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Indian Diaspora, Old and New: Culture, Class and Mobility

Ravindra K. Jain

The Indian Anthropological Association has done me a singular honour in inviting me to deliver the First Professor J.S. Bhandari Memorial Lecture. Late Professor Bhandari was my senior colleague from Lucknow University. Anybody who knew him from close quarters even for a short time could not forget the quizzical intelligence and disarmingly frank and vibrant conversation style that he was gifted with. I remember, in particular, his passion for anthropology, which we sometimes distinguish a little artificially into theoretical and applied. Once while conducting the viva voce of a research student of mine at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, I still recall Professor Bhandari's thoroughly professional interrogation on aspects of witchcraft and magic in rural Uttaranchal and then, having completed that conversation germane to the thesis, advocating for another quarter of an hour on how exciting and useful it would be for her—this student—to look at the changes brought about by tourism in that area! It is in that spirit of Professor Bhandari's easy and untrammelled transition from the cerebral to the practical that I venture today to speak on a topic that is both about experiments in nature—the diasporic settlement and adaptation of our countrymen in distant lands—and a theme that is the buzzword for pragmatic concerns in the world to come, viz., communications and interactions with our own kind and others in an increasingly globalized human existence.

Introduction

Why does the term 'Indian' diaspora remain viable even when one is considering the Indo-Fijians who have recently migrated to Australia and New Zealand, and for the Gujaratis in New Zealand, Fiji, U.S.A. and Canada or Tamilians

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in Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Australia? The Indo-Fijians do not have even the remote possibility of returning to India, or for that matter, even to Fiji; for them the process of permanent settlement in Australia or New Zealand is a pragmatic decision. On the other hand, the sub-nationalities, Gujarati or Tamilian, may have closer relationships with their co-regionalists in various “diaspora nodes” (Voigt-Graf, 2004) rather than with India. There is thus a hiatus between longing and belonging in the case of these diasporics; and it is this aspect of ‘longing’ that makes “Indian” diaspora a viable concept in considering their case. In other words, what Vijay Mishra has called “the diasporic imaginary” (Mishra, 1995) connects the heterogeneous once, twice and thrice migrants of Indian ancestry to their homeland. Both in terms of space and time (second and third or even more generations as in Mauritius, Trinidad etc.) affiliations with India as the ancestral imagined land remain strong. What bearing these affiliations actually have on existing relationships or of network linkages with India is a topic to be investigated, especially in view of the differential class and mobility statuses of these diasporics in their new homes. It is with this set of questions in mind that I approach the history and contemporary patterns of three communities of Indians — the Tamilians in Malaysia, the East Indians in Trinidad, and the Indian migrants (e.g., recently distinguished as communities of Punjabis, Kannadigas and Indo-Fijians by Voigt-Graf, 2004) in Australia.

The Tamilians in Malaysia

Although as in other instances of the Indian diaspora, Tamilians in Malaysia are represented by all classes of the occupational spectrum, the overwhelming majority were (and to a reduced extent still are) in the 1960s when I first studied Indians in Malaya, rubber estate workers (Jain, 1970). As a numerical majority of labour on rubber estates the Tamilians had been in Malaya since the 1850s. They first came as indentured labour and were subsequently recruited through the “kangany” system. What information we have of their socio-economic status from the mid-nineteenth century up to the 1960s is that they were true proletarians. In what follows, I shall summarize and analyze their vicissitudes for over a hundred and fifty years in terms of culture, class and mobility.

Throughout the settlement of Tamils on plantations in Malaysia their culture has been representative of the south Indian rural folk. The earliest recorded history of estate Tamils shows them to be closely tied-up in kinship networks with their kindreds in Tamil Nadu. One gathers the impression that while during much of the indentured immigration there was growth of individualism, the kangany recruitment, by far the major mode for the labourers, was community based. It meant a mapping on the Malayan space of kinship groups, which were prevalent in the village society. These kindreds-around-kanganies were the most characteristic local kinship groups on estates, themselves differentiated and hierarchized into caste groups with major divisions into the categories of non-Brahmin and Adi Dravida (no Brahmin immigrated to work on plantations). As I have stated in a previous article (Jain,

1990), the segmentary structure of kin-based caste stratification showed kindreds-around-kanganies at the lowest level of segmentation and the division between non-Brahmin and Adi Dravida at the highest level. Each major division was further segmented into named castes or jatis. The jati designations were important for socially placing the progeny in the new locale and for maintaining effective networks, stretching from estates in Malaya to natal villages in Tamil Nadu.

However, the predominant form of social stratification on the estates was not based on caste or jati but on the community-cum-industrial subsystems of the new locale. Currents of cultural nationalism were derived from Tamil Nadu. In the mid-twentieth century the Dravidian movement entered this system through a blending of the workers' proletarian identity with the strong anti-Brahmanical appeal among estate workers. This was a perfect example of "nationalism without the nation" and of "long-distance nationalism" becoming crystal-clear in the ambience of geographically not-too-distant overseas Indian community. One often talks of an identity crisis among the immigrant youth born and brought up in a plural or multi-cultural society of their parents' adoption.

In my detailed account of the politics of the youth-groups in Malayan plantations in the early 1960s I have shown the passions aroused by the Tamilian identity of social actors. The aura of caste looms large on the identity horizon of these young men but it does not result in caste-based encounters. Rather, the harmonious blending of *Thirukkural* (a non-Brahmanical Tamil text) with the worship of Mariamman and minor local gods and goddesses defined the cultural-religious atmosphere. Since the dismantling of rubber plantations and the drift of the workers to their own small holdings and to urban areas, the Great Tradition gods like Subramaniam are worshipped largely without the *saiva siddhantam* textual sanctity associated with them in south India. But the changes in caste, religion and culture are distinctive enough to be studied in their own right. I base the following account on my restudy of Tamilians in Malaysia at the end of the twentieth century.

By and large, Indian scholars including former estate-dwellers who are now academics and activists in urban Malaysia, writing on caste among estate workers in Malaysia, have taken an essentialist view of the institution of caste. Related to this essentialist view and its exclusion of a historical and contextual perspective, is their amnesia about the interpretation and use of the institution of caste by active agents in the social field, namely, the population of former estate-dwellers who have chosen and planned to move away from large plantations. Certain situational features need to be firmly kept in view. Firstly, we need to distinguish between the excluded and deprived people of the Adi Dravida castes living at the sufferance of estates who had been kept in that condition largely by estate managements for their own advantage and the urban and suburban Adi Dravidas who enjoyed a higher socio-economic profile, including monopolies of cleaning and scavenging services in towns. The latter group started with an advantage in adapting to the emancipatory forces unleashed by the break-up of large estates in the region. They had been

active participants in municipal committees and had enjoyed considerable economic leverage in the grant of civic contracts. Coming down to the specific region of my fieldwork in Malaysia, in Batang Berjuntai town, for instance, the Tamil cinema hall and bus-service are owned by members of Adi Dravida caste. Secondly, as I had discussed in my earlier study, even on the estates the purity-impurity opposition between the higher (non-Brahmin) and lower (Adi Dravida) castes had become considerably reduced. Members of all castes irrespective of their ritual status had contributed from their wages money to build the central Mahamariamman temple on Pal Melayu. On collective festive occasions like *Adi Tiruvila*, estate workers sat for a feast in the temple premises irrespective of their caste status (Jain, 1970). This development reached its culmination during the current phase of the Tamilians' emancipation from estates in the Pal Melayu region. Not only is Muniandy the Chairman of the Thandayudapani Temple Committee in Batang Berjuntai a Parayan, but both in his perceptions and reactions to caste questions, he displays at once an intimate knowledge of the workings-out of caste distinctions in Tamil Nadu and an utter disdain for the claim of being an original high caste by the non-Brahmin Vanniars whom we had discussed as the 'dominant caste' on Pal Melayu (ibid, 347-349). The following is an excerpt from my field-notes dated 20.1.1999.

