

Destination: Australia

A Qualitative Case Study of the Aspirations, Experiences, and Integration of
Indian Student Migrants in Australia 2013-2017.

Submitted by

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Submitted in total fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Australia

September 2021

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Abstract

This thesis analyses the attitudes and experiences of a select cohort of young Indians who are permanent residents in Australia or on temporary student visas. It seeks to understand the factors that compel these students to study in Australia, what happens after they arrive, and how they feel about these experiences. The thesis analyses the characteristics, goals and aspirations that influence young Indian students' decision to study and live in Australia. It evaluates the extent to which these goals and aspirations are met and considers which factors limit their attainment. It examines key aspects of young Indian students' lives, including their academic and university experiences, social interactions with locals and fellow migrants, and workplace experiences.

This study's central argument is that despite some commonalities in their motivations for moving, young Indian students in Australia represent a complex and diverse cohort whose lives and aspirations vary widely, and which cannot be evaluated neatly in terms of either positive or negative experiences. Whether their life goals are met or not, all these students' lives are, nevertheless, characterised by the pursuit and expression of agency.

The thesis is based on a series of in-depth interviews I conducted with this cohort during the period 2013–2017. Interviews supplement this data I completed in 2013 and 2014 with young Indians residing in India who expressed an interest in studying and living in Australia. This period is chosen as it was when this thesis was started and a peak time for Indian student migration to Australia.

This study was prompted by evidence of rapid increases in Indian migration to Australia since 2010. Until 2019 Indians were the second-largest cohort of nationals migrating to Australia after the Chinese, and Indian students were the top migrating student cohort to Australia in 2016, 2017 and 2018. Yet research and understanding of the reasons for this growth and the impact of these experiences on young Indians are still under-developed such as the cultural aspects within the push and pull factors and the interactions within Indian migrant communities. These research gaps compel us to explore the factors that drove this increase, understand the experiences of those who come and determine whether these experiences are mainly positive or negative.

Statement

Except where reference is made in the text, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma. No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis. This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

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1 September 2021

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Acknowledgements

Foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my principal supervisor for most of my thesis, Dr Gwenda Tavan, for her continuous support of my research, and her patience, motivation, enthusiasm, and immense knowledge. Her guidance has always helped me during the research and writing of these chapters. I could not have imagined having a better supervisor and mentor for my research.

I would also like to thank my co-supervisor, who was also my principal supervisor towards the end of my thesis, Dr Raul Sanchez Urribarri, for his encouragement, insightful comments, and the difficult questions he posed to me to help me tighten my thesis.

I am also grateful to Dr. Anthony Moran, Professor Tim Scrase, Bob Smith, Howard Wilson, Professor Joseph Camilleri, Dr. Adrian Soh and Professor Robin Jeffrey for listening to my thesis topic and encouraging me to research into fields I could analyse better.

Last, but not the least, I would like to thank my parents Mrs. Uttara Gogate and Capt. Upendra Gogate for supporting my PhD journey both emotionally and financially. This thesis is dedicated to them.

Chapter 1. Introduction

This thesis analyses the attitudes and experiences of a select cohort of young Indians who were residing in Australia temporarily or permanently and those who intended to visit Australia either for education or migration through the pathway of education. It seeks to understand the factors that compel these students to study in Australia, what happens to them after they arrive, their experiences of life in Australia and their attitudes. The thesis is based on a series of in-depth interviews I conducted with this cohort during the period 2013–2017. This data is supplemented by interviews I conducted in 2013 and 2014 with young Indians residing in India who expressed an interest in studying and living in Australia. This period was chosen as it was during the time this thesis was started and a peak time for Indian student migration to Australia¹.

This study was prompted by various factors. The primary one was the evidence of rapid increases in Indian migration since 2010. Indians were the second-largest cohort of nationals migrating to Australia after the Chinese until 2019, and Indian students were the top migrating student cohort to Australia in 2016, 2017 and 2018 (Reesby 2016 & DIBP 2018). It was also prompted by the lack of knowledge about the qualitative experiences of these students as most of the existing research tended to focus on the economic motivations that drive Indian migration and their economic impact on the host country and the immigrants. I propose that other social factors are just as important, including social impacts on the immigrants, social prestige and the creation of migration networks as Massey (1999, p. 45) explains that “causation is cumulative in the sense that each act of migration alters the social context within which subsequent migration decisions are made, typically in ways that make additional movement more likely”.

This study’s central argument is that despite some commonalities in terms of their aspirations for moving, young Indian students in Australia represent a diverse cohort with complex motivations for migrating and some unique experiences while integrating with the Australian society. Their aspirations range from the desire to experience social freedom, access quality education without the encumbrances of the Indian reservation system, and gain access to job opportunities, higher standards of living, and higher incomes. These aspirations are usually tied

¹ While finalising the analysis and evaluation of the data collected, COVID-19 pandemic affected the migrations to Australia. Once borders open again and universities get ready to welcome international students to the level of pre-Covid times, the data collected will hold more relevance as trends, aspirations and experiences from 2013-2017 could reemerge within the Indian student communities in Australia.

to the goal of obtaining permanent residency (PR), as without PR, these aspirations cannot be fulfilled on a long-term basis. In contrast, some students face significant hardships and their aspiration changes from a desire to earn Australian PR and remain permanently to simply earning enough money via part-time jobs and eventually returning home to India.

This phenomenon is analysed and evaluated through qualitative analysis of interviews with 90 young Indian students residing in Australia and 35 residing in India during the period 2013-2017. It explores various dimensions of their lives, including their expectations of what life in Australia will be like and what it will achieve for them, their experiences of university life, employment, and their political, social and cultural activities. In doing so it proves that for the select cohort, social experiences remain mostly positive but for others, negative experiences on campus or in the workplace can undermine their sense of fulfilment. Furthermore, even when university experiences remain mostly positive, unrealised expectations of Australian education and a PR led many to experience frustration and dissatisfaction. The interviews reveal a fascinating story of human agency, suffering and adaptability. It reinforces the complexity of migration and mobilities across the globe in the 21st century and the powerful impacts these flows have on individual lives and societies. It provides a deep analysis into what influences this new student migration thereby providing new data to understand what has changed since the previous migrations and what has remained the same. It offers perspectives into the privileges and lives of middle-class Indian students who are inclined towards more social factors for migration than economic and financial factors that matter more to the lower-middle sections or poor sections of the Indian society.

Rationale and justification

Between 2002 and 2017, the number of Indian students residing in Australia grew from 10,572 to 78,424; an increase of 641% (ABS 2018). In addition to this, nearly half of these students went on to obtain PR (ADHA 2020). This pattern reflects a much larger global trend of young student migration from Global South to Global North. The thesis has major relevance beyond the academic realm and makes an important contribution to understanding the motivations and experiences of these students. Indian student mobility has enormous personal, social and economic consequences for the individuals involved, as well as for their country of origin and their new country of settlement. Therefore, it is essential to understand the motivations, challenges, and problems that shape their experiences in Australia. Understanding these experiences will help Australian policymakers and higher education institutions implement

better sustainable strategies to protect the rights of international students in Australia and ensure that Australia remains an appealing destination for young Indians who want to study internationally. It will also provide these institutions and individuals with an improved understanding of how migration policies and flows impact host societies such as Australia. This is particularly important after the borders reopen, as Australia will seek to increase the number of international students, especially Indian students into its tertiary educational institutions². Once the international student migrations resume, lessons from the experiences of the past migrant students would help shape policy towards the potential new entrants. These institutions also control the initial visa application process of international students authorised by the immigration department (ADHA 2020). Indian society will also benefit from this study as it provides an opportunity to gain an understanding of the lives of Indian migrants in Australia and the challenges and difficult decisions they face. The thesis describes the experiences Indian students undergo and shows that they are not always as pleasant as they are often portrayed in the Indian media. There is a wide audience such as student bodies and cultural clubs and societies who could also align their policies by understanding the personal journeys of these newly arriving Indians. The student experiences analysed in this thesis will be helpful for Indian parents sponsoring their children's education in Australia. The parents or sponsoring family members will be able to compare their expectations of the student and Australian society and modify their strategies and future planning accordingly. In this way, cultural shocks and disappointment arising from a gap between goals and actual experiences can be bridged.

This thesis also helps us understand the complexities of contemporary global migration and mobilities. International student migration is an increasingly important dimension of this trend. It's full economic, social, political and human rights dimensions have just begun to emerge and are not properly understood. Academics and political decision-makers alike can learn about broader trends in international migration and mobilities by comparing migration patterns in Australia along with the expectations of Indian students and their behaviours driven by various experiences. While most literature tends to focus mainly on the economic variables of migrations followed by negative migrant experiences such as racism, language barriers and

² Australia closed its international borders on 20th March 2020 on the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This resulted in the stranding of already enrolled international students, internationally travelling domestic students as well as created a barrier towards the entry of potential new international students. The education industry has been deeply affected due to low new enrolments because of the closed borders, fall in the expected revenue from international students and in managing the infrastructure designed around pre-Covid influx of international students.

issues with integration, this thesis adds deeper knowledge about the issues faced within diasporic Indian communities in host societies. Last, this thesis also addresses a gap in understanding of some non-conventional aspects of migration including student participation in campus life and various cultural organisations, and how such experiences impact settlement and integration.

Thesis Structure

This thesis contains ten chapters. Chapter 2 reviews the literature related to the theories of migration as these relate closely to the trends and phenomenon analysed in the thesis. The chapter further reviews Indian student mobility and Indian student life in Australia, as these areas later assist in constructing newer arguments linked with the findings from the qualitative interviews. Chapter 3 explains the methods and methodology of the thesis; in doing so details the interview questions, interviewee profiles and list of primary and secondary sources used to complement the analysis and evaluation of the findings. Chapter 4 provides the background and structural context for Indian student migration in the 21st century. It traces the changes in Indian student migrations in the 20th and 21st centuries, analysing the policies that are in place as well as the Indian social factors that have led to this new phenomenon. It focuses on the Indian migrants who are coming in growing numbers to Australia in the early 21st century and the policies that are encouraging this growth. This chapter focuses particularly on: Indian students pursuing master's degrees in Australia, arriving with the intention to migrate permanently. The chapter concludes with a focus on the visa category that has specifically encouraged this increase in migrations: the 573 visa.

