter in law is in full control of everything. When their youngest son begins attending primary school, she will work full time as a childcare professional. She has managed to complete her studies in the area through TAFE and university. I supported her by looking after the children and cooking for her family on the days she was studying. She appreciates us. We have had our differences but there has not been any major crisis as they began staying on their own when their oldest son was three. She has her freedom and space and we have ours (personal interview, 2008).
Chapter summary

The research findings demonstrate that there are many layers of family and community networks at play in the life of Fiji Indians. Success of marriage is seen as an art, a skill, towards which there is commitment from those who have reached a marriageable age, as well as senior (mostly married) couples within the immediate and extended families. Hindu priests conducting the marriage ceremonies and acting as celebrants also play a significant role in the matching of couples and ensuring their compatibility before they take the solemn vows to be husband and wife. Many of the attitudes towards arranged marriages are conditioned through family experiences and values, as evident from the details provided by some of the survey participants who had accepted an arranged marriage for themselves and later applied similar concepts while attempting to find partners for their children. Fear of failure could be a factor contributing to the Fiji Indian mind set to arrange marriages to ensure all areas of compatibility are considered.

The dramatic changes in the dynamics of community and communication via various methods such as mobile phones and email facilitate better, quicker and regular communication. These in turn help consolidate relationships that may have initially been arranged by members of family and friends. Affluence and easy, cheap travel also help with pushing boundaries to uncover possibilities. As presented in some of the participants’ narratives, many families travel to Fiji to ‘find’ partners for their children. There are also narratives by some female participants who took their sons to be married in Fiji which adds an interesting layer to the equation on marriage-migration. Marriage is seen as an investment by the community and while much is at stake in terms of values and morality, there is a lot of risk taking by facilitating marriages with those outside people’s immediate and familiar networks, especially from Fiji where many changes are taking place, affecting attitude and behaviour.

The advantage of arranged marriages is that it is easy to trace family origins back to Fiji and use familiar networks to ensure compatibility of the couples in a marriage proposal. Members of the community take advantage of Sydney’s complex, multicultural make-up and its fast pace with advancements in technology and transportation, all of which help promote activities related to seeking partners of similar background. The ideologies of marriage are realised through various factors which are presented through this chapter, such as that the
younger generations’ combined hegemonic values with romantic notions, a situation possible to achieve through the modern media communications. Appadurai’s (1996, 2004, 2007) models work well for the community; in that the encounter of the global and indigenous play out variously (1996), influenced by the global economy and transnational flows and vitality of local traditions (2004) and through ‘imagination to hope’ as the cornerstone of sustainable social change (2007). The next chapter examines the role different media (including Bollywood movies) play in the community, and how these media facilitate marriage within the community.
CHAPTER SIX

Media (and Bollywood): Middle Agents in Marriage

This chapter explores the Sydney media environment for Fiji Indians and the ways in which these media help to create a separate identity while facilitating match making, marriage and migration to Australia. The community’s desire to cross borders, as a solution to Fiji’s ongoing political strife, has led to an interesting ‘hook-up’ between the 21st century media and migration. The media and migration work both as separate entities and combined elements in facilitating match-making in the community. Presenting a textual analysis of media forms combined with an investigation of the media’s reception and appropriation in the Fiji Indian community, this chapter also presents the role of the media in the cultural divide between South Asian and Fiji Indians. Sydney’s South Asian Indians are skilled professionals from the upper echelons of India’s caste system. For many of them, the class and caste system are applicable in their new environment, and to some extent they apply these, especially in their dealings with Fiji Indians. This knowledge also helps frame an understanding of why Fiji Indians look within their own networks for marriage partners.

Globalisation and the ‘dot.com’ era, with information saturation, have taken a strong hold on the way the world communicates, and while access to news and information is almost instantaneous as stories break and events happen, the global scale shift in media consumption and engagement is giving rise to an interesting community of media practitioners who operate a thriving business. These businesses capitalise on the growth markets in communities such as Fiji Indians that have little recognition by the mainstream presses because of their small scale existence. These media, in the form of magazines, newspapers, radio, website, business directories (to name a few), are vibrant and allow people of this common culture and heritage to locate one another and to socialise while ‘looking out’ for a possible marriage match. Such media also provides the community with a powerful voice.

The second half of this chapter explores how the community uses the media, and particularly Bollywood movies, to continue its cultural practices and maintain links with its Indian heritage. The influence of film, especially Bollywood, is presented through the collective fantasy which allows the community to copy on-screen scenes and plots in their daily lives. To understand the role of the media in arranged marriages, it is also important to see how
Bollywood influences the Fiji Indian consciousness. The popularity of Bollywood movies and its widespread consumption by the community makes a significant contribution towards the community’s identity with Hindu cultural practices, especially among those who display their rich media-ethnography through their habitation, ethnicity and social class. There are two primary options for seeing the consumption of Indian movies in Australia as indicative of a relationship between media-use and community. The first is a media-ethnography approach, where the relatively discrete community is established, in terms of proximate habitation, ethnicity or social class, that also displays a high incidence of Indian movie viewing. Media practices within this group can be analysed in order to make a cultural assessment of that community. Their level of consumption of such media is evident from the racks of Indian videos and DVDs in the Fijian-Indian grocery stores which are full of Bollywood-centred entertainment and dance events staged for the younger generation (Ray, 2000). Also, from early 2004, cinema houses in Sydney, especially in Liverpool, Blacktown, Castle Hill and Fairfield, have begun screening some Bollywood movies.

Marshall McLuhan, the man who coined the phrase ‘the medium is the message’, said:

All media work us over completely. They are so persuasive in the personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical and social consequences that they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered. “The medium is the message” proposes that an understanding of social and cultural change is impossible without knowledge of the way media work as environments. All media are extensions of some human faculty - psychic or physical. (1967, p. 26)

McLuhan presented the ‘medium as the message’ as the various ways human beings ‘extend’ themselves, and how these extensions affect human relationships with one another. Extension occurs, he argued, when an individual or group makes or uses something in a way to extend the range of the human mind or body in a new fashion. The way the media is presented today in its various forms means it has become an extension of man’s capabilities. The audiences or the masses such media reaches also become a powerful extension of the thoughts or views expressed, and the information being presented. The media then becomes a powerful extension of the human mind. McLuhan believed that with such technology as television, computers, radio, the internet and telephone, man had created a global village. Using media such as computers and television extends the human sight worldwide, and increases links
making communication with someone on the other side of the world like communicating with someone in our own village.

For the Fiji Indians, their ethnic media provides an extension of its community’s relationships through stories and advertisements that affect them directly. These stories appear as sets of advice on migration matters, the political situation in Fiji, any changes to Australia’s immigration policy or legislation as well as numerous advertisements promoting businesses being run by members of the community. The advertisements relevant to this research are those seeking marriage partners within the community, as discussed later in this chapter.

Extending McLuhan’s framework, Appadurai (1990), using MediaScapes, argues that the term refers to both the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazine, television stations, film production studios, etc.) which are now available to a growing number of private and public interests throughout the world and to the images of the world created by these media (p. 298). MediaScapes is the flow of images and information through print medium, TV and films. This concept is connected to McLuhan’s notion of the global village, as Appadurai’s five scapes share the common feature that no borders, boundaries or limits are impenetrable.

Although the global village can be a reminder that media create communities with, as Meyrowitz says in his book titled *No Sense of Place* (Meyrowitz, 1985), the world we live in now seems rhizomic (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987), even schizophrenic, calling for theories on rootlessness, alienation, and psychological distances between individuals and groups, on the one hand and fantasies (or nightmares) of electronic propinquity on the other (Appadurai, 1996). These theories reflect the problem of the cultural aspects of this research, that is, the identity formation through marriage by using the media in the Fiji Indian community.

The director of the BBC Global News Division, Richard Sambrook (2006), publicly proclaimed that news organisations ‘don’t own the news anymore’ (qtd. in Allan, 2006, p. 169), while simultaneously presenting the realities of the lack of control by the media on what the public knows. The world where a select group of powerful media controlled information flow has almost vanished and has been replaced by unlimited, readily available information. News Corporation’s president and chief operating officer, Peter Cherin (2006), on the other hand, says that ‘traditional media is not dead [...] the media industry stands at the
dawn of a new golden age, fuelled on the demand side by ever-more discerning consumers, and on the supply side by fresh thinking, new products and oceans of new content (qtd. in Allan, 2006, p. 170). Both agree that the networked digital future is driving the industry forward.

Cherin argues that new technology, far from being a threat, offers a solution to an old problem for the media:

> Our businesses were built on our ability to enlighten, entertain and educate - whether through the pages of a novel, the images on a screen, or the facts in a news broadcast. We exist to connect masses of people with compelling content. Yet throughout history, our power to achieve that mass connection has been limited by distribution constraints - prohibitive costs, hard to reach locations, sluggish technology (Wall Street Journal 2006).

People increasingly want their ‘news on demand’ says Nikesh Arora who operates Google’s Europe operations. ‘They want control over their media instead of being controlled by it’ (qtd. in Allan, 2006, p. 177). These arguments sit well with the Fiji Indians’ consumption of their ethnic media and their use of the new media technologies to communicate. The special breed of ‘prosumers’ (Hjorth, 2007) referred to in Chapter Three thus becomes relevant to the community’s experiences in the changing media landscape.

This argument then leads onto the idea of news value as complex and changing, and particularly when scholars are talking about connectivity and conversation, opposed to debate where two sides of the coin were presented when providing news and information. These conversations, argue Anderson, Dardenne and Killenberg (1994 and 1997), Carey (1995 and 1997) and Benesh (1998), present audiences as citizens and participants rather than mere consumers. Public journalism thus allows members of the public to discuss topics that are important to them. In a way, this is not new. It returns to the spirit of journalism practices in the 1950s and 60s where news values were influenced by conversations with ordinary people rather than the current trend in mainstream media where public relations spin doctors set the news agenda.

Other scholars from liberation theory define this development of journalism as interactive, advocative, educational and ethnographic medium, aimed at building self-reliance and democracy in the community. This style of journalism thus gives the marginalised minorities and underprivileged the chance to share information with fellow citizens (see Hedebro, 1982,
All these arguments show that news value depends on cultural factors and proximity to the audience. Stuart Hall (1992) uses the term ‘hegemony’ when arguing that the media reinforces rather than reflects the leading class ideology to the audiences. He says the media produces ‘consent’ rather than ‘reflects consensus’. Noam Chomsky and Edward S Herman, in *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media, the propaganda Model* (1988), argue that news is structured through advertising, media ownership, government sourcing and others forms to create an inherent conflict of interest which acts as propaganda for undemocratic forces. They view the media as business – interested in the sale of a product.

Koch describes news as a ‘window on the world [...] but like any frame that delineates the world, the news frame may be considered problematic. The view through the window depends upon whether the window is large or small, has many panes or few, whether the glass is opaque or clear (1990, p. 20). Underwood (1993), on the other hand, argues that journalists are not impartial observers, while Cohen (1963) says that the media’s greatest power is telling people what to think about, not what to think. These observations, in some way, point to the realities of the dynamic Indian media scene in Sydney and the way the Fiji Indian community engages with it in relation to marriage and migration.

**The Indian Diaspora in Australia**

Australia’s population was projected to be at 22,032,167 on October 28, 2009. Net Overseas Migration (NOM) contributed 63 percent while natural increase made up 37 percent of this growth. This projection was based on the estimated resident population at March 31, 2009 and assumed a growth since then of one birth every minute and 44 seconds, one death every three minutes and 39 seconds, a net gain of one international migrant every one minute and 53 seconds, leading to an overall growth of 2.1 percent during the 12 months ending March 31, 2009 (ABS 2009).

The Indian population in the State of New South Wales where Sydney is the largest city was 87,000 in July 2009. People of Fiji Indian heritage made up 29,000 of this total Indian population. The states of Victoria and Queensland each have 8000 and 9000 Fiji Indians respectively, with 53,000 (Victoria) and 11,000 (Queensland) Indians from the subcontinent.
People of Indian origin contribute to the pot of cultural milieu in cosmopolitan Sydney through their colourful visual display of ‘sarees’, ‘bindies’, bangles, ‘chapals’, foods and spices, as well as Bollywood posters, especially in cities and towns where the people of Indian heritage live in clusters. They also organise their social events and celebrations of religious events such as ‘Holi’ and ‘Diwali’ with much pomp and ceremony. These highlights on the Hindu/Indian calendar bring out the radiant colours and fragrances popular with the Indian culture. The Indians’ consumption of diasporic videos, Bollywood movies, television, cinema, music, the use of the World-Wide Web as well as the ethnic media, helps create their own identities in a setting juxtaposed with multiculturalism. Fiji Indians, displaced from homeland by migration, educational, business and economic imperatives use the media to negotiate the complexities of settling in Sydney. The pathways by which these media travel from Indians in a global, transnational mode in Australia to their multifarious destinations reflects their yearning to maintain their ‘Indianess’ while attempting to create their own identity in a multicultural setting.

**Sydney’s Indian Media**

Numerous magazines, newspapers and commercial/community radio stations that cater for the Indian market has sprung up in Sydney over the past two decades. The most popular magazines for the Indian community in Sydney include the *Fiji Times, India Times, Indian Downunder, Indian Link, Indian Post, Navtarang, Masala Times, The Indian Sub-Continent Times* and *The Indian*.

Radio, as an immediate, inexpensive, portable, and intimate medium has created its own niche through three 24-hour Hindi stations in the *Indian Link FM, Navtarang* and *MadhuRima*. There are half a dozen other radio stations that provide segments of Hindi programs featuring entertainment/cultural enlightenment (in the form of ‘bhajans’ - religious songs and songs from Bollywood movies), news as well as the latest information from the sets of Bollywood. These community radio stations provide programs in Hindi from two to 10 hours on various days. SBS radio provides a national, hour-long Hindi program three times a week, with repeat sessions, while SBS television occasionally screens Bollywood movies as do some of the commercial TV stations.
Sydney based organizations, such as the international network GOPIO (Global Organization for People of Indian Origin), look after the Indians’ welfare. The ICFI (International Congress of Fiji Indians) also focuses on the welfare of under privileged children in Fiji. Every year up to $AUD 80,000 is provided to these children in the form of help for education. The Australian Hindu Educational & Cultural Society helps in providing a place of worship for the Hindus. It is planning to construct an aged care facility and a multi-purpose hall to cater for Fiji Indians. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) promotes Hinduism by uniting different Hindu groups. These groups organise fundraising events in Sydney and target the Indian community through advertising in the ethnic media as well as through direct marketing via the World-Wide Web. The Fiji Indians are also making an impact on the physical landscape in Sydney through their community style living in cities like Liverpool and Blacktown. The indenture era led to people from all castes living together and inter-marrying. Many of the labourers lost trace of their castes, which to some extent leads South Asian Indians to look down upon the Fiji Indians. Prasad (2002) describes Fiji Indians as a casteless society, unlike India, which has an inherent and accepted caste system. Ghosh agrees that the South Asian Indian view is that, ‘Indo-Fijians are very much Fijian [...] the difference is in their physical identity’ (personal interview, 2000). Anil Singh, a Fiji Indian dentist, says, ‘[t]hey smile and talk to you, the first question being: “What state do you come from?”’. The minute you say you are from Fiji, their faces drop and they drop you like a hot potato’ (personal interview, 2000).

The level of difference in caste as well as hierarchical order keeps the two sets of Indian communities separate in Sydney. This level of separateness is evidenced in the radio and print news media that target the separate groups of Indians, and this is examined later in this chapter.

The post indenture days saw Indians settle in clusters in Fiji. This pattern was a repeat of the indenture days when they were kept separate from the native Fijians in coolie lanes (rows of low cost housing for the cheaply hired unskilled labourers). The Indians also joined the workforce and were able to borrow from the banks and prosper and this led to tensions with Fijians. A form of indigenous nationalism developed, leading Fijian leader Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna to declare that, ‘[t]he Indian community, having shown us the way and given us the example, can hardly expect to continue to hold all agricultural land in the sugar districts
where the plough mints money’ (qtd. in Norton, 1977, p. 43). The British Colonial Sugar Refining Company, also concerned with the lesser productive Fijian farmers, warned government that:

We cannot view with equanimity the disruption of the peasant system which has cost us so much patient effort and expenditure to establish. The development of individualism among the Fijians is accompanied by a growing disinclination to part with their land, which is often provocative of great hardship, especially to small Indian agriculturalists (Norton, 1977, p. 42).

This situation was exacerbated when this fear climaxed in the May 14, 1987 coup staged by Rabuka, ostensibly because the ‘taukei’ (indigenous Fijians) felt they had to act in the name of their country. By then the Indian population was 52 percent and Fijian 48 percent. Fenton’s 1999 study found that the Fijian experience was shared with other countries with a British colonial past such as Malaysia and Trinidad.

In the case of Malaysia and Fiji there is a strong surviving indigenous people who have seen themselves as being in danger of being displaced by successful descendants of migrant groups (Fenton, 1999, p. 40).

**The Australian migrant experience for Fiji Indians**

Fiji Indian immigrants do not see themselves as Australian either, mainly because they still feel connected to Fiji, which holds a rich record of their small and humble beginnings as a community. They see themselves as a class of their own, and in many ways (especially through media frames), want to keep this identity. Their unique history and identity is under more threat in Sydney’s melting pot of cultures than it was in Fiji where Fijians were the only significant ‘other’. A headline in the *Sunday Times* (26 September, 1999) in Fiji aptly read: ‘Aust Indians Face Identity Crisis’. The story described how the Fiji Indians were working against many odds in a Western culture to recreate an identity for themselves and their children (p. 3).

A majority of the Fiji Indians have settled in Liverpool and Blacktown in Sydney. Liverpool’s Northumberland Street and George Street together host more than 50 Fiji Indian owned businesses. The five major places of birth for Liverpool residents are in order, Fiji, Vietnam, Iraq, Lebanon and the Philippines (Macleod, 2008). Using the Liverpool City Council’s data, Macleod estimated the Fiji Indian population at 5000. Media producer, Jai
Prasad, who operates the 24-hour Hindi Radio *MadhuRima* located in Notherumberland Street, Liverpool estimates there are more than 40,000 people of Fiji Indian heritage in and around Liverpool (personal interview, 2011). In 10 years to 2006, Liverpool experienced the largest population growth in the state of New South Wales, with 44,767 additional people, making the total population 164,603. Blacktown was next with 40,109 (Liverpool City Council 2009). Macleod, a historian, found in her 2008 research that a majority of migrants chose Liverpool to build a home so that they could be close to people from their communities and country. To some extent this is a practical approach and common among other migrants. Ray (2000) suggests there is an economic component to this phenomenon.

In Sydney, the professional Fiji Indians are scattered all over the city while those in blue-collar jobs tend to concentrate in one of two regions. In the immediate years after the coup, they concentrated in the Campsie region of Sydney. Later, Liverpool, and to some extent Bankstown, were the two suburbs to which a majority of the working class Indians have moved. (161)

Living close to family helps migrants not only to navigate their way around but provides much needed moral support and help with issues like childcare. Many elderly parents and grandparents help with childcare for the community. This close-knit environment has reinforced the idea of exclusive media outlets. The owners/publishers of the various media have capitalised on this trend to market their products.

A majority of the Fiji Indian businesses on Northumberland and George streets are Indian grocery shops that sell food items such as rice and flour in 20 kg bags, as well as lentils and spices in bulk. Other items they specialise in include foods from Fiji such as root crops dalo and cassava (similar in their bland taste to potato and staples in the indigenous Fijian diet), fish from Fiji waters and other sea foods as well as prayer goods such as incense sticks, camphor, statues of Hindu Gods and Goddesses, to name a few. Fashion houses featuring the latest outfits from the sets of Bollywood are also have a presence while businesses like travel agencies, restaurants, legal and accounting firms, real estates as well as media stations have all mushroomed around the Fiji Indian presence in these streets. Every business visited as part of this research had a small section on the cash out counter carrying business cards of other Fiji Indians’ businesses such as panel beaters, motor mechanics, tile layers, dance
teachers, party/wedding decorators and caterers, to name a few. The windows of many of these shops also carry posters featuring recent community events or celebrations.

Although a majority of the migrants fled from Fiji under a condition of crisis, they have not detached from their past. Memories of Fiji are real and fresh and have become an active and constructive process of remembering. Unlike India, Fiji is three hours away from Sydney by plane and many migrants have made at least one return trip home. Unlike their indentured ancestors (who were from the lower castes and farming communities), the Fiji Indian migrants had a prosperous life and status in Fiji. They had power over Fiji’s economic base as well as education. To let go of those ‘good old days’ and close families back in Fiji is not an easy ask.

For the adult migrants, magazines like the Fiji Times provide a meaningful link to news back home including political news. Teenagers see the ethnic media as a socialising agent. The media sample for this work was drawn from online, print and broadcast outlets. A comparative study of mainstream and suburban publications was conducted to analyse how these media catered for the news of the migrant Fiji Indians. A study of the ethnic Indian media, across the Tasman, in Auckland and in Fiji (of www.fijilive.com) presents the media as a facilitator of marriage within the community as well as a source of information on migration and community building activities. Apart from content analysis, interviews were conducted with the editors/publishers, as well as radio station owners/managers of some of the media, to gauge their understanding of who their audiences are and what they want in terms of news or information.

Sample audiences were also interviewed, as were some owners/managers of spice shops who are the distribution agents for the magazines. Some shopkeepers also sell the radios/decoders for the Hindi programs.
Table 1. Ethnic Indian Print Media in Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Publication Schedule</th>
<th>Place of Publication</th>
<th>Editor / Owner / Publisher</th>
<th>Circulation</th>
<th>History</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Fiji Times</em></td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Campsie, NSW</td>
<td>Nick Kumar</td>
<td>10,000+</td>
<td>1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bharat Times</em></td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>West Footscray, VIC</td>
<td>Dinesh Malhotra</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Hindi Samachaar Patrika</em></td>
<td>First Monday of each month</td>
<td>Kingswood, NSW</td>
<td>Paras Ram Maharaj</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Indian Downunder</em></td>
<td>8 times a year</td>
<td>Thornleigh, NSW</td>
<td>Neena Badhwar</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Indian Link</em></td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Market Street, Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>Rajni Anand and Pawan Luthra</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Indian Post</em></td>
<td>Monthly (third week)</td>
<td>Strathfield, NSW</td>
<td>Rekha Bhatta</td>
<td>7000</td>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Indian Sub-continent Times</em></td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Wentworthville, NSW</td>
<td>Ashok Kumar</td>
<td>7000</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Indo Times</em></td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Thomastown, VIC</td>
<td>Taswinder Singh</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Indian Voice</em></td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Bent Street, Bentleigh, VIC</td>
<td><a href="http://www.indianvoice.net">www.indianvoice.net</a></td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Navtarang</em></td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Liverpool, NSW</td>
<td>Prakash Chandra</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Punjab Express</em></td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Holbeche Road, Arndell Park, NSW</td>
<td>Rajwant Singh (published by Indian Media Group)</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>India Week</em></td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>Wigram Street, Harris Park, NSW</td>
<td>Raj Singh</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Masala Times</em></td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Quakers Hill, NSW</td>
<td>Surinder Singh</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Punjab Times</em></td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>Harpeet Singh</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Indian</em></td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>York St, Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>Rohit Revo</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A dozen of the ethnic papers are published in NSW while three are published in Victoria. Seven of the publications also have an online edition, while Navtarang and Indian Link also operate 24 hour commercial radio stations.

Rajni and Pawan Luthra say the Indian Link is the most prominent voice of the Indian community in Australia. As the leading newspaper, the Indian Link has set new standards in journalism and production. It reaches thousands of homes and has become an integral part of lives of people from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Fiji, Nepal and Bangladesh. Growing in its scope and influence, the Indian Link is now more than the voice of the community. It is a vehicle for change and a voyage of discovery. Thanks to its rich and varied editorial content, the Indian Link has a big and loyal reader base that includes educated professionals, housewives, senior citizens and the young Australian born-Indians. In a recent report by the Circulation Audit Board (CAB) the Indian Link was by far the leader in the market.

In September 2002, Indian Link Radio hit the airwaves offering a mix of entertainment and information, local and overseas. Advertising makes up more than two thirds of each publication evaluated and advertorials constitute news in the majority of the mediums. Editors/announcers apply their own level of restraint when it comes to the ‘checks and balances’ in disseminating information, be it news or advertising. A few of the magazines run copy written by either advertisers or politicians, without any editing. Others use their publications to promote their own business such as migration agencies. Nick Kumar says that his frustration is competing with the media that do not adhere to journalistic standards, ‘[t]he ethnic media is not a journalistic activity really’ (Kumar, personal interview, 2009). He sees the Indian Link, The Indian, Indus Age, The Indian Downunder and Masala Newsline as being in direct competition. All the media have heavy advertising, featuring mostly migration agencies, lawyers, restaurants, spice shops and fashion houses as well as matrimonial sections. Badhwar is planning to go online and focus on a ‘quality’ matrimonials section where there will be stringent screening of prospective marriage partners (personal interview, 2009).

This investigation, to some extent explains why the newspapers and magazines, in the absence of any control/restrictions, have really gone beyond informing an audience to become active players in framing two separate Indian societies. While mainstream Sydney
media has organisations like the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) and the Australian Press Council as the controlling/complaints receiving body, there is no such body to oversee the content in the ethnic media.

The MEEA 1999 journalism Code of Ethics, Clause 6, tells journalists, ‘[d]o not allow advertising or other commercial considerations to undermine accuracy, fairness or independence’. Those at top management level in the ethnic media are not journalists, thus are under no obligation to adhere to such regulations. Their editorial decisions are for commercial gain. There is no such code for the ethnic media.

The classified advertisements

The classified sections of the ethnic media indiscreetly carry advertisements seeking marriage partners with specific reference to Indian identity. It is common among those from a Fiji-Indian heritage to seek out partners of similar background by making clear statement such as ‘Fiji Indian man seeks Fiji Indian girl from a good family.’ Such advertisements provide details such as status of the person in term of citizenship by specifying ‘Australian Citizen or PR (permanent resident.)’ These classifieds section, titled ‘personal notice board’, features advertisements like the one below specifying age and status in Australia of those living in Australia, while those seeking Australian partners from Fiji specifically ask prospective partners for a permanent residency status in Australia, as evidenced by the two advertisements below. (See appendix eight for samples. Note also how the advertisements address specific labels and identities to separate mainland Indians from Fiji Indians).

‘Fiji Indian girl, 19, tall, slim and fair with pleasant personality seeks Fiji Indian male between 22 and 29 with Aust PR or citizen with a view to marriage. Interested person please contact brother on (local Sydney and mobile number) or parents on (phone number in Fiji).’
Some of those seeking partners for themselves or their families were contacted to gauge what was driving the specific requirements in the marriage partners they were seeking. A man, 56, seeking a husband for his 30 year old daughter said:

My daughter lives in Sydney with her brother and sister in law who were married two years ago through arranged marriage. My families in Sydney and Fiji facilitated this. My son is a professional and my daughter in law who studied in Fiji wanted to live overseas. Now they live happily, she is studying to become an accountant like my son. Now we want our daughter who is a doctor, to be married. She has not found anyone herself as she was so focused on her study. I must say it is difficult because we want to find her a man who is compatible in education, is Fiji Indian and Hindu (Personal interview, Fiji, 2008).

The man and his wife, 55, both now retired school teachers in Fiji, often travel to Sydney to be with their two children. They said they were hopeful of finding a match for their daughter in Sydney from within the Fiji Indian community.

Advertising in the media helps as many more people see these advertisements and respond. The man’s wife additionally said:

We get a better chance at finding the man we want as we open ourselves to a larger audience. Many of my friends and families have taken this road. Once we find the person, we will use our networks to get background checks done. There are many educated Fiji Indian boys and girls in Sydney. Once our daughter is introduced to the boy, she will date him and find out for herself if he is right for her. I get worried as she is now 30 and I want her to settle down soon (personal interview, Fiji, 2008, mother, 55).
The 30 year old woman, whose brother and parents had advertised their contact details, answered my questions in one sentence: ‘I trust my parents and my brother to make the right decision for me, I will get to know the boy before taking the decision to marry and see nothing wrong with seeking partners this way’ (Personal interview, Sydney, December 2008).

A Sydney man, advertising for a woman from Sydney to marry, had this to say:

I am 28. I want to settle down with someone from Fiji, who lives here. This woman will easily understand my ways and adapt better than anyone from Fiji. I have dated many Australian girls of various backgrounds … Chinese, Italian, Serbian during my university days and after, but could not marry any of them as they are too set in their ways. Dating is different from marriage. Marrying a Fiji Indian girl will also make my family, especially my parents happy. Mind you, there are many educated Fiji Indian girls and boys who think the way I am thinking. Many children from Anglo Saxon and multicultural backgrounds with modern and western lifestyles also seek partners through dating agencies and websites. Compatibility is the key factor in marriage. Marrying from my own community will help start my marriage on a sound footing. I want a modern girl who can keep me and my family happy as we will all live together for a few years (Personal interview, Liverpool, Sydney 2008)

The man explained that a Sydney woman of Fiji Indian heritage would understand his way of life (going out to clubs, socialising) better than a woman from Fiji who may not be exposed to these realities or lifestyles. All the Indian media, especially the Fiji Times feature such advertisements with details on age, background, professional status and visa status.

Another popular medium is the www.fijilive.com website, with its dating site. Operated by Fiji’s own media baron, Yashwant Gaunder, the website features profiles of people from the Fiji Islands, others, Australians, New Zealanders and Americans, in order of the number of profiles. Gaunder said:

We receive phone calls at odd hours of the night or early morning from irate former Fiji citizens who live overseas and whose access to the site gets blocked because they have used abusive language, pleading for reinstallation. The dating site is very popular and many lonely people are able to find their life partners via this service. The site was started in 1998 with a few members and a few features.

Most people from Fiji are seeking overseas partners because they see it as a way out of Fiji. As for people from Australia and New Zealand, coming to Fiji to seek a partner, I believe, has something to do with maintaining cultural values and for some it is foolishly believing they will find ‘pure’ and ‘innocent’ virgins in Fiji. In these countries (even though the boys are going out with Australian girls) those Indians who still religiously practice the Hindu beliefs are probably looking for partners who have similar religious and cultural values. Parents who are seeking girls from Fiji are also hoping that these women will help preserve and promote their culture and tradition. I think we have helped several hundreds of people find partners through not only our dating site but also through our chat site which is very popular. People from all over the world call us when the chat site is down. They also look for partners through our classifieds section.
We are not helping migration but are providing a service to the Fiji Indian community in the countries they have migrated to so that we become their link to Fiji in many ways. Check out our letters section; one guy wrote to us and said his father was always homesick but is so happy since he discovered fijilive. The Hayward festival in the US is advertised on our site every year to get the people of Fiji origin together because this is the easiest and cheapest way to communicate. (personal interview 2008, 2009).

The table below represents the number of profiles on the fijilive site for the weeks in February to April, 2008.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>New Profiles</th>
<th>Total Premium Profiles:</th>
<th>Total Basic Profiles</th>
<th>Total Profiles Online:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28-Feb</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>20806</td>
<td>20992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-Mar</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>20814</td>
<td>21005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-Mar</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>20832</td>
<td>21028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-Apr</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>20852</td>
<td>21059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-Apr</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>20856</td>
<td>21067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-Apr</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>20869</td>
<td>21083</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>No of Profiles</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>781</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiji Islands</td>
<td>17656</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>2076</td>
<td>9.50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mala (not her real name), 26, has been engaged to a man, 28, from Sydney for over a year. She was introduced to him by her aunties in Sydney:

I studied in Fiji and have to pay back a bond to the government. I also want to help my father who is poor; at the same time seek a future for myself outside of Fiji. I met many men in Fiji as a student and teacher but marrying them was out of question as migrating will help solve so many financial and other issues for my family. I made this clear to my Australian Fiji Indian husband and he is waiting for me to join him in Sydney in 2011 when we will have the Hindu marriage ceremony, after I have paid back my bond to the Fiji government. We are engaged and were legally married a year ago (personal interview, Sydney, 2009).
Mala’s husband, educated in corporate finance and forensic accounting from a prestigious Sydney university and living in Liverpool, said:

I am marrying her firstly because I love her. She is educated, headstrong, my type and will bring a lot of happiness in my life. When we get married via traditional rituals and start living together, we will leave our families on their own as we both have given them enough support for them to stand on their own feet. My widowed mother will live on her own as will her (Mala’s) parents who she has been supporting financially (personal interview, Sydney, 2009).
The ethnic media also feature special reports written by lawyers and migration agents, who break down and simplify the immigration laws of Australia, providing details on skills and trade that earn the highest points for would-be migrants. These law firms also advertise their services in such media. Some colleges and education centres also advertise their services in skills training, in these media. (See appendix nine)

Migration agent, Sashi Singh & Associates, advertised their services in several editions of the Fiji Times. The January 2005 advertisement on page 13 detailed all the services such as skilled migration, graduate skills temporary visa, spouse de-facto applications, family migration (parents, aged parents, remaining relative), NZ work visas, bridging visas, to name a few.

Page 53 of the September 2007 edition of Indus Age featured a story under the immigration section titled ‘New Migration Occupations in demand list’ with a photo byline of Manish Agrawal. The story begins with: The occupation of cook and hairdresser is still listed on the current list. It was relief for overseas students who have mainly applied for their general skilled migration before 1 September. For the first time, the occupation of architect and external auditor has been added to the list. The list of IT occupations has been extended and now it includes the specializations such as J2EE, Sybase SQL Server and SIEBEL.’

The article provides an update on the migration numbers for the 2006-07 period, as well as information on the new strict penalties for employers found illegally employing or exploiting workers. Other information includes details on the offshore trade skills assessment, starting from September 1 of 2007. Readers are asked to visit www.VETASSESS.com.au for more information. Although the migrations agents and lawyers advertising their services refused to participate in my research, the information they publish in the ethnic media points to a vibrant economy in the migration trade.