CASTE WAR

There is a caste war going on among Indians in Malaysia. Let me delineate the general process and recent history. The estates had only non-Brahmins & Adi Dravidas and no Brahmins. The companies employing Indian partly through design and partly as a fall-out of recruiting procedures let the status quo of Indian villages be here, viz., the non-Brahmin and Adi Dravida division was firmly entrenched and it helped the management to run the estate. The Vanniar as "dominant caste" and Adi Dravidas as the "subordinate castes" described the situation correctly (see Jain, 1970). That caste was increasingly an aspect of culture rather than of social stratification *per se* was broadly true of the isolated and insulated circumstances of estate living.

With the post 1969 changes and the increasingly powerful stream of Indians marching out of the estates the "djinni was freed from the bottle". Opportunities were there for any or every of the Tamilian caste for the taking, though of course because of the environment the non-Brahmins had a head—start compared to the Adi Dravidas. But the situation has rapidly changed over the 1980s and 90s. Of course there has been economic mobility across the board for estate Indians. But there has also been important socio-economic mobility. The earlier caste-based kindred-around-kanganies - of the non-Brahmins and the Paraiyans-have broken down and the former estate population has become economically & geographically mobile as well as scattered. The head-start by the non-Brahmins of which we spoke earlier is increasingly being neutralized in the sense that, in the new circumstances, the Adi Dravidas have caught up or are very much in the process of catching up.

What happens to the culture of caste in this context is extremely instructive. It would be a triviality to say that the Adi Dravidas have 'Sanskritized'. For one thing, the Adi Dravidas have made a massive inroad into the Tamilian ritual life if not actually appropriated it. In fact, it would be no exaggeration to say that the non-Brahmins in strictly public religious (ritual and temple) terms are existing at the sufferance of the culturally mobile and high profile Adi Dravidas. The entire history and present organization of the Thandayudapani temple in Batang Berjuntai epitomizes that process. While the non-Brahmins have concentrated on entrepreneurship basically in the economic sense, the cultural entrepreneurship of Adi Dravidas has flourished and taken a number of varied forms. On the one hand, they have become managers of the ritualistic and social (e.g. marriage registration) functions of the new temple, on the other hand, teachers of their castes-themselves educated ones like Rajagopal - have undertaken in a manipulative and entrepreneurial way to motivate the youth (especially children) of their own caste but with an eye on individual mobility, popularity and leadership. The ideological and political umbrella under which this upwardly mobile Adi Dravida category is functioning is provided squarely by Dravidian Tamilian ideology, rhetoric and organization. In this respect the understanding between Muniandy (temple chairman), Nallathamby and Parasuraman (DMK spokesperson) and Rajagopal (ambitious teacher of the "paradigm shift" fame) is remarkable. The rhetoric and vanity of Muniandy is worth documenting. He discusses the Vanniars as Telugu refugees (rather than self-claimed rulers) in Tamil Nadu. The titles Reddi, Naicker, Naidu etc. he says are all from the Telegu country. The real Tamilians are the Adi Dravidas. While on the one hand, he connects himself up with Tamil Nadu, he also speaks of the earlier hauteur of the Ceylon (Jaffna) Tamils against Indian Tamilians (especially the lower castes) and the present 180 degree turn which impels the Jaffna Tamils to show solidarity with their Indian counterparts. Many are the stories of the supercilious attitudes of the Ceylon Tamils but the Adi Dravidas seem to have taken their revenge on the Ceylon Tamils. According to Muniandy in Colombo at the height of Sinhalese-Jaffna Tamil conflict the former were beaten back (with long steel pipes) by a combination of Malayalees, Singhs, Telegus and Tamils (meaning Indian Tamils again mainly Adi Dravida) who came to their rescue. The Sinhalese raped and ravished the Jaffna Tamil and thus (to the great vicarious satisfaction of Muniandy) destroyed the hypocritical and supercilious purity of their women. It was then that revenge had been taken and a new solidarity commenced between the Ceylon Tamils and the Indians. It is in this context that Prabhakaran has proved himself to be a real Tamilian hero whose tapes are popular among the Dravidian Tamils, books are there and portraits garlanded. In the same vein, Muniandy kept on praising and extolling Ambedkar. (I did not deliberately mention Pandithan because that would be embroiled in local politics rather than in meta-narrative or the myth, which was the centrepiece of Muniandy's rhetoric.)

The element of so-called "desanskritized sanskritization" in Muniandy's knowledge system is a claim to the intricate knowledge of the caste system. Even

the Parayans, he said, were divided into eight or nine hierarchical castes (what Rajagopal called “subcastes”). *Talis* (marriage pendants) of various castes differed. (“Did I know?” - the rhetorical question he asked me.) They had got a gurukkal from India on hire. They called him “gurukkal” rather than the inferior term *pusari* (animal slaughter associated) as in North India. In other words, they were practicing a Tamilian Great Tradition superior to the practices of North Indians or the northernward Telegus who had pretended to be rulers of the Tamils. Muniandy further said that though he knew about all the intricacies and the true origins of the caste system, he would not be so foolish as to mention these in public. Mentioning all this caste stuff in public “would lead to a big fight”.

Muniandy openly confessed that as marriage registrar he knew that inter-caste marriages were taking place galore. He slept over problem-marriages (pregnancies before marriage especially of inter-caste unions). Also the stigma of caste did not die out completely. Women of high caste married low caste men when they reached the age of 35-45 years (when the man was becoming other-worldly they still enjoyed health and youth superior to their husbands). They looked down upon the latter, and even told their children that their father was of a lower caste than her.

It is interesting to note the largely defensive and economic entrepreneurial (as opposed to cultural entrepreneurial) position taken by non Brahmins like Ganesan and his brother Thangavelu). The latter is a bit reconciled though the former has had sallies in politics and in religion but continues to have an uneasy relationship with aggressive Dravidian Tamilism. (Notice that none of the Adi-Dravidian temple committee members came to my so-called “dialogue” in the temple arranged by Ganesan and how the only person of that category who came was Rajgopal and was all the time challenging the Mahamandram people and their activities emphasizing the lack of unity).