Chapters 5 and 6 are closely related, with chapter 5 focussing on factors that compel Indian student migrants to leave India (push factors) and chapter 6 focussing on factors that attract them to Australia (pull factors). It must be noted that a range of factors drive a circular relation and sometimes overlap, so that the distinctions between push and pull factors are not always distinguishable (Sridhar 2012). The main push factors identified include having too many entrance exams in India to secure tertiary education spots; the reservation system which hampers the progress of open-category students; corruption in daily life, government services, and educational institutions; maximising the dowry payment, social prestige and the easy availability of educational loans specifically for Australian education. These factors reinforce the mainly middle-class interviewees, and their structural capacity to leave India based on the emigration and migration policies of both India and Australia respectively. The pull factors

identified include the economic prosperity of Australia and its high living standard but extend also to cultural and social factors. Cultural factors are those which make Australia specifically an attractive destination over countries with similar economic standards like the US and the UK. They include the role of the entertainment industry, the Australian tourism board, and cricket. The social factors identified revolve around the social freedoms available in Australia which make it an attractive destination. They relate to issues like alcohol consumption, sexual freedom, freedom of religion for conservative students, the social stigmas incurred in India for leading a Western lifestyle, and freedom of expression within Australian universities. Altogether they show that the decisions made by this middle-class Indian student interviewees are not only based on economic factors, but additionally a result of their social, cultural and community-based networks in Australia. These networks are families, friends, colleagues, tourists as well as media and migration agencies that make Australia attractive.

In subsequent chapters, the focus is strongly on the various experiences of Indian students in Australia. Chapter 7 analyses the university lives of Indian students in Australia and evaluates whether Australian universities have helped or hampered the realisation of the students' aspirations. These experiences are categorised as academic, extracurricular and social. They include the views of Indian students regarding the quality of education and their views on the educational returns they receive against their tuition fees. The study-related experiences analysed are based on their interactions with academic staff, levels of study support, their interactions with academic staff of non-English-speaking backgrounds and their attitudes towards blended learning environments. The extracurricular experiences include participation in university-based clubs and societies, residential leadership programmes and university award programmes. Last, I examine students experiences of personal freedoms on university campuses, multiculturalism and racism, identifying both positive and negative features.

Chapter 8 analyses an important aspect of Indian students' lives in Australia: their experience of working part-time and casually. First, the chapter establishes why Indian students choose to work part-time or on a casual basis and why they choose casual workplaces not relevant to their qualifications or educational backgrounds. The chapter then analyses the students' experiences at work with colleagues, customers, and employers of different backgrounds and in different localities. The chapter shows that Indian students' experiences vary according to the diverse backgrounds of their employers, colleagues, and customers. The exploitation of Indian students, primarily at the hands of employers of Indian backgrounds, is an important feature of this discussion. Underpayment is the most reported form of exploitation in the news and in the

literature focusing on Indian students in Australia; however, this chapter also sheds light on ethnic prejudice in workplaces, blackmailing by employers, sexual harassment and physical abuse experienced by Indian students at casual workplaces often owned by Indian employers.

Chapter 9 analyses the role of cultural and religious groups in helping students engage and interact with not only the broader Australian society but also with Indian nationals in Australia. Apart from university and work, Indian students become involved in many social activities. They join Indian sub-cultural or ethnic organisations and religious groups and gatherings; they leadership programmes through the accommodation services of the universities; volunteer with city councils; play sport at local clubs; participate in activities organised by Indian political parties in Australia; and become involved with Indian dance troupes. With the growing number of Indian students in Australia, these social and cultural engagements are on the rise and contribute significantly to the quality of students' social experiences in Australia but also their integration into the broader Australian society. Chapter 10 concludes the thesis demonstrating that Indian student migration to Australia is a very complex phenomenon. The rationale for migration, the anticipated outcomes and experiences vary widely based on the priorities of the students and their approach towards reaching out and making attempts towards integration. It shows that student mobility does not fit any one migration theory or analytical category but is a mixed bag of diverse expectations and experiences of Australian culture and lifestyle. Students have not necessarily experienced what they anticipated, and circumstances have played role in the attainment of their dreams. While some students have positive experiences and integrate with the local community, some have negative experiences and remained isolated and discontented.

Chapter 2. Theories of Migration

This section examines research activity into Indian student mobility. Such research tends to fall into two broad categories; either a focus on factors that compel students to move or a focus on their experiences after they move. While valuable, there are limits to these approaches in that they tend towards monocausal explanations and analyses. These limited perspectives risk undermining the complex, inter-related factors and forces which influence young people's lives.

Much of the research to date on Indian student mobility has had a strong focus on economic motivations, including income maximisation. Such analyses reflect dominant theories in migration studies, including functionalist/neo-classical and historical-structuralist perspectives. Neo-classical perspectives tend to emphasise push and pull factors in migration. According to Mazzarol and Soutar (2002, pp. 82-90), "the ability of a host country and its institutions to continue to attract substantial numbers of foreign students will increasingly depend on the 'pull' factors". Sjaastad (1962) and Todaro (1969) have proposed that international migration is linked with the demand for labour across the borders. Nations with a shortage of labour will allow for the migration of labour needed to overcome the skill and physical resource void. In contrast, nations with lower labour wages will have people wanting to leave their countries for ones that pay higher wages for similar jobs. Balicki and Stalker (2006, pp. 212-275) argue that the search for better jobs and economic rewards is propelled by a surplus of labour in nations paying lower wages to their people. In other words, lower wages and conditions in the home country 'push' people out and higher ones in other countries 'pull' them in. These forces affect international students as well as conventional workers. Mazzarol and Soutar (2002, pp. 82-90) state, "The global pattern of international student flows may be explained by a combination of "push and pull" factors that encourage students to study overseas. "Push" factors operate within the source country and initiate a student's decision to undertake the international study. "Pull" factors operate within a host country to make that country relatively attractive to international students. Some of these factors are inherent in the source country, some in the host country and others in the students themselves.". These forces have both macroeconomic as well as microeconomic dimensions (Weiss 2003). Macroeconomic factors include wage differentials, labour market mechanisms and governmental controls over migrations of labour both incoming and outgoing (Corry 1996, Harris and Todaro 1970). Microeconomic factors affecting migration are individual rationality based on calculated costs and benefits of migrating (Borjas 1990), estimated net returns in a

future period against a job in the home country and the specific migration policies either favouring the migrations or making it difficult (Massey 2005). According to these perspectives, such people seek better employment opportunities and higher wages, but they are not the poorest within their nations. They want the rewards of so-called developed economies and the benefits that globalisation seems to offer. These are also analysed in this thesis about Indian students preferring a globalised and generally socio-culturally progressive Australian society as their educational destination. This is also the case with some student mobilities as it is better education and not just access to the education they are after. According to Mazzarol and Soutar (2002, pp. 82-90), the variables that are more important to international students are the quality and reputation of the institution. These students have access to universities in their home countries, yet they seek universities with better global rankings and reputations as a means of enhancing future workforce opportunities. It is for some of these reasons why most of the interviewees of this thesis chose Australian universities despite the existence of over 51,000 higher education institutions in India (Statista 2021).

In contrast, theorists like Wallerstein provide historical-structuralist perspectives of migration, including the impact of economic globalisation. Wallerstein (1977, pp. 1075-1120) argues that the structure of the global labour market rather than developments within an individual state drives migration flow. He explained that the world system is a social structure, it has rules of legitimation, structures, borders, coherence and member groups. The life of a world system comprises of the contradictory forces that embrace it together by tension and tear it separately as every group pursues perpetually to remould the world to their advantage. It has the features of an organism since it has a lifetime over which its features change in some respects and continue to be stable in others (Hier 2001, pp. 69-86). The life within it is mainly self-contained and the changing aspects of its development are mainly interior. A world system is also referred to as a world economy, incorporated through the market instead of a political centre, where two or more areas are co-dependent concerning needs such as fuel, protection and food. And where two or more communities contest for dominance without the emergence of one single centre forever. Wallerstein further postulated that a world system is a multicultural territorial division of labour where the exchange and production of necessities and raw materials is the obligatory daily life of its populations. This division of labour states that the relations of production and forces of the world economy in its entirety result in the existence of two co-dependent areas - the periphery and core. These are culturally and geographically diverse, one focuses on capital intensive production and the other on labour-intensive (Simpson 1990, p.73).

Wallerstein's study helps understand the pull factors attracting Indian students to Australia. This thesis has analysed how it is not simply the development or first world status of Australia, but the micro factors within the Australian society and economy that act as Wallerstein's world system with Indian students and Australian society as co-dependant factors. While Indian students seek better educational opportunities overseas, Australian universities find such students as necessary elements for the expansion and the survival of their growing departments, financial goals and academic courses.

Scholarly approaches to Indian student mobility

Indian student mobility overseas has gained significant attention due to the large number of Indian students leaving India for opportunities overseas. Pachauri (2004, PP. 616-622) studied the detailed migration of Indian diaspora around the world and detailed reasons why Indians emigrated to Western countries such as the US, Canada and Australia for a better social and economic life. By 2019, 17.5 million people of Indian origin were residing overseas as immigrants. At 6.4%, these numbers form the largest portion of all international migrants among all nations ahead of Mexico (4.3%) and China (4%) (The World Bank 2021). The research into these trends has established lower standards of living, economic conditions, low wages, and lack of educational opportunities as the major reasons for Indian youth migrating overseas.

Although India is a relatively developed nation technologically, the country remains behind when it comes to standards of living with the average national income at \$2104 (World Bank 2019) and Human Development Index³ rank at 129 out of 189 nations ranked globally (UNDP 2020). There is rising inequality in India with the wealthy becoming wealthier and the poor getting poorer (Gosh and Pal 2007), however, it is the middle-class Indians who do not fall on either end of the spectrum that aspire to migrate overseas. As of 2016, about 121 million households in India belonged to the middle-income bracket earning a gross annual income between 7,700 and 15,400 U.S. dollars (Statista 2021). While there are more than 33,023 colleges in India granting degrees, due to the lack of quality teachers in public schools and tertiary education providers many middle-class Indians face unemployment (Chakrabarty 2021) due to a lack of industry-ready skills. In addition to this issue, there is high youth

³ The Human Development Index (HDI) is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and have a decent standard of living. The HDI is the geometric mean of normalized indices for each of the three dimensions.

unemployment among middle-class Indians. In 2019, the youth unemployment in India was 23%. These youth are part of the labour force and are aged between 15 to 24 years (O'Neill 2021). Therefore, the student population moves to Australia based on educational opportunities, with the eventual aim of obtaining employment in the country. Baas (2012, pp. 105–137), for example, has acknowledged that, apart from learning, Indian students who travel to Australia do so in the hope of enjoying other migration opportunities. Employment and the search for the perceived 'good life' are overlapping goals that many people who move abroad intend to achieve, including finding work in white-collar industries. The expectation of a higher standard of living in Australia compared to that in India has also been established in the works of Badami (2005, pp. 195-204), Benson and O'Reilly (2009, pp. 608-625), Borjas (1989, pp. 457-485) and Raghuram (2013, pp. 127-137).