**Circulation**

All the publications are English language monthly editions distributed free through the chain of some 150 Indian spice shops and fashion houses, except Indian Downunder which is sold for a only a dollar through selected newsagencies. Badhwar says the paper has recently been made available free in selected spice shops to keep up with market competition (personal
interview, 2008). The Indian Link and Indian Post have newspaper (tabloid) format and style. All editors and announcers have backgrounds other than journalism, except Jai Prasad from radio station MadhuRima. For the print media, advertising is the only means of revenue except for the Indian Downunder.

Badhwar migrated to Australia from India in 1976 and publishes the Indian Downunder from home with a strong focus on news from India. Badhwar says that Indians, irrespective of where they come from, have one culture and that identifies them with India, thus they would be more interested in news from the mainland India. She has plans to launch an online version of the newspaper and has identified writers from as far away as New York and India, ‘I want to maintain credibility as a serious news medium, researching and presenting news rather than stealing from other places and claiming these to be my creation’ (Badhwar 2008).

The Indian Link has its biggest readership in NSW and is available in Queensland, Tasmania, Northern Territory and South Australia. It has a sister publication - the Melbourne Indian Link. Operating from the heart of Sydney, this paper is run by Rajni and Pawan Luthra, a husband and wife team who has lived in Sydney for more than 25 years. The couple launched a 24-hour radio station -Indian Link FM - in November 2002.

Retired schoolteacher Rekha Bhatta had been editor of the Indian Post for three years. With a strong political slant on news, especially on issues/decisions made in Australia that affect the Indian community, the paper is also available in Melbourne and Brisbane.

The Fiji Times published by Nick Kumar from his Campsie office has mainly political news from Fiji. Some editions have stories on other Pacific Island countries.

Navtarang has sections on dental care, spinal injury and diabetes and on local soccer (by Fiji Indian teams which are named after some of the districts in Fiji. The magazine concentrates on the entertainment industry - local Indian artists and those visiting from India.

Radio Stations

Radio Navtarang, MadhuRima and Indian Link FM are the only 24-hour, seven-day a week commercial Hindi stations. There are other community stations such as Radio Jhankar, which
operates for a few hours each week. The others are: *Radio Dhanak* (99.9FM, 10-12am Tuesdays and Thursdays, 6-9pm Saturday, 7-11pm Sunday), *Radio Lehren* (89.3FM, 3pm Saturday), *Radio Saaz aur Awaaz* (100.9 FM, 6-8pm Tuesday), *Yaadein* (90.1FM, 9-11pm Thursday), *Radio Rhim Jhim Ka Sangam* (100.9FM, 1.30-4pm, 9-10pm Sunday), *Monika Geetmala* (89.7FM, 10am-4pm Sunday), *Radio Mohabattein* (99.9FM, 10-12pm Tuesday and Sunday) and *Radio Preetlari* (100.9 FM, 4-6pm Sunday).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Radio station</th>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>History</th>
<th>Reach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indian Link FM</td>
<td>Rajni and Pawan Luthra</td>
<td>Mostly Asian Indians</td>
<td>Late 2002</td>
<td>Sydney and Melbourne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MadhuRima</td>
<td>Jai Prasad</td>
<td>1/3 from Indian subcontinent, others are Fiji Indians</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navtarang</td>
<td>Prakash Chandra</td>
<td>Mostly Fiji Indians</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table. 2. Ethnic Indian Radio Stations in Australia

MadhuRima and Navtarang have a special radio and decoder that listeners can buy for between AUD $100 and AUD $120. Listeners to Indian Link FM are provided with a special radio with an inbuilt frequency receiver. The radio is not sold independently but is part of the subscription. MadhuRima has news for 10 minutes at 7 and 8am, and 6pm. This is Australian news of interest to Indians and would include issues like political decisions on migration issues, education, health, welfare and investment. The half hour 7pm news has a Current Affair Style of presentation. The station has sold 7000 radios and claims to have an audience of 25,000, calculated at an average of four to five listeners in each home.

For many of the radio stations the top priority is to maintain the fabric of family life. This is done with emphasis on family values, the Indian culture and community living.

Navtarang has more of Bollywood music and news, targeting a much younger audience (teens to mid 20s).

Indian Link FM has special features like the Kannada Sangah (a south Indian dialect) - catering to the speakers of the Kannada language (origins in Southern India) from all over the world, living in Australia. It has doses of conversational English and broadcasts simultaneously in Sydney and Melbourne. Those who enjoy Hindi music (Bollywood and old hits) and maintain affiliation with India make the audience.

Sydney’s SBS has Hindi programs on Sunday, Monday and Wednesday. The Sunday program is from 9am to 10am which is repeated at 11am. The program on Monday begins at 3pm for an hour and is repeated at 5pm while Wednesday’s program begins at 12 (noon) and is repeated for an hour at 2pm.

The role of media in creating separateness among Indians

Depth of knowledge about the differences that exist within the Indian communities in part underpins the perceptions and attitudes of the media towards the two communities. There is real individuality because there is increased complexity and diversity. The media helps frame this divide through its coverage of news and events. This divide filters through to classified
advertisements seeking marriage partners where specific ethnic identity (Fiji Indian) differentiates the members of the community from mainland and other Indians. Many editors and news presenters have accepted responsibility for creating and feeding this divide saying that ‘this is what my audiences want’. In the same way distributors of the news products claim to know their clientele, and they would therefore stock certain publications and not others. Managing director of Tara’s Trading (a grocery store in Liverpool, Ben Kumar (of Fiji Indian descent) aptly says, ‘I used to only have the Fiji Indian papers but a few years ago others (South Asian Indians) have begun leaving their magazines outside my shop. We now have all these available for our customers’. Spice shops visited in Blacktown mostly had the Fiji Times, India Times, Desi Style, Pacific Star and Navtarang.

The Indian Downunder and Indian Post cater for the South Asian Indians with little or no news on Fiji, except a regular opinion column by K. C. Ramrakha in the Indian Downunder, Indian Post and Navtarang.

The writers and audiences for the ethnic media

Sydney lawyer and former Fiji politician, Karam Ramrakha, writes on issues other than Fiji politics. He migrated to Australia in 1981 and last visited Fiji in 1985. His name was on Rabuka’s blacklist after the 1987 coup. He claims to have expertise on political developments in Fiji: ‘I know and understand that country although I have not returned for a long time’ (2004).

The Indian Link appeals to a wider Indian audience but carries stories that would specifically cater to Indians from the subcontinent. The Indian Link offers variety and includes articles on India featuring prominently in the Sydney Film Festivals, the launch of the latest CD on devotional songs in Sydney, Bollywood movie reviews and the significance of ancient Hindu housewarming ceremonies (in its May 2002 edition). The Fiji Times, and Navtarang are for Fiji Indians and attempt to embrace the ‘other’ Indians through their highlights on entertainment, from Bollywood and Sydney.

Badhwar says selling the Indian Downunder is a commercial decision since the owners of news agencies can gauge who will buy these. A sample survey of 45 readers from Blacktown and Liverpool in August 2008 showed that many people pick up the magazines to find out
about the social events in Sydney and about the politics back home. Readers are so used to the two papers and know what type of information is available where. Many advertisers prefer a particular audience. It is not difficult to produce two publications but a huge challenge to put out one catering to the various needs of the two communities (N. Kumar 2002).

Badhwar, Bhatta and Rajni Luthra agree that there is a definite division between the two groups. Badhwar argues that the division is a ‘thing of the heart’ and not easily overcome. She says that culturally, and in language, Asian and Fijian Indians are a century and a world apart. Fiji Indians lost touch in the crucial areas of language and culture by being removed from the realities of India and she says. The Indian Post has a small Fiji Indian readership. Bhatta sees attracting advertisements from Fiji Indian businesses as a means to break into that market but says it is a long time coming. In its attempt to become user-friendly, the Indian Link uses a different language - Hinglish. This is evident, for example, on the first page of the July 2002 issue with a caption reading: ‘Bend it like . . . behenji? Futball shutball hai rubba!!’ According to Luthra:

We use Hinglish (a mixture of Hindi and English that originated in the UK) so that we can embrace a larger readership. Our readers are African Indians and Indians from all over the world, living in Sydney. We see our paper as an information house on India-related issues—the mainstream media call us for comment and background information on complex issues such as the India Pakistan clash. And yes, we do not cater as much to the exclusive Fiji Indians mainly because we are not familiar with them. We cover issues affecting Indian migrants like socializing problems for the elderly, how families can still arrange marriages and what happens when a Hindu dies—what is available to observe all the rituals in a traditional way (personal interview 2004).

This division filters through to the spice shops/fashion house owners who are selective about the publications they distribute. Random checks reveal that a majority of Fiji Indian businesses do not keep the Indian Link and Indian Post. This is particularly obvious in Blacktown and in some shops in Liverpool. Editors agree that breaking into the circulation market in some areas is difficult. Readers (about 50 on different days) sampled through observations in spice shops and from surveys (45), show a distinctive division in reading habits. Those visiting Fiji Indian businesses either pick up the Fiji Times and Navtarang out of habit or ask for these. About half as many would take away copies of the other magazines.

The sample, responding to why they preferred the Fiji Times, said the paper was the only media that provided an extensive coverage of issues that affected them, such as Fiji’s
unresolved land debate. Other community newspapers such as the *Liverpool Champion* (Fairfax), *Liverpool Leader* (Cumberland), *Blacktown Sun* (Fairfax) and *Blacktown Advocate* (Cumberland), evaluated for this study, did not have any specific stories on the Indian communities of the respective regions. These weekly publications’ news was broad, not targeting any migrant group but the geographic region. Despite reading their local newspapers, the Fiji Indians are still on the lookout for their ethnic media. Their media in Sydney is popular and vibrant because there is demand for it. The Fiji Indians are continuing with an age-old tradition of consuming newspapers that target their specific group. In Fiji they had the *Shanti Dut* (meaning messenger of peace) published weekly as a sister publication to the English daily *Fiji Times*, published by News Ltd of Australia. Hindi radio stations had filled any gaps in their need for news.

Fiji Indians are not alone as other migrant communities, such as the Chinese, have their own media. There are four daily and nine weekly Chinese language newspapers in Sydney. Hong Kong press heiress Sally Aw Sian brought the popular Hong Kong based Chinese language daily, *Sing Tao Jih Pao* to Sydney in 1982, two years after the first wave of migrants from Hong Kong began arriving in Australia. She believed the ‘migrants will want news from home’ (*The Australian* 11 April 2002).

In 2009, the people of the Indian diaspora have the ‘largest piece of cake’ of the ethnic media in Sydney, with 15 publications compared to 12 for the Chinese community. The Indian magazines are monthly publications while the Chinese focus is daily and weekly. The Turks and Arabic communities have eight and five publications respectively (Community Relations Commission 2009).

**Influence of Bollywood and technology (internet) on marriage**

The influences of Bollywood as a social institution, on the Fiji Indian consciousness (as inferred by McLuhan’s ‘global village’ and Appadurai’s ‘MediaScapes’ of extending the human capabilities), is applicable to the community’s networking and identity formation through Bollywood and marriage in Sydney. Bollywood is the largest Hindi film producer in India and one of the largest film production centres of the world. Ray also suggests Fiji Indians have preserved their various folk traditions, associated with Tulsi Das Ramcharitmanas, which underlies the strength of the community’s connection to Indian
cinema, which he suggests is structured by the popular and folk traditions associated with the epics (Ray, 2000, pp. 153–8). The origins of the majority of the Fijian-Indian community in India’s Hindi-speaking northern state of Bihar (Lal, 2003) and the localised dialect of Bollywood also makes it a direct form of address for them, compared to other Australians from the Indian diaspora. The transfer of the anthropological model of ethnographic study within a diasporic context is, due to its relative accessibility and legibility, the means by which minority media-use is generally assayed (Gillespie, 1995; Cunningham and Sinclair, 2000). The particular attachment to Hindi movie culture observed amongst the Fijian-Indians serves as a measure of their cultural identity, which can be assessed in the light of an in-depth contextual understanding of the community. Vijay Mishra (2002) asserts that moral codes and narratives of Hindi films are patterned ideologically in their similarity to the Hindu epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata.

Scholars have paid attention to the social life of media in diasporic contexts, especially its role in fostering bonds of community and mediating identity while enabling connections to homeland and other diasporic locales. Spitulnik (1997) argues that often a back-grounded theme, language and the linguistic aspects of media consumption can be an important dimension of this process.

Bollywood films, serving simultaneously as visual culture, a social institution, as well as a linguistic resource for the community, has also deeply affected its everyday social lives. Ethnographic works by Ginsburg et al examines ‘how media are embedded in people’s quotidian lives’ (2002, p. 2) by connecting its consumption to larger processes of nationalism (Abu-Lughod 1995), youth culture (Liechty 2002), and trans-nationalism (Gillespie 1995). Anderson’s (1991) theory on imagined communities is especially useful in illustrating how both media and language have become key elements of community construction and identity. Based on Anderson’s concept, Spitulnik (1997) offers an insightful examination of what she terms ‘the social circulation of media discourse’. Appadurai (1996) also theorises the connections between media and diaspora and explores in ethnographic detail a range of settings, including examinations of nostalgia and nationalism. Naficy (1993) presents interesting insights on these conditions through the study of diasporic television with Iranian exiles in Los Angeles. In both these studies, as is the case of Bollywood, until recent years the media produced was primarily for diasporic viewers, with their mass appeal through the
Indian culture, creating a localised sense of community. Bollywood’s objectives and scope, historically, has been for viewers in South Asia. As such, the audience, which is imagined as part of the production process (c.f. Ang 1996; Dornfeld 1998), is distinctly Indian. As such, the films’ themes, genres, and narratives predominate in these films, including moral dilemmas of good versus evil, purity and chastity for women before marriage, sacrifice of individual desires for the larger good of the family, respecting elders, and preserving the sanctity of one’s community (see Joshi 2002; Prasad 2001). In recent years, however, the production has expanded to imagine the diaspora as a key audience segment in the production process (Ganti 2002). Indeed, marketability in the diaspora is an increasing consideration for Bollywood filmmakers and this trend is an important aspect of cinematic appeal to the Fiji Indians.

Hindi films are popular among communities worldwide (Larkin 1997; Liechty 1995) and actively watched in the Indian diaspora. Ray, in his 2000 study, investigates the popularity of Hindi films among South Asians in Fiji. Indeed, the film stars, songs, and other aspects of this cinematic form seeped into various aspects of Fijian public culture, including local print media and various community events. Bollywood films mediated the community for many families and also served as a preferred form of entertainment. In Sydney, taking a Bollywood DVD home to watch with the family has become a weekly practice of Fiji Indians. A spice shop owner in Blacktown said, ‘we sell and rent such videos and they are popular with our Friday customers who grab a few DVDs for weekend viewing’ (personal interview, 2009). While new releases used to take months before they were officially released on video, DVD releases are now nearly, if not completely, simultaneous with theatre releases. Viewers can either rent DVDs or the crystal-clear, commercial free videos copied directly from DVD.

Spitulnik’s discussion of how people engage with, employ, and enjoy various media discourses in order to increase sociability and connectedness resonates with Fiji Indians, while the suggestion that the larger conditions that enable ‘decontextualisation’ and ‘recontextualisation’ that result in the production of shared meaning also applies to the community.

Here I present some themes, script and dialogue of two Hindi movies, one from Bollywood, *Dil Wale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (DDLJ) and *Bride and Prejudice*, to demonstrate how such
media influence the Indian system of placing value on family (parents) which has become a portable asset across the globe, especially to Sydney among the Fiji Indians.

**Bride and Prejudice: Celebrating Indian identity**

Released in English and Hindi in 2004, Gurinder Chadha’s *Bride and Prejudice* ‘marries’ a characteristically English saga (Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*) with Bollywood’s glitter and glamour by transforming corsets to saris, the Bennetts to the Bakshis and pianos to bhangra beats. The film takes the viewer into a contemporary globalised colonial space, embracing Amritsar in India, Goa, London and Los Angeles, telling the story of young lovers caught up with complex familial politics against the backdrop of a nationalist celebration of Indian identity (Uberoi, 1998).

The film opens with William Darcy arriving in Amristar, India, with a groom’s party for a wedding between a British non-resident Indian (NRI) man and an Indian woman. The scene cuts to the Bakshi household where the mother of four grown-up daughters, obsessed with their marriage, prepares them, especially her oldest Jaya, as a ‘noticeable prospect’ for Balraj, the groom’s man. The mother says, ‘[h]urry up, you silly girls! We must make sure Jaya meets this Mr Balraj from London before anyone else. She (Jaya) is our only hope. If we do not get the eldest married first, we’ll never be able to marry the rest of you for the shame’ (Mrs Bakshi in the movie).

The movie features much dancing and merrymaking. During the first dance at the wedding, the bride’s female friends tease the men from the groom’s side. The lyrics of the song in Hindi are translated as: ‘Oh, these pretty girls fluttering temptingly like kites without string. These girls are like naked live wires. If you get too close, you'll get an electric shock of love’. On screen Mrs Bakshi, in the scene while transiting at a family’s home in London on the return journey from attending a wedding in LA laments at ‘not getting a single’ proposal for her two daughters who had accompanied her to the wedding.

The scene later cuts to where the main character, Lalita (Aishwarya Rai), confides in her older sister (Jaya) that she got a proposal from Darcy who said that he ‘loved’ her. Lalita had first met Darcy at the wedding which kick starts the movie. It was at this first wedding that
Jaya met Balraj and the couple fell in love. Darcy (an American) in a later scene confesses to falling in love with Lalita then (at the wedding).

My research findings also point to Fiji Indian weddings and prayers as a forum/place where the community meets other members of the diaspora. Many of those surveyed in the questionnaire said that they meet other Indians at prayer meetings and weddings. Despite the impact of the communications explosion, weddings are still seen as a good opportunity to check out boys and girls for marriage partnerships (see results section in Chapter Five).

In another scene, when Mrs Bakshi realises that Balraj was not communicating with Jaya via email from London, she goes online to http://www.shaadi.com in search of prospective husbands for her girls. Fiji Indians replay these on screen scenes in their real lives with regard to marriage and seeking partners, as presented through the focus group sessions and interviews with participants. The movies, in a way, feed the Indian mind about the possibilities at their disposal in this world of the communications revolution. The Indian magazines are replete with advertisements by parents as well as individuals seeking a match for someone they know. Many of the women at focus group meetings said that they had registered their children online in search of matches.

Chada de-stabilises the stereotypes generated about Indian women as being domesticated, unintelligent and ready to marry while playing a subservient role husbands, by portraying Lalita as a modern woman. In the movie, she presents the Bennets, the Bingleys and Darcy negotiating the relationship between money, social status and marriage in England, which too has been transformed by globalisation and industrial capitalism, while in the movie the Bakshis, Balraj and Darcy undertake similar challenges in India which has experienced exponential change at the hands of globalisation. The patriotic family romance, characterised by spectacular melodrama with little heed paid to psychological complexity in *Bride and Prejudice*, which marries British high culture to Indian popular culture, creates a mimic text that is, in Homi Bhabha’s terms, ‘almost the same, but not quite’ (1994, p. 86).

The cultural and class differences become obvious as the middle class Bakshi family interacts with the non resident British and American Indians as well as American owners of multinational businesses. In this process the problems created by pride (social status) with prejudices/stereotypes become challenges presented through cultural insularity. Chada re-
casts Bingley as the British Indian Balraj, a representation at another level of the immigrant identity of Britain today. Johnny Wickham (a British visiting India on holiday), on the other hand, is presented as a villain. In presenting the British identity the film pans shots that cover Big Ben, a mosque, Buckingham Palace, all juxtaposed against its representation of an imperial tradition (monarchy) and multiculturalism. Chada presents Darcy (an American) with his dismissive and stereotypical attitudes towards the Indian culture as he makes snide remarks about arranged marriage as being ‘backward’ and bhangra, as an easy dance ‘that looks like screwing a light bulb with one hand and patting a dog with the other’.

Lalita, a modern day Indian woman, raised with good education and who takes charge of her father’s business in record keeping, reads books in her spare time, challenges the cultural snobbery of the West through the liveliness of her mind and cutting comebacks. For example, when Darcy’s mother dismisses the need to travel to India ‘since yoga and Deepak Chopra are now available in the US’, Lalita asks if going to Italy has become redundant with the opening of Pizza Hut around the corner. In a similar tongue in cheek response, she undermines Darcy’s stereotyping of India as ‘backward’ because there arranged marriages are still the norm, by pointing out the eerie similarity of this with Darcy’s mother’s attempts to find him a wife. She also questions America’s divorce rate with, ‘Americans think they’ve got the answers for everything, including marriage, pretty arrogant, considering they’ve got the highest divorce rates in the world’ (Lalita, 2004 in Bride and Prejudice).

Lalita is not the shy, demure, sari-clad Indian woman but instead displays an ease in her jeans, riding a tractor at the start of the movie, and she is as much as in her confidence on the dance floor performing garba (a special form of Indian dance using sticks) to sipping marguerites in a LA restaurant with Darcy. As the film reaches its climax, Lalita walks away from her family towards Darcy, however, before he embraces her as his lover (to be wife), Darcy seeks out and receives the approval of Mr Bakshi (Lalita’s father). This level of eye contact and agreement, which is granted with a nod by Mr Bakshi, is played out in real life among young adult Fiji Indians who get parental approval even for a love match before marriage.

The plot, scenes and the messages thus denote that patriarchal authority is given ultimate recognition in the Indian culture, despite any bold independence displayed by children,
especially women. This level of gender politics and consumerist ideology, presenting the Indian culture and values through a patronising frame, makes *Bride and Prejudice* similar in many ways to any other Bollywood ‘masala’ (spice filled) movies. Throughout the movie, Lalita is given the freedom to make her choices (including rejecting a marriage proposal from an American Indian from LA named Kholi). Sangari says:

> The narrative of *Bride and Prejudice* perfectly aligns this framework with Lalita’s projection of cultural nationalism, which functions purely at the personal/familial level, but which is framed at both ends of the film by a visual conjoining of marriage and the marketplace, both of which are ultimately outside Lalita’s control (1999, pp. 23-4).

The Fiji Indians, on the other hand, can have total control over any decision they make regarding marriage or marriage choice, however, through my research they demonstrate a clear leaning towards parental approval in marriage. In a way Bollywood themes are taken to heart and the diaspora, especially the young adults, fantasise and copy the on screen themes and dialogue in their own lives.

*Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge*: presenting another screen ideology

A popular commercial Hindi film *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge (DDLJ)* (1995), directed by Aditya Chopra, based on a love story involving Indians settled overseas, is presented as another example of how the screen ideology is copied on the ground by Fiji Indians.

The film identifies with and plays on family values with the essence of being Indian. It defines Indianess with reference to specificities of family life, the institution of courtship and marriage in particular (Uberoi, 1998). Uberoi argues that the film, focused particularly on the relations of the sexes, within families and social classes, constructs an ideal moral universe that is intrinsically, if not always explicitly connected with the ideas about tradition and nation (Thomas, 1996, p. 160).

*DDLJ* presents the conflict between individual desire against societal norms and expectations with regards to marriage choice, what Uberoi (1997) calls the animating logic of South Asian romance. The movie presents the contemporary ideal of the arranged love marriage, where
romantic choice is endorsed by parental approval, and treated thereafter like an arranged marriage. Parental authority/approval thus becomes the influence of such an arrangement, similar to the arrangement of introducing marriage partners taking place prior to them falling in love. Here too, parental authority takes precedence over all else.

The plot of the movie is that Raj (Shah Rukh Khan), son of a successful self made NRI businessman, Dharam Vir Malhotra (Anupam Kher), is living in London and has just failed his tertiary exams. He plans to join his father in business but before doing this he takes a holiday to Europe with his college friends. Simran (Kajol), elder daughter of another NRI, a shopkeeper in London, Baldev Singh Chowdhury (Amrish Puri) has persuaded her father to let her take an European holiday with her friends before she settles for an arranged marriage to a man of her father’s choice (his childhood friend’s son) in India. Temporarily separated from their friends, Raj and Simran meet in Switzerland and fall in love. Upon returning to London, Simran tells her mother about her experiences. Her mother is sympathetic while her father is enraged and immediately takes the family to Punjab for Simran’s wedding. Raj’s dad, on the other hand, persuades him not to give up, so he pursues Simran to Punjab. In Punjab, Simran’s mother comes to know about Raj’s true identity and urges the two to elope.

Raj insists that he would marry Simran only the ‘right’ way, with her father’s approval. In some of the scenes characters are constantly reminded of, or are presented as promoting, the unique Indian values and identity.

Specifically dealing with the ambivalence of migrating, the first scene resonates with any migrant’s sense of loss in a foreign land. Baldev Singh, feeding pigeons in Trafalgar Square, reflects:

This is London, a big city in the world, I have been here 22 years, Everyday I pass this road and it asks me who is Chaowdhury Baldev Singh? ... Where has he come from? What is he doing here? What can I reply? I have spent so many years of my life here, and still this land is alien to me. Nobody knows me here except these pigeons. Like me they don’t have a country, they go to the place where they get food... now necessity has enchained me, but one day, definitely, I will return to my country.

His daughter, Simran is introduced to the screen in her bedroom, her hair blown across her face, conveying an impression of barely controlled sensuality (Uberoi 1998). Simran assures her mother that the love poems she’d been writing were based on her imagination. The scene
then cuts to Baldev Singh receiving a letter from his friend Ajit in Punjab, renewing the proposal for Simran’s marriage to his son Kuljit.

Simran, who reads the letter aloud, leaves for her room halfway through reading it. Her mother knows that the news has upset her while her father interprets this as shyness. Baldev Singh says, ‘[s]ee Lajo ... she is feeling shy. This is our culture ... Indian culture, even today a daughter feels shy in front of her father. You see I haven’t failed. I have kept India alive, here in the heart of London’.

When Simran is stuck in a hotel room with Raj, she ventures out into the barn as she is not willing to share the room with him. Snow falls and the cold gets the better of her. The next morning she is hysterical to find herself in Raj’s pyjamas and demands to know what happened. Although playful at start, Raj alludes to all sorts of possibilities, even adding for good measure that ‘this must have been her first time’.

Simran is outraged and Raj becomes serious. Looking in her eyes he says that rogue that he may appear, he is after all a ‘Hindustani’, and as well is aware of what an Indian girl’s ‘izzat’ (honour) means to her. Later when Simran tells Raj that she is engaged to be married, he is perplexed that she could think of commending her life to someone she had never met. Simran says, ‘I don’t feel the need to meet him. My father has seen him. He is my father’s friend’s son. In our society (India), that’s what happens’. Back in Punjab, Raj assures Simran, who is ready to elope with him, ‘[n]o, I have not come here to steal you. True, I was born in London, but I am an Indian, I will persevere till I marry you and your father himself will put your hand in mine’.

When Simran’s mother hands over a bundle of jewellery to her daughter and advises her to elope with Raj, the latter says:

‘[m]other, I lost my own mother when I was a young boy ... but I remember one thing she said to me, “[t]here are two paths in life – one is right and one is wrong. Maybe one has to suffer a lot in choosing the right path, but there is success in the end. That doesn’t happen with the wrong path ...I want my Simran with her father’s consent. Now, don’t you worry, she’s my responsibility’.
In the end, Simran’s father indeed puts her hand into Raj’s upon realising that he (Raj) was a better match than Kuljit.

DDLJ thus feeds into the Fiji Indian consciousness the ideals of family life and the Indian value system; of taking a woman in marriage, women as well as men respecting parental authority and the role families, especially women and mothers, play in negotiating personal and family relationships.

Chapter summary

Indigenous people’s perceptions of racism in the mainstream media led to the development of indigenous media outlets. These outlets were used as a ‘cultural resource in reclaiming identity and space in the public sphere’ (Meadows, 1998). Hopkinson, former editor of British alternative publication Picture Post, and founder of the Centre for Journalism Studies in Cardiff, argues that the alternative press not only gives voice to those dissenting but also provides the public citizens of democracy with a choice in the information they consume – ‘[a]t least the public is offered a choice and the convention’s given a shake-up’ (1981, p. 5). The Indians, with their own media and news forums, in a way are indeed giving the conventions a shake-up, as the sum of these findings offers new insight into the role of the ethnic media in defining the identity of Fiji and South Asian Indians. The media’s role is particularly strong in the case of Fiji Indians, disconnected from their South Asian roots by indentured labour and marginalised by indigenous Fijians. Relocated to Australia under crisis after the coups starting in 1987, they rely on media frames to construct their connections with Fiji and India. In Sydney they are, in a way, recreating the cultural space they had in Fiji as a marginalised minority.

The Indian community in Fiji has entered into the third generation but how many of them can say with pride: ‘this is the homestead of my father and my grandfather and it shall be the homestead of my descendants?’ There is nothing that contributes towards the sober steady development and progress in human beings as the feeling of lineal continuity. But there must be a tangible link to bind a generation to another and in the case of an agricultural population, that link can be only land consisting of the family and the homestead (Norton 1990, p. 42).
The migrants, fourth, fifth and sixth generations, see India as a reality of their history. A great majority has not even been able to trace their lineage of ancestry to India. Fiji is still their country of birth, holding a rich history of their life where they were treated as second-class citizens, evident in government’s anti Indian political and social agendas. And although they are accepted for who they are in Australia’s melting pot of cultures, they want to keep their identity as an Indian from Fiji. They cannot shy away from their Indianess and to show their Fijian identity they capitalise on what the media feeds to frame that identity.

Many mainland Indians exhibit deeply entrenched caste-ist attitudes and view the indentured past of the Fiji Indians as a non-negotiable barrier. On the other side, Fiji Indians often characterise mainland Indians with the same kind of negative attributes that they want to use for ethnic Fijians. Both realise the need for a united front to deal with Australian racism, but both view each other as an obstacle to better acceptance by the white nation (Ray, 2000, p. 166).

Some of the news outlets have sprung up by default in the absence of news from home in the mainstream media. The ethnic media’s history of continued presence on the Sydney scene has boosted their credibility as a news medium. Content analysis proves that their advertorial approach has boosted their continued success.

Since both communities are migrant minorities, the way they assimilate within their own groups and with Sydney’s ‘others’ exposes their fragility and vulnerability. While the deep divisions may be an accepted norm within the two communities and the media representing them, two issues arising from this investigation are the potential for public disengagement with the traditional big city journalism, especially among migrant communities such as Fiji Indians, and the impact the media’s advertorial approach is having on journalism practice in cities like Sydney with a mixture of ethnic minorities. Further, exploration should be done to determine the impact of such trends on various other migrant communities and their long-term affect on the profession.

It must also be acknowledged that those writing for the ethnic Indian media are not journalists (N. Kumar 2008). Those publishing and writing for the media recognise the power of providing information to the audiences on issues of interest such as migration. The environments in which they work across the various media platforms of print, radio,
television and online environments are changing in response to innovations in technology and communication. These practitioners, in a way, have become an army of citizen journalists, changing radically the way information or news is provided to the masses in competitive markets for advertising. These new platforms, in fast moving times, provide journalism and news production challenges as well as opportunities. The challenges are on professional practice and the means of gathering/writing/presenting news, while the opportunities are to think beyond newspapers.

Presenting *Bride and Prejudice* and *DDLJ* as case studies has provided an understanding of how Bollywood influences the Fiji Indian consciousness and has effectively demonstrated the popularity of such movies among diasporic communities. Both these movies, through their storylines, visual effects, dialogue and presentation of characters - sometimes in ambivalent states - feed the community’s ideals, which are also deeply affected by the values of chastity in young women and the ability in a man to provide for a woman when asking for her hand. These views were also reflected in several of the interviews conducted in Sydney, especially with women (mothers) who discuss their roles in ‘bringing back on track’ their sons, through marriage.

Nayar (1997) aptly describes the Bollywood ‘dream factory’ as uniformly market driven. She says that to ignore the ideological drifts and tendencies in these Hindi films is not only to suffer from a ‘high culture reflex’ but to dismiss the projected desires and the collective fantasies and frustrations which are not only read but earnestly written by the Indian moviegoer. Nayar also presents the argument that Bollywood stars are often hesitant to try anything too new or unusual for fear of alienating their public/audiences while producers are ‘always clamouring to refill orders on yesterday’s sleeper’ (p.85). A majority of the Bollywood films are formula films, with a mixed bag of essential ingredients such as hero, heroin, villain, mother, father, dutiful son with doses of glitter and glamour, mostly brought out through wedding scenes where young guests at the wedding fall in love. Discrimination and distinction between good and evil is always portrayed through the characters and given the Indian ‘stamp of approval’. Nayar says the typical Indian popular movie indirectly concerns itself with the transition from adolescence to adulthood which may well explain why so many of these films feel narratively fractured.
This chapter acknowledges the increased complexity, diversity and division within the Indian community. While it questions the conduct of the media in constructing two separate communities, it also accepts the role the audiences play in pushing this agenda of separate identity. These have been discussed in detail, reflecting on the history of the communities, especially Fiji Indians, for whom Bollywood acts as a social agent by providing a connection to India through their ‘imagination’ and making it a ‘real’ part of their everyday existence in their Sydney space. Popular cinema has indeed become a major part of the community’s social engineering to dictate patterns of normality which is shaped by importing exemplarity from the characters in the films. These characters become role models for identification as well as idealisation.