Another point to note is that Muniandy type aggressive Tamilism helps him interact inter-ethnically. As representative of “true” Indian type he is able to hold his own with Malays and Chinese and show down the so-called Indian Tamil of the high caste, grasping, greedy ambience. “Holier than thou”, “purer than pure”. Fighting and partly succeeding in higher public credibility in an inter-ethnic context. For the Indian elites the best policy is to play down caste in public (though use it fully in private-among themselves).¹

While caste as the embodiment of social stratification does not play a dominant role among Tamilians in Malaysia, the caste ascription to groups by birth and the practice, by and large, of caste or even sub-caste endogamy is attributed to kinship, viz; to *sondakarar* status among those who intermarry and express solidarity as kindred-style quasi-groups and networks. In this respect the situation of Tamilians radiating spatially from Pal Melayu is similar to what Yalman has called ‘micro-caste kindred’ in Sri Lanka (Yalman, 1967). Here the elementary structures of kinship among Malaysian Tamils produce what may be described as ‘conservative’ social

structure when the verb 'to conserve' is being used in a positive sense. This culture of caste premised on Tamil kinship (and affinity) is an aspect of evolutionary trend in the Pal Melayu region. To give a concrete instance, the catering business of Ganesan is largely channeled along the lines of kindred based networks in localities such as Batang Berjuntai itself, the various tamans fronting the estates of the Pal Melayu region and extending up to Rawang. The modernizing conversion of older puberty ceremonies for girls (*tiratti*) into 21st birthday celebrations common among all ex-estate workers has meant a big boost to Ganesan's catering business. Similarly, the attenuation of purity/impurity considerations coexisting with the bonus of esteem attached to a non-Brahmin caterer like Ganesan during celebration in the Adi Dravida households has meant a certain twisting of the arms of an orthodox Hindu like Ganesan in the direction of reluctant, though avid (because profitable), extension of business activities among the dalits. The sentiment of kinship and endogamy is strong among economic entrepreneurs like Ganesan although the next generation of even non-Brahmin parents openly states their perception that caste endogamy and hypergamy etc. are doomed to extinction.

The Indian Malaysian population was among the last of the plantation enclaves of the labour diaspora from India to be dismantled. The booming rubber economy of Malaysia and a strong trade union movement among the estate workers until the 1970s were largely responsible for economic changes within the ambit of Malaysia's economy based on the export of raw materials, namely, tin, rubber and increasingly oil palm. At the macro level the rise of manufacturing, construction and service industry in the post 1970s Malaysia led to drastic reduction in the number of estate workers, especially those of Indian (mainly Tamil) origin and their shift to a combination of self-employed occupations and jobs as blue-collar workers. It is difficult to give an accurate estimate of the Indian estate workers' progeny who continue to depend wholly or partly on estate jobs but if the situation in the Pal Melayu region is representative then this proportion has shrunk to about five to ten percent of the pre-1970s levels. As pointed out earlier, the impression that the ex-plantation labour continue to exist as a poverty group even under the changed economic scenario in Malaysia is somehow reinforced by socio-economic studies only of the families still heavily dependent on estate jobs or of slum dwellers in the vicinity of large cities. On the other hand, the above two sections of the Tamil population in present-day Malaysia have to be put into perspective by examining the out-migration from estates of groups and individuals who have become self-employed on vacant lands in the close vicinity of plantations and of those who have moved into the nearby smaller towns. The composite picture emerging from such 'holistic' data is that decisions to move out of plantations for the bulk of estate workers' progeny have been proactive ones. My ethnographic analysis in the re-study of the Pal Melayu region supports the conclusion that there has been a scattering and dynamics, if not actual socio-economic mobility, in the ranks of Tamil Malaysians let loose from an earlier dependence on the plantation enclave.

Cultural changes as shown by my data have been in tandem with the economic dynamics. Interestingly enough two major planks of Tamil culture, namely kindred and caste, have always responded to the exigencies of the Malaysian context—an earlier plantation one and the contemporary semi-urban and urban nexus. I have, therefore, argued against an essentialist reading of Tamilian social institutions in Malaysia even if such is the ‘emic’ view of some indigenous sociological observers in Malaysia. The culture of caste has responded differently in relation to the Adi Dravida groups still wedded to estate jobs and those of the same caste-category who have become entrepreneurs in the nearby towns. The latter groups are in competition with similarly circumstanced Non-Brahmins but there exists an uneasy truce between the members of these caste-categories, especially in the field of religious leadership. Detailed case studies show how the institution of caste continues to influence success and failure in the economic arena. The same is true of the micro-caste kindreds; particularly the ones built around the first or second generation progeny of pioneer migrants on plantations. But the succeeding generations show a much greater Malaysianization and commensurate move away from traditional institutions like cross-cousin marriage, sub-caste or caste endogamy or even ethnic closure of all the marriages. We may, therefore, expect bigger socio-cultural changes in the Tamilian institutional set-up in the decades to come, though much will depend on how much urge to ‘conserve’ may be unleashed, paradoxically, with the current modernizing spread of information technology between Tamil Malaysians and Tamils elsewhere.

East Indian Exclusivity in Trinidad

How does a numerical majority of middle class Indians get excluded from the socio-political mainstream in the new nation of Trinidad? I begin with a brief outline of the demography, origin, socio-economic mobility and present status of the Indian² community in Trinidad. Of a total population of 1,213,733 in 1990, the ethnic composition of Trinidad and Tobago was the following: African descent, 39.6%; East Indian descent, 40.3%; White, 0.6%; Chinese, 0.4%; Mixed, 18.4%; other 0.2%; and not stated, 0.4% (central statistical office 1997 and 1998). On May 30, 1845, the *Fatel Rozack* arrived in Trinidad with the first Indian immigrants: 225 men, women and children. Except for a brief period between 1848 and 1852 when emigration was suspended, labour continued to be supplied by India until indenture was abolished in 1917. Approximately 143,939 East Indians came to Trinidad during the indenture years, with the number of male recruits consistently outpacing that of females. The immigration ordinance of 1854 set the main parameters for the system of indenture. The immigrants signed contracts in India that bound them to certain terms for the period of indenture. On arrival in Trinidad the Indians were assigned to a plantation, where they had to work for three years. Then they had the option of choosing their employer for the following two years to complete the total of five years of mandatory industrial residence, the pre-requisite for becoming legally “free”. To qualify for the free return passage to India, the immigrants had to reside in the colony for a total of

ten years. After completion of the industrial residence they were again free to choose their occupation and employer for the remaining five years. The law regarding return passage was revised in 1895 and 1898 so that immigrants who arrived in the island after 1895 had to pay a proportion of their return passage. Only 33,294 immigrants (22.47% of the total) eventually opted to return to India; the majority of Indians gradually abandoned the hope of one day returning to India. For many it was not a conscious decision, and only practical circumstances precluded any possibility of return. Yet others, who chose to reindenture themselves or even to return to the West Indies after they had repatriated to India, showed a commitment to Trinidad as their home. By and large East Indians, believing their situation in Trinidad to be only temporary, displayed little enthusiasm to integrate with the wider community. To be fair, the conditions imposed by the colonial government to confine the East Indians to the plantation environment of the sugar belt, together with the black population's hostile attitude toward them, left the East Indian with little alternative but to remain exclusive.