These expectations of a perceived 'good life' also relate to the conditions of work other than wages in their home countries. Crompton (1979, pp. 34-36) emphasises how daily routines and unfavourable work requirements such as long working hours, difficulties in commuting and tough working conditions may encourage migrants to escape. Jang and Wu (2006, pp. 42-45) as well as Hikmah, Herman, Ahmad and Syubada (2012, pp. 19-26) explain that people emigrate to escape perceived unfavourable hectic lifestyles and work routines. This also applies to India and is demonstrated in the thesis through the experiences shared by the interviewees. Many times, these unfavourable experiences pertain to difficult office work culture and the attitudes of senior management towards their teams. In addition to unsatisfactory work culture, the desire for knowledge and access to skills also encourage people to emigrate. Jang and Cai (2002, pp. 10-15) argue that people are pushed out of their countries when they feel their knowledge is not valued or have limited scope in the job market. People seek to challenge and mental stimulation through work tasks that give them a sense of achievement in the workplace. At times, it is not this undervalued knowledge, but the oversupply of certain skills that cause emigration as commonly seen in India with an oversupply of skilled professionals. Akl et. al (2007, pp. 32-39) have shown how migrants move out of countries with higher unemployment in their fields and move to ones with greater job opportunities. When the market is saturated with a certain type of jobs, people look to move out of their countries for international job markets that will welcome their skills.

While individual economic aspirations are primary, for many people, it is also about providing better economic conditions for their families. According to Massey et al (1993, pp. 430-442), "Unlike individuals, households can control risks to their economic well-being by diversifying

the allocation of household resources, such as family labour. While some family members can be assigned economic activities in the local economy, others may be sent to work in foreign labour markets where wages and employment conditions are negatively correlated or weakly correlated with those in the local area. If local economic conditions deteriorate and activities there fail to bring sufficient income, the household can rely on migrant remittances for support". According to Kumar (2013, pp. 15-19), Indian students send more than half of their Australian earnings back to India to provide a better life for their siblings or retired family members. These studies suggest the social and collective bonds that shape individual decisions to move (Balicki & Stalker, 2006; Faist, 2000). According to the new economics of labour theories (Taylor 1981; 1986; Stark 1984; 1991), a range of factors compels migration, such as risk minimisation after retirement or investing in the stable markets of the developed world to minimise the risks in investment opportunities. However, another key point relates to wage maximisation. This refers to the capacity for higher wages in the Global North than in the Global South and better employment opportunities in the host country than in the home country. A key insight of this approach is that migration decisions are not made by isolated individual actors, but by larger units of related people— typically families or households—in which people act collectively not only to maximize expected income but also to minimize risks and to loosen constraints associated with a variety of market failures, apart from those in the labour market (Stark and Levhari, 1982; Stark, 1984; Katz and Stark, 1986; Lauby and Stark, 1988; Taylor, 1986; Stark, 1991). Massey et al (1993, pp. 430-442) argue that the choices made by immigrants are not exclusively reliant on personal utility-maximising scheming rather, a response by a household to both failures on various markets, for instance, credit, labour, and insurance markets, in addition to income risks. Migration is a result of the behaviour of people but correspondingly it has a collective societal form (Bodvarsson & Van den Berg 2013, p. 44).

Central to these theories is the view that migration decisions are mediated through social networks. Batista (2018, pp. 5-35) describes these networks as a variety of agents and actors either directly or indirectly connected with each other. These agents share knowledge and resources, based on word of mouth and stories passed on by networks overseas, as well as more formal networks such as migration agents and the ethnic press. They create narratives about the desirability of some locations over others, affirming the existence of established Indian communities abroad and economic opportunities which provide safety, security and belonging. This thesis confirms the strong influence of such networks, with young Indians and their

families drawing on popular assumptions about the benefits of studying overseas to maximise employment and life chances.

Studies of Indian student life in Australia

The key characteristic of much mainstream research into international student mobility in Australia has focussed on the difficulties caused by their lack of English language skills, the attitudes of students towards international staff members, racism within universities and exploitation within the workplace. However, this is not the case with Indian students.

Indian students are not widely known as a cohort that struggles with English literacy skills at universities in developed English-speaking Western countries. Like the interviewees in this thesis, that was mostly pursuing master's degrees in Australia and from middle-class Indian families, a significant portion of Indian youth leaving India for overseas education speaks English as a second language. This is especially more relevant when these students have completed their previous undergraduate degrees in an English medium. While the students pursuing master's degrees have sufficient academic level English proficiency owing to their English medium education during prior bachelor's degrees, a large portion of other students mostly belonging to the middle-class Indian families have attended English medium primary and secondary schools.

Although Indian students are not known as struggling with their English communication or writing skills, this English is characterised by its second language. English is often seen as a privileged language within the Indian education system and is regarded as one of the country's official languages. Despite the grammatical rules for Indian English being the same as British English, often they have cultural and local linguistics influences. During the colonisation times and even after India attained independence, these cultural influences are reflected in how some Indian students pronounce words differently from British or Australians. As English penetrated the different sections of the educated Indians, a new variety of English emerged (Chelliah 2003). This variety of English had a very distinct Indian flavour, and several words of vernacular origin were absorbed in Indian English. Not just the words but pronunciations were also blended in Indian English. Most Indian languages write the word in their local scripts the way they are pronounced, hence in Indian English, the pronunciation of "r" is articulated, giving substantial stress to the alphabet, unlike in British English, the letter "r" is not pronounced with high stress at the end of the word. So, this slight change in the phonological

aspect of the language changes the pronunciation, and the audibility becomes more elite and attractive, which attracts a mass of individuals and countries towards British English.

In Australia, as in any other Western country, the experiences of Indian students based on their communication skills with their peers and university staff are determined by how one understands the other and whether a clear verbal communication also reflects in the grades these students receive for their written English skills. While communicating ideas and engaging in a dialogue may not be among the challenges faced by Indian students, their ethnic and, at times, Indian state influenced pronunciations have led to racial jokes and mockery by Australian locals. Languages are a powerful medium that affects various social and unconscious biases. These may further create a sense of prejudice and discrimination against certain nationalities due to the constant mocking of their accents. Such jokes and discrimination based on accents and linguistics hampers the integration process of migrants and alienates them (Agarwal 2019). It is the social humiliation that these students are subject to and influences their experiences than their academic challenges. Western media, Australian included, especially the entertainment industry, is known to mock and make fun of Indian accents. When the general public is influenced by the mockery seen on their televisions, they may also engage in this conduct, assuming it to be the norm. This only results in detrimental emotional effects on Indian students (Tagore 2020).

Daswani (2001) and Mohan (2014) have analysed the prevalence of English medium education and historic importance given to the language by Indians where they explain how an increasing number of Indian families find English medium education as a better standard of education delivery compared to a delivery in local languages. As a result, there isn't any noteworthy scholarly research pointing to the struggles of Indians students in overseas tertiary education with English literacy as this not a prominent trend. However, there is an abundance of literature demonstrating the challenges faced by the wider community of international students.

One such research is by Haugh (2016) that analyses the literacy struggles of international students within Australian universities. The research points how these struggles range from weak writing skills, underdeveloped analytical skills as well as troubles in understanding the spoken English delivery of academic teaching staff. These struggling international students usually have a background of completing their prerequisite degrees or qualifications from non-English mediums of content delivery and rely on pathway English courses on arriving in Australia. These pathway courses aim to develop the skills of these students to cope with the

university level English however, the short durations of these courses and the lack of early years of education and training in English result in these some of these international students struggling with English throughout their tertiary degrees in Australia. This includes coping up with the materials taught in the classrooms as well as interacting with their peers and academics. According to Badke (2002, pp. 1-6) due to poor English language skills, many international students struggle to formulate questions in the classroom and remain quiet despite having queries regarding the content. Sometimes these queries extend beyond the classroom and as such led to challenges with information literacy. A lack of this information literacy includes having trouble asking for directions, seeking assistance and contributing to the in-class discussions with peers. Furthermore, Benzie (2009, pp. 447-459) argues that students who enter Australian universities with low levels of English language skills, do not develop work ready skills during their degrees because they fail to acquire the skills delivered in the classrooms. As a result, careful selection of students and increased use of English language testing are among the solutions put forward, else the English language struggles of these international students continue even after graduation and into the workforce.

Apart from their own language challenges, international as well as local students have also taken issue to international teaching staff at universities. This is analysed in my thesis where some interviewees have expressed a negative attitude towards the literacy skills of some international teaching staff members. Research by Munro et al. (2006, pp. 626-637) has been conducted on this phenomenon, in which students were inclined to present negative attitudes towards non-native accents, especially in cases in which the lecturers or tutors were individuals of non-English-speaking backgrounds. In addition to these findings, Steinbach (2014, pp. 319-334) explains how a newer study by University of Chicago found students tended to have a negative, prejudiced attitude to teachers and lectures who had a foreign or non-native accent. According to this research, the 'cognitive fluency' of international lecturers who had English as their second language is significantly reduced, meaning the ease with which the brain processes interactions between the teacher and the student are reduced with these international teachers. Due to this phenomenon, students come to doubt the accuracy and credibility of their lecturers. Furthermore, Dragojevic (2017, pp. 111-136) tested the hypothesis that heavily foreign-accented speakers are evaluated more negatively than mildly foreign-accented speakers because they are perceived as more representative of their community and their speech is difficult for their listeners to process. In this experiment, participants listened to a mildly or heavily Punjabi- or Mandarin-accented speaker. Compared to the mild-accented speaker, the

heavy-accented speaker in both studies was attributed less status and given negative feedback, not only in terms of their accents but also their teaching skills and knowledge of the subject.