The next chapter expands the realities and theories presented in this chapter by delving into the actual Hindu wedding scenes on screen and in Sydney and how these have evolved with cultural transformations. It considers the traditions and rituals that have become ingrained into the Hindu wedding of the new era.
CHAPTER SEVEN

Traditions, transitions and translations: Hindu marriage in a new era

This chapter presents the fun, pomp and ceremony in celebrating Hindu weddings in Sydney while evaluating the influence mass circulation of wedding images has on the Fiji Indians’ desire and anxiety for marriage. In also presenting the cultural traditions and transitions of the Hindu wedding ceremony for the community, this chapter explains how the community legitimises its social structure through marriage as a sacrament. It also presents the new generation’s copying of Bollywood to add ‘masala’ (spice) to wedding rituals in the modern era. Still traditional in many facets, the Sydney weddings are a far cry from the humble village event in Fiji. The innovative additions feature the level of extravaganza seen on the silver screen, making weddings a new regimented barometer of wealth and status in a land of ‘show and tell’. The days of close female relatives singing songs to felicitate their daughters and sons during weddings, is being reinvented by choreographers and DJs taking over the stage. Easy access to Bollywood, television soaps, and other forms of media such as the World Wide Web, Zee TV, mobile phones and home videos of Sydney Hindu weddings circulated as DVDs among families and friends around the globe, on YouTube and through other forms of communication, has spawned newer and high-tech additions to wedding ceremonies. Professional wedding planners combine old and new and borrowed and invented ideas to make each wedding unique and special. With so many choices, the brides and grooms are also becoming ever-more discerning in taste. Sydney’s first Indian bridal magazine (*My Shaadi*), and the first Indian Bridal Fair at the Randwick Racecourse in September 2006, gave Indian weddings an international stamp of approval. This chapter presents how the mass circulation of such images, and knowledge on the significance of the Hindu marriage rituals, reinvigorate the yearnings of a community sharing a common culture, history, identity and values to maintain the institution of marriage.

My memory of 70s weddings in Fiji

‘Peep peep peep’ … the horns of approaching cars echoed through the entire village, creating a vibration that forced people away from the most important of tasks into forming an Indian
file to watch the procession glide past. I remember being part of that group of people, hanging off guava trees or just standing by the roadside, feasting my eyes on the balloons and crepe paper that swung in the air as the cars, followed by a busload of mostly men, shouting, waving and singing, slowly drove up the hill to the wedding home. Dust, blown from the procession of vehicles would circle the air and settle on us (children and adults) like a coating of powder. Tears would fill our eyes but we dared not blink for our eyes would be set on the balloons, a rarity for us in the early 70s. I remember the entire village coming to an almost stand-still for weddings. ‘Baarat aiye gaye baarat aye gaye, bhago chalo, bhago chalo … ’ the groom’s party has arrived, the groom’s party has arrived, run, let’s go’, we would declare and make a grand entrance into the limelight, full of laughter, energy and anticipation, pushing and shoving among the crowds of people, to claim our strategic positions, with a clear view of the ceremonial grounds. In our childhood innocence, we did not give much thought to our shouting and screaming, for this is how we lived. I was only seven or eight when weddings in our village, Tavarau, Ba, in Fiji,became one of the most looked forward to events in my life.

The village women, already seated on a wooden plank for a stage, would blast away with a bang with their rehearsed wedding songs at the first sound of the tooting horns, serenading the groom’s party. Close female relatives of the bride and groom would also sing these wedding songs to felicitate the couple for three days of fun, festivity, rituals, cooking and feasting. (Hindu weddings in Fiji lasted for three days, culminating in the main ceremony on the third day – mostly on a Saturday or Sunday.) Everyone would try to get a glimpse of the groom. ‘Sabh ladkan door hato, ek dam door hoi jau … - all the children move away, move, as far away as possible’, a woman leading the bridal party would declare. This was a phrase repeated at every wedding as women tried to ‘push’ excited children away. We were a force and would keep reappearing for our share of the fun. We relished the wedding food, plain rice and dhal, puri, served with potato and green peas curry, on banana or ‘maan’ (heart shaped) leaves. We would eat with our hands; the challenge was to keep the food on the leaf. The forefront would feature a series of wedding rituals, culminating in the wedding ceremony. As the couple carefully took their seven steps, within the limits of a physical space of seven circles created with dry flour by the priest denoting the couple’s boundary as one, in body and soul, into a new life, the priest would bless each step, reciting mantras and calling out loudly to the Gods to protect and guide the couple. In the background, the troupe of women on stage would be waiting to begin serenading at the top of their voices as soon as the priest
took a break. They would be sitting in a circle with ‘dholak’ (Indian drum) and other musical instruments, including a few empty Fiji beer bottles against which they would tap two extra large nails or a small piece of iron rod, close to the ‘mandap’ (canopy with four pillars, representing the four parents of the couple, decked out with flowers, crepe paper, balloons and coconut leaves with a banana tree in the middle, held in position with green bamboo stem). When the microphone came to our village these voices reached out into the cane fields and mountains in a distance. On numerous occasions the priest would tell the women to stop singing as they disturbed his trail of ritual performance. The couple taking its vows by circling the ceremonial fire was always accompanied by high pitched songs, their lyrics emanating advice, mostly for the bride. A song etched in my memory that was sung as I took my own vows several years later in 1984; ‘beti kul ke reet nibhana chichha bhool na jana re … Oh ye daughter, please keep your dynasty’s values intact…do not forget your lessons from your mother’s home’.

The lyrics also featured admiration of the couple, putting them on the same pedestal as Lord Rama and Sita: ‘bhaawar pade siyaraghubar ki sakhiyo gao mangal gaan – Sita and Ram are taking their vows, oh ye friends and maidens, sing auspicious songs’.

**Framing an understanding on the value of marriage**

The research for this chapter has been framed through a ‘nostalgic’ presentation of Indian (Hindu) weddings in Fiji, from the early 1970s to 1990s, and onwards in Sydney. Participating in and observing weddings the community organises in Sydney since 2003 has helped provide an auto-ethnographic account of this important institution for the community while allowing me, as a researcher, to become a social witness to one of the most important occasions in the lifecycle or stages of life for a Hindu. These weddings in Sydney are presenting a new epoch, characterised by flux, change, modernity, affluence, globalisation and the use of information technology to transform the 70s weddings from a humble home event to an occasion featuring internationally renowned icons such as the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Opera House as backdrops.

Some of the questions asked of participants, in presenting this chapter included: how was the wedding organised? What were important issues for consideration? These two questions alone attracted a variety of responses, some of which are presented as direct quotes. The next
stage of inquiry involved in-depth interviews with Indian wedding planners, caterers as well as fashion house operators who sell Bollywood and Indian fashion in Sydney. These specialists advertise their businesses in more than a dozen ethnic Indian media, including newspapers, magazines, Hindi radio, websites and Australia and New Zealand’s first bridal magazine, *My Shaadi* (2006). The Indian business directory is also a major source of contact for those planning a wedding. A brief study/analysis of these media advertisements shows a booming trade for those businesses involved in weddings. Providing a flash back on the *Ramcharitmanas* community, its consumption of Bollywood movies and their themes and how the community emulates Bollywood weddings, their costumes, song, dance and music, food, catering and decorations in its new global Sydney space, helps one to understand how ideology feeds a desire for marriage in the community. Two Hindu priests and marriage celebrants explain the relevance of wedding rituals while framing an idealistic view of marriage from religious and traditional perspectives. The two Hindu religious epics, *The Mahabharata* and *The Ramayana*, readily available as books as well as serialised DVDs from the Indian spice shops in Sydney, also feed the community’s desire for marriage while keeping the extended family unit alive in a multicultural, western city. With Bollywood, the rituals and traditions work as foundations to the continuity of marriage in the community against a backdrop of western cultures where co-habitation for a long time before marriage is an accepted norm.

**How Bollywood plays out Ram and Sita**

The story of Ram and Sita, from the Hindu epic *The Ramayana*, was narrated to the Fiji Indians in private homes during evening prayer meetings in Fiji. While this practice is a common feature of their Sydney space where there are close to 150 *Ramayan* mandalis (recital groups) (Prasad 2009), Bollywood movies play out the characters of Ram and Sita, with variations. These movies portray a son and father as honourable and duty-bound, always working towards family harmony and keeping the status-quo with a faithful and obedient wife, daughter, daughter-in-law and mother. Such movies are also framed around personal sacrifices the characters make, for the good of family and society. The woman, portraying how Sita from *The Ramayana* is imagined, always stays by her man whatever the vicissitudes of the plot.
This influence of Bollywood is best described as Hindi cinema working within set parameters. Inspired by epic and folk theatre the stories and their characters fall within broad stereotypes. The hero is an incarnation of valour and virtue, and the heroine is always submissive and supportive (Amitabh Bachan, 2005).

Ram and Sita are presented as the ‘perfect’ pair in Tulsidas’ *Ramayana*, leading an exemplary human life (*Sri Ramacaritamanasa*: 72 A-B. p 1026). Vijay Mishra (1985) asserts that moral codes of Bollywood movies are ‘ideologically’ patterned by their similarity to *The Ramayan* and *Mahabharata*. This assessment of the role of Hindi cinema was more applicable to the older generation of Indians (*Ramcharitmanas* community) living in Fiji in the 1950s and 60s. Their world revolved around the two epics, as this was all they were exposed to. Pfleiderer (1985, p. 83), presenting a range of discussions with viewers, sees Hindi films as stabilising the social system by repressing new needs and, at the same time, mythologising tradition. He says they are an instrument of cultural continuity. Younger people might play with film content in the same way as with thoughts or dreams, and unconsciously test identification processes, often in a non serious way. Older people however, and especially women, expect an educational function from films.

The younger, more affluent generation of Fiji Indians living in Sydney in a liberated, western world of fast communication and various forms of media, has become more discerning in taste and copies. They even play with and experiment with some of the films’ fashion, glamour and rituals while planning for wedding ceremonies and also during wedding ceremonies. Bollywood screen queen and Britain’s celebrity *Big Brother* victim of racism, Shilpa Shetty, summed up the change in attitude of today’s liberated young in a media interview in Sydney (2007), ‘I have never kissed on screen, that is my contract. I do not want to do it but it is a personal choice; it is not because of a rule or law’. Shetty was responding to the furore in some circles in India in response to repeated kisses on her cheeks from Hollywood macho-man Richard Gere at an AIDS fundraising event in India in 2007.

**Influence of Bollywood in Sydney**

In Sydney, weddings, influenced mostly by the sets of Bollywood movies, have spawned a whole new social space for the community. Films provide more than cultural and wedding ritual continuity for the community. The kaleidoscope of colour, glitter and glamour from the
sets of Bollywood are copied and imitated at Australian Fiji Indian Hindu weddings. Many such weddings feature a day of rituals in the bride’s and groom’s homes, with a select group of family and friends (smaller backyards in Sydney limits the numbers), followed by a grand wedding ceremony featuring the final rituals (of cultural continuity) in a hall with the capacity to hold 400 to 1000 guests. Highlights of the wedding are the decorations, especially the ‘mandap’ (wedding canopy with four pillars representing the unconditional pillar of support from the four parents of the couple), table settings, colour themes for decorations and table service. Anglo Saxon ‘looking’ waiters and waitresses from Sydney’s multicultural community bring more class and status to the bride’s family. The bride’s family, not the groom’s, as has been a historical tradition, provide food for the guests, invited by both families. (Some families however, share the costs between them). Some of the settings are imitated from movies like Hum Aap Ke Hai Koun (HAHK-Who Am I to You, 1995, directed by Sooraj Barjatya). The movie’s feasting scene where the groom’s party is pampered with food and sweets, is replayed in reality at many Sydney weddings. Mother of an Australian Fiji Indian bride sums up this new trend:

We cooked the food at home but arranged with a catering company employing mainly (white) university students who work as waiters and waitresses, and speak good English, to serve the food. We made sure we did not use paper plates … this does not look good and is messy. We hired china, forks and knives, proper glasses with matching napkins for our daughter’s wedding. None of the women wanted to spoil their $600 saris while helping to serve the food or while cleaning up. It was a big celebration; something that my husband and I always dreamed of from the time our daughter was a baby. We also had non Indian guests and we couldn’t be the typical Indian ‘junglees’(bump kin)... from Fiji. Everyone was asking how we managed to organise such a grand wedding. If it is catered, you are giving your guests a good time (Suman, December, 2006).

Suman’s sentiments are echoed by almost every Fiji Indian who has participated in planning a wedding in Sydney (also part of this research), for they see weddings as one of the most important social occasions in terms of celebration and rituals, an ideal that has been part of their Indian heritage for centuries. As much as the Sydney Fiji Indians mythologise tradition as a cultural continuity, Pfleiderer’s (1985) idea of repressing new needs does not apply to their affluent and more western, liberal approach to life. They live as they please, especially in a consumer-driven nuclear family environment. Those with modest means in Sydney still have a grand wedding with all the trimmings. One way of cutting costs for modest income families is to do all the cooking and preparations at home with the help of people from their community networks. Similar to weddings in Fiji, the Sydneysiders pitch in financially for
weddings. Nand, who had to organise his only daughter’s wedding within a year of migrating to Australia, said:

The people of Fiji who I befriended in Blacktown (suburb) provided financial, logistical as well as moral support. Although the wedding was not as grand as some others that I have been to in Sydney, it was way above what I could afford then. I did not have a job then and my wife was the only one in full-time work (Nand 2006).

Theories presented by (Dwyer, 2004, p. 66) also see weddings as grand events, ‘[t]he wedding is a major spectacle, Indians being known for the grandeur and splendour of their weddings even within families of modest means’. These views (of the Indian community) are further reinforced through the Indian movies where weddings are also presented as a grand spectacle. It is rare for a Bollywood film not to have a wedding scene for the hero and heroine or for another couple. Cinema is interpretative art and expands our sense of the possible (Kothari, Raheja and Merchant, 2004, p. 15). Just Married (2007), Namaste London (2006), Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam (1999), Bride and Prejudice (2004), Devdas (2002), Hum Aap Ke Hai Kaoun (1994), Hum Saath Saath Hai (1999), Kabhi Kushi Kabhi Gam (2001), Dil Wale Dulhaniya Le Jayege (1995), Kuch Kuch Hota Hai (1998), Kal Ho Na Ho (2003), Dil Chahta Hai (2001), Saathiya, (2001) and Monsoon Wedding (2001) are among the popular titles of movies which pride themselves on the wedding scenes. Songs, and their lyrics, combined with music give an ‘intravenous shot of adrenaline’ to those watching Bollywood movies. These are then replayed in real life weddings. Songs like ‘chote chote bhaiyon ke bade bhaiya aaj bane kisi ki saiya – the oldest brother of small brothers is today becoming a husband’, from Hum Saath Saath Hai (1994), is replayed as the groom arrives for the wedding ceremony in real life (personal observation since 1998 in Sydney). Similar to the fanfare the families and friends enjoy at weddings on screen, such forms of entertainment have become an integral fabric of the social and cultural continuity for those ‘on the ground’. Raheja and Kothari (2004) say that the language and lyrics of Bollywood are not some abstract critical theory but a living, breathing reality providing depth and unexpected synthesis, enriching the consumers’ day-to-day lives. They also credit the appeal of Bollywood to a combination of acting and inventive musical numbers, which in turn are based on literary themes and folklore. While the Sydney weddings are replete with the traditions and rituals such as henna night (with song and dance), played out in Bollywood movies, the music at the occasion is provided by specially hired bands, DJs and through live performances. Guests dance to some of the popular songs from the movie HAHK: wah wah
ram ji jodi kya banayi ...God Ram has made such a beautiful match of my brother and sister in law, congratulations to them. The brides and grooms select the songs for their wedding. Priya, who had a ‘society wedding’ in 2005 had given specific instructions to the DJ on the music for each wedding ritual:

I did not want my aunties who cannot sing to be a “phata baas” (cracked up bamboo) at my wedding. As I arrived in the mandap, the DJ played the song from Raja Hindustani: “Aaye ho meri zindagi me tum bahaar banke … You have come into my life like a breeze’. This was my wedding and I wanted to make the best use of all that is available in this modern age. (personal interview 2005)

Many brides, grooms and close friends and families, when selecting the songs to be played at weddings, do so by focusing on the lyrics, some of which is translated into real life interpretations. One Sydney woman said:

The song ‘saath phere ke saatho bachan pyari dulhaniya bhool na jaana (the promises made during the ritual of the seven steps)’ was played during the ritual of the seven steps at my daughter’s wedding. My daughter has been married for three years now and I keep reminding her of that commitment and the song from her wedding whenever she says she’s not coping in her marriage. So far, she’s managed to keep working at her relationship and it has worked because we have a moral commitment to support her and make the marriage work. She also feels the pressure to make the marriage work as she does not want to bring any kind of stigma to the family, having had such a grand celebration to mark the union (personal interview, 2009).

The song’s lyrics refer to the seven steps taken by the bride and groom as an integral part of the Hindu marriage ritual, promising to work towards keeping the marriage intact.

Jone and Ramdas (2004) discuss ideal and reality in Asian marriage, with reference to Bollywood movies. They say that costumes worn in \textit{HAHK}, especially the green outfit worn by the heroine, Madhuri Dixit, was much copied, as well as other costumes worn in the movie. They were copied by tailors in India and the diaspora ‘as they allowed for further emulation of the possibilities offered in the film’ (p. 67). Each new Bollywood movie offers a new style and hope for Sydney weddings. Brides and grooms not only want to imitate the merry making and festivities of weddings, they also copy the colours and outfit worn by brides and grooms on screen, from henna designs to jewellery and costumes. The argument that Bollywood provides a primary link to India for the new international audiences of first and second generation emigrants in the UK and US (Raheja and Kothari, 2004) also applies to migrant Indians in Australia. Their argument that the 90s Hindi cinema was preoccupied with the themes and dreams of the ‘yuppie’, young, affluent, urban, obsessed over lifestyles of burnished materialism, also applies to the Australian consumers of Bollywood. This
change in the material world, displaying the double existence of structure and well argued in the works of social theorists like Bourdieu (1997), is played out by Indians who remain true to their cultural identity but reproduce their social structure. Priya, who earlier in this chapter discusses how she chose the songs to be played at her wedding, wore a wedding dress that reflected what Karishma Kapoor (Bollywood actress) wore in the movie *Ha Maine Bhi Pyaar Kiya* (Yes, I too have been in Love) (2002). Usually a week after the wedding ceremony, a party is held where families and friends from both sides come together to ‘let their hair down’. Alcohol and meat are consumed as both of these are not on the menu during the Hindu wedding ceremony, for religious reasons. Many Sydney families take their sons and daughters to be married in an arranged-love match back to Fiji. This means the Hindu wedding ceremony is held in Fiji but the couple meets its new families and friends at a western style party in Sydney. The Fiji Indian arranged marriage has an emphasis on family consent rather than how the couple met, and is valued in the close-knit Sydney community (research focus groups and individual research participants; arguments supported by the plethora of advisements in the media, seeking marriage partners of Fiji Indian background). This arranged cum-love partnership is worked on at various levels within the community networks, not excluding any possibility of the couple meeting through their own networks while being exposed to the community’s exclusive spaces such as prayer meetings and weddings.

However they meet, getting the family’s approval/blessing is an important stepping-stone to the more solid and formal ‘tying of the knot’ or bond in marriage. While Indian traditionalists believe in love after marriage against the general Western belief that love comes before any commitment, the Fiji Indian community is borrowing these concepts while creating its own ‘third space’ (Bhabha, 1994) and adding new meaning to marriage, which is not a case of ‘one size fits all’. While love relationships are given parental approval before marriage, the community also facilitates a first meeting of the couple, arranged by families and friends, before they are in love and begin to consider marriage. There are other variations to how the couple meets, however, getting approval from parents and families has been an important element of cultural continuity for the community. The community has indeed invented its third space while playing out its Indian, Fijian and Western identities at weddings. Lal (2007) sums this up with the comment that:
essentialised notions of homelands are displaced in favour of dualities. One can be an 'Indian' and a 'Fijian' in the same space and at the same time. Lovo and Kava and Sevens Rugby can be celebrated without apology alongside Bollywood films and Indian art and aesthetics. That is both the challenge as well as the condition of Indo-Fijian identity in Australia (in Chand, 2007).

Shanti, 52, migrated to Sydney when her children were six, four and two. In the last few years all her children got married, two of them have children of their own. The two older children returned to Fiji to marry partners who were introduced to them through the family networks:

We had the Hindu ceremony in Fiji for my daughter and son in 2001 and 2004 respectively. They are both living with their partners in Sydney. My youngest daughter met an Indian boy from India through the internet chat rooms. They fell in love and wanted to get married so the boy’s family came over to Sydney from Punjab and the couple got married here. We had a Punjabi wedding at the gurudwara (Seikh temple) in the morning and a Hindu ceremony at night. We had a small party for close families and friends after the wedding and before the groom’s parents left for India, at our home. For my older daughter and son, a week after their weddings and honeymoon in Fiji, we returned to Sydney and organised after wedding parties where we invited all our families and friends in Australia. We cooked the food at home but hired party planners for serving the food and for decorating the hall (personal interview, 2008).

Organising such parties is common in the community in Sydney. The wedding months, September to May (June, July and August being winter), are scheduled as ‘busy’ on the Fiji Indian calendar as weekends are spent in wedding preparation and staging. Dancing to Bollywood hits (songs) provides the adrenaline for the party. Songs like ‘Mehndi laga ke rakhna’ from Diwale Dulhania Le Jayenge, ‘Aaye ho meri Jindagi me tum bahar banke’ from Raja Hindustani, ‘Maiya Yashoda’ from Hum Saath Saath Hai, ‘Dil to paagal hai’ from Kuch Kuch Hota Hai, ‘Dola re Dola’ from Devdas, ‘No life without wife’ and ‘bale bale’ from Bride and Prejudice, and ‘Aaja nach le’ and ‘chunari chunari’ from Monsoon Wedding are all essentially based around love, marriage and affluence, especially among overseas Indians. These songs have become an integral part of Fiji Indian weddings in Sydney. The dream of liberation from the poverty and simplicity of their past in Fiji, like the 90s cinema, has occupied the minds of the now ‘yuppie’, young, affluent and urban migrants. The attire brides, grooms and the wedding party wears, the rituals, wedding food and the decorations have all been overhauled to usher in the new era of affluence. Wedding planners have replaced the close relatives and village women who managed the wedding plans in the past. Brides take full control of their day from whom to invite, including the invitation card, to their wedding attire, the mandap decorations to the food that is served. The invitation card is selected from a range available on the internet at websites like www.myshaadi.com. At 274
George Street in Liverpool, Shaadi in Style, http://www.hotfrog.com.au/Companies/Shaadi-InStyle-Designer-Wedding operates an exclusive boutique for wedding cards and other paper goods such as ‘thank you’ cards, table name tags, sweet and gift boxes with names and initials of the bride and groom as well as wedding invitations as e-cards. Shaadi in Style, targets the Indian as well as the Western wedding market with its exclusive designer wedding invitation cards. Ritesh and Reshma Singh operate the business which, like VIP decorations, started off as a home based business in early 2000. Ritesh says “those having a Western wedding are also being influenced by the glamour of Bollywood. They also want colour and themes at their ‘White’ weddings. As for the Fiji Indian brides and grooms, they select their invitations to match their wedding attire, which they also choose together, many times keeping to colours and themes they decide on for their big day” (Ritesh Singh, 2009).

The realities associated with planning and executing Hindu weddings in Sydney in many ways reflects affluence as well as the ability to copy what the Fiji Indians see in the silver screen wedding scenes.

Hindu priest, Sada Nand recalls how wedding invitations in Fiji in the late 60s and 70s were given by distributing approximately 20 grains of coloured (yellow) rice to would be guests from the village. This was a task given to the poorest man in the village by the groom’s and bride’s families, so that those being invited would give him food items and money in the form of donations to say ‘thank you’ for the invitation. Sada Nand performs Hindu wedding ceremonies in Sydney (personal interview, 2009, 2011).

These methods of sending out invitations have been transformed in the new era as everything to do with a wedding has become an opportunity for businesses in Sydney. Businesses like Shaadi in Style are competing with wedding and other card suppliers to lure Sydney brides and grooms to place orders through the internet and online shopping. Additionally, there is the new method of sending e-cards to prospective guests. All these methods are introducing new and creative ways of planning and executing weddings.

While Bollywood and the visual media influences the community in creative and new ways, affluence in Sydney makes copying on screen actors and actresses, especially the clothes they wear, possible. The groom’s party wears a ‘themed’ or coordinated outfit while the bride’s group makes its own bold statements. Many families travel to Singapore, Malaysia or India to
hand pick the wedding attire, including jewellery. Fashion houses in Liverpool specialise in exclusive Bollywood attire and advertise their latest stocks in the Indian media as well as via internet mediums (see Appendix Ten for Dhadkan in Style advertising).

The fashion house named Dhadkan in Style has a fully fledged business on Northumberland Street in Liverpool. It opened another outlet in the Westfield Shopping Centre in Liverpool as the demand for the goods it specialises in has soared.


When couples getting married or families of the bride and groom go out shopping, they are able to associate what they see on display in shops, with what they see on the silver screen. In a way, copying Bollywood has become much easier and within reach of the community in Sydney, as demonstrated by the visual presence of fashion houses like Dhadkan in Style in Liverpool and on the World Wide Web.

Globalisation, easier communication, coupled with quick travel and affluence has helped transform the buying and preparation patterns for weddings. Irene and Vidya Prasad, of VIP Mandaps in Sydney, together with more than a dozen other specialists who advertise their services in ‘loud’ advertisements in the ethnic Indian media (radio, TV, newspapers, magazines, the Indian Business Directory and the internet) provide a selection of more than a dozen themed mandaps for weddings. The Devdas mandap has been popular for some time. In the movie Devdas, Bollywood screen queen Aishwarya Rai (as Paro) performed her role as the neighbour madly in love with Shah Rukh Khan (Devdas) with extraordinary finesse. Brides in Sydney try to walk in her shoes as they glide onto the mandap, decked in jewellery, wedding outfits and resembling Rai’s silverscreen appearance. Actress Karishma Kapoor’s bridal acts from movies like Ha Maine Bhi Pyaar Kiya and Dulhan Hum Le Jaye Ge, are also popular among Sydney brides (qualitative research as well as observation/study of Sydney Indian weddings). Priya, already mentioned in this chapter, said: ‘I chose gold and a bit of red for my wedding. The colour went well with my gold colour mandap from Devdas. I have
always admired Karishma Kapoor as a bride in Bollywood movies and always dreamed of looking like her on my special day’ (personal interview, 2006). Like Priya’s words, fashion houses advertise their attire with catchphrases like, ‘This costume is a remake of what Karishma Kapoor wore in *Hum Saath Saath Hai*’.

Owners of Bollywood fashion houses in Liverpool say that Sydney brides and grooms come into their shops with specific requirements for their bridal costumes. The co-owner of Abhisekh Fashions on George Street, Radhika, orders special wedding costumes which are hand-made in New Delhi. He says, ‘[w]e have several designer wedding outfits on display and change colours and other refined works such as beading on these as per the requests of the brides and grooms. Some orders are placed more than a year in advance’ (personal interview, 2009). A few shops down the street, Jasmine Patel operates an exclusive designer wear costume jewellery outlet under the banner of ‘Payal Emporium’. She says:

I take orders for jewellery as well as *sherwani* (Indian design shirts and trousers) for grooms. We provide more than 200 outfits for grooms in a year and order jewellery from our makers and designers in India for hundreds of brides across Sydney and indeed Australia. Some of the smaller shop operators from around Australia come to Sydney to buy their stock from us. The Indian weddings are definitely stamping a huge mark in Australia, mostly Sydney. Women bring in their own jewellery designs which they copy from movie sets or download from the internet. Some of the customers spend a few thousand dollars on different sets for the many Hindu wedding rituals, such as *henna* or *haldi* night as well as the actual wedding (personal interview, 2009).

These realities, which the community experiences, brings the ‘good life’ within reach. These words, ‘good life’ are borrowed from Jain who says, ‘[t]elevision and advertising have brought the good life in reach. Moreover, the whole world and what it has to offer in material terms is pouring “into” [Indian] consciousness’ (1994, p. 57). Keeping up with the demands of brides (mostly) and grooms today is a challenge for wedding planners Irene and Vidya:

We keep bringing in new things such as *mandaps*, other decorations like chairs, chair covers, sashes, table centre pieces, statues of Hindu Gods and Godesses, to add sparkle to our presentations at weddings. Brides keep calling us to ask if we have a particular item they have seen in a particular movie. Sometimes they find these new items in magazines or the internet. I have to regularly watch Bollywood movies to be in the know. Our advantage is that my husband (Vidya) is a chef by profession, so he meets the catering (food, drinks, snacks, savouries) needs of the wedding. We have become a one-stop shop for Indian weddings. In the past few years, we have catered for multicultural weddings, providing a Bollywood theme, with Indian food (Irene, personal interview, Jan 2007).

Irene and Vidya have left their full time jobs to start up their business which, in 1986 (in Sydney) was a weekend hobby. From one wedding per month then, they now decorate and
cater for more than 10 each month. They have expanded the business and Irene often travels to India, Singapore and Malaysia to bring in new stock. Families with influence and affluence in the Sydney society want their son’s or daughter’s wedding to usher in the latest trends. They ask for something extra, something unique that has not been used previously. Sometimes I get overwhelmed but I do my best to please the bride and groom. It is their day and we are here to make them happy. In 2006 for a Hindu wedding I had to do a mandap on a boat which had the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Opera House as a backdrop (Irene, personal interview, Jan 2007) (see Appendix 11 for pictures).

It is not unusual for couples to take a journey out of their homes to special locations for photo shoots in their wedding attire. This again reflects the Hindi films’ archetypal way of falling in love which is the song picturisation, which is a key part of the song or of the whole film (Jones, Ramdas, 2004). While Fiji Indians capitalise on the Sydney landmarks for photo opportunities, Australians from a multi-ethnic background see India as an exotic destination for weddings. Again, Hindi films often portray foreign destinations like Switzerland, Amsterdam, Melbourne and Sydney as exotic locations where couples on screen fall in love. A story in The Sydney Morning Herald carried the headline ‘A passage to India to tie the knot like royalty’ (2006) about a couple from Hobart who married in Ghaziabad, outside Delhi with the Indian style pomp and ceremony. Foreign couples choosing India as a ‘wedding destination’ is a new global phenomena (SMH, 2006). Again, Bollywood movies as well as the communication revolution, provide exposure to international landmarks for those getting married and play an integral role in the ‘sea change’: ‘[a] change in attitude towards popular Indian cinema in the west began in Britain in the late 1990s, demonstrating the increasing influence of the Asian community on mainstream British culture’ (Kabir, 2005, p. 143).

It is not only the attitude towards the cinema but a whole new appeal, especially of the glitter of costumes and jewellery, that has caused much fascination of anything Indian – from food to fashion. Media coverage of celebrity weddings add to the desire for elaborate weddings. The Sydney Morning Herald had front page coverage of the wedding of Bridal princess Vanisha Mittal (daughter of British Indian billionaire Lakshmi Mittal) and London financier Amit Bhatia which cost US$35 million (AU$46 million) (SMH Oct 29, 2005) The media (print, internet, Bollywood, magazines, websites) thus exposes the community to all sorts of possibilities when planning weddings on the ground. Romance, and eventually the wedding
scene, are backbones of Bollywood films. These provide the viewer an opportunity to borrow or apply the concepts portrayed including the excessive consumerism, the spectacle, music, dance and dialogue. This in turn leads to vices (eroticism, consumerism) as virtue and aesthetic pleasure (Jones, Ramdas, 2004). Other Sydney based wedding planners, caterers and decorators who advertise their services via the ethnic Indian media, including radio, newspapers, magazines and websites, echo Irene’s challenges:

For the weddings, families want large statues of Lord Ganesha, rows of deep laxmi statues with diyas in their hands, lined up to the entrance of the mandap, themed table settings, elaborate chairs for the groom during the tilak and aarti rituals, all oozing an air of Indian glamour (wedding planner, Sydney, 2007).

For the after party, the newly-weds and their families focus on the quantity and quality of food and table service. Music and entertainment form an integral part of this celebration space. Long speeches, tracing family histories and their successes in their Australian homes are narrated to audiences. Some families hire specialist speech makers to narrate these stories. When the official part of introducing the bride and groom and their families is over, the newly married couple takes to the dance floor, with Bollywood music.

They barely finish their first dance when crowds of young and old swarm onto the floor to the ‘rip-roaring’ Bollywood numbers. Entertainment at weddings and after parties, have become a new barometer for gauging the wealth of the families. DJs, performers from dance schools as well as sought after local singers are hired to provide such entertainment. Food and service to guests are equally important:

Every glass must be filled and finger foods and nibbles should be served to every guest, we get told. For the very elaborate and expensive weddings where every detail matters, we serve a five course meal with entrees, such as Indian savouries, hot from the pan, a full course meal on the table rather than a buffet, tea, coffee, ice cream, fruit and cake, as well as serve wine and other liquor at the table. Providing this service adds to the costs for the hosts and some families, after an elaborate wedding want to sit back and relax with those who supported them with the wedding. This is when we come into the picture. Then we have families on a budget who cook the food at home but pay us to serve and clean up. Yet others ask us to cook and serve with a buffet type arrangement (Vidya, personal interview, Jan, 2007).

In regards to the menu guests are offered a feast of international cuisine including Thai, Chinese, Italian and of course Indian. Many families keep to traditional Indian foods such as puri and curries for the wedding ceremony but serve up a richer array of food at the after
party. Yet others keep to vegetarian foods at the wedding and a combination of vegetarian and non-vegetarian at the after party.

This again reflects Bhabha’s ‘third space’ (1994) and Bourdieu’s (1997) ‘habitus’ where a whole new concept of reproduction is created. Bhabha uses the term hybridity to expand his argument on the third space as a creation of new transcultural forms. Bhabha argues that all cultural systems and forms are constructed in the third space, which opens up the notion of inter-national culture ‘not based on exoticism or multiculturalism of the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture’s hybridity’ (p. 7).