The vast majority of Indians who settled in Trinidad came from the densely populated central plains of the Ganges - the United Provinces, Oudh, Bihar, and Orissa. Since they embarked from Calcutta, they came to be known as *Kalkattiyas*. They were not a homogeneous group, however, there were religious differences among Hindu, Muslims and Christians; there were caste distinctions and there were linguistic distinctions and regional differences. Some South Indians, 9,133 in all also arrived in Trinidad as indentured labourers; they were all called *Madrasis*. Although popular opinion in Trinidad claims that most immigrants belonged to the lower castes, the academic community continues to debate this issue. Between 1876 and 1885 the Hindu immigrants had the following caste composition: Brahmin and other high castes 18%; artisan castes, 8.5%, agricultural caste, 32%; and low castes, 41% (Wood, 1968: 144-45). Although such figures tend to substantiate the hypothesis that the majority of immigrants were low-caste members fleeing the grip of the upper castes, caution is needed in accepting these records because, on the one hand, there is a strong likelihood of the immigrants representing the normal range of castes found in India and, on the other, the premium placed on the agricultural castes in recruiting could have led Brahmins and other high castes to register themselves as agriculturalists. It is true, however, that despite heterogeneity in the derivation of indentured immigrants-not only along provinces but also within the districts and villages of origin-they were looked upon by others and also forged consciously an identity that was homogenous. The mixing up of castes, language and region in the course of journey to Trinidad as well as common proletarian living conditions on plantation must have worked in that direction. However, the historical perspective should not be ignored: there is evidence that caste and other distinctions were restored when the East Indians settled in villages in Trinidad (Jha, 1985: 10) and even to this day the distinction between Brahmin (the highest priestly caste) and Chamar (which designates all untouchables in Trinidad) is quite pervasive (Vertovec, 1992: 95 and 100).

We need not go into the details of the legal differentiation and spatial isolation of the early Indian immigrants to Trinidad (Munasinghe, 2001: 73-76) but note that these factors along side the occupational segregation which was endemic to their status as sugar labourers, contributed to making the East Indians an exclusive and excluded group in the new setting. In this milieu not only did the other non-Indian ethnic formations look upon the Indians as outsiders but the 'coolies' themselves considered their stay as a sojourn. I shall soon return to the social and ideological representation of Indians as outsiders in Trinidad but let me first note the 'objective' conditions, which make these representations a problematic to be resolved. We have already noted the demographic parity, if not numerical superiority, of the East Indians vis-à-vis other races or ethnic groups. Also, unlike in Malaysia, for example (cf. Jain, 2003) the majority of Indians were quite early knocking at, if not actually entering, the door of the 'middle class' status.

East Indian Upward Mobility: A Mixed Picture

'During the last quarter of the nineteenth century the acquisition of land and education constituted the primary means of mobility for East Indians. Yet it is a testimony of Trinidad's ethnic situation that this mobility, which continues today, did not fulfil its potential to integrate East Indians into Creole society. Rather, the very circumstances governing East Indians' mobility served to enhance their alienness, many achieved success through landownership and education, but this prosperity acquired the peculiar veneer of an East Indian style of success.' (Munasinghe, 2001: 89).

The author of the above quote is right about the failure of the Indian integration into Creole society, but her overall conclusion about upward mobility through land ownership and education paints an over-optimistic picture of the East Indians' status in Trinidad society at the end of the nineteenth century. Elsewhere (Jain, 1988: 129-3) I have argued that the increasing number of Indian immigrants in farming after 1884 was a reflection, firstly, of unemployment and retrenchment of free labourers from sugar estates. This factor was closely related to the planter policy of renting out or contracting abandoned estate land to "free" labourers with the stipulation that they plant cane in a certain manner (frequently under estate supervision), grow subsidiary crops only in certain years, and assume responsibility for tax-payment if a house was built. Indeed, when one takes into account the continued employment of indentured labour for estate work, the widespread practice of renting and contracting rather than owning property among ex-labourers, the preponderance of extremely small holdings of Indian farmers contrasted with the large and medium-size properties of Creole farmers with whom they competed (unfavourably) for the cultivation and sale of cane. With the resultant necessity of these largely tenant-farmers to supplement their earnings by regular or irregular work as agricultural labourers on estates, the rise of an Indian peasantry and their possible rise as a vanguard "middle class" was an absolute chimera. The figures cited by Munasinghe both for the large number of cane farmers among Indians and

the labourers' progressive abandonment of residence on estates has to be placed in this perspective. Table 1 (Occupations of Indian immigrants, 1891) tells its own story, with 38,889 agricultural labourers and 720 peasant proprietors in a gainfully employed population of 49,401. K. O. Laurence (1985: 111-12) cites cases of two labourers who became big property-owners but describes them as 'most exceptional'. As the *Mirror* of 13 April 1901 remarked: 'Comparison is often made between our cane farmer and the peasantry in other countries, but there is not the slightest similarity. The cane farmer is simply a labourer the exigencies of the sugar industry have placed in his present position. As a rule he has no means and lives from hand to mouth.' (cited in Johnson, 1972). In sum, following from Beckford's conclusion (Beckford, 1985: 413) that "the dominance of the plantation mode of production is the single most limiting factor inhibiting peasant development and the associated necessary economic and social transformation in the Caribbean"; it is obvious that

Table 1 : Occupations of Indian Imigrants

Agricultural labourers	38,889
General labourers	5,585
Railway and municipal workers	253
Priests and teachers	150
Domestic servants, gardeners	1,242
Drivers, overseas	250
Estate owners, managers	25
Merchants, agents, dealers	30
Shopkeepers	665
Carters	202
Bakers	24
Barbers	64
Tailors	65
Chemists, druggists	4
Hucksters	320
Goldsmiths, silversmiths	125
Peasant proprietors	720
Midwives	13
Seamstresses	99
Stockmen	--
Watchmen	--
Charcoal burners	65
Grass sellers	110
Milkseller	68
Shopmen, clerks	231
Fishermen	22

Source: K. O. Laurence, (1985 : 110-11).

in Trinidad the Indian population mainly involved in this mode of production must be adversely affected by hindrances to peasant development.

Land was the initial basis for East Indian mobility, but a few-very few-East Indians also sought mobility through education in the late nineteenth century. Colonial authorities failed for the most part to provide adequate educational facilities for East Indians because they were perceived as transients. Although government “ward” schools established in 1846 were available to children of East Indian labourers for primary education, there was hardly any enrolment on account of the fear of mixing with those of an alien race and faith. However, the resistance on the part of the East Indians was not the only factor; from the very beginning there has been a running battle between denominational and state sponsored schools in Trinidad with decisive triumph of the former. From the 1890s onwards until as late as 1950, the only Indian-friendly schools available were the Canadian Presbyterian missionary schools, which aimed as much for conversion as for education. “The East Indian in Trinidad ...was prepared to use the mission schools as levers for upward economic mobility, but was unwilling to forsake his ancient faith.” (Samaroo, 1975: 51). The separation of Indian pupils in Canadian missionary schools fostered exclusivism and the curriculum content, based primarily on Canadian model, far removed from the local situation, did little to bridge the racial divisions. Samaroo also suggests that the propagation of East Indian exclusivism might have been part of a deliberate strategy to keep the two non-white races apart (Samaroo, 1975: 55). The only genuinely Indian ‘middle class’ at this time comprised of ‘the pariah and commercial groups’ (Rex, 1978) of shopkeepers, Sirdars and *pandits* (priests).