Another negative experience often faced by international students is racism within their educational institutions and at their workplaces. According to Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson (2016, pp. 784-847), Australian institutions have taken significant steps towards eliminating the negative effect of racism towards the integration of students. Similarly, Ward (2017, p. 471) has argued that when any student is a victim of racism, the issue should be a significant issue of discussion within the Australian universities. This is in the wake of what King and Marginson (2011, pp. 135-177) call a new form of racism which is increasing against international students where people show their disapproval of the immigration policy through exclusion. Although the issue is not justifiable under racial characteristics such as physical features, language and culture are used to identify foreigners and subject them to unfair and unjust treatment or even violence. Wall and Baker (2012, pp. 54-63) have conducted a study to determine ideological constructions of racism within the Australian education system. The study focuses on the effects of the reports on poor academic performance by aboriginal students alone, hence there is no indication whether such racism could affect the performance of international students. The findings showed that stakeholders in the education sector have been collecting information on the performance of students categorised by race. The data has had negative effects on the motivation of the students. Minority races, especially the aboriginal students, have been profiled as poor performers by other learners, which affects their ability to interact freely with the rest of the learners.

Racism faced by Indian students in Australia has also been analysed in depth by Singh (2011, pp. 673-689) and Robertson (2015, pp. 1-22). A study by Singh (2011, pp. 673-689) has revealed that racism is a harsh reality that many Indian students living in Australia face. Singh explains how variations in ethnic and traditional values continue to predispose Indian students to racism from the Australian population. According to Singh, most cases of racism manifest in public spaces such as restaurants, shopping malls, workplaces, and sporting events. Indian students also take up jobs at places where racism might be rampant due to the financial pressures and burdens of paying off their education loans and sustaining their expenses in Australia. Robertson (2015, pp. 1-22) states, "The post-2004 emerging class of non-elite Indian students were generally painted in the media as either opportunistic and untrustworthy 'backdoor migrants' or hapless victims of an exploitative system and racist culture". Furthermore, Robertson (2015) has gone on to highlight violence and cultural intolerance as

two of the vulnerabilities of Indian students living in Australia due to their large numbers within workplaces and universities. According to Robertson (2015, pp. 1-22), "The so-called Indian student 'crisis' of 2009 and 2010 is often analysed in the context of how the violence against students challenged Australian multiculturalism and revealed both underlying racism and denial of racism in Australian society".

There is also some research on racism at workplaces. The cleaning industry showed reports of highest levels of racism against international and Indian students. Australia's 2011 race discrimination commissioner Dr. Helen Szoke has argued that international students working as cleaners are subjected to concerning levels of racism. According to Szoke (2011), "To hear the extent of racism is a particular concern. Racism has such a damaging impact on people who are supposed to be welcomed into our country and making the most of being here." Another report by Victorian TAFE International (2012, pp. 1-24) and United Voice (2012) blamed this racism on the practice of unscrupulous subcontractors for acts of racism and harassment towards international students. Velayutham (2013, pp. 340-361) has argued that one of the gravest concerns in the Australian cleaning industry is the existence of sub-contractors who exploit these students. Corporate offices, businesses and universities often hire contractors who in turn hire shadow sub-contractors to ease their workloads. It is these sub-contractors that are mainly responsible for exploiting international and particularly Indian student workers in Australia. Research by Margnison (2005, pp. 4-22) of Monash Institute for the Study of Global movements interviewed 200 students from 34 countries and found alarming levels of discrimination and racism towards these students with more than half of them suffering bad treatment of which 57 per cent were female students. According to another research by Graycar (2010, pp. 3-15) for the Australian Human Rights Commission, racism mainly occurs depending on the location, racial appearance, socio-economic status, age and gender. Since young students tend to work graveyard shifts and are out at late hours of the night while returning from work, they could be subjected to racial attacks. While racism does occur in Australia, it is not established whether it was due to the victim's status as students or due to the victims belonging to minority groups. To focus on this racism as being prejudiced towards students alone means focussing on symptoms and neglecting the causes.

Apart from racism, exploitation through low wages and poor working conditions has also become a common phenomenon among international students working in casual jobs in Australia. Once again it was the cleaning industry which reported high levels of such exploitations. International students who work as cleaners mainly come from India (51.5%),

Colombia (15.2%) and Sri Lanka (12.1%) (*Sydney Morning Herald* 2013). Despite a union backed starting hourly wage of \$24.35, many students working as cleaners are paid only \$15 an hour, and some as little as \$8 per hour. These underpayments annually amount to nearly \$15,000 per Indian student putting them just above the poverty line with earning of only \$325.86 a week (Howe 2013). Hawthorne (2013, pp. 3-19) argues that since 2008 the exploitation of migrant workers in Australia has become an urgent human rights issue. These international students are exposed to poor working conditions that are repeatedly presented by media exposes. A significant amount of exploitation was also found in the hospitality sector.

Crellin (2016, pp. 6-9) has analysed how it is not just the cleaning industry but exploitation in developed countries also occurs within multinational chains such as 7-Eleven via underpayment. According to research by Clibborn (2017, pp. 150-165) of the University of Sydney Business School more than half of all international students working part-time in Sydney earned less than \$12 an hour. Furthermore, more than 60% students were paid below the legal minimum hourly wage. This research found that most of the exploitation happened in the hospitality sector and Chinese students were the worst affected with almost 70% of Chinese international students facing underpayment. Goodall (2015, pp. 34-67) has argued that international students are often trapped by the conditions of their student visa that limits their earnings. Moreover, the fear of deportation in addition to expulsion forces them to provide their services in such conditions. It means they are subjected to verbal, physical as well as sexual abuse in their workplaces. One of the ways out for these students would be to simply work at places that pay a legal wage, however, it is not that easy. Chau (2015, pp. 1-3) has argued that another reason why some international students accept this exploitation is because they are not offered employment in legally paying jobs that insist employing people with a PR. These students can apply for a PR only on completion of their degrees; hence, they fail to secure legally paying jobs on student visas.

Furthermore, Castles and Wise (2008, pp. 11-55) have investigated why Indian students also fall prey to such workplace exploitation. Castles and Wise's research has revealed that it is the financial burdens faced by Indian students that make them susceptible to exploitation. Their difficult financial situation pushes these students to sacrifice their academic time by working at any available job to meet their housing and sustenance needs. Cameron (2013, pp. 135-146) further adds that the majority of student workplace exploitation happens in the name of work experience or internships. Learners usually seek work experience in addition to work-integrated programs that will increase their chances of secured employment after graduation.

That's why international students become susceptible to workplace exploitation as some of employers make them provide free labour. Students are asked to work on trials or as interns for no pay for months before being told their services are no longer needed. New students continue to apply and work for such unpaid internships or trial periods and the organisations continue to receive free labour. According to Berg and Farbenblum (2017, pp. 19-56) the underpayment of migrants is usually attributed to their lack of awareness about the underpayment or discrimination which is often practiced by employers to ensure high ranking or legally paying positions are reserved for local Australians within the same workplaces. Nyland et al. (2009, pp. 1-14) has argued that students from Asia fear to speak out about their negative experience at work because of many prejudices against them. Such silence due to poor language skills and lack of cultural knowledge makes international students vulnerable to mistreatment and abuse. Nyland and Forbes-Mewett (2009, pp. 44-69) have argued that the lack of information from universities is one of the reasons why these students are uninformed of their workplace rights. This lack of awareness could be overcome by information sessions or reach-out programmes by the universities where these students' study.

In addition to the negative experiences and hindrances faced by international students in Australia, some research has also demonstrated the positive experiences of these students. Webb (2016, pp. 193-210) has demonstrated how international students find the student support services within Australian universities conducive to their mental wellbeing and academic progress. These provisions by Australian universities have also led to higher international student satisfaction ratings and encouraged these universities to deploy more resources towards student support services. Another research by Hasle (2003) has analysed the positive impact orientation programs have had on international students. These orientation programs have assisted students to understand the Australian university culture and academic requirements. It has helped them socialise and feel comfortable with the new learning environment. Such programs are highly rated by international students as positive factors impacting their journeys as international students in Australia. In addition to these services, the lower power distance between the teaching staff and the students is seen as a favourable factor by many international students. Hofstede first introduced this lower power distance in 1973. Power distance is a term that describes how people belonging to a specific culture view power relationships – such as the relation between an international student and a university lecturer, including the degree that people not in power accept that power is spread unequally. Individuals in cultures demonstrating a high-power distance, such as India, are very deferential to authority

figures and generally accept an unequal distribution of power and value and prefer a low power distance experienced by them overseas. Individuals in cultures demonstrating a low power distance, such as Australia, readily question authority and expect to participate in decisions that affect them.

This thesis builds on these studies further by analysing the micro push and pull factors and cultural dynamics affecting the positive experiences as well as financial burdens faced by Indian students in Australia. It also adds further knowledge about a unique aspect of this exploitation and that being exploited by fellow migrant employers of the same nationality or origin. It provides an analysis of diverse Indian ethnicities involved in workplace exploitation of one another.

Chapter 3. Methods and Methodology

The methodology for this thesis consists of qualitative research, largely interview-based as well as engagement with a variety of primary and secondary sources. The prime method for data collection and analysis has involved qualitative analysis of 125 oral interviews, supported by quantitative work and a close analysis of the policy context for Indian student mobility. It used a semi-structured interview style, in which the outline was set for the topics covered, but the interviewee's responses determined the way in which the interview was directed. This is the type of interview most used in qualitative research (Jamshed 2014). All the questions used in the interviews and the detailed bio sheet of all the de-identified interviewees' information have been attached in the appendices section.

The students interviewed on university campuses were asked to participate with the help of their international offices as well as student union emails. These emails usually contain information on networking and socialising events. The titles of the emails were designed to grab the students' attention, e.g., 'want to be heard?', 'Share your story' and 'Help us understand you'. With such headings, these emails are sent to students who had subscribed to receive the event updates and hence were more likely to act on the emails. Stalls were also set at various campuses and students were directly approached regarding their participation in the oral data collection of this research. I began by interviewing a sample of 10 students in India who hailed from the states of Punjab, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. They comprised of six women and four men, all working professionals in their late 20s with undergrad degrees planning to peruse master's degrees in Australia. As they voiced their aspirations, I was able to conceive, then plan the cohort and sample questions for a larger sample of students to be interviewed. I conducted interviews with students from India who had not yet arrived in Australia but were either scheduled or wanted to travel. Some of these students had simply enrolled with migration agencies but were undecided whether to migrate or not. Some were scheduled to migrate to countries other than Australia. A basic understanding of the migration-related aims and goals was obtained from this set of pilot interviews. The more interviews I conducted, the greater the insights I gained which allowed me to plan chapter themes. Once key ideas about why students aimed to leave India for Australia had been established, more interviews were conducted across Australia to delve deeper into the students' experiences after arrival. This helped to establish a comparison between what expectations were prior to arrival and what they were after arrival. While waiting for the interviewees interviewed in India to arrive in Australia and begin their degrees, new interviewees already in Australia were asked

what their aspirations had been prior to their own arrival to establish some comparisons between pre- and post-migration situations. All face-to-face interviews lasted for at least one hour and the students were asked open-ended questions to understand as much as possible about their aspirations and experiences.