Bourdieu’s theory on ‘habitus’, on the other hand, creates a set of dispositions which generate these practices and perceptions among the Fiji Indians, signifying how the community or the ‘actors’ carry themselves, including their manners, style and gestures. These dispositions generate and organise practices and representations that are objectively adapted to outcomes (successful wedding ceremonies).

Amitabh Bachan, India’s screen legend for several decades now who has not lost his on-screen lustre or his real life appeal (as the father of 2007 wed Indian heart-throb Abishek Bachan to Aishwarya Rai), best sums up the Indian pageantry:

> Indians express themselves through folklore and poetry. Our heritage provides us with songs associated with all festivals and seasons. This is reflected in our films, where we have songs for every situation: love, separation, triumph or war. Occasionally an extremely popular song has become an allegory for a generation of film audiences (Amitabh Bachan, 2005).

Like the 1930s hit farewell song for brides ‘Babul Mora’ (K.L. Saigal), the popular songs of the 90s and the new century are: ‘No life without wife’, which is a Hinglish song featuring a mixture of English and Hindi from *Bride and Prejudice*. The colourful escapism of Bollywood marked its strong presence in the 60s as young women copied screen queens like Sandhna, Asha Parekh, Saira Banu and Sharmila Tagore for their popular fringe, foot high bouffants, idiosyncratic eye-liner, multi-hued lipsticks and tourniquet-tight salwar kameezes.

If glamour was your cup of tea, here was the entire tea pot. The girls of the 60s perfected the art of artifice and adopted affectations. The popularity of this glossy posse of actresses had a context. By the 60s, a new middle class, an affluent elite and a large populace aspiring to belong to either of these classes had emerged even in socialist India (Raheja and Kothari 2004, p. 67).
Sydney’s first ever-Indian Bridal Fair, at the Randwick Race Course in September 2006, created a craze for all things Bollywood in the ‘land down under’. Wedding decorators, planners, photographers, and those selling Indian fashion wear from home to owners of well established fashion house chains in Sydney came together under one roof to create a wedding-like atmosphere for Sydneysiders.

Australia’s and New Zealand’s first ever Indian bridal magazine, My Shaadi, offers a whole range of shopping tips, makeup artists, wedding planners, videographers, photographers, personal organisers, bridal hair, fashion and accessory artists to honeymoon destinations. Publisher Tasneem Ali, of Fiji Indian heritage, planned the magazine, keeping in mind the needs of migrants. A special section titled ‘Marriage Legals’, written by an Australian Indian migration consultant, deals with issues of marrying and migrating, with a frequently asked questions’ section. These issues are important as news and information to the community, giving rise to the various media platforms available to them. Although migration is possible through marriage to a partner from Sydney, many of the survey participants were not willing to discuss this subject. The media however, is aware of this need for information and presents it in the form of advertisements as well as stories, especially on the skills in demand as rated by the Australian Immigration Department.

The Indian wedding scene in cities like Sydney and Auckland has transformed this Indian culture from a home space into an international arena. The magazine My Shaadi has kept pace with these transformations while capturing the essential elements for today’s Indian weddings. Tasneem Ali says, ‘[w]e offer a combination of ideas from a shaadi planner to a shaadi directory, featuring the experts in organising the event to those experts giving tips on ways to survive the most important day of your life without being snowed under (Ali, personal interview, 2007).

Among tips for the bridal party in its first edition (2006) the magazine informed the bride and the groom not to invite previous boyfriends and girlfriends to the wedding. To the bride’s sister: ‘your clothes, henna or jewellery must not clash with the bride’s’. For the groom’s sister: ‘go to the gym; lose the extra kilos for the dance floor’. Guests were advised to ‘arrive on time, don’t give gifts unless there is a registry, give money, keep calm at the wedding and don’t ask about the bride’s jewellery. Don’t gossip about the bride or the groom’. Ali says
these suggestions are in keeping with the changing trends where couples prefer to buy what they like instead of receiving gifts. Giving money also helps towards the costs, and keeping relatives ‘at arm’s length’ helps avoid confusion as planners take care of details. Immediate relatives need to be reminded that it is the day for the couple so that they (guests) do not steal their thunder. While a majority of the Fiji Indian community has become a part of the new trend sweeping through Sydney, it is evident from research, face to face interviews, observations of practices at more than 40 weddings (between 2003 and 2009), that while this new trend is gaining popularity, some families are reverting back to seeking women who sing the traditional songs (popular in Fiji in the 70s and 80s) at weddings. Lyrics of songs like ‘Balu retta chalab hum kaise … saas morey behjaye paniya bharan ko, rassi chota bharab hum kaise (The land is swampy with sand, how will I walk? My mother in law sends me to fetch water from the well, the rope is short, how will it reach the bottom)’ are resurfacing, although the relevance of the lyrics or its meaning is lost. This song was popular on the charts in Fiji in the 70s and was repeatedly played on special Sunday radio programs dedicated to the newlyweds. Its meaning, of suffering and challenges, of having to fetch water (still a reality for many women in Fiji) is lost in the Australian landscape where turning on the tap for water is spontaneous.

No Sydney wedding is complete for the community without a DVD of the rituals, celebrations, feasting and after parties. The Indian media advertise those who have taken up wedding photography and making wedding DVDs as a weekend business. Once these DVDs are made, they are easily copied and circulated among families in all corners of the globe. Photos are also shared and almost instantly via YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. Similar to the ideology created by viewing Bollywood, as well as the holy epics Ramayana and Mahabharata, these DVDs send out the message of the sense of belonging and longing in the community to be married. These act as an agency to support the institution of marriage, fostering among young adults the desire to be married ‘in style’. In Appadurai’s (1990) terms, they become ‘agents’ as opposed to ‘dreamers’ of the collective fantasy of late capitalism. One Liverpool based videographer and photographer said:

I take wedding photos and make DVDs of weddings and the demand for copying Bollywood weddings is high on the stakes. Couples request for the DVD to be made just like a Bollywood movie, and I am able to do this with proper editing software. I also play Bollywood songs that have relevance to the particular rituals and my customers love this. So many of my new customers remind me to make DVDs similar to what they have seen/viewed earlier among friends and families (personal interview, 2009).
A photographer who advertises his service in the Indian media said:

I hardly have any weekends free during the wedding months. A few days after the wedding, the newly married couple requests to have the best shots so that they can upload these onto the various internet platforms for their circle of friends and families. So much more business is generated via this means for me. Now my son is also involved in the business as I cannot cope with the handful of photographers I have employed (Rajendra Lal, Campbelltown based photographer, 2009).

The community’s ideology of Bollywood style weddings in Sydney is fulfilled to a large extent by the commercial activities of wedding planners, caterers, invitation card manufacturers, fashion houses, DJs, photographers and videographers. While those involved in establishing such businesses capitalise on the available opportunities, members of the community, to a large extent, feed their ideologies of grand weddings by copying Bollywood. Distributing home wedding videos among families and friends while posting engagement and wedding photos on internet sites such as Facebook and twitter enables the mass circulation of such ideologies.

The relevance of Hindu wedding rituals

The purpose of marriage in the Hindu religious context is to procreate and perform one’s religious and social duties. Hinduism views the fulfilment of life through marriage. In the early years after indenture in Fiji, many Indian communities saw the begetting of children as an integral part to the development of their village economy through the supply of labour. This was a common practice brought into Fiji by the indentured labourers. Those living on farms needed to have children to help with the labour supply. Children, especially sons, were also the only social security in old age, and in the case of sickness or disability. This in turn gave rise to the popularity of the Hindu extended family. According to the Hindu dharma, a woman (daughter) is given away in marriage. This means she leaves her parents’ home to live with her husband and in-laws. From a religious viewpoint, having a son is essential as he performs the religious rites for his parents after their death. In a modern world however, this is changing as daughters actively participate in these rituals.

Marriages were arranged; at an early age, before puberty, in many parts of India and is still common in some states. Hinduism, as a complete science of spirituality, provides an objective means where optimum compatibility in marriage can be ascertained through astrology. When arranging a Hindu marriage, compatibility is matched socially, spiritually,
mentally, sexually and economically. Family lineage also plays an important part as marriage is also about two families coming together. A Hindu marriage arrangement is intended to be permanent, and although divorce is seen as a social stigma, there are certain conditions sanctioned by the canon law which make provision for remarriage and divorce. Therefore, marriage should ideally be contracted when there is the highest degree of compatibility between the couple (Pandit Sada Nand, 2009).

Today’s contemporary society is, however, conditioned with romantic ideas of marriage based on love, where partnerships are based on sexual attraction with other considerations taking second status. In a traditional Hindu wedding, the man and woman represent the two halves of the divine body (as Goddess Laxmi and Lord Vishnu). As part of the ceremony the couple repeats ‘Id na mama’ meaning ‘it is not for me’. Repeated after the offerings in prayers, this teaches the virtues of selflessness required to run a family.

Hindu priest Pundit Narayan Bhatt, who conducts Hindu marriages and is also an Australian marriage celebrant, argues that in Hinduism marriage, is viewed as a sacrament, a life-long commitment, and is the strongest social bond in a family, community and society. Known as the ‘Grahastha Ashram’ (the householder stage), the second of the four stages of life, this stage begins when a man and a woman marry and start a household. For a Hindu, marriage is sacrosanct and the only way to continue the family and thereby repay their debt to his/her ancestors. Hindus also view marriage as a means for spiritual growth where the husband and wife are seen as soul mates who can direct their energy, associated with their individual instincts and passion, into the progress of their souls. The Vedas also affirm that after the completion of the student life, one must enter the householder stage of life and procreate.

The priest argues that many people equate the Hindu marriage to arranged marriage, mainly because all Hindu parents, in keeping with their religious duties, begin looking for partners for their children as soon as they (children) reach marriageable age. They (parents) do this, keeping in mind the ‘societal values’ regarding financial/social status, education, natal chart, religion and other such things. Today these vary according to the individual family and the choices of the young couples getting married. The traditional Hindu wedding features three days of rituals and celebrations. In Sydney, however, families mostly combine the first two days into one and have the final day which is the actual ceremonial wedding in a hall. For the
purpose of this research, I am only presenting a brief overview of the Hindu marriage ceremony as it takes place among Fiji Indians (Hindus) in Sydney.

The traditional Hindu wedding has symbolic, spiritual and philosophical meaning, dating back to more than 3000-5000 BC. The ceremony is performed in Sanskrit, the language of ancient India and Hinduism. The Sanskrit word for marriage is ‘Vivah’ which literally means ‘what supports or carries’. “The ceremony thus referred to as ‘vivah samskara’ (the 13th of the 16 samskaras or the rites of passage) is meant to create a union that supports and carries a man and woman through their married life in the pursuit of righteousness (Dharma).

The ceremony joins the souls of the bride and groom and creates a strong bond between the two families. These customs have originated from the Rig Veda, the most ancient Hindu scripture. The ceremony is solemnised in the presence of God and the five elements of nature: Fire, Earth, Water, Air and Light” (Bhatt, 2009).

In presenting the rituals or ceremonies performed during a Hindu wedding in Sydney, this section aims to frame an understanding of the importance of the rituals to the institution of marriage for the Fiji Indian community in Sydney. This aspect of the community’s cultural space has not changed much since the days of indenture. If anything, the community has recreated this cultural space as a ‘celebrated space’ because of the affluence in their Sydney space and the influence of the modern media. While the media feeds the community’s imagination with all sorts of possibilities, especially through Bollywood, their exposure to disposable income means that they can indulge in fashion, food and elaborate rituals during wedding ceremonies.

The following ceremonies are commonly performed at Hindu weddings in Sydney, and were explained to me by Bhatt:

* **Dwaar pooja**: the reception of the bridegroom and his kinsmen at the entrance gate of the wedding hall where the officiating priest chants a few mantras and the bride's father welcomes the groom and party.
This ritual has become an elaborate affair as wedding guests (groom’s party) and hosts (representing the bride) usually meet and greet with the performance of dance by both parties.

**Parchan:** The bride’s mother welcomes the groom with tilak of sandalwood paste and aarti (circling the diya: earthen oil lamp around his face). She places the tilak (dot) on the groom’s forehead, between his eyebrows, which is the seat of memory and thinking. This ritual invokes the feelings of sanctity. Light symbolises knowledge. The upward burning flame signifies acquisition of knowledge. The other common reason for this ritual, as applicable in the indenture era and a few decades later, was to ensure that the man who had initially been approved of as the girl’s marital partner, was indeed the one arriving at the bride’s home to take her hand in marriage. In those days of poor communication and when groom’s covered their faces with fresh flower garlands making it impossible to recognise them on the wedding day, it became the responsibility of the bride’s mother to ensure his correct identity before the ceremony. The word ‘parchan’ in Hindi means to identify. Circling light around the groom’s face is also significant in warding off evil eyes. This ritual is followed in the modern times of today as it is interpreted as a means to ward off the evil eye.

During this ritual in Sydney, mother’s of brides give expensive gifts such a 22 carat gold chains and money to the groom. Only married women can perform this ritual. This points to the value placed on marriage and being married in the community as the ritual has cultural rather than religious significance.

**Madhuparka Ceremony:** Reception of the bridegroom at the altar or mandap (actual wedding canopy, held together by four pillars representing the four parents) by the bride’s father. The four pillars denote the blessings and steadfast support of the four parents of the bride and groom. However the couple meets, parental approval in Hindu weddings is a vital life-force, as parents, especially of the bride, play significant roles in some of the wedding rituals.
The priest invokes blessings from Lord Ganesha (the elephant deity) for the protection of all involved and the removal of all obstacles. Worshipping this deity, believed to be the most benevolent, is seen as important during auspicious occasions. The priest also recites prayers to sanctify the water used during the ceremony. Holy water is sprinkled to purify the location of the wedding. This is significant as weddings in Fiji were held in the home of the bride which used to get a spring-clean two weeks before the ceremony. It is impossible to host such large gatherings in Sydney homes.

The bride (on the days prior to the wedding ceremony) also performs gauri pooja to Goddes Parvati (Lord Shiva’s consort), seeking good fortune, blessings of prosperity and a long, happy married life.

Bride arrives in the mandap with jaimala (garland) which signifies the beginning of no end. The fragrance of flowers provides a sweet smelling atmosphere for their acceptance of each other. She is accompanied by her mother, sisters and other female relatives, mostly aunties, from both her mum’s and dad’s sides. She exchanges garlands with the bridegroom. This signifies that they have sublimated their individuality and are now united as a single unit, a family based on the principle of equality and mutual respect.

**Abhishek:** The bride and groom are consecrated by the priest who sprinkles water over them. The priest recites this mantra: ‘May the golden-hued, the bright, the splendid cosmic principles that produced the Sun and Fire, those that contain the supreme wisdom, the golden ones bring joy to you and bless you’ (*Atharva Veda* 1.33.1)

**Kanya daan:** the gifting away of their daughter by the parents of the bride, first to God who then gives her away to the groom. Thus marriage is not viewed as a purely human affair, rather as a sacred covenant between a man and a woman in which God participates as witness as well as the donor of the bride. During this ritual the bride’s right hand is placed in the right hands of her parents while the bride’s brother pours out the libation of sacred water (blessed by the priest) onto their hands, signifying this giving away. The groom recites Vedic mantras to
Kama, the God of love, for pure love and blessings as he receives the bride with both his hands. Placed in the palm of the bride is a gift of gold, wrapped up in dough made from flour with grains of rice. Gold represents eternal life and is a symbol of strength which the bride can use in the event of financial strife. The acceptance of the bride, in the presence of God is referred to as ‘pani-grahan’ (acceptance). The bride’s father requests a promise from the groom in realising the important purposes of life: Dharma - to remain true to one’s beliefs and values, Artha - to provide for one’s family, Kama - to obtain emotional and physical fulfilment and Moksha - to achieve enlightenment and liberation. This is the most significant aspect of the Hindu marriage as well as the most emotional and involves religious rites. Parents work towards keeping their daughters chaste until marriage so that this giving away is a fulfilling and rewarding experience. Hindus also believe that this gifting is the highest gift one can give. Lyrics of many Hindi songs, devotional as well as from Bollywood, are based on this gifting of the bride.

The priest says, ‘This maiden is well adorned and bedecked with gold. I desirous of attaining the realm of Vishnu; give her to you O (embodiment of) Vishnu, the supreme lord who resides in the hearts of all beings, and all the gods are witnesses. I give this maiden so that you may fulfil your obligation to your forefathers and beget offspring’. After reciting this pledge, the bride’s mother finally lets go of her daughter’s palm.

The bride is accepted by the groom with the following verse by the priest: ‘This maiden will be before me, she will remain beside me, she will encompass me on every side; may you be liberated through your gift. Impelled by God, I take you; with two arms of right knowledge and right action and the hands of the enricher I receive you.

**Surya dharshan and Dhruv darshan - Meditating on the Sun and the Polar star:** The couple looks to the Sun and Polar star in order to be blessed with a creative, energetic life. They look to the north to the polar star and resolve to remain steady, unshaken and steadfast like this star. This ritual is significant and
involves consulting with the priest to match the natal charts of the couple prior to the ceremony. Pundit Bhatt suggests that it is important to organise the marriage ceremony when the Polar Star is fully visible in the sky and not eclipsed by the movement of the earth.

**Saptapadi:** A ribbon or scarf is used to tie the edge of the bride’s saree to the shirt of the groom. Known as the marriage knot, this is tied by the bride’s sister in law (brother’s wife). The bride and groom take their seven steps together as a couple. These represent nourishment, strength, prosperity, happiness, progeny, long life and harmony and understanding respectively.

**Vivah Homa:** This is the sacred fire ceremony which ascertains that all auspicious undertakings are begun in an atmosphere of purity and spirituality. The couple walks around this fire seven times taking solemn vows of loyalty, steadfast love and life-long fidelity to each other. They also offer *laja-homa* (puffed rice) as oblations into the fire by the couple – the bride places her own cupped palms into the groom’s while offering this rice which is prepared by the couple’s aunts and sisters a day prior, amid much singing and dancing. The puffed rice from the two sides is mixed together and offered to the couple by the bride’s brother. This aspect of the ceremony legalises the marriage according to Hindu traditions.

**Sindoor daan:** *Sindoor daan* (red vermilion) is placed in the middle of the bride’s parted hair. It represents the groom’s strength and love. The bride wears this as a red dot on her forehead as well as in the parting of her hair as a desire for a long life for her husband. *Sindoor daan* denotes a new life for the bride, that is one belonging to the groom.

Soon after this ceremony, the groom’s older brother (or an older paternal male cousin) is called into the *mandap* by the priest to make a final pledge to ‘take care’ of the bride as an older brother, father-figure, in her new home. He assures her of confidentiality in dealing with any problems she may have in her new home, by asking her to confide these problems in him and not tell anyone else.

The significance of this ritual is a practical one, being that in a community where
gossip is rife, sometimes sharing a trivial matter may lead to complicated problems. By accepting a present from the older brother and a special garland, made of yellow cotton thread, the bride promises to keep within the parameters of her new home in resolving any problems, especially not take her problems to her mother’s home which she eventually leaves for her new home.

**Shila Arohan:** The bride steps onto a grinding stone: *sil* and *lodha* (flat stone with an oblong shaped stone) used to make chutneys by Fiji Indians. As she does this, the bride is counselled to remain steadfast in her commitment to marriage and be blessed with the power to grind the most difficult problems into a soothing paste.

**Aashirvaad:** benediction by the elders representing both the bride and groom.

**Sheesta chaar:** This ritual performed by the father of the groom and bride, or their representatives, signifies the coming together of two families. Hindu marriages are also about the marrying of families, thus the significance of the ritual.

**Vidaai:** This is considered to be the most emotional ritual when the bride leaves her parents' home and makes her way to her husband's. Family and friends, who also shower her with blessings and gifts, give her a tearful farewell. The male members of the bride's family bid farewell to the groom by applying the traditional *tilak* (vermilion) on his forehead and shower him with gifts.

In presenting the significance of the rituals followed at Fiji Indian Hindu weddings in Sydney, this research demonstrates how Hindu religious and cultural beliefs, combined with the rituals followed at weddings, form a strong foundation to build the capacity for making marriage relevant. The *Ramcharityamanas* community has built its social structure around the importance of marriage and family. The Hindu epics *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* illustrate that a couple ought to stay together no matter how challenging the realities of life may be, thus the institution of marriage for Hindus is not peculiar to humans only, even Gods marry and lead married lives just as humans (Ram and Sita in *Ramayana*). For the ordinary mortals, the Gods exemplify the ideals of marriage through their actions and attitudes towards
their partners, families and communities. Sita, as Ram’s wife survives many trials to remain steadfast in her devotion to her marriage, while Ram presents as a dutiful son, husband and ruler. Marriage thus symbolically represents the same relationship that exists at the universal level between the Purusha (Father God or the highest supreme self) and Prakriti (Mother Goddess or the universal divine mother), the dynamic energy of God responsible for manifesting creation under the will of God (Bhatt, 2009).

Chapter summary

This chapter has framed an understanding of the value of marriage in the Fiji Indian community by presenting its (marriage) ideals through the Hindu epics, the extensive literature on Hindu wedding rituals and the influence of Bollywood on the lives of the Fiji Indians in Australia. The chapter also argues that eastern as well as western societies, especially the Indian diaspora, will continue to emulate the raunchy fun, pomp and pageantry-loaded Bollywood style weddings in a globalised world. Hindi cinema of the 21st century has generated a creative milieu conducive to taboo-trashing experimentation, while breathing a new life into what it means to be Indian. Indianisation of street culture in metropolitan and multicultural cities like Sydney means a better appreciation of the culture while Bollywood movies, as well as the alternatives like Monsoon Wedding, Bend It Like Beckham, Bride and Prejudice, Namaste London and Namesake, create the Indian identity into a global phenomenon. Any lack of knowledge on the relevance of the Hindu marriage is catered for by the serialised DVD versions of Hindu epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata. The influence of these, combined with the syntax of stealing scenes from Bollywood for special moments in real life such as weddings, adds an exotic touch to wedding rituals. As themes of the Bollywood movies are revamped and reproduced, as happened with the three versions (1943, 1962 and 2002) of the movie Devdas, the wedding stage will continue to evolve, reflecting the glitter and glamour of the silver screen while basking in the opulence of modern society. Dwyer (2002) presents Bollywood films as a means to negotiate the connections between romance, love marriage, the arranged marriage and the joint family through their presentation of both the romantic couple and the marital couple and their families. Hindu literature, as well as serialised versions of the religious epics into film, feed the importance of marriage into the Fiji Indian consciousness. Marriages and weddings are key elements of Hindi cinema, which is not surprising given that they deal with some of the
most important and pleasurable issues in life, namely love (romantic, erotic, sexual and familial) as well as social status, money and consumerism (Dwyer, 2002).

From a religious perspective, marriage is seen as the strongest social bond in the family, community and society (Bhatt, 2009). The wedding rituals have not lost their significance in the new century and are indeed being revived with creative imaginations by the wedding planners and couples being married. Bollywood movies, more than any other media, teach the social conventions. Such films constitute a medium for enacting and sharing ideals on virtues, devotion to family and Indian roots. All these point to the significance of marriage as well as the importance of having a Hindu wedding ceremony before a couple begins to live together as husband and wife.

The next chapter presents the importance of networks and the role of gossip, especially in relation to the Fiji Indian settlement in Liverpool. It argues how yet another layer of the community’s network feeds the ideals of marriage while framing the role of gossip in a close-knit society.
CHAPTER EIGHT

The role of social networks and gossip in fostering the ideals of marriage

This chapter presents the Fiji Indian community dynamics in Liverpool, the heartland of the Fiji Indian population in Sydney. Liverpool’s Northumberland and George Streets display the colours, fragrances, spices, root crops, vegetables, fish from Fiji waters as well as the vibrancy of the Fijian lifestyle with shop windows adorning notices on Indian events and entertainment. The city, frequented by the more than 40,000 Fiji Indians in NSW is popular as a mini Fiji. While presenting the community’s networks through their lived experiences in this physical space, this chapter also considers the role of gossip as a powerful medium that reinforces and propels group cohesion. Gluckman (1963) argues that gossiping is a ‘duty of membership of the group’ (p.313) as it strengthens the feelings of belonging. This chapter argues that both these factors work towards creating a platform for arranging marriages; networks to find partners, but on the other hand, gossip can ostracise those who do not get married according to established community codes.

Social scientists have for a long time recognised the importance of networks, especially among migrant communities. Such networks are sets of interpersonal relationships - sometimes deep ties based on friendship, kinship and shared history or nationality - which provide a connection among migrants and members of other communities in host countries and former homelands (Massey et al, 1993). As a result of creating this network such migrants contribute significantly towards social capital (Portes, 1995a). In the case of Fiji Indian migrants living in Sydney, this level of social capital (Bourdieu, 1990) is developed and maintained in a closely networked environment in Liverpool where political activism (a notion that has begun to evolve with new meaning, centred within the dynamics of migration, democracy and globalisation) is helping it stamp its physical presence. Many migration scholars and researchers have explored the notions of political activism among migrants as directly related to ‘transnational migration’ or ‘transnational field’ (Glick Schiller and Fouron, 1999, p.34) where such migration causes those who have actually crossed
international borders, settled and established a home in a new country or state, to maintain an ongoing, active interest in the polity of their sending country.

Thus, these transmigrants (Schiller and Fouron, 1999) ‘literally’ live their lives in several physical and imagined places (Anderson, 1983). Although this definition has its owns flaws for not separating those migrants who are not actively engaging in such behaviour from those who are, an important area that needs attention is the political activism of such migrants (Fiji Indians) in their host country. Liverpool’s Northumberland Street which is occupied by Fiji Indian owned businesses, is presented as a physical space to capture the notions of community building for such activism in a global space while evaluating the elements of networking in relation to marriage, migration and the birth of its own media and other businesses to promote everything Fiji Indian.

Eva Ostergaard (2003) defines transnational political practices as ‘various forms of direct cross border participation in the politics of their country of origin by both migrants and refugees, as well as their indirect participation via the political institution of the host country’. Linda Basch, Nina Schiller and Christina Balnc define transnationalism as the processes ‘by which immigrants forge and sustain multi stranded social relations linking together their societies of origin and settlement’ (1994, p. 7). Trans-nationalism thus becomes a social field that crosses geographic, cultural and political borders, making globalisation a core element of these processes.

Guarnizo and Smith (1998) draw a distinction in trans-nationalism, as one from above and the other from below. They view transnationalism from above as concerned mainly with micro economic processes synonymous with globalisation, while presenting transnationalism from below as dealing with daily lives and activities of everyday people, featured around social relationships, kinships, families whereby they may be sending remittances while engaging in transnational practices in multiple locations.

For the Fiji Indians, such interpersonal networks in Liverpool provide social, economic and cultural capital; with resources and sometimes status which they can capitalise on in other areas of social life such as marriage and migration. Pierre Bourdieu defines social capital as ‘the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition.’ He says that
generally social capital works at the levels of families and communities. While Bourdieu’s research has focused on strategies of accumulation of capital and the reproduction of inequality, others like Robert Putnam and Francis Fukuyama have treated social capital as a basis for solidarity and as a collective resource that makes trust possible. They present social capital as a productive variable that facilitates development and democracy, held by social groups and not possessed or accumulated by individuals. Social capital has also been brought to bear on the question of family support and on benefits mediated by extra familial networks.

These definitions fit well into the Fiji Indian networks which are established at various layers – from business interest to education and promotion of the community by investing in its people, especially through education.

Social capital, thus, is a term independently developed by a number of scholars (Bourdieu 1990, 1985; Coleman 1988; Portes 1998; Putnam 2000) and refers to the investment of social relations with expected returns in the market place. The concept of social capital stresses the importance of social relations and networks, and since it relates to collective as well as individual goods (Lin, 2001, p. 26), it can be applied to the built environment (Liverpool) constructed by ethnic community organisations (Fiji Indians) as well as individuals of minority ethnic community backgrounds.

The concepts of bonding and bridging through social capital has allowed this research to investigate the social use of the Fiji Indian built environment (Liverpool and Northumberland Street) from the standpoints of the community’s networks and the networks with the broader communities, thus allowing a focus on how such networks enhance the social, political, economic and cultural developments while improving community relations in multicultural Australia. At the grassroots level the members encourage children from the Fiji Indian community to socialise and gain education as a united group. The clusters of settlement of the community in Western Sydney, especially in Liverpool and Blacktown means that children of Fiji Indian background attend primary and secondary schools as a group. When these children start attending university or join the workforce they again are drawn to what is familiar.

A 27-year-old graduate from a Sydney university explaining why many of his ‘mates’ were Fijian Indian said, ‘look closely at the elite boys and girls schools in Sydney and scrutinise whose children attend these schools and who do they marry – this idea of separate societies
has existed for a long time and will continue into the future until there is an overhaul of the thinking processes’ (Avnin Kumar, Personal interview 2009).

**Strengthening the bonds**

The type of migration directly influences the bonds and strengths of the social networks, relationships or kinships among migrants. For the Fiji Indians these bonds have impacted on the vibrancy of the community and how it has evolved in Liverpool, a multicultural, global city. To understand their current pattern of settlement and engagement in the economy and political/social activities in their host city, it is important to understand their arrival and settlement in Fiji as indentured labourers. More than 60,000 indentured labourers were brought to Fiji via several passenger ships. These labourers lived in sometimes inhumane conditions in coolie lanes (cheap housing) for labourers, separate from indigenous Fijians who the then governor, Gov. Sir Arthur Gordon, prohibited from commercial employment so that they could enjoy their traditional lifestyle undisturbed by contact with the outside world and thus escaping the fate that befell other such communities that came into contact with the outside world (Lal, 2003).

They worked under trying conditions to move out of their cycle of poverty. Many of the 60 percent of labourers who decided to remain in Fiji at the end of indenture leased small plots of land from their native owners and began sugar cane farming as well as growing other cash crops. Soon these labourers began participating in economic activities which was motivated by the presence of Gurjerati traders (Lal, 2003). These traders had begun arriving in Fiji at the end of indenture, in the early 1920s, as ‘free’ merchants to establish businesses. Some of these businesses such as Vinod Patel & Company and Lords Jewellers have expanded their businesses to Sydney and other parts of the world (New Zealand and Canada) where the community has settled.

By the end of World War Two Indo Fijians outnumbered Fijians in total population. This trend, which was not reversed until the 1980s, caused concern among indigenous Fijians who became worried about their place and identity in their own ancestral land (Lal, 2003). The Indians were poor but they created their own place by investing in schools, temples and other infrastructure such as building roads and establishing piped water systems. Government initiatives came later.
The Indians also joined the workforce and were able to borrow from the banks and prosper which led to tensions with Fijians. A form of indigenous nationalism developed, leading Fijian leader Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna to declare that, ‘[t]he Indian community, having shown us the way and given us the example, can hardly expect to continue to hold all agricultural land in the sugar districts where the plough mints money’ (Norton, 1977). The British Colonial Sugar Refining Company, also concerned with the lesser productive Fijian farmers, warned government that:

> We cannot view with equanimity the disruption of the peasant system which has cost us so much patient effort and expenditure to establish. The development of individualism among the Fijians is accompanied by a growing disinclination to part with their land, which is often provocative of great hardship, especially to small Indian agriculturalists? (Norton, 1990, p. 42).

As their population increased, the first and second generation Fiji Indians started becoming politically active in Fiji. By 1970, when Fiji became independent from Britain, Fiji had two political parties - the Alliance Party, representing mainly indigenous Fijians and rich Indian businesses and the National Federation Party, made up of lawyers, businessmen and traders, seeking to represent the Indian blue collar workers and the farmers. The Indians, however, were never given a national heritage in Fiji or called Fijians. They always remained Indians, Indo Fijian or Fiji Indians. *KaiIndia* (belonging to India) is what Fijians call Indians.

The Fiji Indian migration out of Fiji has been voluntary, under a condition of crisis. Between 1997 and 2000 alone, 16,825 people migrated and the numbers are increasing daily, ‘draining the country’s best and brightest to greener pastures’ (Lal, 2003). Thus migration out of Fiji represents a different experience from the indenture era. It involves a constant and dynamic movement of people in a social, economic and political context, heightening social and economic dependence between transmigrants and nation states within a field of global social networks (Apadurai, 1996, Basch et al 1994).

The processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their countries of origin and their countries of settlement are the product of the current global capitalist system and have created a situation in which migrants construct, maintain, and reproduce transnational links as a response to shifts in the global economy. Demographic geographer, Mohanty Manoranjan (2002), estimated the cost of emigration at $F44.5 million. The figure
is much higher at $F274.7 million when the non replacement of skills in such professions as architecture, teaching, medicine, accounting and engineering are taken into account.

**The auspices of migration**

While attempting to understand the Fiji Indians’ desire to migrate, one needs to also understand the ‘auspices of migration’ as proposed by Grieco (1998), whose study of Fiji Indians focused on caste formations in Fiji. He argues that caste groupings became lost during indenture as the labourers had to live together and intermarry. It is also generally viewed that the primary source of caste disintegration was the ‘ritually polluting condition’ of the voyage from India and the ‘exploitative’ nature of life on the plantation (Jayawardena, 1971, Mayer, 1961, Schwartz, 1967, Gillion, 1962, Brown, 1978, 1981). They became *jahaji bhai* (ship mates) and *gaon bhai* (village mates) (Jayawardena, 1971, Mayer, 1961). They all went through similar trials of hard labour on the farms, thus formed strong kinships. Their movement within Fiji was based on the movement of social units such as family or, in the case of those arriving after 1920 as free immigrants, chain migration.