According to Vashti Singh, “the revolt of the East Indian in the education sphere was fully initiated around 1928 to 1930” (Singh, 2002: 33). This was the period during which the reformist Hindu sect of Arya Samaj was introduced in Trinidad. The East Indian concern for education under their own management was greatly influenced by liberal intellectuals of the Arya Samaj sect (Vertovec, 1992). The Arya Samajis instituted the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha in Trinidad in 1934. (The Tackveeyatul Islamic Association (TIA) was the first Muslim body incorporated by government in 1931). However, just as in India, the leaders of the Sanatan Dharma community attempted to form organizations to resist controversies instigated by the Arya Samaj. The post 1930 period witnessed a great deal of argument, slander and factionalism among Hindus in Trinidad. For the next two decades Indian (Hindu and Muslim) organizations in Trinidad engaged in a kind of infighting with eventual victory of the Hindu organizations. SMDS (Sanatan Dharma Mahasabha) was formed under the leadership of Bhadase Sagan Maraj as President General. In 1953 Maraj formed the People’s Democratic party (PDP), primarily as Indo-Trinidadian Hindu political body that drew its support from the Indo-Trinidadian rural masses led by “a conservative group of East Indian businessmen and professionals.” (Hintzen, 1989: 44, cited by Munasinghe 2001). He consolidated the religious and

political position of leadership by becoming the President of the major sugar union, the ATSEFWTU (All Trinidad Sugar Estates and Factory Workers Trade Union). With his control over three important political and cultural bodies, Maraj was a formidable force in the upcoming 1955 elections.³ Here was a perfect case of someone combining religious and political leadership of the “minority” (since ‘outsider’) East Indian community; however to understand this summation of politics and religion we must look at the king-pin activity of Bhadase Sagan Maraj, his dynamism in creating East Indian educational institutions, something inevitable in the nation-state configuration of denominational education in Trinidad.⁴

Before the advent of this strident non-Christian leadership among East Indians, non-Christian schools were struggling for their existence. In 1938 an SDBC memorandum to the West India Royal Commission under the Chairmanship of Lord Moyne outlined the pitiable condition of almost two-dozen non-Christian schools. No action was taken. In the General Election of 1950, Bhadase Sagan Maraj won the Parliamentary Election in the constituency of Tunapuna as an independent and became a member of the Legislative Council. He intended to transform the Hindu community from one of cane cutters and grass cutters to one with opportunities available for educational advancement. His prime objectives were to bring all Hindus under one organization and to build primary schools in areas where there were no schools (Seetahal-Maraj, 1991). His first act as a Member of Parliament was the consolidation of the SDA and SDBC to form one Hindu organization, what is known today as the SDMS (Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha) of Trinidad and Tobago Inc (Ordinance # 41 on June 26, 1952). The SDMS was accorded recognition as a School Building Authority on July 25 1952. Foresight and personal commitment led Bhadase without any government assistance to undertake and complete the construction of the first six Hindu primary schools by September 1952 (for details, see Singh 2002: 50 *passim*). By the end of 1953 the SDMS had built thirty-one (31) schools; in 1954 two more SDMS schools were opened, and by the end of 1956 there were forty-one (41) SDMS primary schools. These schools had a dual role as envisaged by the founding father: the achievement of academic education and the propagation and dissemination of Hinduism. The curriculum of Hindu schools was modelled on the English educational pattern operative in the society but Bhadase was firm in his conviction that teachers in Hindu schools should teach their religion as well. During the period under review Eric Williams, founder of the People’s National Movement (PNP) was the main adversary of Bhadase’s PDP. As we have seen, through no fault of their own, East Indian leaders of the SDMS were keeping Hinduism and politics hand-in-glove. Williams’s critique of this connection was bitter. He labelled Bhadase’s political party-now graduated from PDP to Democratic Labour Party (DLP) as comprising of Trinidad Indians who were “a recalcitrant and hostile minority masquerading as the Indian nation, and prostituting the name of India for its selfish, reactionary political ends.” (Williams, cited in Ryan, 1974: 192).

Bhadase retorted, "Williams would have to destroy every East Indian in Trinidad because we do not intend to sit with our arms folded and let him do what he wants" (Ryan, 1974: 194). Some agreed that the Indians were indeed clannish, but believed that their behaviour had to be viewed as a natural urge on the part of the minority group to preserve its religion and culture for advancement. As Singh (2002: 69) puts it, "Bhadase was outraged that PNM had selected the Indians as their social target rather than the Europeans who had rejected them completely. The East Indians elicited strong protests via the Press and Williams was accused of using 'race to maintain his slipping power', of 'soiling other peoples' clothes while licking his wounds' and of 'unleashing the mad dogs of racial strife.'

Recent East Indian Mobility and Exclusivism

I have so far delineated the conjoint processes of limited mobility through landownership and education on the one hand, and East Indian exclusivity, on the other, as the initial objective or infrastructural conditions of the immigrant group's adaptation in Trinidad society. The socio-economic mobility of the East Indian community, along with that of the other ethnic sections of Trinidad, was accelerated during periods of the so-called American 'occupation' of these islands during the second world war and, more recently (1974-83), with the oil-boom. In fact the petroleum sector had begun to expand during the former period. Oil accounted for only 10% of exports in 1919 but by 1932 it had increased to 50% and by 1943 had reached 80%. Of course the unprecedented increase in oil prices and consequent emergence of the Indo-Trinidadian rural masses 'as the nouveaux riches par excellence in the 1970s' (Munasinghe, *op.cit.*, p. 148) meant their increasing participation in mainstream sectors. According to Vertovec (1992:134-35), by most measures Indo-Trinidadians constituted the most depressed group in Trinidad during the 1960s and early 1970s. In 1960 Indians had an annual per capita income of pounds 195, whites of pounds 1250, and blacks of pounds 260; nationally, East Indians represented the highest proportion of the poor. In 1964 83% of Indo-Trinidadians lived in rural areas in comparison with 51% of Afro-Trinidadians. In 1970 Indo-Trinidadians also had the lowest level of education; only 7.5% had post primary education, and 26.1% had no education at all (Dookeran, 1985). As we have seen, an incipient Indo-Trinidadian middle class (primarily Christians and Muslims) had begun at the turn of the twentieth century to enter the higher echelons of society through education and business, but the majority of Indo-Trinidadians were rural, poor, and had little education before the oil boom. The situation in the late 1980s were markedly different. In her analysis of social mobility experienced by different ethnic groups between 1960 and 1989, Reddock (1991: 232) concludes that according to the three indicators of occupation, education and employment, 'Indians in general have been experiencing the most significant degrees of mobility overall.'

There is disagreement between anthropologists who have described changes which conspicuous consumption among Indo-Trinidadians introduced in the late

1970s and early 1980s. Joseph Nevadomsky (1980 and 1983) who studied in 1972-73 the same East Indian village in Trinidad, which Morton Klass had described in 1961, saw acculturation. On the other hand, Vertovec (1992) and Munasinghe who too studied East Indian villages after the oil-boom suggest that traditional patterns did not die out in the face of new ones but were instead rejuvenated with the influx of wealth. To cut a long story short, we are presented with a picture where socio-economic mobility among Indo-Trinidadians is accompanied by exclusivity and perceived marginalization as much as in the initial period. Further, based on an account of village trends as well as macro-level developments in Trinidad, Munasinghe decisively asserts that in the very recent times East-Indian culture has made a bid to enter the socio-political mainstream of Trinidad. The most striking evidence, according to her, is the election in 1995 of Basdeo Pandey, the East Indian leader, as the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, an eventuality unforeseen in the country at any other time.