I am aware that small samples do not always provide the best representation of the broader population; hence it is difficult to know how generalisable the results of such studies can be. I attempted to create a credible and indicative sample by selecting it in a methodical way. For example, I consciously addressed key demographic variables likely to have an impact on the interviewee's views of the topic such as diverse ethnicities, different universities, different university courses, and people living and working in diverse locations. In some instances, I used snowball or chain sampling, in which I requested key interviewees to recommend other relevant informants for the interviews. This method was useful in reaching out to hard-to-find cases of those students who are introvert or suffering from social isolation. I also used intensity sampling in which rich and significant information was gathered in much detail from a few select cases that constitute interesting examples of the phenomenon. Interviewing a diverse range of students in different geographic locations provided challenges. So was reaching out and managing multiple meetings with these interviewees. The interviewees were dispersed across Australia and the field trips were self-funded, which added financial constraints when collecting the data. Some interviewees requested reschedules and meeting them on different dates meant travelling interstate again for certain interviews. Similar financial constraints applied when reinterviewing some of the interviewees to discuss ideas that arose from their previous interviews.

The key questions asked for mapping the experiences included factors, goals, and aspirations that had influenced their decision to study and live in Australia; to state to what extent they believed these goals and aspirations were met; and to discuss the factors that limited or constrained their attainment.

Interview Questions:

Sample of Questions asked during the face-to-face interviews. Since these were face to face, based on some responses, certain questions were asked differently, or additional questions were also asked. These were asked in a different order to different cohorts.

- What is your name, age, gender, education, occupation, nationality, ethnicity, residence status?
- Do you intend to study in Australia? Why?
- What attracts you about Australia? E.g., education, society etc.
- Is there any reason or experiences why you want to leave India?
- Describe in detail your educational experiences in India and Australia.
- Describe in detail your workplace experiences in India and Australia.
- Do you participate in extracurricular activities? Which ones, how and why? Why not?
- Do you work in Australia, where why and what are your experiences at workplace?
- How did you settle in Australia? Describe your journey from the time of arrival.
- Are you content and happy with your decision to study in Australia? Why, why not?
- Could you reflect on your social life in India and your social life in Australia?
- Could you reflect on your academic experiences in India and the ones in Australia?
- Could you reflect on your short- and long-term goals and their attainment in India and in Australia?
- Could you reflect on your financial situation while in India and now in Australia?
- What aspirations about Australia you had, have been met and which ones have not been met?
- Would you like to share any experiences not covered so far?
- Would you like to share any insights and information you have seen around but not covered in the interview so far?

Additional challenges also arose along the way during these interviews. One was getting the interviewees to speak honestly about their real-life stories and experiences. Qualitative analysis and data collection depend heavily on the person gathering the data and their interviewing skills. Some questions in the interviews about dowry, personal freedoms and religion were very personal to a few interviewees and this made interviewing them a difficult task. These

interviews sought to map the experiences through key questions and proceeding through the remaining interview in an unstructured manner. The interviewees tended to explain recent experiences in more detail compared to older ones regardless of their significance. Hence, reminding the interviewees to detail older yet significant experiences was also a challenging task. Since the interviewees mainly belonged to those Indian students who were planning to leave India and those who had already arrived in Australia, the questions were the same with few variations depending on the migration situation of the student. For instance, a student in India planning to leave was asked why they intended to leave India, whereas a student interviewed in Australia was asked why they left India and chose to migrate particularly to Australia.

Profile of interviewees

The recruitment of interviewees took place through established networks. Unions in major universities across Australia were contacted and these unions sent out emails to their databases requesting participation in this research. Furthermore, stalls were obtained from these unions and placed in their open meetup areas. Students were approached at these stalls and were told what the research was about. Participants that met the criteria and agreed to take part were contacted later to set up a meeting and to conduct the interview. The criteria were simple. The students had to be international Indian students enrolled in a university in Australia. While these students formed the primary cohort, students were also approached in India. In India, students who were planning to enrol in a foreign university or an Australian university were interviewed prior to their departure. Follow-up interviews were conducted with the students who arrived in Australia to compare their expectations prior to arrival to their migration experiences after arrival.

I interviewed a total of 125 interviewees with the following demographic breakdown⁴:

Gender	Female	58
	Male	67
Religion	Hindu	71
	Sikh	27
	Muslim	12
	Christian	8
	Buddhist	3
	Jewish	3
	Zoroastrian	1
Education (Enrolled in or completed)	Staff	1
	Bachelor	10
	Master	114
	PhD	0
Location of interview	Melbourne	82
	Sydney	13
	Adelaide	4
	Canberra	3
	Brisbane	3
	Mumbai	17
	Delhi	8
	Pune	7
	Bangalore	3
	Punjab	1
Sub Indian-Ethnicity	Punjabi	32
	Maharashtrian	14
	Hyderabadi	7
	Tamil	6
	Andhraite	6
	Pathan	5
	Keralite	5
	Haryanvi	5
	Gujarati	4
	Hindi	4

⁴ More details provided in the appendix. Refer to A1: Participant Bio Sheet Data.

	Jewish	3
	Bihari	3
	Goan	3
	Lucknowi	2
	Sindhi	2
	Kashmiri	1
	Parsi	1
	Bangalorean	4
Financial Background	Wealthy & Upper-Middle Class	7
	Middle Class	118
	Lower-Middle & Poor Class	0

It was a methodological decision to categorise the migrants based on their financial class rather than caste since interviewing Indians based on their caste is a sensitive issue and may have needed a high-risk ethics application. My ethics application was approved twice for both interviews rounds and on both occasions was deemed low-risk research as it did not put me or the interviewees in any eminent danger based on the content of the questions asked. Besides, India has around 3000 castes and 25,000 sub castes (BBC 2017) which would have made the interviewing process very complex. The Lok Survey, conducted by *The Hindu* (2015), provides a considerable amount of evidence regarding the extent to which the financial class of a person affects their place in society, their consumption levels, and their choice to migrate overseas. The Lok survey established by the Lok Foundation samples over 65,000 households across India to gain deep empirical data on the Indian society to assist policymaking on a range of issues. In the Indian context, there is no definition or official classification of financial class. However, through the patterns of migration I observed in Australia, I decided to categorise the interviewees according to the financial backgrounds of the entire household. Based on the *Lok Survey* used for financial class categorisation in India, I categorised them into ‘wealthy-class’ and an ‘upper-middle class’; a ‘middle class’; and the ‘lower middle-class’ and the ‘poor class’. This categorisation was possible⁵ via analysis of data collected via pre-interview questionnaires.

⁵ Since I had studied SPSS during my economics degree and I also teach statistics and econometrics as a casual academic, it was a straightforward process for me to use the SPSS software and analyse the data collected that helped me with the categorisation of my interviewees.

These needed interviewees to provide information on their age, ethnic backgrounds, religion, education, family cumulative incomes, assets, and dwellings (refer to appendix 6).

The wealthy and upper middle-class students came from families whose parents combined annual incomes were over \$60,000. The families of these students owned multiple luxury cars and, at times, one luxury car per family member. They also owned multiple houses and apartments in upper-class areas. The middle-class students who were much of the interviewees came from families whose parents combined annual incomes were below \$60,000 but above \$15,000. These families owned at least one car, usually a family car, or one or two small cars. They owned a single apartment or at most two small apartments and had larger families in their houses in cramped living situations. The lower middle-class and poor class students belonged to families whose parents combined annual income was below \$15,000. These families did not own cars and lived on the outskirts of the cities in small houses or slums. My research also found a connection between the level of education and the financial background of the student. The wealthy and comfortable students moving to Australia mostly enrolled for bachelor's degrees; the middle-class students opted for master's qualifications; and the lower-class students did not opt for overseas education, as they could not afford the costs.

Most of the interviewees belonged to the above mentioned middle-class of the Indian society and were pursuing master's degrees in Australia. While these students did not have access to a luxurious lifestyle, they had a choice to remain in India, however, they took on the challenge to migrate into a new country for a better life. Besides, despite a desire to emigrate, many poor people in India do not have the amenities and financial or societal structure to emigrate. These middle-class Indian students had opportunities and a framework to plan and execute their migration to Australia. This is what makes their analysis interesting - because they are not entirely deprived of freedoms in their own country, they move overseas mainly to make their standard and quality of life better.

Secondary sources

While theoretical concepts were laid out using the scholarly sources, supporting data and information was sourced using reputable secondary material.

These secondary sources included data from official government sources, newspaper articles, government tourism board websites, University websites, and Student Union websites and publications. Government websites such as the national archives, ABS and national museum

provided historic facts, timelines, and data in the original form. These also provided historic information about the first migrations to Australia, especially ones from India. Government websites and sources such as the Department of Home Affairs and the Australian Bureau of Statistics were used to gather data on migrant numbers, the visa categories they arrived on as well as where they came from. These websites provided publications and publicly available data including historic and current policy papers relevant in understanding the magnitude of the migrant numbers and the governments' policy-based approach towards them. Some data on these government websites was not available to the public as it was restricted or only allowed paid members access. This data was not confidential, rather detailed with all the micro level numbers not available on the website. Hence, I sought help from the office of the Minister for Immigration to access this data. The minister's office was helpful and provided me with the requested detailed data pertaining to Indian migrations to Australia.