The wave of migration out of Fiji after 1987, however, displays a far removed auspice of migration. A majority of those migrating have been able to do so because of their education, trade and professional skills. In Sydney they are living in an affluent and liberated society where competition as a result of globalisation has meant a different level of kinship and unit formation. Exponential shifts in communication and easy travel through globalisation has meant that kinship ties are reinvented and reinvigorated. Their new home in Liverpool provides a strong foundation for this to happen. While word of mouth networking and visible physical presence in Liverpool helps promote the networks and identity, many professional groups have formed their own networks through Facebook, Twitter and other online networking sites.

Through these connections, political and other news about Fiji spreads like ‘wild fire’, sometimes well before the mainstream media report these. In a similar way, these groups are able to provide emotional, financial as well as political support to people of Fiji as and when need arises. Identifying these communities has meant economic opportunities for those keen to set up business, such as travel agencies, accounting and real estate firms, medical and legal facilities, as well as grocery, fashion and other businesses such as catering and decorating
services for weddings. Many members of the community use family chain migration whereby members of the community sponsor or support newcomers to Sydney or send remittances to help educate those left behind in Fiji so that they can upgrade their skills to qualify for skilled migration. The expectation is that those who migrate will assist those who remain behind. They take actions, make decisions, feel concerns and develop identities that connect them to the two societies, making them quintessential transmigrants (Lal, 2003).

Fiji Indians in Liverpool

Liverpool’s Northumberland and George Streets together host more than 50 Fiji Indian owned businesses. The five major places of birth for Liverpool residents are, in order: Fiji, Vietnam, Iraq, Lebanon and the Philippines (Macleod, 2008). Using the Liverpool City Council’s data, Macleod estimated the Fiji Indian population at 5000. Media producer, Jai Prasad, who, from Northerumberland Street operates a 24-hour Hindi community station called Radio Madhurima, estimates there are more than 40,000 people of Fiji Indian heritage in and around Liverpool.

The evolution of the Fiji Indian community in Liverpool has transformed the city’s physical as well as religious landscape. As discussed earlier in chapter two, in the 10 years to 2006, Liverpool experienced the largest population growth in the state of New South Wales with 44,767 additional people, making the total population 164,603. Blacktown was next with 40,109 (Liverpool City Council, 2009). Historian Macleod found, in her 2008 research, that a majority of migrants chose Liverpool to build a home so that they could be close to people from their communities and country. This level of closeness leads to the establishment of Ramayan recital groups and other Hindu religious affiliations for praying together, in private homes.

The Fiji Indian businesses on Northumberland and George streets are Indian grocery shops that sell food items such as rice and flour in 20 kg bags and lentils and spices in bulk. Other items they specialise in include foods from Fiji such as root crops dalo and cassava (similar in their bland taste to potato and staples in the indigenous Fijian diet), fish from Fiji waters and other sea foods, as well as prayer goods such as incense sticks, camphor, statues of Hindu Gods and Goddesses, to name a few. Music and film video/DVDs are also an integral feature of these and other specialist Indian music stores along the strip. Fashion houses featuring the
latest copies of outfits from the sets of Bollywood are also prominent while businesses like travel agencies, restaurants, legal and accounting firms, real estate as well as media stations have all mushroomed around the Fiji Indian presence in these streets.

Every business visited as part of this research had a small section on the cash out counter carrying business cards of other Fiji Indians businesses such as panel beaters, motor mechanics, tile layers, dance teachers, party/wedding decorators and caterers, tutors in specialist academic subjects, to name a few. The windows of many of these shops carry posters featuring community events, celebrations, entertainment events and movies from Bollywood.

Noel Lal, 50, of Fiji Indian heritage, lives in Liverpool and owns an engineering business there. He also contested the local government election as an independent candidate in 2008. In an interview on May 18, 2009 he said:

As history depicts, politics is embedded in any Indian/Hindu’s life. Our religious books esp. Ramayana and Mahabharata are based on politics. Living in Liverpool where the second largest ethnic group after Australians is Fiji Indians warranted a representative in the council and hence a couple of our people and I decided to contest the elections. It is a renowned fact that the Indians are contributing towards the development of Liverpool in many ways. Just a stroll in the main streets of Liverpool will display an array of shops owned by Indians. 98% of Indians in Liverpool own their own houses and a majority have an investment property as well. These people need a say as to how the city is to be run now and in the future. I was trying to provide a conduit to the council for their concerns, grievances and suggestions. I am originally from Fiji, born on a farm. I completed my studies (Primary & Secondary & Tertiary) in Fiji. I migrated in 1989 with my family to Sydney where I continued my studies in Electrical Engineering and completed several courses. I moved to Vancouver for three and half years. I completed my BSc in Electrical Engineering. An Australian company recruited me and I returned to Sydney where after 1 year I set up my own engineering business. The business has now increased from 1 employee to 15 with a branch in Victoria.”

Lal is also regional vice president of Oceania of the Global Organisation for People of Indian Origin (GOPIO). GOPIO is an international organization networking people of Indian origin from different parts of the world and looking after their welfare wherever they are settled. He is the vice president, international of the International Congress of Fiji Indians (ICFI). ICFI’s focus is the welfare of under-privileged children in Fiji. Every year up to A$80,000 is provided to these children in the form of help. Lal is trustee of the Australian Hindu Educational & Cultural Society. The organization helps in providing a place of worship for the Hindus. It is planning to construct an aged care facility and a multi-purpose hall to cater for Fiji Indians in Western Sydney. The Vishwa Hindu Parisad, (Hindu religious group) of
which he is national vice president, promotes Hinduism by uniting different Hindu groups. Lal says he has his sights on federal politics.

However, in the meantime his focus is local government where he wants to become an independent voice for the people of Fiji Indian origin. The Fiji Indian experience is echoed through the recollections of Ben Kumar, owner of Tara’s Supermarket who started his business as a small corner shop in a ‘back lane street’ in Northumberland 15 years ago:

When my Indian grocery business was started in 2004, the surrounding areas were bushland. No one knew about us and today, through word of mouth networking and the vibrancy of Fiji Indian community activities in and around Liverpool, the shop has been refurbished into a supermarket, offering goods in bulk to individual shoppers as well as other smaller grocery shop owners in Sydney and Canberra (personal interview, 2008).

As is common in Fiji, some of the Fiji Indian shop fronts have become a meeting point for people of Fiji Indian origin. During my numerous visits to Liverpool and Northumberland Street, I observed people either catching up or discussing upcoming events such as the launch of a CD of religious bhajans (songs) by one of the other independent candidates in the 2008 Liverpool council elections, Guru Charan. Charan, 60, owns and manages GuruTravel International Pty Ltd. He said that his business is ideally located in the heartland of the Fiji Indian space on Northumberland Street:

Through my business I am able to influence votes. I make a substantial economic contribution to Liverpool as well as Australia through my business. I am able to build on my economic, cultural and political clout. Fiji Indians wanting to travel to Fiji, for weddings in groups, for holidays and sometimes at very short notice especially to attend funerals or to visit sick families, rely on my services to facilitate their travel. Many of the businesses in Northumberland Street as well as other Fiji Indians I know promote my business through word of mouth. This street is becoming the Fiji Indians’ economic base. There is so much activity and vibrancy here. Although none of our candidates won this election, we are not giving up (Charan, 2009).

He lives in Cecil Hill, an upper class suburb of Liverpool and like Lal, is involved in numerous Indian charity and social groups such as the Hindu Cultural Society that facilitates community building in Sydney, while providing much needed help such as disaster relief for the people of Fiji. Radio producer/owner Prasad says that anecdotal evidence shows that Fiji Indians take up Australian citizenship within two years of being permanent residents:

In the beginning they focus on roti, kapada aur makan (food, clothes and shelter). All of a sudden, from being counted as stateless, they become real citizens where the law safeguards equal opportunity. This leads them to take on new challenges without any fear of rejection or loss. In Fiji only the elite such as doctors, lawyers and business people could be politically active. Here, economic or professional status does not matter, as
globalisation has made this opportunity available to them. Mahendra Chaudhry (from the rural class) inspired many of the laymen and now US President Barrack Obama is a living, breathing example of hope. Politicians are people who represent other people, not just their own interests. By being involved in politics these Fiji Indians aspire to be proactive in the city’s development and future growth. Also, they all must remember the political crisis in Fiji and how taking the back seat did not help. Thanks to globalisation, politics today is an everyday thing. These migrants are still connected to Fiji like a stretched out umbilical cord. They fly back often to revisit home or motherland. They also capitalise on the opportunity to do business with those still living in Fiji. In a way this becomes a community contribution (Prasad, 2009).

Jagdish Lodhia, 56, operates a gold jewellery business by the name of Lord Jeweller’s in George Street. His great grandfather migrated to Fiji as a free Gujerati migrant. By the end of 1945, the Gujerati migrants had established themselves as a visible Indian community, noted for their success in trade and commerce (Prasad, 1978). Lords Jewellers have the parent company in India with branches in Fiji, Australia, New Zealand, US, Africa and the UK. Lodhia is president of GOPIO:

We are where the Indians have gone. Liverpool has provided a great opportunity for our business which is growing despite the recession. As a businessman, I know that Fiji Indians live in their own clusters. The new migrants especially look for familiar faces and places and Liverpool facilitates this need with the array of shops and Fiji Indian people. When I contested the election, I had to face two other Fiji Indians as competition. I was planning to pull out when the newly formed Australian Business Party approached me to represent them. I now have a commitment to them as I plan to capitalise on the business aspects of politics to sit on council” (Lodhia, 2009).

Some members of the community in Sydney have clustered in settlements, recreating social networks in sports. There are groups that represent districts and towns from Fiji in soccer. These groups play annual inter-district finals as is the case in Fiji. Such competitions lead to economic networks where funds are raised to support home towns back in Fiji, especially during times of hurricanes and floods. In a similar way religious groups (*Ramayan mandalis*) are also formed around district connections.

Through these various layers of networking, members of the community do direct business within the community, many times referring new migrants to the clientele listings. Children and young adults in the community get exposed to this level of networking and referring members for services and help within the community at prayer meetings, weddings and gathering in private homes. These help towards fostering bonds (of trust) which in turn works well in social spaces for young adults when they begin communicating via Facebook and other internet channels. So when marriage partnerships are proposed, those directly involved are able to trace knowledge of and acquaintance with such people within their own familiar
networks. This works as better than meeting some total stranger as is the case in other western communities where love before marriage is generally seen as a prerequisite in a relationship. In the end, members of the community are able to trace the networks to their own familiar spaces while fostering the development of relationships.
The role of gossip and beliefs in the networks

While the bonds are strengthened through face to face meetings, networking in cyberspace and in the densely populated streets and cities such as Liverpool, these close-knit environments also foster and propel gossip and jealousy in the community. Like any other diaspora clustering, Fiji Indians also consider and are affected deeply by what other people say about them and how they are portrayed in public. They are thus preoccupied with their public image while attempting to ‘hide’ controversial issues such as marital problems, divorce, domestic violence, and children’s ‘bad’ social habits such as drinking alcohol, sex and co-habitation before marriage and pub crawling. Bottomley, (1992, p. 96) discusses the ‘ever present gossip network as an important source of information because honour and prestige are generated and evaluated by gossip’. Therefore gossip is not to be underestimated but seen as one of the most powerful factors that reinforces and propels group cohesion.

Gluckman (1963, p. 313) argues that gossip strengthens the feeling of belonging to the group as gossiping ‘is a duty of membership of the group’. For the Fiji Indians, every detail of life in Australia thus becomes a gossip in such a close-knit physical, emotional and social environment. In Fiji this level of closeness was possible because of the country’s small size in geography. In Sydney, easy and cheap communication coupled with regular meetings at Ramayana recitals and mandali (religious groups meetings), usually on weekly or biweekly intervals, and the availability of news and information about the community through the media and social forums, all add to the ‘stew pot’ of gossip.

While the main focus of this research has been to argue if, why and how the community arranges marriages, there is scope to research other interesting fields such as how ‘gossip’ within the community impacts on its status in the general Australian community, especially in relation to other minority migrant communities.

Some of the respondents to the research, especially women with daughters aged between 28 and 36, said the level of gossip in the community about these women not being married creates a level of paranoia whereby they feel they are constantly under the community’s radar:

My two daughters and son who are all more than 30 years old, do not feel comfortable going to Fiji Indian poojas (prayers) or weddings as some people just gossip about them
even while they are within ear-shot. One of my daughters cried so much upon being labelled as drinking alcohol and dating white men and that for these reasons, no Indian boy would want her as a wife (personal interview, Blacktown woman, 64, 2009).

All her three children work as professionals and want to settle down with partners of Fiji Indian heritage. The woman said she and her husband are now looking outside of Sydney for Fiji Indian men (for the girls) and for a woman (for the man), mainly because their children’s character have been tarnished by the level of community scrutiny and gossip.

We have placed advertisements in the media and alerted our families in the US, Canada, New Zealand and Fiji and hope to get the girls married first. We are definitely looking for those with Fiji Indian background, mainly because we will be able to easily trace their family history and reputation and our children will be able to make marital adjustments without too many problems because of the similarity in values and culture (personal interview 2009).

Another woman said her daughter, who works as a lawyer and had a breakup with her fiancé well before they were to be married, was ostracised so much whenever she socialised within the community that ‘she now lives away from home, in the heart of the Sydney CBD, close to work and away from the Indians’. In regards to her son she says:

My son, who is also not married handles the taunting in his own stride, even by much older men who say things like “Aare laadka tumhe ladki nai mile, kaisan aurat tum mangta ki abhi thak kuch kara nahi – oh boy, you can’t find a girl, what type of wife/woman do you want that so far you have not done anything?” Sometimes I break down and cry because I want my children to be married and settled, however, things are so different here that I can’t just tell them to marry the next person waiting (personal interview, 2008).

At a prayer meeting in Liverpool, the following conversation among a group of four women, aged 50 to 62 was captured:

*aaj kal to Fiji ke Hindustani ladki log hiya pe daaru piye aur mai baap ke ekh bund nai giney. Jab mange modh utahe aur naache chal de, raat bhar piye aur gheree bhi nai aaye, kon saadi kari aisam ke sanghe, door roho aur tamasa dekho khali. Baap mai peethi toor ke kam kare aur nai jane lakdkan kon nach nachye. -These days Fiji Indian girls in Sydney drink alcohol and do not give any regard to their parental authority; they just put their heads high up and go dancing, staying away all night, not returning home ... who will marry such girls, let’s just stay away and watch the dramas unfold, from a distance. Their parents do back breaking work oblivious to the goings on behind their back (personal observation, 2009).

One of the women commented that

*Aarye bhai, Fiji se ketna ladkan ke pagla banaye ke, paisa dekhaaye ke saadi kar le hai laachaar baap mai. Hiya pe to aapan admi ke dabaye ke rakeh hai aur mauj kare. Ka bolhoo koi ke, jamana bahut kharab hoi gaye. – Oh sister, so many boys from Fiji have been fooled into marrying such girls as their helpless parents show their wealth and buy them off. The women over here rule over their husbands and do what they (women) like.
What does one say about this, the world is facing a really bad time. (Personal observation; prayer meeting in Liverpool, April, 2009)
Such comments and topics of discussion are common at Fiji Indian social forums such as weddings and prayer meetings. Analysing these can provide another layer of research and insight into the community’s dynamics, however, for the purposes of this research, these comments demonstrate the level of gossip and lamenting that goes on about the dilemmas facing the community, even at prayer meetings.

In a similar way those who are divorced are also ostracised in the community. Pundit Bhatt explains that marriage plays a vital role in ensuring lineal continuity for Hindu families as it takes place mainly so that couples can procreate and pay their debts to the parents and grandparents (these discussions were presented in Chapter Seven).

Divorce or co-habitation before marriage, on the other hand, are socially stigmatised in the community. Fiji Indians apply their value system on these issues at wedding ritual performances where only married couples and married women participate in ritual performances such as welcoming the groom. It is not an intention of this research to ascribe value or to compare various ideas on marriage, or to discuss the views on polygamy or adultery, although these are also realities facing the community in Sydney and elsewhere around the globe.

This research thus points to gossip as a factor which causes people of the Fiji Indian heritage to conform to the community’s expectations in marriage. ‘Those who do not marry on time (girls by age 25-28 and men by age 28-32) become marginalised, stigmatised and even ostracised” (personal interview with an elder in the community, 2009).

How Hindu stages of life frame value on marriage

Pundit Bhatt argues that the human body clock begins to tick faster when young adults wait too long (past age 25) to settle down in marriage. Hindus believe in the four stages of life:

The first stage: **Brahmacharya** (student stage)

The second stage: **Grihastha** (householder stage)

The third stage: **Vanaprastha** (hermit stage)
The fourth stage: Sannyasa (wandering ascetic stage)

The first stage, which lasts to the age of 25, is for formal education where the man is expected to remain celibate, focusing on both spiritual and practical knowledge in preparation for a responsible life ahead. At the second stage he is expected to be married, take up the responsibility to earn a living, have a family, sustain the family and marry off children. Hinduism supports the pursuit of wealth (artha) as a necessity and indulgence in sexual pleasure (kama) under certain defined social and cosmic norms (this is detailed in Chapter Seven under marriage rituals). This stage lasts until around the age of 50. Hinduism also suggests that when a person’s skin wrinkles and his hair greys, he should take up the third stage of life. However, the realities of life, such as late marriage and career development cause this to remain an ideal for many Hindus in this modern world. For yet others, the householder stage lasts a lifetime. Although these stages of life are designed predominantly for men, women also have a vital role to play through each stage. Hinduism, however, sees them as dependent on men for protection at every stage of life. By the third stage, a man is expected to become a grandfather and begin to renounce all physical, material and sexual pleasures, retire from social and professional life and leave home to live a simple life in a forest, taking along with him his wife and maintaining little contact with family. This stage of life is not adopted by the majority of Hindus as it is harsh (having to give up the pleasures of the material world which is affordable to many people) as well as the reality of grandparents raising grandchildren to allow their children to work, especially within the Fiji Indian community. For this reason, this stage of life is nearly obsolete.

By the fourth stage man is supposed to be totally devoted to God without attachment, desires, fears, hopes, responsibilities or duties. His sole purpose in life becomes to attain moksha (release from the cycle of birth and death). When he dies, his son or heir performs the pretakarma (funeral rites).

Bhatt argues that the modern era has pushed the approximate age limitations put on each of the stages further and further, creating situations where many Hindus end their lives caught up in the vicious cycles of the second stage. The reality is that these are only viewed as Hindu ideals rather than as common practice. To a large extent, internal social rankings influence
the retention of values, beliefs, customs and traditions as well as the rituals (personal interview, 2009).

Pundit Sada Nand, who performs the Hindu wedding rites at an average of 12 Fiji Indian marriage ceremonies annually, argues that although many Hindus indulge in the second stage of life those who do not take on the responsibility to marry and procreate are to a large extent looked down upon and seen as incomplete beings. Hinduism and Hindu marriage rituals legitimise a set of ‘norms’ by providing a particular ethos and world view on family as a scared and private sphere while giving the institution of marriage a dominant standing as a social pillar.

**Religion as a salient variable**

Religion thus has become a salient variable, providing a focal point in this research for the retention of the Hindu/Indian culture. Isajiw (1990) argues that the desire for ethnic cultural retention in general is found to be stronger among first generation immigrants. In the case of Fiji Indians, the first generation immigrants are grandparents and parents of young people choosing to settle for an arranged marriage. The findings of this research point to the impact the close-knit society has on the institution of marriage. Although living in Sydney for a longer period of time over several decades and generations is likely to divide allegiance and commitment to the community, this is long time coming for Fiji Indians. Isajiw (1990) argues that it is difficult for distinct ethnic groups (in terms of race, religious value preferences and language) to retain their cultural heritage. However, for Fiji Indians, more than two decades of migration from Fiji has not changed much in regards to their marriage preferences and choices. The advancements in communication and technology have indeed propelled their desire to remain as a separate group through marriage and many other ways of socialising as presented in this research. The challenge, however, is the creative ways in which the community is attempting to maintain the extended family arrangement common in India and in Fiji (post indenture) and changing dramatically in Sydney against a backdrop of globalisation where the nuclear family is replacing the values of the joint family for practical and economic reasons. Sponsoring elderly parents to join children who have emigrated through the skills category is a common practice in Sydney. Many of the survey respondents discussed how they have paid as much as AU$90,000 to support parental migration. A
Hebersham (suburb in Blacktown) couple sponsored their parents (the husband’s) who are in their late 50s by paying the government close to AUS$90,000:

Now they both work in a factory and earn a weekly wage which was impossible in Fiji. We all live together; my wife is a stay at home mum and looks after our three children. In the weekends when they are not working at the factory, my mother helps with household chores and my dad helps me with my business activities which I do as a weekend hobby in addition to my full time job as an electrician. As a family we are so much better off. We do have our disagreements and usual tension but are able to cope (personal interview, 2009).

The politics of citizenship

In clarifying the relationship between physical place and social, political, cultural and economic relationships, the use of community as real and imagined (Anderson, 2006) provides an understanding of the Fiji Indian dynamics in Liverpool. Their relationship with sending and receiving countries are simultaneously real and imagined. Modern literature on transnationals delinks space from identity (Glick Schiller et. al 1992, Mahler, 1998). The Fiji Indian transnational, as this chapter shows, is formed by political, emotional, social, economic and cultural relationships to identity where universal, democratic and citizenship relations are enacted. By allowing Fiji Indians to proactively participate in national issues (not in a token manner as is in Fiji), Australia accepts them as citizens while undertaking an obligation to ‘protect’ them and have an effective presence in the political and social public spaces. Balibar (1988) defines citizenship as the ‘capacity to be heard,’ providing an effective presence in the political sphere. Young (1989) argues that this becomes a cultural and moral right. Shklar (1991), on the other hand, describes economic participation as a means to legitimise status as a good citizen. Although his research was specific to migrants sending remittance to sending countries to promote their interest in its politics, the theory applies to Fiji Indians in their receiving country where they are seeking such a status through their political activism.

The Fiji Indians’ two crossings, from India and from Fiji, have contrasting features and are products of two different eras as well as historical conditions. The emigration of Indo Fijians will continue unabated, draining Fiji of the talents of its best and brightest (Lal, 2007). In their new home, they are recreating themselves in innovative ways. Dynamic changes in communication, technology and travel have complicated former ethnographic notions of citizenship, making national boundaries porous and permeable. The discrediting of assimilation in multicultural cities like Sydney means creating possibilities of dualities and
multiple existences, celebrating diversity, difference, pluralism and multiculturalism. The community’s ability to create all levels of interaction and activity has given its members a new leverage in their relationship with Australia, where they also feel that they can influence the national government to act on political and social injustices taking place in Fiji. Their cultural cluster, which has led to social capital development, aims generally to profit from the networks while presenting an interesting development in urban economic, cultural, social and political activity. Liverpool has become the springboard for these activities as migration becomes an even more visible and fundamental feature of modern economic, cultural and political transition.

The influence of gossip

Gossip in their close-knit environment about those not marrying or conforming to community standards, in a way, forces those who want to belong to these networks to take up marriage.

Gossiping has created a moral characterisation of others within the community. Rosnow and Fine (1978), drawing on interdisciplinary observations of gossiping, argue that unlike its common definition gossiping is not merely ‘idle’ talk but is rather ‘purposeful communication that appears to serve three primary functions: information, influence, and entertainment’ (p161).

They suggest that information, in this sense, shapes and reinforces the structure of attitudes which are responsive to local tensions and thus become a rich source of information about a community. Fine (1977) also argues that gossip may be one important way for children to discover norms about appropriate social behaviour. Rosnow and Fine suggest that as information, gossip transmits culture and illuminates the ambiguous areas of behaviour while mapping the social environment. Szwed (1966) and Herskovits (1937, 1947) present their investigations of gossip as a cultural phenomenon. All these theories and ideas apply to the realities of the Fiji Indian experience in Liverpool and indeed Sydney where gossip, to a large extent, defines the moral codes and accepted norms of the community.

Information and influence, in relation to gossip in this context, are closely intertwined to the extent that vigorous gossiping creates changes in attitudes towards marriage, as demonstrated in the personal narratives of some of the participants in this research. Crawshaw (1974)
argues that gossip, with the intention to influence, can be interpreted as a defensive mechanism motivated by protective or vengeful self gain.

For the community, this level of influence serves the twin force of punishing or rather ostracising those who are not married within the expected social norms, while those who are married get discussed as ‘living happily’ or making adjustments to keep the family status-quo. The common ‘shop talk’ at mandali meetings revolve around the success of members within the network, be these in education, marriage, promotion at work, travels or lament over children not being married, taking up too many social activities, dropping out of school or university. Such levels of gossiping in a way set the community’s standards, morals and values. The families or individuals whose public image gets diminished through such gossiping make efforts to enhance their standing in the community by attempting to conform to the accepted standards of behaviour, as demonstrated by the personal interview with the woman mentioned above who was seeking partners for her three children within the community.

Yerkovich (1977), presenting gossiping as a form of social interaction, says that through strategic management of information, it (gossip) creates ‘moral character’ in others. Touching on the entertainment element of gossiping, Rosnow and Fine (1978) argue that such an engagement can be a satisfying diversion from the tedium of routine activities. This definition resonates with the engagements of the Fiji Indians at Ramayan mandali meetings, held biweekly or monthly, where much socialising and less praying takes place. My ethnographic study of these and other mass meetings of the community such as weddings, shows that participants get bored of the rituals and thus begin to engage in ‘idle-talk’ about other members of the community. Relating information about others creates bonds over common knowledge while also feeding the ideals of gossip.

Chapter summary

This chapter has explored and discussed the phenomenon of cultural clustering of Fiji Indians in Sydney and how this in turn has resulted in the community’s use of social capital to enhance economic, cultural and political ambitions of its people while simultaneously providing an ideal forum for gossiping. The global restructuring of capital has created dislocations in industrialised states (deindustrialisation) and in the developing world
(economic adjustment programs), giving rise to increased migration in a context of economic vulnerability in both host and sending states, and has ‘increased the likelihood that migrants would construct a transnational existence’ (Glick Schiller et al., 1992).

“Unlike previous population movements, the current migration takes place in a globalised context of economic uncertainty that, in turn, facilitates the construction of systems of social relations that transcend national borders. In short, the circulation of goods, ideas, and information is embedded in these systems of global social relations that are maintained, reconfigured, and reproduced in the context of families, institutions, economic investments, business, and finance and of political organisations and structures, including nation-states” (Glick Schiller et al., 1992).

This level of movement (migration) demonstrates that a significant and stable transnational field of economic, social, cultural and political action connects the Fiji Indians at various levels and layers within the host country and city (Sydney/Liverpool) while simultaneously feeding an interest in the former homeland of Fiji Lal says:

> Although they live abroad, they maintain active contact with Fiji through a variety of means; the internet, telephone, video, periodic re-visits and by remitting money and goods to Fiji. Funds are raised communally to meet losses sustained through hurricanes, floods and drought (Lal, 2003).

The Fiji Indian cluster mirrors a situation whereby cultural, economic, social and political areas have evolved and overlapped as the community has readjusted to recreate its home in a global city, removed from the realities of Fiji’s political and economic crisis while challenged to seek new directions in a dynamic, multicultural city, offering the ‘best of both worlds’. This emerging transnational practice among Fiji Indians has thus brought new opportunities in regards to international migration and globalisation, two world phenomena that have uprooted and unsettled them. The community’s cross border economic, cultural, political and social activities warrant attention as the analysis of these activities points to their incorporation into a new home while altering conventional expectations about their assimilation in the host city/country. Transnational economic, social, cultural and political activism thus does not preclude successful integration (Brubaker 2001) and the old school views on assimilation are contradicted by the Fiji Indians’ activities on all four fronts. While these forms of activism are phenomena through which they respond to their obligations to
their new home, at the same time, these allow them to, in a way, seek to unite and remain as Indians from Fiji.

Thus marriage, especially within the community, gives it a renewed sense of efficacy and self worth. These situations in turn facilitate their integration into the social, economic, cultural and political areas of their new home while keeping them connected to the country of origin. Traditionally, political theorists have worked with closed society models (Rawls, 1971, 1993) presenting loyalties to a single state or country of origin. This discussion on Liverpool, as a centralised new home for the community, is vital to this overall research as it presents the case of a small community with origins in India, a country which does not give it due recognition, not even as NRIs (Non Resident Indians), while it recognises Indians across the globe, such as in America (Baubock, 2003), while Fiji, where a majority of them have spent their childhood and adult life, is fighting its own political and racial battles. Having given up on both places (India and Fiji), the Fiji Indians are reinventing themselves through economic and political means in Sydney. Liverpool has become the buffer zone for these activities. Their engagement with the Indian Diaspora is taking place in a new global context whereby representatives of their community (Lal and Lodhia) play significant roles as president and secretary of an important global institution for Indians. In a way, these forums facilitate new ways of forming identities in a new place.

The next chapter (9) presents a discussion of this research while presenting the limitations of the findings.
CHAPTER NINE

Discussion and limitations of the research

This chapter presents an overall discussion on this research, arguing how a separate Fiji Indian society is created through the many elements of my findings presented in earlier chapters. It also demonstrates how the community feeds and maintains its ideals of arranged marriage, while also presenting marriage as a means to build and keep a separate society in a complex, global Sydney environment which is changing with the dynamics of multiculturalism, migration and the modern media. The chapter also considers the limitations of this research while arguing that Fiji Indians see marriage as an important milestone in the lifecycle of a family and the community. In the context of the extended family, as well as the community, the young married couple is expected to maintain family unity as well as fulfil filial obligations. This chapter reiterates the general view in the community that women are past their ‘use by date’ if they are not married by age 25 or 28. Men are expected to be married by age 28 to 32. This is also in keeping, although moderated in view of the dynamics of modernisation, with the traditional Hindu beliefs and cultural norms about the stages of life.

The role of the media

The growing media concentration for Fiji Indians in Sydney has been caused by the desire in the community to have information that is important to it: on migration opportunities, politics and socio-economic issues in Fiji, as well as provision of other services such as classified advertisements on prospective marriage partners. Advertising has indeed been the backbone for the success of the ethnic media. The uses and gratifications media theory claims that creative use of media fulfils a social and psychological need. The theory places focus on the audience or consumer rather than the message being presented by the media. The ‘audience is perceived as active’ (Katz, Blumer and Gurevitch, 1974, p. 15). The Fiji Indian community is creative and active in its use of the media which meets its various needs, including seeking partners from similar history and background. The media, which the community actively uses to gratify its needs (for interpreting and integrating information that is important, on migration visa categories in demand, Indian social forums and so forth) plays a vital role in helping the community create its Sydney space. The internet and Bollywood films provide an
imagined and real connection to Indian culture and Hindu values, all promoting a separate society and Fiji Indian identity through marriage. Identity thus becomes a prism through which the community’s other aspects of contemporary life are spotted, grasped and examined. Identity then also becomes an integral and naturalistic notion of unity in the community. Hall (1980) asserts that ‘what we require is not the theory of the knowing subject, but rather a theory of discursive practice’. That is, the concern is not whether things exist but where meaning comes from in a specific historical context within the play of specific modalities of power.

The media producers, also aware of the yearning of the community, establish mediums to provide a level of community connectivity. Expansion of the www.fijilive.com site to incorporate chat rooms and allow for personal profiles of the Fiji Indian community living abroad demonstrates the level of division and separateness. The omnipresent internet has opened a vista of opportunity for commerce and community building. Hindi films, on the other hand, also place importance on marriage and weddings (to create a solid foundation for a plot), but more importantly to place couples getting married within the broader context of family and society, demonstrating the challenges they are required to negotiate as well as competing demands and interest. As my readings of the two films discussed in this research (Bride and Prejudice and Dil Wale Dulhaniya Le Jayege (DDLJ) demonstrate, Hindi film upholds the sanctity of marriage and family values while providing a sentimental thrill about weddings which get copied in ‘real life’ by the Indian masses, including those from the Fiji Indian diaspora.

Lyrics of Hindi songs also celebrate the enduring physicality of marriage, most vividly in the song ‘ae meri zohra zabeen ... tu abhi tak hai haseen aur main jawaan ... you are still beautiful and I am still a young man’. Sung by the bride’s father at her engagement in DDLJ (1995, Aditya Chopra), the lyrics demonstrate the husband’s desire for his wife of many years. Jones and Ramdas (2004) argue that alongside the physical intimacy of marriage, the deeper intimacy of daily sharing and living together in marriage makes it a most profound way of ever knowing another person as well as oneself. As a result of this knowing, Singer (1987) presents marital love in a different category from romantic love. Cavell (1981, p.102) argues that marital love, presented through film, becomes a way to happiness:
Since this happiness is expressed as marriage, we understand it as simultaneously an individual and social achievement. Or rather, we understand it as the final condition for individual and for social happiness, namely the achieving of one’s adult self and the creation of the social. The achievement of human happiness requires not the perennial and fuller satisfaction of our needs as they stand but the examination and transformation of those needs (Cavell, 1981, pp. 4-5).

While promoting marriage and the family unit, Hindi film also specifically denounces what marriage should not be and even in a comical way by mocking a married woman’s desire for material pleasure over her family’s welfare (Jones and Ramdas, 2004).

This research also acknowledges that, similar to the compromises made by couples getting married in an arranged set up, there is also the possibility of people ‘ditching’ a lover to satisfy parental authority and community expectations, although none of the survey participants were willing to discuss this issue. The formula of romances set in the culture of Indian kinship, as demonstrated by the two films used as examples for study in this research, demonstrates a romantic ‘happy ending’. This is achieved through adherence to the family or elders’ orders. In DDLJ the hero does not contest parental authority over the daughter he is in love with but seeks it. He is willing to forfeit the object of his desire if he is not given approval (by her father) to take her ‘the proper way’ in marriage. The female character, on the other hand, maintains her ‘purity’ in order to be worthy of bestowal (at her wedding), while the male character submits to an arrangement by the families, his own father included, before he can sexualise the love relationship.