Explanations

Munasinghe's monograph, *Callaloo or Tossed Salad?* is a historical and ethnographic study of East Indians in Trinidad with an emphasis on the politics of cultural conflict between East Indians and Africans, the nation's two traditionally subordinate ancestral groups. She argues that East Indians in Trinidad seek to become a legitimate part of the nation by redefining what it means to be a Trinidadian, not by changing what it means to be Indian. In her view, Indo-Trinidadians' recent and ongoing struggle for national and cultural identity builds from dissatisfaction with the place they were originally assigned within Trinidadian society. The author examines how Indo-Trinidadian leaders in Trinidad have come to challenge the implicit claim that their ethnic identity is antithetical to their national identity. Their political and cultural strategy seeks to change the national image of Trinidad by introducing Indian elements alongside those of the dominant Afro-Caribbean culture. Munasinghe analyses the moral, political and cultural dimensions of identity, the relation between ethnicity and the nation and details how principles of exclusion continue to operate in nationalist projects that celebrate ancestral diversity and multiculturalism. Drawing on the insights of theorists who use creolization to understand the emergence of Afro-American cultures, Munasinghe argues that Indo-Trinidadians can be considered Creole because they, like Afro-Trinidadians, are creators and not just bearers of culture.

The manner in which Munasinghe develops her analysis of the East Indians being considered 'outsiders' in Trinidad and, secondly, the argument about ethnicity (ethnic identity, awareness and patrimony) of the various groups in multi-cultural and multi-racial society as being attached to the ethos of nation-building, leaves much to be desired. To take the 'outsider' status of East Indians first, Munasinghe claims to take into account both the 'material' and discursive factors but her clinching argument is based on the latter set, especially on the lexical analysis of the terminology

used by Trinidadians in respect of race, colour and ancestry. It is claimed that while the Afro-Trinidadian and European identities as also those of the 'mixed' groups are based on colour (Black and White continuum), there is no counterpart of 'colour' for the East Indian. Besides colour the Afro-Trinidadian and European identities are also based on ancestry. Further, the Afro-Trinidadian identity is based also on phylogeny ('Negro' identity). The East Indian identity according to Munasinghe is based only on ancestry (their origin from India). What is missing in this characterization is, firstly, a realization that colour is only a signifier of 'race' and that the three criteria of a race relations situation as defined by Rex, for instance, (cited in Jain, 1990) applies to Trinidad. The three elements, which are necessary and sufficient to characterize a situation as a race relations situation, are:

- (i) a situation of abnormally harsh exploitation, coercion or competition between groups,
- (ii) an individual in these groups could not simply choose to move himself or his children from one group to another, and
- (iii) that the system should be justified in terms of some sort of deterministic theory, usually of a biological sort.

Secondly, the analysis remains incomplete being oblivious of the strong racist opposition between "coolie" and "smirwal" (the former term being used universally for the East Indians and the latter by the East Indians for Creoles, (perhaps only for the Negro and "mixed" excluding "local whites"). Breman and Daniel (1992:268-295) have shown how 'coolie' both etymologically and contextually is a racist-cum-class term. My principal disagreement with Munasinghe is that she fails to include in her lexical analysis the East Indian representations.⁵ If these representations were given their due place, the result will be to reinstate in our analysis the emic points of view of "coolies" and "creoles".

Munasinghe's second argument is that the Creole narrative for nation building in Trinidad is keyed as that of a mixture (for which she uses the metaphor of Callaloo) whereas the East Indian narrative emphasises the cultural landscape of Trinidad as a 'miniature United Nations' or a plural society (for which she uses the metaphor of tossed salad). The East Indian narrative, obviously, is cast in terms of exclusivity whereas the Creole narrative is inclusive of the culture of all ethnic groups in Trinidad *minus* the East Indians. Given Munasinghe's explanation of East Indian exclusivity and exclusion in lexical terms, their very late entry in the political process of nation-building is seen as a turn about in the sense that they wish to contest and change the very definition of 'Trinidadian' by adding on (but not changing) the Indian cultural element. In other words it is not acceptable to the East Indians that the nation-building process in Trinidad would be only in Creole terms. And this is possible because factually, if not in perceptions, the East Indian culture in Trinidad has been *creative*, incorporating Creole elements.

I think there is a circularity in the above argument when the concept Creole is being used simultaneously as the exclusive patrimony of non-East Indian culture as well as of the historically created heritage of all Trinidadian including the Indians. In an earlier article (Jain 1986) I have argued that for conceptual clarity the 'creolization' of East Indians in Trinidad should be termed as interculturalisation. Further, this interculturalisation - a symmetrical process of give and take - should be distinguished from acculturation-an asymmetrical process-whereby Afro-Saxon model of 'respectability' had been emulated both by the 'mixed' and 'black' populations in Trinidad. The exclusivity of the East Indian ethnicity in Trinidad would then be a reflection of social stratification of the race-cum-class structure (Jain, 1986 also 1988).

The diversion, on the other hand, to the nation-building process which is something without a beginning or an end (as contrasted with on-going political processes), is unhelpful in the present context (cf Verdery, 1994 for the distinct valence of ethnicity in relation to "nation" between European and "third world" contexts). In a paper dealing with Tamilians in Malaysia (Jain, 2002) I have demonstrated how the framework of "nation" and the omnibus "Indian" identity are neatly subverted in actual political processes. Ethnicity and race-relations need to be viewed conjointly to unravel the historical trajectory of cultural politics in Trinidad.⁶

A Final Point

Where from do these narratives arise? The infra structural conditions lead us to the causes of these stereotypes and conflicts. And in this dialectical analysis between reality and ideology the 'emic' perspectives of the social actors are of paramount importance. We may try and split hairs by distinguishing between the lay, the political and the academic perspectives on ethnicity but the battle may be won while the war will be lost by imposing a super-academic 'etic' model. A discourse analysis, while certainly informative to analyze the surface reality, needs to be supplemented, if not dominated, by a material one. For example, the underlying economic interests of the big business —British and US — in the forest resources of Fiji were not the least among reasons for the triggering and still suppurating wounds of Indo-Fijian and native Fijian ethnic conflicts. [(www.sppf.org)] Subject: Mahogany row (story in Sydney Morning Herald regarding Speight and Mahogany deal)].

Networks : How does a small minority of Indians in Australia gets included in an ethnic transnational middle class?

From the labour migration beginning in the mid-nineteenth century to the immigration of professional-class Indians to Australia beginning in the 1970s may seem a big leap in time and space. However, it is sociologically interesting to compare

the fortunes of those who migrated as working class and then transformed themselves into a middle class to those professional Punjabis, Kannadigas and Indo-Fijians who continue to add significantly to the Asian population in Australia. Analytically, my reason for detailing the case of the Indian diaspora in Trinidad and following it up with that in Australia is, to put it in broad theoretical terms, the twin processes of exclusion and inclusion exhibited by the two cases. In the former case, the framework within which these processes work is that of the nation, and one cannot but agree with Munasinghe that except for the very recent period (post 1980s), the East Indian representation in Trinidadian national identity had been one of exclusion in the sense that, in my terms, the *kirwal* narrative had completely marginalized the *coolie* presence. Also, it would be fair to say that the dominant race-relations paradigm in Trinidad had encapsulated the intercultural currents of the *coolie* representations. This is the manner in which I would interpret Munasinghe's thesis of the creative aspects of East Indian 'creolization' in Trinidad. It is only with the strong political consolidation of the East Indian presence since the last two decades or so that one may speak legitimately of their 'inclusion' in the on-going nation-building processes in Trinidad.