Apart from government documents and publications, newspapers were also utilised for research from both India and Australia. This included *The Times of India*, *The Hindu*, *Herald Sun*, *The Age* and *The Australian*. The thesis needed news articles to analyse the incidents and reported surveys as well as media covert operations relevant to migration studies. Issues relating to underpayment in Australia, cultural and religious violence in India, incidents due to dowry payments and acts of racism were sourced from these media outlets. While incidents in these media outlets were used to understand the occurrences of the issues, initially cited academic literature was utilised for the further analysis. University websites were also utilised to understand university policies, facilities, amenities, and study support services available for the students. These websites and publications also included those from various departments of the university such as their respective residential services. The websites of these residential services as well as their annual reports provided information about international as well as Indian student participation in cultural as well as leadership activities. It also provided information about the leadership roles students held along with their names and countries of origin.

In conjunction with university websites, their respective student union websites, databases, and publications were also utilised to understand the deeper issues, action plans, trends and cultures imbedded within the micro circles of student life. For instance, student union publications provided information about the participation of Indian students in union sponsored and at times university-based leadership activities. Information about such cultural and social participation was not available elsewhere but the union-based publications. Because this thesis is analysing

issues and phenomenon new to the academic literature, it had to strategically utilise such non-academic sources for backing important facts and figures.

The next chapter utilises these sources and interviews to introduce the crucial historic context which supports the understanding of the later chapters and reinforces the significance of the narratives of 125 interviewees.

Chapter 4. Changing Trends in Indian Migration to Australia 2000-2017

Introduction

In 2013, when I began writing this thesis, Indian immigration to Australia accounted for the highest number of permanent new settlers in Australia (ABS 2018), overtaking the hitherto highest number of settlers, those from the People's Republic of China. This trend continued until 2019-2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world including Australia. From 2016-2017, Indian migrants constituted 21% of the total Australian migration entry (ABS 2016). Such a high percentage reinforces the importance of understanding the aspirations of Indian migrants to Australia. It is also important to understand exactly what type of Indian migrants are arriving. There is a common assumption in Australia that Indian migration to Australia is a recent phenomenon, however, it is not completely new. It was extremely limited in the past, started to rise sharply from 2000 to 2005, and has continued to grow steeply since then. The reason for the limited migration of Indians to Australia during the 20th century relates largely to Australia's severe restrictions on non-European immigration for much of that time, courtesy of the White Australia Policy (WAP). The ending of the WAP in the 1970s saw migration from parts of Asia increase significantly, especially Vietnamese. In contrast, Indian migration increased slightly, but not dramatically with 21,914 Indian migrants entering Australia until 1980 and another 54,424 from 1980 to 2000 (ABS 2016). The dramatic increase after 2000 was a result of the relaxation of various immigration policies during this period and the introduction of the Student Visa Subclass 573. This drastic increase accounted for an entry of 398,225 Indian migrants between 2000 to 201 (ABS 2016). This visa allows students to complete their degrees in 18 months to two years and makes them eligible to apply immediately thereafter for a temporary residency (TR) visa which gives them time to prepare documents and apply for a permanent residence (PR)⁶. Unlike earlier group of migrants, the new Indian migrants are students who intend to settle permanently after completing their education in Australia (Singh 2011).

This chapter comprises an explanation of how Indian students are increasingly pursuing master's degrees in Australia, with the intention of migrating permanently and why the 573 visa category has been favoured by young Indians in recent years and directly contributed to

⁶ On July 2016 the Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection combined all international student visas under one category, the Visa Subclass 500 (DIBP 2017). From that point on, it became impossible to know exactly how many students arrived for what degree level. The data from that date relates only to the total number of students arriving on visa 500.

the overall increase in post-2000 Indian migrant numbers. It contextualises this development within a broader history of Indian migration to Australia.

Indian Migration to Australia in the 20th Century: The impact of the White Australia policy

Tavan (2005) and others (Biddle, Khoo & Taylor 2015) have demonstrated that the White Australia Policy (WAP) severely constrained the migration of ‘non-whites’ to Australia, including those from India, for much of the 20th century. The aim of the policy was to keep Australia a ‘country of white people’ living according to British customs (Coupe and Andrews 1996). Labour market competition from foreign workers from China and Pacific Islands was also scrutinized by trade unions. This was due to the increasing fear of these workers accepting lower wages and thus bringing down the overall wages and work conditions for the broader labour market. The policy was not implemented by the federal government in one piece of legislation, but a series of acts, the centrepieces of which were the Immigration Restriction Act (IRA) 1901, the Post and Telegraph Act and the Pacific Island Labourers Act.

The most infamous feature of the IRA 1901 was the dictation test, in which prospective immigrants were asked to complete a test in 50 words in a European language to test their language proficiency. It stated, “Any person who...shall fail to himself write out and sign in the characters of any language of Europe in application to the colonial secretary the form set out in the schedule” (Yarwood 1958, pp. 21). The dictation test was a ‘diplomatic’ mechanism meant to make migration for Asians and Pacific Islanders difficult by imposing dictation tests in European languages (Yarwood 1958). The tests could be manipulated to exclude undesired individuals through denial of entry or by deportation, thus effectively halting the immigration of non-whites to Australia (Megarrity 2006). Between 1902-1903, the dictation test was administered 805 times and a total of only 46 Asian and Pacific Islander migrants passed it (Migration Heritage Centre 2020). From 1904-1909, the test was administered 554 times and this time only six people managed to be successful (McNamara 2009). However, from 1909 to 1958, no person passed the dictation test. Moreover, those who failed the test were deported and even refused entry to Australia. The IRA and the dictation tests, although frequently amended, remained in force until 1958 (Willard 1923).

The WAP was strongly criticised by countries in the Asia region that recognised that its real intent was to severely restrict Asian migration (McNamara 2009). India too, strongly disapproved of the WAP, even though the Indian government restrained from making public

statements condemning the policy. However, the government of India would compile weekly reports of ill-treatment and discrimination of Indians overseas. It was in these reports that the WAP would be condemned. These reports also published calls by Indian nationalists – from Radha Kamal Mukherjee to MK Gandhi – for Australia to allow Indians to settle in the Northern Territory (Benvenuti 2011 and Kama 2020). Such arguments failed to gain traction in Australia, but the idea was a tenacious one. This is not to suggest that the policy was completely static. India, being a British colony, participated in World War I, siding with the Imperial Partners. This participation influenced the way in which policies relating to Indians migrating to Australia were viewed (Ahmed 2014). Yarwood (1964, p. 132) explains that India's alliance in the 1914–1918 war had a markedly positive impact on Australian sentimentalities and policies towards Indians. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers in November 1914 recorded an increasing level of waivers for former Indian residents who wished to return to the Commonwealth (cited in Yarwood 1964). After the enactment of the Reciprocity Resolution in London, at the Imperial Conference in 1918, the spouses and children of Indians resident in Australia were excused from the dictation test (Yarwood 1964). Still, at the outbreak of World War II (WWII) there were a mere 5,000 Indians living in Australia (Jupp 2001).

It was not till after World War II that Australian governments began to liberalise their immigration policies. In 1945, the Chifley Labor government formulated a plan to increase immigration to meet Australia's demand for population, defence and labour purposes (Hugo 2001). Arthur Calwell, Australia's first Minister of Immigration, commissioned a report on immigration, which indicated that Australia needed an annual increase of 1% of its 7,000,000 population by immigration to meet its needs. British migration was especially encouraged in the years that followed, but by 1947 urgent labour shortages compelled the government to turn towards previously resisted European migration, and by the early 1950s Australia was accepting immigrants from many parts of Europe (Price 1998, p. 17). The Chifley Labor government remained adamant, nevertheless, that the White Australia policy would be maintained.

The 1950s saw some minor liberalisations of the White Australia policy. Newly elected Liberal Prime Minister Robert Menzies promised to administer the policy in a more humane manner than the Chifley government. The pledge demonstrated changing economic and strategic priorities for Australia. Menzies was a loyal supporter of links to the monarchy and the British Commonwealth, but he also promoted an Australian alliance with the US and eased post-war

trading with Japan (Hugo 2001). The Menzies government also oversaw significant regional developments in its early days, which included Australia becoming a signatory of the Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic and Social Development in Asia and the Pacific. The Colombo Plan was a Commonwealth scheme under which bilateral aid was intended to flow to the Global South as part of the Commonwealth's attempts to contain the spread of Communism in South-East Asia (Lowe 2010). In 1952, Australia became party to the Colombo Plan and in accordance with this scheme, between 1950 to 1980, around 18,000 to 20,000 students and scholars from Asia, particularly from India enrolled in Australian universities (Black 2017). With the introduction of the Colombo Plan, Indian migration to Australia increased to 6,097 in 1949–1959 (Hugo 2001).

Attitudes associated with racial-related questions were changing not only in Australia but also the rest of the world. Australia's discriminatory immigration policies were constantly criticised in international and especially Asian press. With this, the international criticism of Australia's discriminatory immigration policies continued to rise, resulting in the consideration for a change in the nation's political dynamics (Tavan 2005). Moreover, the Australian parliament experienced a generational shift, beginning with the retirement of Australia's long-serving Prime Minister Robert Menzies in 1966. That year, with growing pressure for relaxing Australia's immigration policy, the Holt coalition government introduced legislation whose focus was to enable non-Europeans to acquire citizenship (Hafez 2011, p. 102). The adoption of this initiative removed some of the discrimination built into Australia's migration policy and allowed Asian immigration to increase moderately (Tavan 2016). In 1966 about 1920 non-Europeans and 1498 of "mixed descent" were admitted. A year later this figure rose to 3142 and 2449 respectively. The Holt government continued to relax the entry of migrants and in 1971 about 9666 non-European immigrants could enter. From 1966 to 1971, a total of approximately 44,521 non-Europeans and part-Europeans were allowed to permanently migrate to Australia. However, racial discrimination against Asian immigrants remained in place. This led to the leaders of Asian nations to further publicly express concern at Australia's treatment of their nationals (Tavan 2005). This caused a further relaxing of the WAP. From 1965 to 1973 approximately 12,308 new migrants from India entered Australia (Coupe & Andrews 1992). With the groundwork done by the Holt government, the WAP was finally abolished in the year 1973 by the Whitlam Labor government (Akbari & MacDonald 2014). To implement the abolishment, the Whitlam Government made citizenship permissible to all immigrants regardless of race and country of origin if they had lived in Australia for at least

three years. Furthermore, overseas ports were also instructed to disregard race entirely while allowing immigrants to travel to Australia. The final step was the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)⁷ along with any remaining international agreements relating to immigration and race (Tavan 2005).