In a similar way Bride and Prejudice displays the Indian ideology and social responsibility parents take to ‘find’ a match and marry their children, played by on screen Mrs Bakshi and the various families who are portrayed as ‘being on the look-out’ for prospective matches for those in their networks. Lalita, however, denies/suppresses her love for Darcy as her allegiance to her family is more important; Darcy being found out as the one who blocked/stopped Lalita’s older sister getting married to his friend Bal Raj. This also demonstrates the level of sacrifice children are willing to make, for the sake of family. The film construes the family as a patriarchal institution, an unshakable pillar of morality and values, to which even Darcy, an American, looks to for approval before moving forward to take Lalita’s hand to demonstrate their love (he seeks approval from Mr Bakshi, Lalita’s father, through eye contact and does not move forward until the nod of approval is given by Mr Bakshi).
In both films, as well as in real life presented through the focus groups and individual interviews, women (and female characters in film) realise that they are objects of transactions between men and that the Indian social system, even from the religious point of view, denies them their subjectivity. They know only too well that they can adjust to all situations and hope for a happy outcome. The women who negotiated with their sons and members of extended families while seeking *bahus* (daughters in law) in an effort to reign in their sons’ are clear demonstrations of this level of subjectivity. The male participants’ expectation that the woman they were to marry would be a home maker and be chaste add another layer to this reality for women.

The research, as well as films, present the Indian family values as portable assets, similar to the experiences of the Fiji Indian migrants who are able to replenish these with regular visits to Fiji and India (in real time and through being transported to these places via imagination, the media, especially film). Films, Hindu traditions and the community’s social structures create important sites for the ideological transformation of the Indian culture, its values and morals in regards to marriage in the modern world. This is in the face of popular culture which gives the Fiji Indian Diaspora a new outlook on its identity. Conservatively constructed, the family values presented in this research are indeed a reflection of the ambivalence and anxieties of the community, juxtaposed in a complex multicultural setting, having to choose between love and arranged marriage, western cultural markers and their own value system, all challenging their everyday existence in Sydney’s physical spaces.

This research has also presented globalisation as a most significant force ‘creating and proliferating’ cultural identities (Tomlinson, 2003, p. 16) while being an important component of economic development and social change, encompassing space, residential/citizenship status and life changing status and experience through migration, marriage and media. The politics of citizenship and Australian Permanent Residency (PR) status seep through into issues of marriage, as evidenced by the plethora of advertisements in the ethnic Indian magazines and websites, specifically detailing this status. This is important information especially for those with a desire to migrate to Australia. There is a better possibility of spouse sponsorship if a marriage is arranged with someone with Australian citizenship or PR. An interesting element of this research has been the common practice in the community to return to Fiji for marital partners. All the men and women who brought
partners from Fiji and spoke about their relationship confirmed that they had married someone with a lesser social and financial status. Although this was to be expected given the vast differences between Fijian and Australian economies, it also echoes what media producer Gaunder calls the wild imagination of Fiji Indian Australian men that they will ‘find a simple bride who is a virgin’. Women who have taken their sons to Fiji for marriage also confirm this by statements such as ‘we wanted a woman who would keep our family together, a home maker’.

A few of the women even discussed how their sons had improved their behaviour after the birth of their (son’s and daughter-in law’s) first child. There is often pressure in the community and immediate family circles of a newly married couple to start a family. Sonpar (2005), in presenting a case study on marriage and clinical issues in India on contemporary family therapy argues that ‘being parents together can be a significant way whereby the marital bond is cemented. This easily ends up in a triangulated situation and may be an adaptive resolution for the family’. In a scene from the movie Bride and Prejudice Lalita, while arguing with Darcy angrily, comments that, ‘so you see India as the place to go to for a simple woman’. This parallels with the realities on the ground for Fiji Indians, especially men who travel to Fiji to marry women who have been ‘located’ through family networks or their engagement with the media. Sydney women, who participated in the survey, discuss how they saw marriage as a solution to bring their sons who had been ‘side tracked’ by excessive socialising and drinking back on track. Three women in personal interviews and several others at focus groups discussed how their families rallied together to find a solution to this.

Using these identities to foster their sanctity of family and marriage, the community reinvents itself, borrowing and copying ideas of Indianess from the diverse media available to it while capitalising on its affluence in Sydney to become an integral part of Sydney’s multicultural mix. Their visible Indian identity is enhanced through the popularity of Hindi films, viewed in private homes as well as screened across cinemas in populated Indian suburbs such as Liverpool, Blacktown, Fairfield and Castle Hill. This represents a growing phenomenon in Sydney of their ethnic, diasporic and racial visibility and integration. This ritual of going to the cinema to see Hindi films has again translated their community space into an opportunity to meet others, gathering and reconnecting while reasserting its presence and identity. The
films, as well as the spaces that are occupied by the community, have in turn expanded the popular Fiji Indian imagery.

**Limitations of the research**

Given the enormous diversity and complexity of the Fiji Indian community in Sydney, all migration, match-making and media-related issues could not be comprehensively covered. This research has been able to establish that Fiji Indians arrange marriages, despite other new possibilities, and while it explains why and how marriages in Sydney are arranged by presenting the host of situations and structures (namely the role of the media and the desire in the community to migrate), its limitations are that it does not present information or data on the level of sacrifices that may be involved in accepting parental authority and community expectations in marrying within the familiar networks. While chastity, especially of women, is highly regarded in the Indian culture as it is in Hinduism as an important pre-marriage attribute, this research has not been able to focus on this issue, mainly because of the initial limitations faced in getting the community to discuss anything to do with marriage or migration. This question however, has a small significance to the main thesis question and even if it were asked, it would have been difficult to confirm or substantiate chastity. This issue of chastity, however, is an interesting field which if explored would help determine how, why and if at all it will maintain its significance in the Hindu traditions and culture at a time when there are dynamic shifts in the values and morals with the cohabitation of couples and sex before marriage as stark realities of the modern world. It is only a matter of time before closed societies like the Fiji Indians are affected and afflicted by this tide of change. This level of research, against a backdrop of the Western influence on marriage, especially cohabitation before marital commitment, will provide interesting insights on the challenges brought about by globalisation, migration and multiculturalism in diasporic communities.

Although the research has established the various findings that answer the core question it could not establish the popularity, or otherwise, of nationally recognised and popular dating sites such as [www.e-harmony.com](http://www.e-harmony.com) among Fiji Indians or the level of influence reality television shows such as *The Farmer Wants a Wife* (Channel 9) have on the Fiji Indian mindset. Such sites also highlight the social changes taking place in a modern, consumer driven communications environment which radically reduces personal space and time. Parental influence, the parents’ role and their decision making in the marriage of young
adults also provides a similar scope for further research. A detailed study of these two areas alone can provide interesting insights for comparison between the east and west, touched on briefly in the movie *Bride and Prejudice* when Darcy’s mother is presented as a Western woman on the ‘look out’ for a prospective ‘high society’ match for her successful businessman son. A comparison of the values between the east and west in regards to marriage would thus gauge the relevance of the institution of marriage and its future with special attention to parental influence, where in the west parents have relinquished their authority when children turn 18 and are regarded independent. In the east, especially among Hindus, the level of parental authority is never-ending and lived out through the extended family set up. This research also acknowledges that similar to the compromises made by couples getting married in an arranged situation there is also the possibility of disengaging from a romantic relationship in order to satisfy parental authority and community expectations - although none of the survey participants were willing to discuss this issue.

The research has, however, presented the Hindu family structure which is the pillar of social strength. Around this the community builds its foundations to continue/extend its values and morals which are also imagined and lived through the consumption of Bollywood movies and by readings and interpretations of the Hindu epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* - both of which are available in serialised DVD formats through the Indian spice shops as well as via internet sites. For Fiji Indians the extended family is considered the foundation block for society. Its stability is thus vital for societal and social stability. While there is scope for further research into the level of success/failures of arranged marriage and the data on divorce rates among those accepting arranged marriage, the aim of this investigation was to frame an understanding of the age old practice of arranging marriages amongst the Fiji Indian community in Sydney and why and how it is practiced in a mediated, Westernised and globalised modern environment. There is scope also for an in-depth research into forced arranged marriage which is a productive means to migrate for those who are caught up in a vicious cycle of not being able to change their circumstances any other way, as well as a way to maintain the class, economic and social status of families. The research also acknowledges that while elaborate weddings attended by large gatherings of Fiji Indians provide a sentimental thrill, especially to would-be couples, a few of the survey participants said they opted for a registry wedding without religious rituals. This research points to a more immediate need for further research into the role and operations of migration agencies and
law firms that advertise their services in the ethnic media, promising to provide opportunities for migration. The plethora of classified advertisements in such media, also calls for closer scrutiny to ensure the authorities are prohibiting any form of sex trade or marriages of convenience, both of which provide rich fields for further research.

Marriage as individual and societal achievement

Fiji Indians see marriage as an important milestone in the lifecycle of a family and the community. In the context of the extended family as well as the community, the young married couple is expected to maintain family unity as well as fulfil filial obligations. This research exposes a general view in the community that women are past their ‘use by date’ if they are not married by age 25 or 28. Men are expected to be married by age 28 to 32. This is also in keeping (although moderated in view of the dynamics of modernisation) with the traditional Hindu beliefs and cultural norms about the stages of life.

The survey participants as well as those who agreed to personal interviews and focus group participation, provided varied reasons for their positions in their choice of marriage partners. They all however, showed a common justification for compatibility - for the sake of family and religious values. This in turn points to yet another layer of the social, family and community bonds of kinship that prevails in the community while also pointing to the consideration of attitudes towards individual control and behaviour in marriage. Furthermore, marriage among the Fiji Indians historically has been under the strict control of the family, especially parents.

Some of the participants also discussed how they fell in love with someone from within the community as they met regularly within the Fiji Indian social circles such as Ramayana mandalis or at Fiji Indian events. Yet others presented interesting insights into how their childhood love affair blossomed into marriage because going to the same school in many ways sets the parameters of who they met and socialised with. The research has shown that Fiji Indians living in Western Sydney send their children, as a clustered group, to certain secondary schools so that they can help one another to settle into a new Australian (Sydney) space. This is a strategy to deal with the challenges of migration.
Chapter summary

This chapter has presented a general discussion of this research and its limitations while demonstrating the impacts of the increased pace of cultural connections and contact within the Fijian Indian community against a backdrop of globalisation and the modern media.

These situations have, in turn, created new conceptual maps for identity through marriage in a network of community activities. The community has used its unique identity to promote its value of family and marriage, while capitalising on the affluence in its new home to recreate itself. Fiji Indians draw their strengths from community and kinship, both having withstood the challenges from individualism, another direct product of globalisation.

Marrying within their community, albeit to someone from a familiar background and ancestral history, has become a sort of social conformity expected of those in the group. The modern media, including Bollywood films and music, play significant roles of articulating desires that connect the diaspora and homeland (India and Fiji), creating complex spaces which are celebrated and dismantled in the movements of change.

The following chapter concludes my arguments in this thesis.
CHAPTER TEN

Conclusion

This chapter sums up the argument of this thesis that the modern communications environment provides the Fiji Indian community with new opportunities as well as challenges to recreate itself through marriage. Marriage is a central life course event for the community and this research has provided an insight into the Fiji Indians’ journey from the days of village elders in Fiji travelling on horse-back to find a match for the young adults in their community, some of whom did not meet face to face until their honeymoon, to the Sydney environment where the twin forces of migration and electronic mediation creates a vibrant forum for community building and arranging marriages within these networks, despite the possibility of meeting others.

The household ideology of marriage

Marriage implies a change in legal status and the assumption of new roles and responsibilities. In most cases marriage signals the formation of an independent household, and because having children is generally confined to wedlock in the community, this union formation also marks the transformation into reproductive adulthood. The prevalent household ideology in the community portrays marriage as an example of successful transition into adulthood. Also the close relationship between family and economic life implies that through marriage men and women gain access to an extended network of kinship and exchange that provides them with a safety net in the event of economic hardship (Gonzalez de la Rocha, 1986, Lomnitz 1977). Thus while only a single life event marriage has direct implications for several other life course domains and has important ideological and economic benefits that render it an end in and of itself. Moreover, for Fiji Indians marriage in the post indenture era was also about achieving economic objectives. As presented in this research, many people were married at a young age, as early as 13 upon reaching puberty, so that they could have children who would also help sustain life on farms and help to advance the village economy. In this new century, however, marriage is also about fulfilling ideological and social needs while still under the scrutiny of the community’s morals and values. Popular Bollywood movies, regularly consumed by the community,
always reiterate marriage as the limit of desire for a woman as presented in this research through examples from *Bride and Prejudice* and *DDLJ*.

While this research has captured and evaluated these attitudes, an interesting point to note is that modernisation is the backdrop against which these ideals and ideologies exist. Westernisation and globalisation, on the other hand, have simultaneously created an environment of co-habitation and de-facto relationships among couples. This research also points to the continuing significance of marriage within the Fiji Indian community, especially since the community has become more vibrant in its spaces through globalisation, and acknowledges the influences of the modern era on the Fiji Indian mindset. Marriage is unlikely to lose its significance for the community in the next 50 years but given the focus of inter-connections, sojournning and multiple chains of movements, as well as the mixing and blending of identities and ideas, new concepts on marriage are likely to take place. The western media’s influence on the community through reality television shows, such as *The Farmer Wants a Wife*, reinforces its own values on arranging marriages. The rituals of the traditional Hindu marriage, however, are destined for a revival with more exotic expressions by the modern generation that still wishes to participate in this age old institution. As demonstrated in Chapter Seven, Hindu weddings will savour the fun, pomp and ceremony associated with marriage, an ideal enhanced by the new media communications technologies.

This research points to a vibrant Fiji Indian community in Sydney where Liverpool has become the largest settlement of the community anywhere in the world outside of Fiji. More than two thirds of those migrating from Fiji since the 1990s have settled in Australia, mainly because of the opening up of skills-based emigration, family reunion, chain migration and increased perception (through the media and migration agencies) of greater employment opportunities and a better life. The physical proximity to homeland Fiji, easy, cheap transportation and travel (to India) all add to these possibilities. The community uses its various identities and networks through media communications to locate one another and to find partners for marriage. This study provides details of the various layers of community building, socialising and networking as well the processes and ideals, imaginations and realities that feed the community’s ideology of what the institution of marriage is as well as the expectation of members to adhere to the stages of life according to Hindu principles. These ideals are also reinvented and propelled through the visual impact of Bollywood.
movies enforcing the community’s sense of identity and the importance of being married, as well as the concepts of arranging marriage to match compatibility. These ideologies and concepts, while vibrant in Sydney which has been the focus of this study, are destined to gain greater prominence in the future with the community’s increased ability to transgress time and space through globalisation and the robust influence of the new media facilitating a more efficient transmission of ideas and ideologies across the globe. Living in an era where cultural identities, especially of diasporic minority groups such as Fiji Indians, get global exposure means that these are open to scrutiny, better understanding as well as copying. Although the compression of time and space means that their lives are more interconnected, modernisation and globalisation both challenges some of the community’s values, morals and ethics as well as markets them to the masses.

This research has explored the opportunities presented to the Fiji Indians, first through the indenture system which caused its ‘caste’ identities to be relinquished and then through political upheavals in Fiji which fostered migration to Australia and other parts of the world. Presenting the metaphoric concept of chutney, as a paste of civilisation blending its various identities to a point of neutralisation, and not remaining faithful to any single identity this research has presented the imagination, explored through theoretical analysis in the works of Appadurai (1990, 1997) and Anderson (1983), as well as other scholars such as Van Gennep, Turner and Bhabha, to present the factors that drive and influence the community’s understanding of the social institution of marriage. Hindu religious pronouncements which present marriage as the most important social bond, as well as the ideals presented in Bollywood movies, have been explored in this thesis contributing a deeper level of meaning and significance. Appadurai presents imagination as ‘central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, as is the key component of the new global order’ (1990, p. 31). While Hindus believe that the primary purpose of marriage is procreation and continuation of life on earth, its secondary role is to uphold the social order and the Hindu dharma (religion). The ultimate aim of marriage is to find spiritual union with the inmost self which is possible when couples perform their obligatory duties, namely Devrin through daan (this debt is paid to the Gods in the form of donations), Rishirin through gyan (advancing and sharing knowledge to pay back holy saints or gurus/spiritual teachers) and Pitrarin through children (paying back debt to parents by begetting children). Women become mothers to pay back debt to mother earth. While the Hindu religion presents marriage as the highest social order, both the epics, as well
as Bollywood movies, present the ideals of marriage and extended family networks as a moral expediency where couples work towards keeping the divine order. Hindu couples thus have a responsibility towards society, the Gods, their ancestors and others around them, making marriage a social and family obligation.

Through gossip within strong social networks those who do not marry are ostracised in the Fiji Indian community which has been established in physical spaces such as Liverpool. This research also presents how the level of gossip in the community, rampant as a result of the close-knit socialising where everyone knows everyone else, is propelled through regular meetings of Ramayan mandalis, fast, easy and cheap communication. In a way this environment creates a level of fear among those who do not get married as they anticipate repercussion from immediate and extended families. None of the participants in this research expressed a desire not to be married, although many participants expressed feeling ‘pressure’ from parents and families to marry earlier than later. From a religious perspective, Hindu marriage is a sacred dharma (responsibility) of each individual in society and an extension of the four aims of purushartha and the four ashramas (stages) of human life, unless a person accepts the life of renunciation out of longing for liberation. The close-knit environment where children from the community attend a common primary and secondary school as well as university helps feed the ideas of separateness. It is also not uncommon for a Fiji Indian to ask another from the kinship group, who may be a total stranger, if they know of anyone wanting to get married. All those who have participated in this research were aware of this level of engagement with issues of marriage in the community.

When the decision on marriage is made it is either love or arranged. This research shows that the elements of immediate family and the larger community’s involvement facilitates the creation of an environment where couples meet and love takes place. Whether this happens before marriage, afterwards or in the in-between processes of dating and marriage or is a process in continuity would require further exploration, from a psychological perspective. While online dating sites may be popular as a ‘sign of the times’, among young people of all communities they suggest that people do not have the time to ‘check-out and meet’ prospective partners face to face. This makes the role of families and communities, as happens with Fiji Indians, a crucial link in providing a mediatory role in establishing marriage relationships. The other advantage with this level of scrutiny by the familiar and
known members of the networks means that, unlike the web where information and photos can be enhanced and manipulated, what is presented in the form of a prospective match is real and reliable.

Meeting prospective partners the old fashioned way, in many ways, adds an authentic touch to the ideals of modern day Fiji Indians living in Sydney. A 23-year-old Sydney woman, preparing to meet her new match for the first time put this simply by saying:

I will tell him that I like food, nice clothes, shoes and travelling. I won’t say I love reading or work, I am going out on a date and not presenting my CV for a job interview. It will be a quiet dinner in a restaurant and not a cheap pub environment with drunken people who do not know where they are or what they are doing (personal interview, 2009).

These sentiments, which echo what many of the survey participants term as an ‘important first meeting’, as well as the explicit advertisements in the ethnic Indian media where people of Fiji Indian heritage seeking partners list priorities which they seek in prospective partners while showing the level of differences with other (mainland) Indians, also presents the various methods the community engages in to seek partners within its grouping.

While many see marriage as an option to migrate and break out of the social and poverty cycle in Fiji, the Sydney-based Fiji Indians prefer to be introduced to their marriage partners by parents or family/friends and then gauge the compatibility of the relationship. Fear of failure, in a way, forces young couples to seek partners within the familiar territory of the community where parental guidance and support from families and community networks helps to maintain the relationship. Women who participated in the focus groups and in individual interviews still see themselves as part of the Indian household structure in which they were raised. They see marriage as the fulfilment of a personal desire while keeping to the expectations of family and society. Although the younger members of the community, especially those who came to Sydney as children or were born here, give priority to education and career development in their early adult life they admit to suddenly experiencing high levels of panic when turning 28 and not being married. ‘Fiji Indian men and women especially, seem to have a ‘use-by date’ adhered to them by the community. They fear waking up to find that there is no one suitable left to marry’ (single woman, aged 35, 2008).

The dynamic shifts in the community’s defined social structure since the period when children were married upon reaching puberty, has meant a universal shift in the marrying age.
Despite this, marriage is still a vital stage of life which the community is attempting to keep as an important collective ritual. Improved knowledge of the Hindu rituals and cultural norms, as well as their relevance, is explored through the mass institution of the new media environment which in turn helps to reinforce the family, societal values and parental authority. The media also helps to feed the lofty ideals of the Hindu marriage rituals into the Fiji Indian thinking and imagination. The participants expressed a significant desire and option for arranged marriage, possible through advanced communication, easy and quick transportation as well as various discreet methods available to meet prospective partners as well as other Indians.

This research presents Fiji Indians as a community seeking social identity gratification as they are neither Fijian nor Indian but rather a whole new chutney generation, borrowing and blending old and new ideals and ideas into a paste of civilisation which sustains and secures its unique identity. The concept of chutney thus becomes relevant to this research because it makes visual the ideals of mixing, merging and new creations as geographical and cultural boundaries become ever more porous and permeable. An important feature of this research is the way Fiji Indians construe their differences with their counterparts from mainland India. Class and caste differences play a significant role in feeding this difference and distance between the two Indian Diasporas. The ethnic Indian media also plays a significant role in creating two separate societies of Indians.

Like marriage, the realities of migrating present a compromise, a bridge (in Turner’s terms), that leads to other possibilities such as the women who presented the case of sponsoring in-laws who could live in an extended family unit while caring for children when they (women) went to work outside the home. For Fiji Indian transnationals, migration, as argued by Clifford (1997, p. 254), means leaving behind a homeland, a place of attachment in a ‘contrapuntal modernity’. This research has thus explored the nature of the links the community has with its natal societies of India and Fiji. Indeed, all the participants in this research discuss the return journeys (physical as well as emotional) they have made back to Fiji as well as the level of connections they have with homeland and motherland India (their Indian identity being more visual) using the media to enhance and propel their levels of engagement.
The links range from establishing physical networks such as meeting in clubs as well as Internet communities sending remittances back to Fiji to educate families and communities so that they have a better chance to migrate. Also a link is arranging marriages within the community to help build and maintain its identity. Brah (1996, pp. 189 and 197) argues that diasporic identity is ‘always plural and in process’. The Fiji Indian cultural norms are not fixed or unbounded but are rather social constructions, transient and continually being redefined and remapped.

The research has presented the Fiji Indian family as being a pillar of strength and the foundation block for society. Its stability is thus important for societal and social stability. Marriage, as an important rite of passage, presents a moral universe to the community. Hindu epics, The Ramayana and The Mahabharata, as well as Hindi films, all raise questions about what marriage should be and how happiness can be imagined playing the couple in the broader sense of family and society while presenting challenges in negotiating demands, interests and moral dilemmas. Through the narration of folklore, based on the life of Lord Rama, the scriptures present a moral universe to the community which is also played out in movies which also always uphold the sanctity of family and marriage through the plot and presentation of characters, especially presenting women with virtues of ‘chastity, self-sacrifice, submission, devotion, kindness, patience and labours of love’ (Chatterjee, 1993).

The quantum leaps in creativity and technological advancements have meant that Bollywood produces more than 1000 films a year which feeds into the Indian (Diasporic) consciousness. To help understand the perennial appeal of the Hindi film, this research has presented a detailed analysis of film as a benchmark for cultural copying. Hindi films provide a mode of catharsis to millions by providing entertainment that absolves them. For the community Bollywood has become a repository of hope, dreams and mythology, endowed with ideals of marriage, family and happiness. What Anderson (1983) has called ‘print capitalism’ has unleashed a new power of literacy and engagement with mass productions of images produced through and by the media, including Bollywood, which helps to foster the Fiji Indian affinity.

This imagination has become an ‘organised field of social practices, a form of work both in the sense of labour and of culturally organised practices; and a form of negotiation between
The new media, also with its level of exponential technological transformation, has indeed created a global village for the Fiji Indians who deal with the fundamental ‘disjunctures’ presented through the five dimensions of global cultural flow: ethnosapes, mediascapes, technosapes, financescapes and ideosapes. For the community, these suffixes characterise the Fiji Indians’ fluid identity and its deep perspectival constructs which determine its social situations in a complex, moving and modern western Sydney environment.

These scapes are presented as sites that help to pacify its separatist and fissiparous existence. Its works of kinship, identity, value systems and lifestyle play a significant role in determining marriage within the community. This research thus demonstrates that in choosing marriage partners within the community the Fiji Indians in many ways are transfixed by their roots, carrying with them a memory of many fabrics: political, social and economic. Some of these are remembered as sharp and clear, others scattered but all are used as a goal to savour an identity as Fiji Indians in an environment which challenges all that they are.

Fear of the unknown is another reason for keeping within the community’s cluster, as demonstrated through the various personal interviews with young adults and parents who have been married within the community. Migration, in many ways, has made these dreams and fears a part of the community’s heritage, whereby the attitudes parents exhibit towards what happened and lies ahead, has a profound impact through the expressed or tacit message they send out to their children and the larger community. The political and social history surrounding the community’s migration has indeed intensified its social and cultural adaptations of marriage and the consumption of media in Sydney both of which work as shifting layers to feed community ideals and hopes while helping maintain its resilience and vitality.
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Newspaper Articles


Author not named (2006, Dec 21) *Best Exhibition* [under daily planner]. *Sydney Morning Herald*. p.26

*The Australian* (2002, April 11) Migrants Will Want News from Home.  Should be tthe following as has a quite that says “Will Want News from Home” :


*The Daily Post* (2001, October 21.)


**Other media referenced:**

*Fiji Times* (Sydney)

*Indian Link*

*Indian Post*

*India Times*

*Masala Times*

*Navtarang*

*Blacktown Sun*

*Blacktown Advocate*

*Sydney Morning Herald*

**Other sources:**


**Girmit song:** Lyrics by late Ambika Nand of Fiji Indian heritage of the US, voice by Indira Chinappa of Sydney.


**Personal Interviews:**


Appendix 1
Permanent labour migration from Fiji (since 1970)

Table 1: Emigration of Fijian citizens by ethnic group and professional workers, 1987–2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fijians</th>
<th>Indo-Fijians</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Annual average emigration rate</th>
<th>Professionals**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Annual average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987–99</td>
<td>3,926</td>
<td>57,159</td>
<td>3,124</td>
<td>64,209</td>
<td>4,939</td>
<td>6,869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000–04*</td>
<td>2,373</td>
<td>23,585</td>
<td>1,126</td>
<td>27,084</td>
<td>5,413</td>
<td>3,826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987–2004*</td>
<td>6,299</td>
<td>80,744</td>
<td>4,250</td>
<td>91,293</td>
<td>5,070</td>
<td>10,695</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The figure for 2004 is from January to September.

** Includes professional, technical and related workers.


The table captures the emigration trend from Fiji since 1970 when the country gained independence. Fiji witnessed ‘great waves’ of outflow of skilled human resources during the late 1980s and 1990s and again after May 2000 (Mohanty 2001, 2002). The total official outflow from Fiji was more than 91,000 between 1987 and 2004 (Table 1). Unofficial independent sources, however, estimate the figure to be more than 100,000 (Bedford 1989). Between 2000 and 2004, 27,000 citizens emigrated from Fiji. The permanent emigration process is dominated by the Indo-Fijians (88–9 per cent). The annual average rate of migration showed a varied pattern over the years. Before the 1987 coups, the annual average migration rate was 2,300 migrants a year, which increased to 4,900 during 1987–99, and to 5,800 migrants a year during 2000–03 (Mohanty 2001). Fiji has lost more than 3,800 professionals, technical and related workers since the coup in 2000 (Table 1). This represents more than half of Fiji’s stock of middle- to high-level workers (Government of Fiji 2002: 41). Teachers are the single most dominant professional group that Fiji has been losing.

According to one estimate, the country lost directly and indirectly about $F45 million annually through its human capital loss (Reddy, Mohanty and Naidu 2004).
Appendix 2
Chutney Generations
An Australian-Fijian-Indian Cultural Extravaganza

Produced by Casula Powerhouse 2007
Chutney Generations exhibition is the way our culture will progress.
Ram Raj Prasad

The exhibition has touched our roots. Our children need constant reminders of our roots and background. We should instill some pride and dignity in them.
Dewendra Pratap, Community and religious worker

We feel that the exhibition is an expression of the Fijian-Indian culture back home as well as an indication of our culture’s dynamism and ability to adapt to a new environment. Such an exhibition is vital for giving Indo-Fijians a sense of belonging in the new home.
Dr. Kavita Nandan The University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji

The opening was a warm and wonderful occasion that made space for everyone: participants and visitors, young and old, traditional and modern.
Barbara Alysen, Senior lecturer, UWS

The exhibition is a truly magnificent blend of colour and culture.
Nukte Ogun
Chutney Generations
An Australian-Fijian-Indian Cultural Extravaganza
Chutney Generations
An Australian-Fijian-Indian Cultural Extravaganza
Produced by Casula Powerhouse

Exhibition
16 December – 24 February 2007
Liverpool Regional Museum
Corner Congressional Drive & Hume Highway, Liverpool

Curators
Asha Chand and Nicholas Tsoutas

Coordinator
Cuong Phu Le

Artists
Indra Chinnappa, Kanjibhai Jogia and Prabha Jogia

Catalogue Contributors
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Exhibition Installation
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Inside cover: Gallery mural prepared by Iakovos Amperidis and Sardar Sinjawi
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Message

For many years British colonies dotted all parts of the world and British subjects on one pretext or another were transported as human cargo to provide economic upliftment and stability to their new-found territories.

The history of Indo-Fijian migrants is one of hard work and sacrifice.

Natives, Solomon and Chinese labour had failed to meet the needs of the colonial government. It then looked at other countries for supply of labour. The then-governor of Fiji who had previously served in Mauritius had witnessed the hard work of Indian labourers on that island. On his recommendation, our forefathers were lured to the Fiji Islands under the indenture system. There is no doubt that the social and economic development that the Fiji Islands enjoy today is the result of hard work put in and commitment shown by our forefathers to the country of their adoption. Quite often, our progress and prosperity becomes the source of fear and envy by members of other communities. Instead of being envious, others should emulate the culture of saving, the culture of industry, the culture of sharing, the culture of friendship and the culture of respect exemplified by our people.

History is witness to the fact that our forefathers have never gone to any country as colonisers, have not usurped an inch of land by force nor extracted hard labour under deplorable conditions to satisfy their needs and greed. We have mixed as sugar in milk with peoples of those countries that we have adopted as our home. Ours is a history of peace and patience and we live as god-fearing and law abiding citizens in any part of the world.

Those of us who have made Australia our home should show total commitment to this country and identify ourselves with its multicultural society. Let us all make some contribution for the welfare and betterment of the society and put in special effort for the upliftment and comfort of those less fortunate than ourselves.

Harish C. Sharma
Former Deputy Prime Minister
Minister for Housing & Urban Development and Minister of Information in the deposed Bavadra Government and taken political prisoner in the first coup of 1987 in Fiji. Now living in Peakhurst, NSW, with family and grandchildren.
Since the Fiji coups of 1987, over 120,000 Fiji citizens, mostly of Indo-Fijian descent, have left for other lands, ironically twice the number of Indian indentured labourers (girmityas) who went to Fiji in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The two crossings have contrasting features, and are products of different eras and historical conditions. But the footsteps of the past echo in the present.

The girmityas left their homelands in sorry circumstances, to escape poverty and destitution and discrimination, to create a new life for themselves and their children in new, far-flung places. In this endeavour most succeeded admirably in the face of the greatest of odds. Many recent migrants from Fiji, though better educated, better situated, too, leave their homeland to escape discrimination and racial prejudice, to build a better future for themselves and their children. The emigration of Indo-Fijians will continue unabated, draining Fiji of the talents of its best and brightest. North America and Australia and New Zealand have been the principal destinations of the new migrants.

In recent years, nearly forty percent have migrated to Australia, with the two-thirds of the migrants settling in and around Sydney. The new migrants are different from their predecessors in that their links with their former homelands are never severed, but rather nurtured and reconfigured in new innovative ways. Travel and technology have complicated former ethnographic notions of citizenship and made national boundaries both porous and permeable. The discrediting of the anachronistic ideology of assimilation creates its own possibilities for ‘chutnification.’ The celebration of diversity and difference, of pluralism and multiculturalism, creates new spaces for innovation.

In the diaspora of the ‘twice banished,’ Indo-Fijians experiment to create new identities. Essentialised notions homelands are displaced in favour of dualities. One can be an ‘Indian’ and a ‘Fijian’ in the same space and at the same time. Lovo and Kava and Sevens Rugby can be celebrated without apology alongside Bollywood films and Indian art and aesthetics. That is both the challenge as well as the condition of Indo-Fijian identity in Australia.

Prof. Brij V Lal
Professor of Pacific and Asian History in the Institute of Advanced Study at the Australian National University. The Founding Editor of the scholarly journal the Contemporary Pacific: A Journal of Island Affairs, and the Canberra literary journal Conversation'. His latest publication, as General Editor, is The Encyclopaedia of the Indian Diaspora.
“national identities are far more pluralistic. There are many ways in which a national culture should be and in practice is interpreted. We need to open up this history, because to do so is enabling.”

John O’Carroll & Bob Hodge’s statement from Borderwork in multicultural Australia (Allen & Unwin, April 2006) seems particularly apt in the case of Chutney Generations (16 December 2006 – 24 February 2007). This exhibition presents the Fiji-Indians’ journey – in their homes, social, cultural, sporting and economic spaces, as well as their physical journey, out of India as indentured labourers and their flight from Fiji to Australia following three coups. In addition, the public programs highlight the explorations and negotiations of a vibrant community creating its home in Sydney’s multicultural mix.