In contrast to the Trinidadian scenario, the Indian minority in Australia is not part of the *national* identity as such; the process of nation-building in Australia had been played out much earlier as I have already remarked apropos Verdery's distinction between ethnicity and nation-building processes in western vs. developing societies. Here the terms of the Indians' 'inclusion' in the mainstream are, as I propose to show in the following, part of a *transnational* class identity, namely, an Ethnic Transnational Middle Class (ETMC). Of particular interest is the fact that though this class is transnational, it remains, ironically enough, *ethnic*. And it is this peculiar confluence of inclusion at the transnational level and exclusivity or exclusion at the ethnic-level vis-à-vis Australian society at large of the professional class Indians in Australia that I highlight in the last part of my presentation.

There is a detailed ethnography of early Indian agriculturists in New South Wales (De Lepervanche, 1984); obviously these are non-professionals. More recently, there are brief community-oriented reports on the Punjabi, Kannadiga and Indo-Fijian recent migrants to Australia (Vogt-Graf, 2002 and 2004). But the ethnographic study I wish to focus upon-not so much a community study-is the one by Biao Xiang, a Chinese scholar from PRC who studied the structuration of Indian Information Technology Professionals' migration to Australia (Xiang, 2001). He later theorised this transnational stratum of Indian migrants to Australia as an 'ethnic transnational middle class in formation' (Xiang, 2002). This exercise shows not only the spatio-temporal discontinuity but, most interestingly, certain ethno-practical continuities between the old and the new diaspora of Indians.

Let me first summarize the conclusion of the ethnographic study by Xiang. In the study of globalisation and migration, a distinction between “transnationalism from above” and “transnationalism from below” has been made recently (Guarnizo, 1997; Portes *et al*, 1999). While the former refers to transnational activities of powerful institutional actors, such as multinational corporations and states, the latter focuses on the activities of ordinary migrants. Both trends have been widely discussed, but thus far the links between the two remain unexplored. Xiang’s paper shows how capital and labour, key concepts of a political economy framework, and ethnic networks, which are central for ‘transnationalism from below’, work together in the structuration process of a new international labour system.

Unlike what is usually assumed, ethnic networks play a critical role in the migration of highly skilled professionals in the Indian’s migration to Australia. Besides their role in recruitment, ethnic networks are also important in managing workers within body shops (particularly retaining workers when they are on the bench). For example, workers see it as immoral or as potentially damaging for their own reputation if they raise complaints against their Indian sponsors (body shops).

Ethnic networks are important in this case because they reconcile the state and the market. Corporations in a volatile economy call for a flexible labour market to minimize their costs. A liberal global market inevitably creates social costs, such as the lack of security of workers. The state of the receiving countries requires employers to take social responsibilities for the migrant workers. Employers ‘outsource’ these responsibilities to placement agents. Big agents yet again pass them on to ‘body shops’. Finally, ethnic networks enable ‘body shops’ to keep workers silent when the workers are on the bench. Agent chains and ethnic networks transfer the costs of a volatile market to the workers.

In the US, wives of H1-B visa holders are granted H-4 visas with which they are not allowed to work and are completely dependent on their husbands. Maitri, a San Francisco based South Asian Women Organization, received more than 1,500 calls from H-4 women reporting domestic violence over the year 2000-2001 (Srivastava, 2001). Thus, even in the case of the highly desirable professionals, globalization is accompanied with high human costs.

The ethnicity based labour supply system also has its light side. Migratory Indian IT workers have been able to make a quick transition to transnational entrepreneurs. In California in 2000 AD more than 7,000 high-tech companies were run by Indians generating an estimated US\$ 60 billion in sales annually. These businesses increasingly rely on their networks back in India for labour, outsourcing and offshore investment opportunities. (Saxenian 2000 cited in Xiang 2001). Arising from this labour system India’s IT industry grew at a rate ten times higher than that of the GDP over the last decade and reached US\$ 10 billion revenue in 2000-01 (*The Times of India*, Hyderabad, 4 July 2001). This scenario seems to support the new

notion of 'brain circulation', which replaces 'brain drain' in migration studies. However, what is not clear is to what extent the brain circulation can benefit local society in India. The labour migration system is more likely to contribute to a new 'dual structure': a global sector where resources are calculated and accumulated in US dollars and a local sector where surplus value is pumped out to serve economic globalization. Due to the ever expanding and enhanced transnational connections, the vital issue for the current research of skilled immigration may not be measuring 'brain gain' versus 'brain drain' of a particular country, but may be examining the relations between the global and local sector across borders. The structuration process of Indian IT professionals' migration to Australia is only one case illustrating how skilled labour from a periphery society struggle to join the global system at the cost of their own and ultimately of the periphery society.

Ethnic Transnational Middle Class (ETMC) in Formation

The context of globalization is vital to an understanding of the social stratification framework into which the professional Indian diaspora of the last forty years or so belongs. One has often heard the exhortation, particularly in developing societies, of 'think global and act local'. What is not often uncovered is that the body of professionals working either as immigrants, off shore workers or engaged in outsourcing is vital for global capital not only as cheap skilled labour, but also because they facilitate penetration of global capital to the developing world. Xiang calls them the Ethnic transnational middle class (ETMC), who are not only in the 'middle' between capital and labour, but also between global and local. The body of Indian global professionals is generally not a class, which 'owns' the means of production (TCC or ETCC) but is at the same time client to body-shoppers who are not merely recruiters but also 'trainers'. The ETMC comprises at one end the conventional professionals-engineers, doctors and IT professionals in particular and, at other end, the 'salaried' administrative and managerial, supervisory, clerical, sales, service and account jobs which would be called semi-professional. In respect of the former category there is usually a glass ceiling for mobility but also a limited degree of advance from even ETMC to Ethnic Transnational Capitalist Class (ETCC) or Transnational Capitalist Class (TCC). Thus it comes about that in terms of Indian GDP, 21% is controlled by 0.02% persons.

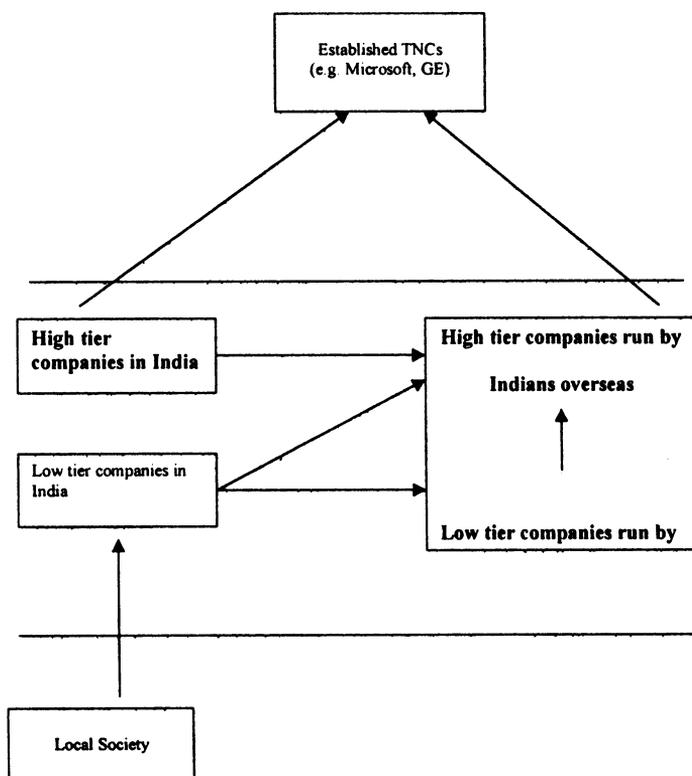
There is a firm nexus between local society and established transnational corporations, viz., IBM, Microsoft, GE, Google etc., and it is the local society (and ultimately the workers), which invests in the recruitment and placement of the ETMC. The local society provides the wherewithal for professional specialists in the diaspora. As sociologists let us look at the connection between the Indian ETMC and the institution of dowry. To quote Xiang (2002: 8),