With the end of the White Australia policy and changes to refugee and family reunion policies, the number of immigrants with a non-European background moving to Australia increased significantly. From 1970 to 1980 around 120,000 Southeast Asians refugees migrated to Australia (APMRN 2008). In 1981, the number of Australian citizens born in India was 41,657, an increase from 29,211 in 1979 (Spence & Thomson 2016). About 15,000 Indian skilled migrants were allowed into Australia in 1982, almost 23,000 by 1984 and a further 60,000 by 1986 (ABS 2018). During this period owing to the improvements that were implemented in the curricula of Australian education institutions, proper marketing of these curricula overseas and the removal of visa restrictions (IMMI 2018), international student migration to Australia also increased. From 1981 to 1982 the number of international students in Australian universities was estimated to be 7,600. Additionally, the increase in the number of Indian students and other Indian migrants continued because of India's 'Look East' policy that was initiated in 1991, with both India and Australia sharing a common interest in developing relations in the Southeast region (Haokip 2011). India's Look East Policy was born of a vision of the Indian government to promote and embrace economic and strategic relations with the nations of Southeast Asia. This policy was expected to solidify India's standing as a regional power. The Look East Policy was comprised of a three-pronged approach to the countries of South-East Asia. These approaches included renewing political contacts, establishing and enhancing trade agreements, increasing investments and strengthening defence with ASEAN member states (Ollapally 2018). During this period from 1991 to 1995, the number of new Indian migrants to Australia increased to 20,793 (West 2014).

After 1995, Australia's migration policy liberalised entry requirements for skilled workers (Hugo 2001). Data from ABS (2018) shows that in 1999, Australia adopted the Employer Nomination Scheme (ENS) and increased business skills categories to improve Australia's attractiveness for migrants in an environment of globalisation of the workforce. This Employer Nomination Scheme allowed employers in Australia to select overseas employees with skills

⁷ICERD is a United Nations convention which acts as a human rights instrument and commits its members to eliminate racial discrimination of all forms, to promote equality among all races and to bar hate speech and criminalize membership in racist organizations (UN 2020).

that could not be found in the Australian labour to fill gaps in the labour market (Denny & Churchill 2016). These employees needed to be under the age of 50 (Ng & Metz 2015) and be fluent in English language skills (Hawthorne 2014).

Despite the draconian policies of the past, these economic policies were welcoming towards India. India had a large workforce of educated and skilled workers who struggled to find work in their home country (Singh and Rajan 2015). These skilled workers looked for international opportunities to work and apply their skills and knowledge. Australia was not the only nation to which Indians could migrate, but Indian migration to Australia increased during this period. Skilled workers migrate to take advantage of better opportunities, better pay and better working conditions, and clearly Indians saw this potential in the Australian economy. Australia was a new market for Indians that promised higher pay and better living conditions. Australia's need for skilled migrants to fill labour shortages coincided with this desire and led to an increase in Indian migration to Australia in the 21st Century (Ghatak, Levine and Price 2006, 159-198).

Indian Migration to Australia in the 21st Century: The rise of the 573 Visa

During the period 2000 to 2012, there was a significant increase in the number of permanent residencies granted to Indians in Australia. This included an enormous 335% increase of overall migrants and an increase of 226% of student entrants (IMMI 2014). In 2011, 33,758 Indian students entered Australia and that same year 28,313 Indians received a permanent residency visa in Australia. Overall, from 2001 to 2011, the total number of Indians who were granted PR visas was 203,912 (DIBP 2017), and a total of 313,908 students entered Australia from 2002 to 2012 (DIBP 2017). These high numbers are a result of Indian students entering Australia on the 573 visa and later settling permanently. The 573 visa was relevant for international students undertaking a bachelor's degree, graduate certificate, graduate diploma or master's by coursework with any Australian university (DIBP 2017).

According to Singh and Cabraal (2010, pp. 19-30), in 2009, 120,569 Indian students comprised 34% of the total Indian community in Australia and 47% of the total Indian community in Melbourne. However, the same year there were 152 assaults on Indian students across Australia, with 23 attacks involving racial overtones (The Indian Express 2010). These attacks on Indian students caused temporary decrease in new student arrivals due to the negative portrayal of Australia as a racist and unsafe destination for Indian students. In 2010 the number of new Indian student arrivals decreased to under 100,000 and further declined to 70,000 in 2011. The numbers continued to decrease and reached the 2005 levels of 55,000 in 2012 (Baas

2015). However, despite the drop in arrivals, the number of Indians receiving permanent migration visas from 2011 to 2012 reached 29,018, 15.7% of total immigration for all nations that year. From 2012, the Indian student arrivals again began increasing. In 2017, the percentage of Indian students in Australia was 16.8% (Tan & Hugo, 2017). As migration academic Lesley Anne Hawthorne has pointed out (cited in Rafi 2013, pp. 157-73), “the scale of recent Indian migration is striking. We can assume large numbers were former international students who had qualified onshore.” India was among the top three or four migrating nations until 2011, but since 2012, it has become the number one migrating nation for both skilled migrants and the number two nation for student migrants, particularly on a 573 visa.

Immigration changes implemented between 1999 and 2001 by the Howard government led to the initial surge of international students in Australia on the 573 visa (Birrell and Healy 2010). As a result of these policies, until 2007, Information Technology (IT) and commerce degrees were popular among Indian students as these allowed them to settle permanently in Australia. However, some major migration policy changes for skilled workers were implemented in 2008 due to the growing mismatch between the skills acquired by migrant students and labour requirements in the Australian job market. These policy changes prompted the implementation of the Skilled Occupation List (SOL). The SOL not only emphasised skills obtained from university degrees alone, but also English language skills and prior work experience relevant to skill shortages in the Australian market (DIBP 2017a). The SOL replaced the much wider and generic Migration Occupations on Demand List (MODL) (DIBP 2017b). These revisions were designed to ensure that multiple relevant factors would determine migration outcomes. In reaction to these revisions, there was a further boost in Indian students enrolling in higher education courses via the 573 visa (DIBP 2017b).

In a 10-year period, from 2002 to 2012, half of the total Indian students entering Australia, entered on 573 visa which was 156,466 students out of a total of 313,908 Indian students entering Australia (DIBP 2017). This was by far the most popular visa category for Indian students to enter Australia. The table below, based on data collected from the DIBP (2017), indicates student visa categories that existed prior to 1 July 2016. This table consecutively lists the various student visa categories and the number of arrivals from India to Australia on this visa from 2002-2012

Visa Subclass	Visa Name	Arrivals	Broad Description of the Visa

570	School Sector	795	For students enrolling in English language courses (DIBP 2017).
571	Independent ELICOS	585	For students enrolling in primary secondary schools (DIBP 2017).
572	Vocational Education and Training (VET)	133,331	For students enrolling in certificate I, II, III or IV, diploma or advanced diplomas (DIBP 2017).
573	Higher Education	156,466	For students enrolling in bachelor's degree, graduate certificate, graduate diploma or master's by coursework (DIBP 2017).
574	Postgraduate Research	20,971	For students enrolling in master's degree by research or a doctoral degree (DIBP 2017).
575	No Award Sector	1,355	Relevant for students enrolling in bridging or pathway courses (DIBP 2017).
576	Foreign Affairs Defence Sector	380	Relevant for AusAID or defence-sponsored students enrolling in any tertiary degree (DIBP 2017).

The graph also shows the total number of immigrants from India to Australia on various visa subclasses. Subclass 572 is not far behind subclass 573 in terms of entry levels. Subclass 572 was popular among Indians until 2007, when subclass 573 gained momentum and subclass 572 numbers began to decrease (DIBP 2017). Subclass 573 accounted for 50% of all the entrants combined from 2002 to 2012. Subclasses 576, 571 and 570 had the lowest number of entrants at 380, 585 and 795 respectively over 11 years. Subclasses 575 and 574 were slightly higher at 1,355 and 20,971 respectively. The only challenge to subclass 573 was 572, the vocational education and training visa because it appealed to Indian students without higher school education or those who did not wish to take up or qualify for higher education. There were 133,331 subclass 572 entrants over 11 years, still lower than the numbers arriving on 573 visa (DIBP 2017).

The key factors which drove migrant preference for the 573 visa include the easier access it provides to permanent residency (PR), the preference for Australian qualifications in the

Australian job market, the role of migration and education agents and easier language entry requirements. The aspiration to achieve permanent residency as a key motivator for young Indian students already living in Australia and for some even before arriving in Australia (Baas 2012). Besides, receiving PR is one of the primary reasons that many international and Indian students decide to study in Australia (Altbach 2012 & Hawthorne 2013). Furthermore, according to Mixon Jr and Hsing's (2006) study, 75% of Indian learners who graduated in Australia applied for and received PR. Here PR was linked to having a job. Most Indians with a job had PR. However, studies like those of Baas (2012) and Robertson (2011) have shown while most Indians with PR have a job, the data obscures the difficulties people have in finding employment. Indian students remain in Australia by applying for post-study work visas that allow them to remain in Australia to gain work experience for a period of between two and four years. The aim of these students is to remain for as long as possible and seek Australian employment (Robertson 2015). This thesis extends these analyses by considering in detail the challenges faced when students apply for work visas or simply look for work on completion of their degree. It presents a nuanced analysis of students' lives once PR is received, focussing especially on employment opportunities. This is done by closely examining the details of the employment, i.e., the type of job, the industry, the relevance of the industry and the part time or full-time status of the job. Since all jobs are not the same, simply grouping all employed Indians together does not tell the details of their story and experiences. The type of jobs these Indians take up profoundly shapes their lives and their capacity to integrate into the broader Australian society.

People seeking permanent migration prefer countries which have easier entry requirements over those with longer and stringent migration channels (Helbling 2016). However, some migrants are determined to migrate to certain countries only and having easier entry requirements for a country that is not their first choice may not necessarily push them towards the easier destination (Khan and McNamara 2017). For potential migrants seeking PR in any foreign developed country, Australia is an easier destination than the US and the UK. The ease of the application, the entry requirements and the perceived hope of easily finding a part-time job while studying have all imbued subclass 573 visas with significant importance. In addition to the factors mentioned above, Australian bachelor and master's degrees are shorter than the US equivalents (Altbach 2007). The average duration of an Australian bachelor's degree is three years and there are many master's degrees that can be completed in 18 months. In the

US, by contrast, many degrees have a four-year completion period and master's degrees are at least two years long for international students (Altbach 2007).