The exhibition links cultural research around the Fiji-Indian diaspora within a broader context for understanding community issues through the arts and social spaces. The display of selected collections which decorate or occupy the homes, personal spaces and the public zones of this community, speak volumes about their chutney.

What we have tried to do in this exhibition is to explore in the selection of works the human presence invested in objects and artworks. In Prabha’s works we see her meticulous work completed by hand, in the sari we see Eva and Gopi’s styling of a bride, in Indra’s video we share in her stories and ultimately in the chutney itself we see the blending, mixing and grinding to which all members of the community have contributed.

There are also interesting domestic objects that illustrate the journey of Fiji-Indian migration. These draw influence from the rich vibrancy of Indian heritage added to the unique flavour that comes from living in Fiji.

The philosophy of the Casula Powerhouse is to produce gallery and museum works that tell the stories of our communities and their contribution to the vibrancy of our life in multicultural Australia. We celebrate this diversity and hope that this catalogue will serve as a legacy of the contribution of all participants to this event and, more importantly, to their home in Australia and our concept of national identity.

A special thank you to: co-curators Asha Chand and Nicholas Tsoutas and co-ordinator Cuong Phu Le; Mr. Paul Lynch the State Member for Liverpool for officially launching the exhibition; Harish Sharma, Fiji’s first Indian deputy PM, for his presence at the launch; the artists included in the exhibition - Prabha and her husband Kanjibhai Jogia, Indra Chinnappa and Hari Ram; all of the wonderful women who donated their chutney to the exhibition; and, all community members who lent their personal items that encompass so much history within them.

Our gratitude also to the numerous community members and academics who have helped realise the fantastic public programs and Sunesh Ram of Moshim’s Liverpool for sponsorship of Chutney Generations.

Congratulations to my colleagues at the Casula Powerhouse and Liverpool Regional Museum for assistance in negotiating this cultural extravaganza. We are all the richer for it.

**Kon Gourirotis**

Executive Director
Chutney Generations

“I get my grog, Fiji fish, spices and vegetables every week at the local Fiji Mart. So how can I be totally Australian and not a bit of kaiviti (Fijian) and kaindia (Indian)?” a 50-year-old Fiji-Indian living in Sydney for 15 years.

“It is a matter of acquiring a taste and developing your taste buds. Mine are used to the hot and spicy foods which I eat almost everyday. My evening meal has to be roti (Indian bread) made out of Desi atta (flour) and spicy curries. I enjoy my evening meal after a few bowls of grog,” says the man, oblivious to the changing Sydney landscape that has become a United Nations on a plate.

“Australia is my home. I came here when I was two. All I can remember is about my life as an Australian. My friends are Australian like me. They grew up in this place although their heritage is Chinese, Italian, Turkish and English. Their parents, like mine, are putting a lot of pressure on them to be like other people from their country of birth. I can’t understand why my parents and other families keep talking about Fiji so much. I go to Fiji for cheap holidays at resorts, but my parents always want me to visit all the relatives there” a 21-year-old university student.

While this nostalgia sums up the feelings of some 27,083 Fiji-Indians living in New South Wales, it also captures many of the essential ingredients for Chutney Generations, presenting some of the losses, gains, mergers and new creations of the migrant community.

Australia’s and indeed the world’s first-ever exhibition about Fiji-Indians in Australia featured a colourful launch on December 16, 2006. The public programs in February 2007 capture some of the essential flavours of the diasporic Australian-Fiji-Indian community.
The three hyphenated identities create the main ingredients for chutney. Add a bit of tradition, language, dress, consumption of media and music and you have a salsa of flavours for mixing and blending.

Chutney is an Indian side dish made with zest and creativity. It adds sparkle to food. Main ingredients are usually tamarind, mint, coriander, tomato or mango, but really the sky is the limit with combinations in making chutney. These ingredients are ground with chillies, salt, onion, garlic, other herbs and spices into a tangy flavour.

Chutney is also used as a dip. New ingredients have been added to chutneys, and its role, like the instability of humanity, has changed over the years. The physical process of mixing and blending causes a fusion of flavours in such a way that there is no single identity, only our sense of taste to tell. That too can create a mistaken identity!

The *Chutney Generations* exhibition used chutney as a metaphor to describe the inhabitants of the 21st century globalised world where identities fuse and cultures merge. The term has special relevance to Fiji-Indians who savour the product and live the word.

The exhibition explores the negotiations, yearnings, borrowings and transformations as well as the new and spicy creations that have blended into Sydney’s multicultural stew pot. More importantly, the exhibition aims to raise awareness in Australia and in the world, of the unique blend of Indian, Fijian and Australian practices that has become a way of life for this diasporic community that is changing, complex and contradictory at the same time.

When making chutney, the process of blending causes products such as herbs, fruits and vegetables to lose their original flavours. In some ways, the exhibition demonstrates the loss of, or blending of, cultural practices for the community in Australia.

Like chutney, which evolved as a tradition spread from India to England and beyond, the exhibition has been realised through my own personal journey as an Australian-Fiji-Indian as well as through intimate conversations and discussions with the community which expresses itself in a loud and colourful manner in Australia. Adding a bit of flavour through the Liverpool Museum and Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre’s team, headed by Executive Director, Kon Gouriotis; Artistic Director, Nicholas Tsoutas and Asian-Australian Community Cultural Development...
Officer, Cuong Phu Le, you will have the main ingredients for chutney. The team of professionals filled any vacuum in planning by questioning and challenging the ideas that were put on the table for this exhibition. We thus have a refined selection of heritage items as well as expressive collections of the community, all of which tell the story of their journey, some of which began in India, others in Fiji and yet others in Australia. The community came on board with the kind of zest common in chutneys.

Chutney has played a defining role in my life. Growing up in Fiji at Tavarau, Ba, a variety of chutneys was what the family looked forward to during meal times, as most of the meals were comprised of rice and dhal only. Rice was grown at home and dhal came from the variety of lentils my mother grew in the patches of land near our home. We occasionally had junglee murgi (chicken raised at home) and fresh or tinned fish. My life revolved around chutneys until I began working as a journalist and was exposed to other foods.

The process of migrating and building a life in Australia, yet not totally leaving my childhood and adult life in Fiji has resulted in this exhibition that weaves a common thread with and among Fiji-Indians as well as multicultural Australians. All these voices echo the pain, trials and sense of loss and gain, among many other mixed feelings. We live as Australian citizens, following the rules of the land, yet in our hearts linger the memories of the home we have left as we yearn to know about the goings on in Fiji. Fiji’s ongoing political crisis, presented in the form of four coups in 20 years, keeps adding doses of new and fresh reminders, similar to the processes of making chutney.

As chutney brings delight to the senses, so have migration and globalisation challenged our hearts and minds. Migration has opened our minds to new possibilities, new challenges and fresh ideas, linking personal struggles with various other migrants who call Australia their new home. In a similar way, globalisation provides a common platform across the world.

Although there are several scholarly studies on emigration from Fiji, presented as books, journal articles and collections of short stories, there was a missing element: the visual representation of the community. This community has been marginalised to some extent because of the size of Fiji (only a dot on the world map) and their small numbers (compared to other migrant communities) in Australia. My rigorous brainstorming with Kon and later with his team at Liverpool Museum has produced a unique combination of ingredients for Chutney Generations. The most challenging aspect was selecting the items for show and tell, from a whole range of collections the community so generously made available.

left: Shop corner installed at the foyer of Liverpool Regional Museum, photo by Ian Hobbs
The Exhibition

The exhibition features some of the live expressions of the community such as dance, music, film and community celebrations of weddings, daily life, cultural spaces, and all representing the dynamics of the community. It links cultural research within a broader context for understanding community issues through the arts and social spaces.

A major highlight of the exhibition is the farming corner, featuring a swaying cane field. This is a life recreated with a blend of items and emotions (verses from a girmi song). The sugar cane stems belong to a Sydney Vietnamese family. From the stems hang a farmer’s hat, billy can and a small kerosene lamp. The cane knife belongs to me and is one of my most prized possessions, for it was my father’s tool of trade. With this knife he raised and educated four children and looked after his wife and widowed mother, but never complained about not having enough. I brought this knife with me when I migrated to Australia in 1998.

The mat made out of sugarcane manure bags (a hand-me-down from my mother-in-law, Saras Pati who now lives in Auckland, New Zealand) tells a personal story of the struggles, hopes and dreams of the past. A majority of the adult Australian-Fiji-Indians indeed spent a lifetime on these mats, known as paal, using them for sleeping, sitting, protection from the sun and wind, as well as for cleaning and drying grains like rice and lentils. In Sydney it is a picnic mat, spread out for backyard socialising and merrymaking.

A collection of musical instruments like the dholak (Indian drum) under the sugar “plantation” speaks volumes about the continuity of the traditions of song and dance, from India in 1879, across to Fiji and then Australia, at the height of coups beginning in 1887. Sugar was the backbone of Fiji’s economy until the Indians who nurtured the land and the sugar fields began migrating in droves in 1887. Music provided balance in their lives like some ingredients in chutney and neutralized the feelings of loss and grief during the indenture era, later with outright racial discriminations in Fiji and with migration to Australia. Music, with its power to heal and stir emotions, crossing all borders and boundaries, like chutney, is an integral part of the Fiji-Indian heritage. For the young, it is Bollywood; for the older migrants, it is the traditional songs, bhajans and kirtans (devotional music).

Life for the Fiji-Indians is not complete without kava, thus the kava section in the middle of the exhibition hall makes a bold statement about every other aspect of life for the Australian-Fiji-Indians, which generally revolves around this brew of life. Serving kava to Fijian chiefs and special guests was a practice of the past. Kava is consumed at many Fiji-Indian gatherings such as prayer meetings, weddings or death ceremonies, with a sense of religious zeal. The tanoa (a large wooden bowl made of dakua wood and used for mixing kava), sits on tapa cloth (Fijian art). In Australia, large mixing bowls have replaced the tanoa which is commonly used as a fruit bowl.

The wedding corner, spices section, chutney corner (with the stone chutney maker, mortar and pestle surrounded by fresh mint, garlic, chillies, salt as well as rows of bottled chutneys, made by women from the community) and the screening of jhumka (film), all tell the stories of the past, change, borrowings, yearnings and new creations, denoting the dynamics of chutney. Affluence in Australia has meant that the community observes important occasions such as weddings, with much pomp and ceremony. It has become a new barometer for gauging wealth. Gopi and Eva Thoman of Sundara Fashions, Parramatta, put together the wedding corner with painstaking detail to reflect the community and to make a bold statement about Indian weddings.
Henna artist Prabha Jogia’s story of the changing landscape in henna works presents yet more chutney where fusion of the past and present unravels the future of henna which is gaining global appreciation.

Dooneside High School teacher, Hari Ram, who takes photographs as a hobby during community events and weddings, captured and preserved the different faces of community members as a collection in the community corner of the exhibition.

**The Launch**

The visual colours and flavours, that are synonymous with the community and not captured by scholarly works, came to life during the launch. The launch was planned with chutney in mind and featured a combination of the Australian-Fiji-Indian expressions of the community, culturally and socially, in their everyday life, within their ethnic and Australian spaces.

The official speakers at the launch included Local Aboriginal Elder Aunty Mae Robinson, Mr. Harish Sharma who now lives in Sydney and was Fiji’s first Indian Deputy Prime Minister in the Bavadra government, Mr. Kon Gouriotes, Executive Director of Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, Liverpool Regional Museum and Collingwood House and Local MP Paul Lynch. The focus of my speech was my father’s cane knife. My story of pain, struggles, dreams and hopes (indeed chutney) brought tears to many eyes as well as to my own.

The opening also featured a song dedicated to the *girmityas,* (indentured labourers, *girmit* in Hindi literally meaning if you fall, you die), Indian and Fijian style welcome of guests, with aarti and tilak (lit clay lamps circulated around the faces of especially invited guests, to honour their presence and putting *chandan tilak* (sandalwood paste) on their forehead as a welcome. Light symbolises knowledge and the removal of ignorance. The flame of a lamp always burns upwards, sending out the message that we should acquire knowledge to take us to higher ideals. *Tilak* invokes feelings of sanctity while the sandalwood paste signifies purity. Joining of the palms in greeting with *namaste* is a cultural convention which negates ego in front of the person being greeted.

Serving Fiji’s national drink, kava and Indian-style chai (tea...
brewed/infused by cooking in a large pot with all ingredients including sugar and tea spices), created a feel of Fiji and the Australian lifestyle. Serving freshly made chutney with pappadums was a new Australian creation which became an instant hit.

The other cultural items, a song by Sargam Musical, featured lyrics of Trinidad’s chutney song (*fulori bina chutney kaise bani*) combined with a Fijian *meke* (dance song) and a Bollywood hit. Men from a Blacktown *Ramayan Mandali* (religious group) sang a *holi* (festival of colour) song which has its origins in India but has continued to dominate the song charts in Fiji and Australia. Bollywood dance performances by young Sydney artists provided a glimpse into the way the youth embrace their Indian heritage and combine it with modern forms of expression such as hip hop.

The Fashion Show coordinated by Eva Thoman of Sundara Fashions presented a peek into the global space on which Bollywood is stamping a mark. Australian-Fiji-Indians religiously consume Bollywood movies and their expressive culture through fashion and lifestyle. Tabla performances by Pundit Ram Chandra Suman, like chutney, brought delight to the senses. Saaz Musical band of Sydney topped off the festivity with live songs from the past and the present, with combinations that are setting trends for the future.

The in-between space of the community

The exhibition demonstrates in a physical sense how the Fiji-Indians, in a short time, have established their home in Sydney and indeed Australia. However, at an emotional and sometimes subconscious level, the community is neither fully settled in Sydney nor has left homeland Fiji totally. They are in an in-between space, explicitly demonstrated through their cultural performances at the launch and the exhibition items.

This space is referred to as threshold (the sill of a doorway) by a number of anthropologists such as Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner (van Gennep 1960, Turner 1969). This sill has to be crossed when entering or leaving a house, thus evokes images of passages, crossings or change.

For Australian-Fiji-Indians, this threshold marks a point or time when they make a choice about moving on or keeping what they hold close. The change is not definitive. Many of them are caught in between these spaces; thus they do not have clearly defined existence in each situation, be it the way they live in their home environments, their social or educational spaces or their life in the communities, ethnic as well as multicultural.

To gain admission into the Australian space means to submit to the accepted norms (or rules) that are in force in that time and space. So in the work environment, they speak in English, report to work on time and follow the culture (expected behaviour) of the work environment. However, when entering their Fiji-Indian space, they change to suit that environment, ensuring that they speak in Hindi, donning Indian fashion and jewellery and arrive late at meetings and parties because they are “on Fiji time” reflecting the laid-back Fijian lifestyle.
On the other hand, the Indian social structure decides who is included or excluded from their network and these decisions are constantly changing with each situation – for reasons of political, religious or social ranking and affiliations. This spatial structure then influences the group’s social interactions and relationships within and outside the group while social status is negotiated at the threshold, either through acceptance or rejection. There is again a degree of in-between in both as acceptance can be marginal, not real or complete. A similar condition could apply to rejection which may not be total.

Threshold thus evokes a sense of entering and leaving. In more concrete terms, it denotes passages and change in the way they live and create their identity in a new home. These passages, physical as well as emotional, negotiated through time and circumstances, mark the points at which they make decisions about their identity.

Even if they choose to move on, the space is not permanent for they soon are at another threshold and change is incorporated (sometimes without them knowing or feeling it).

The youth especially are under pressure from parents wanting to keep some of their old ways and practices intact. There are situations where the transitions from an old lifestyle to a new one, an old social position to another, are hampered, for example by little or no understanding of the significance or practical reasons behind a practice. Thus the transition cannot be completed fully or successfully. These youth, like their parents and grandparents are caught in-between stages of change; thus they do not hold clearly defined positions within their social system or network. They sometimes feel marginalised, excluded and without identity or influence.

While outsiders can be located outside a social structure and may not have the intention or ability to re-enter the space, marginals, according to Turner’s study, are “simultaneously members of two or more social groups whose social definitions and cultural norms are distinct from, and often even opposed to, one another.” Stonequist (1965) describes a marginal as an “individual who through migration, education, marriage, or some other influence leaves one social group or culture without making satisfactory adjustment to another and who finds himself on the margin of each but a member of neither.”

Van Gennep, on the other hand, says “The life of an individual in any society is a series of passages from one age to another or from one occupation to another. Whenever there are fine distinctions among age or occupational groups, progression from one group to the next is accompanied by special acts, like those which make apprenticeship in our trades.”

The movement of almost everything in the world today is governed by change. These changes impact on human life either in stages or through the process of the transitions. For some Australian-Fiji-Indians, these changes take place without their knowing or feeling them. Others go through a process where every aspect is felt or lived, especially in the case of physical and lifestyle changes they experience.

For the second/third generation Fiji-Indians living in Sydney, the common history or experience do not apply to them. They either did not experience what their parents or grandparents experienced politically through the indenture system when there was much suffering and struggle to establish a home in Fiji or are too far removed from the realities of political and social life in Fiji. They have adapted to a more liberal and western way of life in Australia because this is what they know or how they live.

*Chutney Generations* thus demonstrates the deep interactions and adaptations to the new environment, the borrowings and the changes that are shaping their cultural identity. It excavates and brings to life, through visual and collective expressions, the Australian-Fiji-Indian identity, which is grounded not in archaeology but in retellings of their past, their present and aspirations of the future. Identity for this community, like many other migrants, is a continuous production, a rupture which is always in process. This process can be likened to blending of ingredients to make chutney. New ones are added while some old ones are taken out to change the flavor, making it hot or spicy or sweet or tangy according to taste. Constant negotiation blends their identity into various other identities, which in turn, gives birth to *Chutney Generations*.

Chutney’s relevance to the past, present and future has not been lost despite the upheavals, twists and turns in our physical and emotional journeys.

**Asha Chand**  
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Sugar Cane:
a tribute and reminder of our heritage

From humble beginnings almost 130 years ago when they first arrived in Fiji as *girmityas* (indentured labourers) and nurtured the country’s barren land into a sweetener, producing sugarcane, Australian-Fiji-Indians have come a long way.

Along this journey they have weathered many storms in the form of violence and brutality during the indenture era and then the outright discrimination, attacks on personal and community landmarks such as schools and temples, ousting of the first elected Indian Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry, all in the name of protecting indigenous Fijian rights.

Their hard work reaped results and sugar soon became the backbone of the country’s economy. It remained Fiji’s highest foreign exchange earner for several decades. At 10am on Thursday, May 14, 1987, Sitiveni Rabuka, who later became Fiji’s Prime Minister, stormed into Parliament with about ten Special Forces men armed with semi-automatic rifles and took the Timoci Bavadra government hostage. A second coup followed on September 25, 1987 and a third in 2000 by George Speight, removed Fiji’s first elected Indian Prime Minister, Mahendra Chaudhry, a strong advocate of the farmers, from office. Sugar began losing its sweetness after the coups and Indians began their flight to Australia in droves.

Sugarcane farming had also helped the community to establish its own future, first through the setting up of schools which then helped establish an education system. Today, many schools, temples, tap water systems and crematorium grounds stand as monuments of their foresight and sacrifice in Fiji.

The *girmityas* also made a lasting impression on Fiji’s political arena. The indenture system (*Girmit*) brought with it a political culture from a much older civilization. The British had brought the Indians to Fiji under the indenture system. The Indian migration, like chutney, was the result of a combination of interests and circumstances – some British, some Fijian and some Indian, all played out during the indenture era.
Fiji Democratic Party Secretary General, Filipe Bole, who has served Fiji as Education Minister and Ambassador had this to say: “The hardships, conditions of work and the unreasonable and harsh treatment of the girmiyas fashioned a political outlook which demanded fairness, justice, equality and an abhorrence for discrimination based on race. As such, the growth and speed of this outlook became an important influence in the spread of democracy in Fiji. We should strengthen our resolve to hold on to this as a valuable inheritance from Girmit.”

Among the greatest gifts from the girmiyas were the education and values passed on to their children and to the Fiji community. Many schools and temples in Fiji are monuments of their commitment to these causes. Education empowered Fiji-Indians better than the power of any gun! Many families have been able to carve a better and more secure future because their life was built on solid education. This allowed the first batch of Indians to migrate from Fiji. A majority of the Australian-Fiji-Indians were able to migrate to Australia because of their professional articulations. Many of them continue to send money back to Fiji to help with the education of those left behind. They have kept alive the Chinese saying “Give man a fish, you feed him for a day. Teach him to fish, you feed him for a lifetime!”

The farming corner in the Chutney Generations exhibition is a tribute to our girmiyas and a reminder of the sweat, tears and blood that were shed to carve a future for children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, who today live a life far removed from the brutality of the cane fields.

For 40 years the girmiyyas had to endure hardships in the form of beatings and forced labour for long arduous hours under the most inhuman conditions.
Hari Prasad, who was introduced to the sugar fields when he was five, now lives in Quakers Hill in Sydney. Turning 75 in June this year, Prasad spent only two years of his childhood in school. His childhood home in Fiji was a grass house with bare soil, on which his mother would spread her hand-made mat (from the sugarcane fertilizer sacks). The family ate and slept on this mat. “We were in there for these purposes only. The remaining time was spent in the fields,” he recalls.

Hari has kindly given some of his treasured possessions for this exhibition. They include his hoe, which he bought in 1958, for four shillings, after massive flooding in Ba, Fiji and his billy can. He took food to the sugar fields in the billycan in his late years of farming in the 1980s. The cane knife is his, but his daughter owns it and has kept it as a reminder that this knife was the family’s livelihood. The mat, made from manure bags, is a reminder of the family’s roots. It keeps them grounded while they enjoy the other material trappings of their new world in Australia.

These items, among others, have a unique purpose in Sydney. The mat is now a picnic mat for large family outings to the parks for barbecues. Many family friends spend summer afternoons on this mat in the backyard. The hoe is used in the vegetable garden in Sydney. The mixing and matching and changing roles of these items have produced chutney.

The musical instruments, many brought from Fiji, others bought in Australia, formed an integral part of survival for the girmityas. While planting and harvesting the sugar and rice fields, the farmers and their families would resort to singing, perhaps as a way of letting go of the heavy emotional burden they carried. These musical instruments, belonging to Mrs Bimla Rao, Rajendra Kumar and Jitendra Kumar of Sydney, also became an important part of their social space, especially in the evening when the farmers and their families would gather in private homes to recite the Ramayan and read the Bhagavat Gita (Hindu holy books). In Sydney alone, the Fiji-Indians have established more than 80 religious groups (Ramayan manadalisis) where there is continuity in the practices of the girmit era.

Affluence in the Australian environment means that there is much merry making and socialising after the prayers are over. Kava drinking is an essential element of this social space and sometimes the partying continues into the wee hours of the morning.

Song, dance and kava drinking have all merged to become part of the social fabric of the community in Sydney. Indeed Chutney.

Asha Chand
Song: A tribute to the first batch of Indian indentured labourers in Fiji

Ye Mere Watan ke logo
Sun lo sundesh hamara
Girmityo ki yaadon ka
Hum milkar gaye tarana

Par mat bhulo purwajo ne
Fiji ko swarg banaya
Kuch yaad unhe bhi karlo
Joh laut ke ja nah pya
Fiji me praan gawaye

Yeh mere watan ke logo
Jara aankh me bhar loh paani
Joh saheed huwe hai unke
Zara yaad karo kurbani

Goro neh chakrya chala ke
Girim ke pratha chaladi
Bharat ke nar aur naari
Phas aapni shaan gawadi

Bichade sabse aur choota
Nij desh ka dana paani
Ho eid ya ho diwali baisakhi ho ya holi
Who jujhe reha kheto mei
Ban kar Fiji ke mali

Chaabook aur gali sahe kar
Gai chodah amar yeh kahani
Jo saheed huwe hai unki
Zara yaad karo kurbani

Koyi poorabh ka pachim ka
Koi uttar ka koi dhakshin ka
Bharat ke har hiseh ka
Gawraw bharat wasi ka

Mitta jaat paat ka jagda
Hoi shuru nai jindagani
Abdul Krishna Anthony
Sab prreet nibhana thani
Joh saheed huwe hai unke
Zara yaad karo kurbani

Nij khoon pasina baha kar
Fiji ko sawrg banaya
Khud girmitya khela kar
Mehнат ka paat padaya
Anpadthada jad thi saari
Sankat jhele weh bhari
Bwddhaan baney santane
Man me yahi zid thi thani

Shalaye kai bani hai
Hai unki amar nishani
Jo saheed huwe hai unki
Zara yaad karo kurbani

Jai ho girmit ke veero
Jai ho jai ho jai ho

Oh ye the people of my descent
Listen to my message
In memory of indenture
Let’s sing a song

But do not forget our ancestors
Who made Fiji Heaven
Remember them also
Those who could not return
Gave their lives in Fiji

Oh ye people of my descent
Just fill your eyes with tears
Remembering those who died
Making sacrifices for us

The white man, with deceit
Began the indenture history
India’s men and women
Got trapped and lost their pride

Left and lost everyone
Their daily food and water
During Eid, Diwali, baisakhi, holi (festivals)
They hummed in the fields
Becoming the gardeners of Fiji

They bore the whip and the swearing
Leaving a everlasting story
Those who are no more
Please remember their sacrifices
Some came from the East, some from west,
Some from south, some north
From every corner of India
Proud Indian citizens

The cult of the castes and religions
Got wiped away
As a new life began
Abdul, Krishna, Anthony (representing different religions)
All pledged to keep love alive

They made Fiji into a haven
With their sweat and blood
By being called girmitiya (under agreement)
Imparted to us the knowledge of hard work
Being uneducated was the root of the problem
They overcame many obstacles
To educate their sons and daughters
This was their hell bent goal

The several schools
Are monuments of their memory
Please pause to remember those
Who made these sacrifices

Salute to the winners over girmiT
Our salutations to you, our salutations to you

Written by Ambilca Nand of Brisbane and sung by Indra Chinappa of Sydney
Beer at the local pub or at home before dinner is a common relaxant for Australians. Fiji-Indians in Australia gulp kava in the same way. It is seen as a potent of life.

Kava, Fiji’s national drink, once was served at special functions to chiefs and guests only. However, over the years, kava has lost its sole ceremonial significance and has instead become a thirst-quencher after a hard day’s work. Now it is a social drink. Fiji-Indians living in Australia religiously drink kava at prayer meetings, weddings, and after death rituals. To a large extent, kava is today blamed for many of the social ills in Fiji and in Australia where men get “hooked” on kava till the early hours of the morning.

Kava is a tranquilizing, non-alcoholic drink that numbs the tongue and lips. It comes from the waka (dried root) or stem of the pepper plant. When the crop is mature, it is pulled out, cleaned and dried before it is pounded into a powder. In Fiji, the pounding of kava at dusk provides a musical vibration into a silent night as every home prepares for a session of “grog drinking.” Sometimes women of the house pound the kava and have it ready for their men when they return home from the sugarcane fields.

How is kava mixed?

- For a kava party use about half a medium sized cup of kava powder to 1 litre of water
- Pour the powder into a clean “grog cloth” used as a good filter. A piece from an old sari or an old pantyhose would make a good filter
- Wrap the powder tightly around the cloth and dip into a basin of water, ensuring that there is no leakage of the kava from the cloth
- Wring out the cloth with a good massage from the outside to ensure the properties mix well with the water. Squeeze the kava while it is in the strainer bag
- Wring out the cloth (and coarse left-overs) of any excess water and the kava is ready to drink

Kava: the brew of life
Before kava is served, the drink is mixed. Usually mixed in a Tanoa (large wooden bowl) and served in coconut shell, kava has to be drunk in one big gulp.

- You can not sip it and put it away. Men usually form a circle to make serving easier. The person serving kava uses a bowl that sits on the edge of the Tanoa, to mix it and then pour the mixture into individual bowls for drinking.

Like chutneys, kava too has evolved and transformed into kava chai and milk shake, to name a few. It has reached all corners of the globe, from the US to China and Europe and is used to make anti-depressant pills. To enhance its flavour, a sweetener may be added as well as fruit juice or your favourite herbs such as liquorice powder or freshly grated ginger.

Asha Chand
Wedding: traditions, transitions and transformations
Something borrowed, something new, something old, something gold, all bring about a fusion of colours, traditions, rituals and identities at any Australian-Fiji-Indian wedding.

A kaleidoscope of colour, glitter and glamour, many Indian weddings last for three days with rituals and traditions of the past, blended with new things such as changes in the wedding food. Chinese stir fry and pasta (both vegetarian) cook up a storm at many Indian weddings. While the first two days are ingrained in rituals, much of which has changed little, the third day is ushered in with the latest from the sets of Bollywood.

Weddings have become a new, regimented barometer of wealth and status for the community. Thus, Australian-Fiji-Indian weddings are besotted beyond belief with the fun, pomp and extravaganza seen on the silver screen. Song and dance sequence is as much part of weddings as they are a backbone to any Bollywood debut.

In a much affluent land of “show and tell”, entertainment at weddings has become an integral part of the community’s social space. This social space is alive and kicking outside the wedding halls as the community bands together to enjoy live performances by local and Bollywood artists.

Access to the glitter and glamour of television soaps, other forms of media, such as the World Wide Web, Zee TV and mobile phones have all spawned newer and high-tech additions to wedding ceremonies. The ritual space is reinvented. Professional wedding planners combine old and new, borrowed and invented ideas to make each wedding unique and special. With too much choice, the brides and grooms are becoming ever more discerning in taste. Sydney’s first Indian bridal magazine (My Shaadi) published by Tasneem Ali (Fiji-Indian woman) and the first Indian Bridal Fair at the Randwick Racecourse in September, 2006 caused a fire in fashion for all things Bollywood.

While Bollywood is stealing the show, in some quarters there is also a revival of the past as close female relatives sing songs to felicitate their daughters and sons during Indian weddings. Choreographers and DJs are challenged right on the wedding stage by this new way of fun fare.

Irene and Vidy Prasad of VIP Mandaps have carved a fine reputation as wedding planners, decorators and caterers. The couple began their business in 1986 as a weekend leisure activity. Today both have given up their professional jobs to focus on the business. Many of their mandaps (wedding centre stage) are recreated with Bollywood themes. A popular mandap is from the movie Devdas. They have six varieties for the various pocket sizes. “From doing one mandap a month a few years ago, we now do 10. Our clientele is not only Fiji-Indian but many Australians seek us out for special end of year parties or for weddings that are a blend of their multicultural Sydney environment,” says Irene.

The couple designed a mandap on a boat for a wedding that was staged with the backdrop of the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

The traditions, transitions and transformations at weddings create a unique blend of the past, the present and the future, breathing life into what we metaphorically refer to as Chutney Generations.

Asha Chand

Chutney Generations
Sari: one size fits all

The sari is an integral part of the Indian culture that the indentured labourers took to Fiji with them. It is also one of many things the Australian-Fiji-Indian community has maintained. Although the way women drape in saris has changed little, the blouses and jewellery worn with this outfit have evolved and are today influenced to a large extent by the glamour queens of Bollywood’s silver screen.

The sari has become an international costume today with people of many different cultures “wrapping” themselves. In India and in the olden days, the type of sari and the colour worn made a statement about the marital status, region and religion of the woman wearing it. Red generally is for brides, while white is considered a widow’s colour (society expecting purity in her after the death of her husband). Today however, white has become a favourite among young, unmarried Indian girls.

A sari can be worn any time and anywhere – depending on how elegant or how simple one’s choice is. It is among the most versatile forms of clothing and has been around for more than 5000 years.

It can be draped in many different ways to accommodate the many different shapes and sizes of women wearing them. The trick is in the colours one chooses and the material it is made from. It can be worn to look sexy, modest, sophisticated, graceful, glamorous and simple. A sari can conceal or accentuate the body and its curves in a way that is desired by the individual.

What a sari is

A single length of material, about 4 or more metres in length, a sari is worn with a blouse, usually made to match the sari colour, and a petticoat, around which it is wrapped, tucked, pleated and then draped over the shoulder.

Material used for making saris include silk (the most common), cotton, chiffon, lace, crepes and georgettes, to name a few. It can be a single colour, tie died, or a combination of colours. It can be plain, embroidered, sequined, or have gemstones on them (which mostly bridal costumes have).

The blouse or kurta is traditionally a short tight top. The design and shape of the blouse has gone through many fashion trends including short sleeved, long ones covering the hands, skimpy, with shoulder straps, strapless, deep cut back, without back covering, halter necked, etc... as far as the imagination can take one.

The petticoat is a simple skirt worn under the sari to give it support. The petticoat is not usually visible as the sari provides covering. It needs to be the same colour as the sari and made in a way to allow free movement, especially to walk (gracefully!). Thus it is made with 8 A-line panels. It also needs to be tied with a string rather than elastic, as it holds the sari up. If the petticoat is not tied tightly, it will sag where the pleats are and fall off.
How to drape a sari

1 Wear the blouse and petticoat (reign it tight) first.

2 Starting on the right side, hold your sari up so that it hangs next to your body while the remaining part is thrown to your left. Adjust the length of the sari so that it is just above the floor. Tuck the sari in so that the rest of the sari is going towards the left.

(Note that if you are going to wear heeled shoes, wear your shoes first and then put on the sari).
Bring the sari around your body again and over your left shoulder so that it’s on an angle and pin the edge of the sari to your blouse, on top of the shoulder. The pallu – the bit hanging down the shoulder should be long enough to touch your fingertips – just short of a meter – but again it depends on the length you want.

There are saris that are ready made, so if you are having problems, then you can always buy these types. The best thing about a sari is that it is so versatile and one size fits all. In India the sari is wrapped in a way so that it is a form of ¾ pants. It is left to the individual’s imagination really – so have fun.

Bandhna Rao
Art: my little world of fusion

I began dabbing in henna or mehndi design in 1974, travelling from house to house in Fiji, with gear in tow, at all hours of the night. Henna decoration became very important to brides as many families were poor and could not afford elaborate jewellery so the intricate patterns drawn in henna became a beautiful substitute.