There are various social mechanisms through which resources have been channelled to the IT training. The most novel one is the institution of

dowry. Dowry is a completely new institution in AP (Andhra Pradesh) and is largely a product of the introduction of the 'organised sector' during British time. I came across a village, which had its first dowry marriage in 1996 (previously bride-price was the norm) because at that year the first highly educated man in the village married. 'Computer people' bring in a new dichotomy of 'global versus local' and gave dowry a new boost. Dowry is either seen as a direct reward to the groom's parents for their investments in costly private education, or is used as sponsorship for IT study and/or emigration...More effectively than by any other means high dowry gives 'computer people' a high social status... (D)owry is a direct means to transfer surplus value from the unorganised sector to the organised, from the rural to the urban, and from the local to the global.

The dowry rate for the IT professional is also closely associated with the country where the groom is based. An USA-based groom receives a dowry typically double that of Australia. The overall nexus between the local and the global in the ETMC is well illustrated by the following diagram (source: Xiang, Biao, 2002: 12).

The 'Indian System' in the Global IT Industry



Conclusion

Let me, in conclusion, spell out briefly the continuities between the old and the new diaspora. We have looked at the patterns of culture, class and mobility. Apart from the antagonisms — racial or otherwise — between the labour diaspora from developing countries and the newly won but contemporaneously entrenched working class interests in the developed societies (Rex, 1982), there are striking parallels between the three dimensions (culture, class and mobility) among Indian diaspora in Malaysia, Trinidad and Australia. Firstly, ethnic networks and agent-chains have been in evidence for the whole gamut of Indian diasporics abroad. Secondly, there has been a pattern of ‘circulation’ (Markovits, 2000) rather than a one-way passage between the country or region of origin in India and a number of diaspora-nodes. Even in regard to labour diaspora, as distinct from traders such as the Sindhis, Carter (1995) has shown the impact of returnees from amongst indentured recruits from India to Mauritius as far back as during 1834 to 1874. Similarly, even in old and distant locales such as Trinidad and Tobago the to-ing and fro-ing of Indian cultural specialists like religious leaders and missionaries is very much in evidence. So also is the transmigration of Indian nationalism. Thirdly, whether it is the high rate of suicides among plantation workers in Trinidad during the late nineteenth century or the high incidence of domestic violence in the present-day professional Indian diaspora in the US, we learn that the human and social costs of migration have been very high. Fourthly, the internal socio-economic disparities have been commonly found in the old and new diasporas. Khandelwal (2002) has argued about the stratification existing between the well-to-do older immigrants from India in New York and the taxi driving, restaurant and other service-industry migrants. Fifthly, as I have argued in relation to Khandelwal’s depiction of the internal disparities among Indians as coming close to “blaming the victims” the over-all structure of “receiving” societies whether in Malaysia, Trinidad and Tobago, or in developed countries like Australia and US, has carried the stain of discrimination and disparity between the local and the global. In terms of external influences, what was caused by colonialism and imperialism in the old diaspora has been highlighted in the new diaspora through the consequences of globalization.

Finally, I wish to comment on one major continuity and two outstanding discontinuities in the vertical dimension of Indian diaspora (which is contrasted with the horizontal dimension of inter-diaspora relations). The vertical dimension refers to the relationship between India and the diaspora space. There is continuity between home and abroad in terms of cultural hybridity and consumerism. There is a burgeoning middle class both in India today and among Indians in the diasporas, both old and new (Jain, 1998). In short, there is a common youth culture. But at the vertical axis itself there are marked discontinuities between home and abroad. In a historical perspective whereas home is the seat of an old “non-modern civilization” (Dumont, 1975), abroad are “settlement societies”, essentially post-1492 ones (cf. Jain, 1994b, 1997, 1998a). Secondly, there is a set of contrasts, which may be termed

the politicization of culture at home and “culturalization of politics” in the diaspora. The cultural nationalism espoused by the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) or the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) in India, for example, is grist to the mill of political propaganda and party political manoeuvring. In the Indian diaspora, including conflict-ridden instances such as Fiji, Indian culture is used not as a mean for attaining political power but for identity maintenance and enhancement through the building of temples, preservation and propagation of Indian language, demands for more time for ethnic programmes in the electronic media, and so on.

A word about a salient characteristic of the way in which I have analysed the Indian diaspora, old and new. The extant studies in this field have either concentrated on time-space specific instances or they have looked at the overall configuration, particularly the diachronic dimension, of Indian communities abroad. As an anthropologist, however, my preoccupation with the spatio-temporal aspects of the phenomenon under study is guided by a concern with contemporaneity. In terms of geography, increasingly, one would have to look at the diaspora space in addition to one or more localities and temporally one does history backwards, in a manner of speaking. In this endeavour one explores the history and geography of specific instances of the migration, settlement and circulation of Indians abroad to the extent that such a focus may lead to cautious generalizations. There is need for such theoretical, comparative and analytical perspectives in what is as yet an incipient though burgeoning field of study in the social sciences.

Notes

1. A really interesting aspect of the inter-ethnic understanding between Adi Dravida or dalit Tamilians and the Malay bumiputras is the conscious upholding by the former of the latter's status as “sons of the soil”. The dalit Tamilians in Malaysia claim that in being the original inhabitants of their respective lands (India and Malaysia) the Adi Dravidas and the Malays are alike and, therefore, deserving of their rulers' status!
2. I have used the terms ‘Indian’, ‘East Indian’ and ‘Indo-Trinidadian’ throughout the text interchangeably to denote the same community but to suit the context.
3. How the colonial state in Britain sabotaged the 1955 election when the Indo-Trinidadian leaders appeared poised to assume control of the state is a fascinating story in itself. Britain postponed the elections to the following year, providing Eric Williams and his supporters an opportune moment to forge a ‘legitimate’ national party to contest and win the 1956 elections with the help of colonial authorities (for the manipulation, especially by Governor Beetham, Cf. Brereton, 1981: 237; Oxaal, 1968: 115).
4. The point is illustrated by the fact that the two rival Hindu organizations (apart from the third, Arya Samaj) SDA (Sanatan Dharma Association) and SDBC (Santan Dharma Board of Control) had their origin in the controversy between the Presbyterian and Catholics who, respectively approved and disapproved Divorce

Legislation. The pioneering leader of the SDA was a Presbyterian and of the SDBC, a catholic!

5. We may ask the question as to why she researched on lexical terms from a white or European perspective only? What about the 'agency' and proactivity of East Indians in controlling their identity?
6. In this respect see Sanjek's approach to the understanding of intermarriage and the future of races in contemporary U.S.A. He writes, "Both repressive processes of exclusion (race) and expressive processes of inclusion (ethnicity) must be accounted for on our analytic ledgers" (1994 : 110)

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