I create my own designs and use my own henna powder, imported from India so I remain true to traditional henna art practice. My designs are not just art, they become an entire experience as they are a way of pampering the women who are entering a new phase of life as a wife. In contemporary society women have become very discerning in their tastes and suggest patterns they have found on the internet and in magazines. This becomes a challenge for me constantly adding new details, arrangements and patterns, but I know I can handle it.

Deep down I feel challenged professionally as an artist. The fusion of the old with new has kept me going. I am strongly influenced by the rich colours and designs from India. The flowers and natural beauty of Fiji are an inspiration. Perhaps my strongest influence is my husband Kanjibhai Jogia, a critic.

After all these years of rigorous practice, drawing free hand comes naturally to me. I switch to another world when I am drawing and my hand is always itching to draw. I get my emotional strength to draw from long hours of meditating and praying in the mornings. Now that I am retired, I spend most of my mornings in deep meditation.

As a young girl growing up in Ba, I always had something to do. When I married and moved to the city in Suva, I became very lonely and began drawing to keep myself busy. Soon, drawing became a passion and I would grab any chance to...
DRAW

COLOURS BECAME A FASCINATION AND I WOULD LIKE A CHILD TRY ALL SORTS OF COMBINATIONS. THE MORE I DID THIS, THE DEEPER THE DESIRE BECAME TO KEEP GOING.

I WOULD BUY FIJIAN CLAY POTS AND TURN THESE INTO COLOURFUL OBJECTS WITH THE RADIANCE OF INDIAN COLOURS AND DESIGNS. COMBINING INDIAN AND FIJIAN DESIGNS IN A WAY HELPED ME EXPRESS MY DOUBLE IDENTITY AS A FIJI-INDIAN. MIXING THE COLOURS ALSO PROVIDED A UNIQUE FUSION OF FIJI'S SERENE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WITH INDIA'S RESPLENDENT CULTURE WHERE COLOURS HAVE SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE.

MY HENNA WORKS TOO HAVE BEEN TRANSFORMED. BRIDES ARE NO LONGER SATISFIED WITH HAND, PALM AND FEET DECORATIONS, THEY WANT HENNA ON THEIR SHOULDERS, LOWER HIP OR BACK OR EVEN THEIR BELLY. THEN, PREGNANT WOMEN INVITE ME FOR A UNIQUE BLEND OF DESIGNS ON THEIR TUMMY AT BABY SHOWERS. HENNA ART IS NOW SOUGHT AFTER AT UNIQUE EVENTS SUCH AS BIRTHDAY PARTIES AND HEN’S NIGHTS. ALL THESE CHANGES ARE A CHALLENGE FOR MY ART, AND LIKE CHUTNEY, I AM ALWAYS BLENDING NEW IDEAS AND CREATING NEW IDENTITIES.

Prabha Jogia, Artist,
interviewed and written by Asha Chand
Jhumka:
Fiji-Indian couple brings Bollywood to Sydney

Move over Bend it like Beckham and Bride and Prejudice, here comes Jhumka, the first ever-Hindi movie shot in Sydney with a local cast of Indian background from Fiji and India. The movie, part of the Chutney Generations exhibition material, is based on the centuries old caste and class system and how this system is a stumbling block in relationships close to the heart, even in the 21st century. Its theme spans around three countries, India, Fiji and Australia. This combination, with a good dose of changing lifestyles, provides a new recipe for chutney.

Brainchild of Sydney’s Michael Chinappa, Fiji-born son of first generation indentured labourers, the movie touches the core of everyday life in Fiji – of survival and dreams.

A father toils the land he does not own with the hope that one day when he gives his daughter away in marriage to a handsome young man, he would have fulfilled a life-long commitment. Given his personal circumstances of living in a hand to mouth situation, where daily survival is the only long-term concern, this is how far he can dream.

Through this one character, Chinappa is able to appeal to a huge audience who can relate to the situation as a domestic matter, an almost daily occurrence in the lives of Indian farmers who stake their all in their children by either investing in their education or marrying them off to some prince or princess from overseas.

A daughter, living a carefree village life (not knowing the outside world) builds castles in the air and has only one dream to one day be one with her childhood playmate who she falls in love with.

A teenage college student, son of a rich zamindaar (landowner) dreams of completing his studies and returning to his love in the village.

Another college student, brought up in the big smoke, secretly nurtures her dream to one day see her soulmate propose to her.

Every character with any significance in the movie dreams a dream. The only difference is that some dream within the realm of their real existence while others float into another world.

Drawing parallels with the harsh realities of life today in Australia, Fiji and India, the movie has rich dream sequences that Chinappa explains are a must have in which some characters are depicted in a manner that they cannot handle reality.

It is an excellent idea to dream. Many success stories today and in our past were based on childhood dreams. Many people aspire to fulfill these dreams. For some it takes a lifetime, for others it is an easy achievement and yet for others it remains unattainable. Overall, dreaming gives us some sense of direction on where we want to be. How we get there is the journey called life.

This journey is the crux of the movie. It is based around everyday village life of song and dance, rich with colour, theme and incidents - some hilarious, others petty but still significant.

Suspense builds up when country meets city.

Jhumka, an item of adornment (earring), comes in the picture when the village girl asks her lover to bring her a pair from the city. He asks his schoolmate (the student who secretly loves him) to select a pair.

Who gets to wear the ornament?

Do all or one of the dreams materialize into anything real or anywhere close to reality?

Stirring a lot of emotion, the movie is devoted to the phase of interface in the lives of migrant Indians who have come here to Australia, mostly under a condition of crisis (as is the case with a majority of Fiji Indians) but still remain connected to their homeland.
One way to keep that connection active is the return journey home for marital partners – be it for divorced/widowed families or for young sons, daughters, nephews or nieces.

And when this happens, there is always conflict – of geography, lifestyle, and values, to name a few. With this process begins the blending of ideas, ideals, lifestyles - the whole works, creating chutney.

Chinappa, who made his first debut in filmmaking with *kalank*, in Fiji, says his movie will appeal to a wider audience, many of whom will be able to relate to the sequence of events as something happening closer to home than the silver screen.

“I am an old hand now – in terms of life experiences and I always wanted to give something back to my people, something they will think about in their daily lives. *Jhumka* does this quite well,” quips Chinappa.

The movie has a good dose of dance, drama and family disputes that bring out the vibrancy of daily life.

Chinappa’s wife, Indira, well-established as a singer, traveled to Bombay, India to wrap up the songs for the movie.

A great first effort on the Sydney scene, the movie is a must see – if not for comparisons with what Bollywood has been churning out, to show appreciation of the local talent. There are heavy doses of these among our Indians if the recent cultural performances and of course this movie is a yardstick for measurement. Is another movie in the making?

Chinappa quips, ‘View this one and tell me how you feel. Once we can gauge our performance from this, yes, we’d be ready to roll those cameras and of course draw on our local talent. We could have our own Bollywood in Sydney.”

Reviewed by Asha Chand and previously appeared in the Indian Post
Shop:
more than a food place
The recent exposure of the Indian culture to large western and multicultural audiences, through Bollywood movies, street fashion, the catwalks, performance by Bollywood stars at 2005 Melbourne Commonwealth Games and TV advertising of products such as Lipton Chai latte, tandoori and raita sauce in McDonald’s healthy foods promotion, has meant a much deeper appreciation of things that are of Indian heritage or exotic Fijian. Fiji gained its position on the world map through its “exotic” image as the virgin country for tourism and coups.

There are some 120 grocery shops operating as Asian/Indian spice shops in the greater Sydney region. The migrant Indians (especially Fiji-Indians) who have settled in cloverleaf enclaves in urban centres such as Liverpool, Blacktown, Campsie and Fairfield are aware of when the new shipment of fresh vegetables and other supplies from Fiji will be available at their local spice shop. They have cobbled together their own fragrant neighbourhoods of masala (spice) chutneys, pickles, fresh fish from Fiji waters, Fiji-grown vegetables, root crops (taro and cassava) and kava.

Liverpool is home to the largest number of Indian spice and specialty shops (fashion and jewellery). Other businesses that have been created around these shops are travel agencies, restaurants, law firms, radio stations and home loan centres, to name a few. Liverpool’s Northumberland Street is an almost exclusive Indian zone, featuring a majority of Fiji-Indian owned and operated businesses in the city. Liverpool has more than 30 Fiji-Indian owned businesses. Six of these, operating in the heart of Liverpool are grocery and spice shops.

Nowadays, Indian spices, snacks, prepacked meals and exotic Fijian foods such as coconut cream have started to tickle the fancy of many westerners and others from Sydney’s multicultural stew pot. They flock to the grocery shops spread across the heart and major settled arteries of the city, to spice up their appetites.

An interesting feature of these spice shops that dot the Sydney landscape and reflect the contemporary smell, feel and taste of Fiji and India, is the popular Bollywood music, movies and magazines section. Neatly displayed on rows and rows of shelves, the Bollywood movies are a major attraction to the spice shops.

Apart from food, grocery and books, the shops have become a zone for socializing and meeting other people from Fiji. The shop owners have established strong networks with customers and provide personalized service especially when the latter requests items in bulk for weddings or special functions such as parties and prayer meetings. Goods are especially brought in from India, Fiji or other destinations upon ample notice.

The Chutney Generations exhibition presents a glimpse into the vibrancy of the spice shops through a mini collection of some of the priced goods, including statues of Hindu Gods and Goddesses, some of the news magazines, including copies of the Fiji Times (the oldest magazine for Fiji-Indians) and My Shaadi, the first ever Indian wedding magazine for Australia and New Zealand (the brainchild of Australian-Fiji-Indian Tasneem Ali). A book corner within this area is presented to showcase some of the literary contributions of Australian-Fiji-Indians. Sitting outside the exhibition space, in the foyer, the “shop corner” immediately creates a feel of Fiji and India through imagination while presenting the lived situation of Australia, as you step inside the museum... indeed chutney, with food to eat and food for thought, food to communicate and food for faith, food to entertain and food to read.

Asha Chand
Spices: colourful delights

The history of Indian spices goes back to more than 7,000 years when lands and kingdoms were discovered and destroyed as new flavours were sought and created.

Today Indian spices hold a unique spell as the soul of Indian cooking. Used either fresh or dried, their flavour changes for each form. The dried spices and herbs are used in various ways. They can be used whole or grounded (more often than not still pounded at home). They can be roasted, fried, deep fried, half-done, all according to taste.

A chain of 120 odd spice shops dots the Sydney landscape and the goods they carry are as varied as their origins. An estimated 500,000 tonnes of spices and herbs worth US$1,500 million is imported globally every year. An impressive one fourth of this supply comes from India. Major Australian retail chains also stock a variety of spices.

The food scene in Sydney, Australia’s multicultural hub, is complex reflecting cultural diversity born mainly through migration and globalisation, while demonstrating the triumph of uni-polar cultures. Hence it is cool to be seeking out the exotic Fijian foods as well as the spicy Indian delights. Indian spices now add a special aroma to Australian kitchens.

Food is non-threatening when it comes to culture. It is something everyone responds to heartily without being too analytical. It is food that creates a kaleidoscope of the cultural mix known to cities like Sydney. Many Sydneysiders rise to the challenges with an empty stomach while yet others are happy to feed on what they know and have acquired a taste of.

Bland Fijian foods such as dalo (taro) and cassava are boiled, and then coated with Indian spices before being deep fried as a snack to go with chutneys or tomato sauce. This Australian creation is a fine example of the blending and fusion that takes place to add delight to our senses.

Absorbing technology, broad-based products, developing value-added products, identifying niche markets, forging strategic alliances, clinching global collaborations and joint ventures have all added spice to the global food scene. Sydney is no exception.

Asha Chand
opposite page and below: Spice corner, photo by Ian Hobbs
Chutney: the blending, fusion and homogenisation

The sky’s the limit when it comes to choosing the ingredients for making chutney. Herbs and spices, fruits and vegetables, hot and spicy, cool and tangy, all become homogenised in a stew pot.

In the “Stone Age”, chutney making began with the use of a flat and a round stone to blend the ingredients. Next came the mortar and pestle and now in the 21st Century where time is an issue, the blender churns out chutneys faster than one can bat an eyelid. Some traditions never die and for any chutney, garlic, chilli and salt are the perennial sparks of fire.

In Sydney, where fruits and vegetables are available in abundance, making chutney is a challenge, for there is so much choice. Mixing and matching, trial and error create the best of inventions and chutneys, like many other things in life, keep evolving. Fresh tomato, diced with onion, garlic, coriander or parsley and a pinch of salt is a popular delight in these
changing times. This healthy and quick-to-whip chutney adds colour to any table setting.

For special occasions such as weddings, some chutneys are made in large quantities and preserved for several weeks and months. Tamarind chutney is a Hindu wedding speciality. Garlic, ginger, curry leaves, white sesame, ripe coconut flesh, sugar and salt, transform raw tamarind’s tongue twisting bitterness into a tangy flavour. Tamarind chutney occupies a special corner in many hearts and homes, for it is what people reach out to, as a dip for finger foods such as spring rolls, fries, samosas, fried dalo and cassava (native Fijian root crops, similar in taste to potato), during the Australian winter months.

These rows of bottled chutneys as part of the Chutney Generations exhibition are a creation of Australian-Fiji-Indian women. Each bottle is unique for the flavours vary, as do the ingredients. Their names are as diverse: Kamasutra, Viagra, Morning After, Hindustan Mard, Fiji Jawaani, Pukpuk, Hot Air, Cool Breeze, Piping Hot, Sparkler, Tearful, Pardesh, Devdas, Sisila, Masti, Barsat, Salam Namaste, Kabhi Kabhi, Saudagar, Garam Masala, Judai, Mistress of Spice, Bride and Prejudice. These names are creations blending familiar words (Australian context), Fijian words and names of Bollywood movies (Indian) which the community consumes religiously in Australia. India is referred to as the land of the Kama Sutra adding a new dimension to imagination with the names.

The blending of the community’s multiple identities creates chutney. The Chutney Generations exhibition was coined with this fusion in mind.

Asha Chand
How to make chutney

TOMATO CHUTNEY
Karuna Kumar

Ingredients
Canned whole tomato – 425g
Medium onion – 1
Garlic (crushed) – 3 cloves
Ginger (crushed) – 1 tsp
Red hot chillies – 6
Cooking oil – 1 Tbsp
Cumin seed – 1 tsp
Fenugreek – 1 tsp
Mustard seed – 1 tsp
Curry leaves – 1 stalk
Salt – 3 tsp
Sugar – 1 tsp
Water – ½ cup
Coriander leaves – 4 stalks

Method
1. Open can of tomato and crush it up.
2. Peel onion and cut into thin slices.
3. Slice chillies in half lengthwise.
4. Chop coriander leaves coarsely.
5. Heat oil in a saucepan and add the spices and let it pop.
6. Add the onions and cook until light brown.
7. Add the curry leaves and the chillies and continue cooking until the onions are golden brown.
8. Add the crushed garlic and ginger and cook for a further half minute. Add the crushed tomatoes, salt and sugar and water.
9. Stir well and bring it to a boil.
10. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for 10-12 minutes until the sauce thickens. Stir from time to time.
11. Remove from heat and garnish with coriander leaves.
**DRIED MANGO (KHATAI) CHUTNEY**

Karuna Kumar

**Ingredients**

- Sliced dried mangoes – 1 cup
- Medium onion – 1
- Garlic (crushed) – 3 cloves
- Ginger (crushed) – 1 tsp
- Red hot chillies – 6 *
- Cooking oil – 1 Tbsp
- Cumin seed – 1 tsp
- Fenugreek – 1 tsp
- Mustard seed – 1 tsp
- Curry leaves – 1 stalk

**Method**

1. Soak dried mango slices for 8hrs. Drain water
2. Peel onion and cut into thin slices.
3. Slice chillies in half lengthwise.
4. Heat oil in a saucepan and add the spices and let it pop.
5. Add the onions and cook until light brown.
6. Add the curry leaves and the chillies and continue cooking until the onions are golden brown. Stir in turmeric and masala.
7. Add the crushed garlic and ginger and cook for a further half minute. Add soaked mango and salt.
8. Cook for 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Add water
9. Stir well and bring it to boil.
10. Reduce heat, cover and simmer stirring occasionally until sauce begins to thicken.
11. Add sugar and chilli powder and mix well. Cover and continue to simmer until the sauce thickens. Stir frequently to prevent the chutney from burning.
12. Remove from heat and stir in cumin powder.

Transfer chutney into glass/Pyrex dish.

* For a mild chutney reduce the quantity of chillies

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**MANGO RELISH (GUDDAMMA)**

Karuna Kumar

**Ingredients**

- Semi ripe mango (medium) – 2
- Small onion – 1
- Garlic (crushed) – 3 cloves
- Ginger (crushed) – 1 tsp
- Red hot chillies – 6 *
- Cooking oil – 1 Tbsp
- Cumin seed – 1 tsp
- Fenugreek – 1 tsp
- Mustard seed – 1 tsp
- Curry leaves – 1 stalk

**Method**

1. Peel and slice mangoes thinly.
2. Peel onion and cut into thin slices.
3. Slice chillies in half lengthwise.
4. Heat oil in a saucepan and add the spices and let it pop.
5. Add the onions and cook until light brown.
6. Add the curry leaves and the chillies and continue cooking until the onions are golden brown. Stir in turmeric and masala.
7. Add the crushed garlic and ginger and cook for a further half minute. Add mango slices.
8. Cook for 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Add salt, sugar water
9. Stir well and bring it to boil.
10. Reduce heat, cover and simmer stirring occasionally until sauce thickens.

*(Stir frequently to prevent the relish from burning)*

11. Add the cumin and fennel powder and stir well.

Cook for 1 minute and remove from heat

* For a mild chutney reduce the quantity of chillies

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Chutney Generations 41
# List of Works

1. **Chutney Corner**
   - **Stone Grinder, Round Stone and Mortar and Pestle**
     Collection of Usha Prasad
   - **Chutney**
     Donated by Fijian Indian Women from the South West Sydney Region
   - **Tapa (Decorated Placemats)**
     Collection of Sashi Pratap

2. **Kava Corner**
   - **Woven Mat**
     Collection of Hemant Kumar
   - **Tanoa and Kava bowls**
     Collection of Ami Chand
   - **Tapa Cloth**
     Collection of Mohini Kumar
   - **Grog Powder**
     Donated by Charles and Meena of Moshims Doonside

3. **Artist Corner**
   - **5 Decorated Tumblers**
   - **4 Metal Canisters**
   - **6 Hand Painted Clay Bowls**
   - **5 Decorated Coconuts**
     Artworks by Prabha Jogia

4. **Sugar Cane Corner**
   - **Cane Knife, Lamp and mat made out of sugar cane fertilizer bags**
     Collection of Asha Chand
   - **Billy Can, Hoe and Cane farmer's Hat**
     Collection of Hari Prasad and Veera Mati
   - **Grog Pounder (Red jug and black steel rod)**
     Collection of Usha Prasad

5. **Music Corner**
   - **Musical Instruments include** harmonium (oblong box), dholak (drum), 2 Tabla, Dand-Taal, jhaanji (cymbal) and Tambourine
     Collection of Bimla Rao, Rajendra Kumar and Jitendra Kumar

6. **Wedding Corner**
   - **Designed by Eva and Gopi of Sundara Fashions**
   - **Brass Platter and Pitcher**
     Collection of Sashi Pratap
   - **Decorated Table**
     Collection of Prabha Jogia
   - **Chutney making Stone for Weddings**
     Collection of Anjani Kumar
   - **Mannequin, Saree, Veil, Jewellery, Sarees**
     Collection of Eva Thoman
   - **Red Bamboo Tray, Indian Rug, Black Fry Pan and Wedding Centre Piece**
     Collection of Asha Chand
   - **White Bamboo Tray**
     Collection of Kiron Kumar
   - **Coloured Rice Tray**
     Designed by Anjani Kumar

7. **Spice Corner**
   - **Installed by Asha Chand and Aradhna Chand**
   - **Various Spices**
     Donated by Sunesh Ram from Moshims in Liverpool

8. **Shop Corner**
   - **Installed by Asha Chand and Aradhna Chand**
   - **Various grocery and food items**
     Donated by Sunesh Ram from Moshims Liverpool

9. **Community Corner**
   - **Photographer - Hari Ram**

10. **Jhumka**
    - **Indra Chinappa**
    - **Duration 3h 30min**
    - **DVD**
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Har Ram
Bandhna Rao
Jag Deo Prasad of Radio MadhuRima, Jitendra Kumar, Queenie Khan, Mohini
Sunesh Ram of Moshims in Liverpool

Casula Powerhouse, Liverpool Regional Museum & Collingwood House
The Casula Powerhouse is currently closed for refurbishment and operating out of the Liverpool Regional Museum, corner Hume Highway & Congressional Drive, Liverpool.

Liverpool Regional Museum
corner Hume Highway & Congressional Drive, Liverpool NSW 2170
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Fax +61 2 9821 4273
Email reception@casulapowerhouse.com
Website www.casulapowerhouse.com

Chutney Generations  43
Immigration
PTY LTD
ABN 49 131 333 358

Professional advice and assistance with all visas for Australian migration, permanent residence and temporary entry

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Mobile: 0430351877
Email: immigrationptyltd@gmail.com

Blog: http://immigrationptyltd.wordpress.com/
Office: Suite 35/647-649 George St, Sydney 2000
Mail: PO Box K1221, Haymarket NSW 1240
Appendix 5
Consumer research

Information statement

Researcher: Asha Chand: PhD student. Phone: 9852 5643; Mobile: 0402 340 591
Email: a.chand@uws.edu.au

Supervisor: Associate Professor Dr Hart Cohen
Co-Supervisor: Associate Professor Dr Lynette Sheridan Burns

Dear ……..

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the research project described below, in your capacity as a Fiji Indian and a consumer of the ethnic Indian media. You are not, in any way, obligated to participate in this research and are free to decline this invitation if you so wish.

Research topic:
Migration, Match-making and the Media in the Fiji Indian community in Sydney

Research goal:
To analyse how Fiji Indians arrange marriages through media
To document the community building process among this group – in Sydney and other cities such as Auckland, Vancouver and San Francisco
To explore the negotiation that has occurred
To frame an impact of arranged marriages on the institution of marriage

Background:
The centuries old practice of arranged marriages, which occurs in South Asian countries such as India, has been given a new meaning within the changing global media and migration landscapes. Australia is among a few multicultural nations that have given migrant Fiji Indians a special place to call home. The community building process among Fiji Indians, twice displaced – once from India as indentured labourers to Fiji’s sugar cane fields and then from Fiji mostly after the 1987 and 2000 coups, has meant a lot of negotiations, especially on the social front. Although narrowly defined in populous cities such as Sydney, Auckland, Vancouver and San Francisco, the community is attempting to keep their Fiji Indian identity intact – using the media in the process. This research will study the situation from the perspectives of those involved in such engagement.
and will provide a forum for understanding the negotiations that have created a transnational community.

#Asha Chand is a Fiji Indian migrant settled in Sydney since 1998. A former chief of staff at Fiji’s national daily, The Fiji Times, Asha now teaches journalism at UWS.

**Outcomes:**
This research, unique in its approach, will provide a means to understand a community that has been unsettled for more than a century. The Fiji Indians’ history will be recorded to understand some of the current practices in arranging marriage and the role of the media, against a backdrop of a dynamic and changing communications environment, will be studied to gauge the negotiations in this process.

The research will be significant for the understanding it will bring to the community in its acceptance of this age-old ritual against a backdrop of the western world. This will definitely impact on the institution of marriage which currently suffers an onslaught of divorce/delayed marriage and will frame an understanding of some of the unique practices among migrant communities – especially important for heavily settled countries such as Australia.

**Publication:**
It is expected that there will be opportunities to publish and present progress papers at academic forums and in the media, as various phases of the research are completed. Plans are in the pipeline for The Chutney Generation, an exhibition, to be staged at the Liverpool Museum in the last quarter of 2006. The project has received financial support from the New South Wales Ministry of Arts and the Casula Powerhouse Arts centre.
It is also anticipated that a short documentary/film would form an important part of this research.
**Consent Form**

The purpose of getting you to sign this form is to help maintain integrity of the information gathering process and to ensure that it is a voluntary process.

Please sign this form before getting on to the questionnaire at the end of this form.

I, __________________________________ (name) of ______________________ (address) hereby agree to participate in the research being conducted by Asha Chand, a University of Western Sydney PhD student and journalism academic.

My Contact details are:

Phone: (landline)_______________
Mobile: _________________
Email: ______________________

I understand that this is a voluntary process and that I have the right to withdraw from this at any time without any penalty.

Signed: ________________________

(Please sign above)

Indicate also if you prefer face to face interview: Yes/No
(If Yes, please indicate the best time to call)

Please return this form with the questionnaire to:
Asha Chand
School of Communication, Design and Media
University of Western Sydney
Penrith South DC 1797
Penrith South, NSW
Australia
Please answer these questions to help with my research. Note: You are not obliged to respond to any question if you feel you need not answer.

**General:**

Name:

Age:

Status (married/single/separated/divorced/widowed)

Profession (also of partner if married)

Since when in Australia:

**Important: people should not have migrated before 1987**

**Guiding questions**

What are considered advantages of life in Australia compared to Fiji?

What, if anything, is missed about life in Fiji?

How many times have you been back to Fiji and for what reasons?

How do you meet other Fiji Indians in Sydney?

What media (newspaper/radio) do you use and for what in particular?
  a. news from Fiji
  b. classified for matchmaking section
  c. entertainment section
  d. All of the above

How would you classify your own marriage?
  a. Love
  b. Arranged
  c. For money
  d. For migration
  e. A bit of all the above
  f. Any other – please specify
Have you actively solicited partners for people you know? How many?

What are your views on the practice of arranging marriages?

How do you see the media’s (TV, radio, print publications, the internet) role in arranging marriages?

If you have children, how do you hope to get them married?

What about your immediate and extended family – do they prefer one form of marriage to the other? Why?

Please feel free to add any information you think will be relevant to my research in the space below.

Thank you for your time in helping me.
Asha Chand
School of Communication Design and Media,
University of Western Sydney
Penrith South DC 1797
NSW, Australia

Mobile: 0402 340 591
Work: (02) 9852 5643
Email: a.chand@uws.edu.au

Please return this, plus the consent form, to the address above.
Appendix 6
Immigration
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ABN 49 131 333 358

Professional advice and assistance with all visas for Australian migration, permanent residence and temporary entry

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Registered Relationships – Partner Confusion

Over the last month I’ve had a string of clients in my office telling me that they have been in contact with Immigration / DIAC by telephone in relation to lodging an onshore Partner application. In each case they have been de facto couples that have registered their relationship in NSW through the system that began on 1 July 2010 through NSW Births Deaths & Marriages.

Their question to DIAC has been about the connection between the 12 month relationship / cohabitation requirement for a de facto couple prior to being eligible to lodge a Partner application and formal Relationship Registration.

Some have been told that those with registered relationships still need to meet the 12-month requirement. Others have been informed that relationship registration definitely removes the need to have been together for 12 months in all circumstances and some that it depends on the situation and that relationship registration may be considered in place of the 12-month rule. Some have been told all three!

So we have the full gambit of possibilities being advanced by the DIAC contact centre – No, yes and maybe.

Last week to clear up this confusion for a client I went up to the Partner Section in Sydney, rather than calling and the answer is simple with a few provisos.

1. A Registered Relationship, like a marriage, makes a de facto couple eligible to lodge a partner application without the 12-month wait. DIAC will of course require proof of the veracity of the relationship as has always been the case and common sense tells you that the shorter the registered relationship the more they will need convincing. So that’s a definite YES with a qualification.

2. DIAC are aware that NSW Births Deaths & Marriages requires no proof of relationship in order to access relationship registration and therefore the simple act of registration while opening the door to the application does not substitute for actual proof of the genuine nature of the relationship. That’s the MAYBE.

3. I was told that they would not accept a receipt to show that the application for registration has been made as evidence of registration. Remember this process has a 28-day cooling off period and that the actual certificate of relationship registration is not issued until after the 28 days has expired. So you need to have the registration certificate in-hand when you apply or at the very least proof that it has been issued.

4. I was cautioned about last day applications and here the reference was to relationships that began immediately prior to being registered so that a certificate had been issued basically just in time for the applicant’s visa to expire and to allow a Partner application to be lodged. This of course looks like a manufactured rather than genuine relationship / application. I need to add a note of caution here myself by saying that this scenario may be possible but I think it would be very difficult to convince a Case Officer of the genuine nature of such a relationship.

A note of caution regarding IELTS results used in DIAC applications

When ever a qualification is somehow imposed upon a system, as happened in the case of IELTS used in General Skilled Migration (GSM) applications by the outcome of Berenguier v Minister for Immigration case in the High Court we see numerous clients who have been told by a variety of ‘advisers’ that they now have a ‘Get out of jail card’ in relation to the provision of all IELTS results to DIAC. My understanding is that for GSM cases applicants now have until time of decision to provide proof of English Language ability. The relevant notice from the DIAC website is reproduced below for your information...

“Changes to the time of provision of evidence of English language ability

There are new arrangements for the provision of evidence for English language ability. Applicants for the following GSM subclasses have until the time of decision to provide evidence of their English language ability.

- Skilled – Independent (Residence) visa (subclass 885)
- Skilled – Sponsored (Residence) visa (subclass 886)
- Skilled – Independent (Migrant) visa (subclass 175)
- Skilled – Sponsored (Migrant) visa (subclass 176)
- Skilled – Provisional (Regional Sponsored) visa (subclass 475)
- Skilled – Provisional (Recognised Graduate) visa (subclass 476)
- Skilled – Provisional (Graduate) visa (subclass 485)
- Skilled – Provisional (Regional Sponsored) visa (subclass 487).

Applicants should not delay in providing their evidence of English language ability. The department will not delay finalising applications where English language test results have not been provided at time of application. Applicants will have 28 days from the date of application to provide their English language results if they did not provide them at time of application. At this point in time, if evidence has not been provided the application will be refused.”

Please do not assume that you can now do anything you like, for example combining a variety of IELTS results to meet the English threshold or that if DIAC refuse your application on English grounds you will automatically win at the MRT because of this High Court ruling.

Grant Williams is a Registered Migration Agent – MARN 0654799, Justice of the Peace (195363) and Managing Director of Immigration Pty Ltd. Grant has been a Registered Migration Agent since 1997. You can read more of his immigration related musings on his Blog at http://immigrationptyltd.wordpress.com/ or you can call him on 0430 351 877 or (02) 9211 4694 to air your thoughts and reactions.

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Appendix 8
**PERSONAL**

Christian Indian female, age 30, high school teacher seeks Christian male, age 30-37, single or divorced, sincere & caring for genuine relationship with a view to marriage.
Contact via e-mail: neena_2k@hotmail.com

**PERSONAL**

Fiji Indian Hindu girl, 19, tall, slim & fair with pleasant personality seeks male between 22-29 with Aust PR or Citizen with a view to marriage. Interested person please contact brother on (02) 49346351/0401 281 876 or parents on (679) 3609 600

**PERSONAL**

Fiji Indian Muslim boy, age 22, mechanical trade certificate, currently living in Fiji seeking for a genuine marriage partner. Interested parents please contact the brother on 0401 568 278 for details genuine call only

**PERSONAL**

Fiji Indian male, 40yrs, 5'4", slim build, Australian Citizen seeks similar female for friendship or possible relationship. Genuine calls after 5pm. 0447 958 728

**PERSONAL**

Sikh male well settled in Sydney Citizen with secure job and well educated. Aged 25, handsome and is 1.83cm tall. Holds good family values and is a fun loving person to be with. Seeks Sikh girl educated and settled in Sydney aged 21-24 years old. Genuine replies only to mesikh2@hotmail.com

**PERSONAL**

Fiji Indian lady, early 30's, innocently divorced seeks decent, well-mannered, Indian male, aged between 35-40 for life partner. Must be family oriented, please send photo & details via email: Willing2commit@yahoo.com.au Or call me on 0416 625 348 Genuine callers only please

**PERSONAL**

Australian Citizen Fiji Indian Muslim lady, divorced, in her mid 30's slim, tall, medium complexion would like to have a relationship view to marriage with an Indian Muslim man age between 40-43yrs old. Interested person please call on 0449 114 100 Genuine calls only

**PERSONAL**

47 year old Aussie born gent seeking a lady between 30 to 47yrs with or without PR. Lady must be mature minded, easy going, have GSOH, being honest, punctual, reliable, straight forward, open minded, fun loving woman with view to friendship and marriage. Lady must be 1.7m tall and weight 60-70kg. If you have the above qualities like me, please contact me on 0402 632 331 (4pm-8pm) Mon-Fri. Sat & Sun from 10am to 8pm.

**PERSONAL**

White Aust Businessman early 40's wishes to meet an honest, educated, attractive Indian lady between 25-35yrs for a permanent relationship. Kids are no problem.
Text your picture and short description about yourself to 0432 414 408

**PERSONAL**

Fiji Indian Hindu male with Aust PR, age 28, divorced, kind hearted with pleasant personality, 6ft tall, graduate with secure job, seeks slim and fair Hindu girl with Aust PR aged 25-29 with genuine relationship view to marriage.
Email: ramens88@yahoo.com.au

**PERSONAL**

Businessman Indian background, mid 40's, well established is seeking for any nationality lady age between 30-45 for genuine relationship. Please call or text details to 0424 775 454
!!! Attention International Students in Australia and Overseas !!!

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Please contact Navneet Anand for more information

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Tel: 9212 4333  Fax: 9212 4833  Mobile: 0412 289 898
navneet@gemcoaustralia.com

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Appendix 10
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fashion of bollywood

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