Students aiming to receive PR on completion of their Australian education, tailor their courses and choose the cheapest universities to obtain their PR. Applying for these PR visas onshore from Australia is cheaper than applying offshore (He 2006). A related factor is the time it takes to obtain PR. Offshore skilled migrants and onshore temporary migrants can apply for PR based on the SOL and the points test. An applicant needs to have his or her qualification or nominated occupation on the SOL first, followed by fulfilment of the points test Baas (2006). According to the points test, the applicant receives certain points for falling into various age groups, and for having or not having an Australian education and post-graduate work experience in the relevant fields. The advantages for offshore skilled migrants do not outweigh the advantages offered to student migrants in subclass 573. This was certainly the perspective of interviewee Kaushik (12 December 2013, interviewed in Melbourne), a master's degree student, who suggested his decision to apply via a subclass 573 and not a skilled migration visa was the shorter waiting period involved:

First, they needed 120 points for PR, now it is 60 or 65 points. My two-year course will give me 15 points, now I need to crack the IELTS to get 20 points. In two years, by the time I finish my course, I will have enough points for PR. I had no chance to apply directly from India on a skilled migration visa as I could not wait that long to gain work experience to fulfil the points.

When an offshore applicant is compared with an onshore applicant, the differences become evident. To fulfil the 120-point requirement, the offshore applicant needs to have full-time work experience in their nominated profession for at least five years (DIBP 2017). This work experience counts only if the work is done after graduation. In contrast, if the applicant is onshore, having completed a degree in Australia prior to the application, qualifying for the 120 points is possible without gaining work experience (DIBP 2017). Age, as well as the waiting period to gain enough work experience prior to application, has worked against direct offshore skilled migration applicants. Since most offshore applicants are more than 30 years of age, this age category on the points test does not give them as many points as the younger applicants. The case is much easier for subclass 573 applicants. Fresh graduates from India who struggle to find a job in India find it easier to pass the points test minimum passing criteria if they enter as students on subclass 573. Once students complete their master's degree by coursework in

Australia within a year or two, they qualify for PR. They receive the same number of points for an Australian qualification (15 points) as a skilled migrant receives with a minimum of five years' work experience saving them three to four years.

Another factor working against offshore applicants is the cost involved in applying for skilled migration visas (Wilson and Biggs 2016). Applicants based in Australia are usually earning money in Australian dollars via part-time or full-time work; hence the amount involved in applying for PR is significantly less. The same dollar amount from the point of view of an offshore applicant is high. The offshore applicant earns in Indian rupees (INR) and converting the INR to AUD makes the application fee extremely high. For example, a skilled migration visa costs \$3,520 (IMMI 2015), which converts to INR 198,500 – almost four times the monthly salary of an average middle-class Indian individual (Statista 2015). Interviewee Gokul (a chartered accountant with an MBA from India) is an example of a standard middle-class Indian man who must take care of his family and whose goal is to earn thousands of dollars in Australia through the skilled migration visa scheme. Gokul expressed his frustration over the cost of applying for a skilled migration visa (5 January 2014, interviewed in Melbourne):

I had to sell my car to save money for the skilled migration visa. I thought once I got PR, I would get a job in Australia easily. I was already in debt, so the bank wouldn't give me a loan to cover the visa fees.

Spending such a large amount on a visa that does not guarantee a job in the Australian market makes it a tough trade off decision for offshore skilled migration applicants. The following sections analyse the key factors which drive migrant preference for the 573 visa.

The Preference for Australian Qualifications in the Job Market

Australian qualifications are recognised internationally and have a very high reputation in India. Indian students qualified with an Australian degree could secure a decent job internationally in case their aim to settle in Australia permanently does not work out.

As pointed in the introduction according to the new economics of labour theories (Taylor 1981; 1986; Stark 1984; 1991), a range of factors compel migration, such as risk minimisation after retirement or investing in the stable markets of the developed world to minimise the risks in investment opportunities. However, another key point relates to wage maximisation. This refers to the capacity for higher wages in the Global North than in the Global South and better employment opportunities in the host country than in the home country. Related to this is the

view that Western qualifications provide advantages and preferences in the job market than those obtained in the Global South economies. Many Indian students and education consultants believe that degrees obtained in Australia have a higher preference than Indian qualifications in the Australian workforce, and that most Western countries undervalue internationally obtained qualifications of their skilled migrants (Chellapah 2018).

This attraction to foreign degrees is evident in India and other countries of the Global South, such as Malaysia. According to an empirical study of Malaysian students studying in Australian universities, conducted by Pyvis and Chapman (2008, pp. 235-246), Malaysian employers preferred Australian qualifications over Malaysian ones. Students who were educated at Australian universities were preferred over students who had obtained their qualifications at local Malaysian universities. Western multinational corporations operating in Malaysia also demonstrate this preference. Indian students also prefer Australian education for similar reasons, as well as expecting their Australian qualifications to help them get a job in Australia and receive PR.

While many Indians arrived in Australia on skilled migration programmes during the late 1990s, the job market has changed since the early 2000s. Indians are not arriving in Australia for employment opportunities alone, as these migrants have realised that getting a job in Australia with their Indian qualifications is difficult. While seeking a highly paid job or at least one that pays more than a similar job in India could be an objective of migration to Australia, Indians may also have realised that they need to first gain an Australian qualification (Tran & Nyland 2011). This has also increased the popularity of the 573 visa, because most of these Indians already have a bachelor's degree and seek a shorter yet more advanced master's degree to make themselves work-ready in Australia. The necessity of having an Australian qualification and PR is evident in many job postings on Seek.com and Monster.com (Seek 2020, Monster 2020). Advertisements for jobs on these sites often have a section asking the applicant to declare the country from which they received their latest qualification. Many employers prefer local qualifications or qualifications from the US or the UK, not from the Global South. Career expos organised at various Australian universities tell the same story. Most employers put up signs stating they are only employing students with PR and a local qualification. This motivates many applicants to enter Australia on a student subclass 573 first and then apply for PR. Thus, if PR is not received, at least an Australian qualification serves as backup. Australian qualifications are highly valued in India and students believe these

qualifications would put them on a merit list for a previously elusive job (Voigt-Graf & Khoo 2004).

However, it is a disappointing road for those Indians who are unaware of labour market trends. Many skilled migrants arrive in Australia believing it to be a country with plentiful job opportunities, but fail to find a job anywhere, leading to disappointment and, in some cases, they return to India (Tran & Nyland 2011). Certainly, this has been the experience of some of the interviewees. According to Gokul (3 January 2014, interviewed in Melbourne):

I received a skilled migration visa and PR but the job market in Australia is terrible. I have good work experience, so it must be the Indian qualifications stopping me from getting a job. I should have enrolled for a second master's degree and applied for PR instead of this.

Gokul is now considering returning to India. His stay in Australia has cost him thousands of dollars in living expenses, accommodation and recruitment agency fees, with no luck in finding a job. It is frustrating for individuals such as Gokul, who give up their family life and their assets to apply for skilled migration visas in the hope of earning more than they were earning in India. There are an increasing number of cases like Gokul's. However, there are success stories too. The successful immigrants stay in Australia with PR and an Australian job, whereas the unsuccessful ones return home and spread the word about the real situation in Australia and their negative experiences.

The Role of Migration Agents in India in Promoting Visa Subclass 573

Migration agents in India have strategically manoeuvred Indian students towards higher education in Australia portraying the process to be one of the easiest ones in the world. Many potential migrants blindly believe the advice received from these migration consultants (Asia News Monitor 2016). This is important because migration agents have an unreasonable capacity to influence migration channels to Australia. Many Indian students rely on migration and education agents in India to secure information about Australian migration and tertiary education. These agents are responsible for financial, educational and migration counselling for students. They also process university and visa applications on behalf of the students making their role very crucial. Education and migration agents in the countries of the Global South could be viewed as marketing tools, who are paid a salary and commission by Western universities to promote their degrees and courses among international students (Gillan, Damachis and McGuire 2003). Australian university websites also openly mention these

registered migration agents as official channels to submit university entry applications for international students (UQ 2020).

Interviews and studies into the marketing practices of migration agents conducted by Khadria (2001, pp. 45-71), Voigt-Graf & Khoo (2004) and Tran & Nyland (2011, pp. 8-31 have shown that agents in India work on a commission paid by Australian colleges for every student recruited. Hence, to earn more commission and reach their enrolment targets, these agents often do not warn students about the obstacles and challenges of a student life in Australia such as the costs of living, ease of securing part time jobs and workplace exploitation. Major migration agencies in India, such as Chopras, Edwise and Planet Education openly promote the 573 visa applications for migration to Australia. According to interviewee Singh (a migration agent in Mumbai) (4 January 2014, interviewed in Mumbai):

Applicants need the security of getting a job and earning money. We have had too many cases of people returning to India due to the unavailability of jobs after migrating on a skilled migration visa. Therefore, we recommend subclass 573. It is a win-win situation with 573. Applicants can stay in Australia as students, get a degree and later apply for PR. We have a tie-up with seven Australian universities, so securing admission for our applicants is usually not an issue.

Migration agents such as Singh share this common view regarding the ease of entering Australia on the 573 visas. Often, the individuals are lured by the ease of entering Australia through quicker means instead of the longer skilled migration visa channel. Due to this they fail to foresee the negative aspects of the 573 visa category that include high educational costs and the time spent between completion of a degree, receipt of a PR and receiving a job relevant to their field of education. Applicants often end up with a virtual plan of success that they predict will result in them attaining PR via subclass 573. According to interviewee Dimpi (13 January 2014, interviewed in Sydney):

I will work and try to cover my tuition fees and once I complete my course, I will apply for TR [temporary residency] so I get enough time to prepare for the PR documents. Once they are ready, I will apply for PR. Not sure about citizenship, but if I invest so much in Australia, I must get PR. Once I have PR and work experience it will be easy to work full time.

Students such as Dimpi often attain their goals and manage to get full-time jobs on completion of their degrees in Australia. However, due to the increasing number of students using a 573 visa as a pathway to Australian migration, many encounter the bitter truth only after arrival, namely being stuck in employment limbo. The ease of ability to work while studying may be misleading; however, the ease of entry into the Australian education sector is not.

Easier Language and University Entry Requirements

Easier language and academic prerequisite requirements for university admissions are also factors that attract students towards certain countries or universities. This is the case with Australia (McKenzie 2005); however, such easier requirements have led to some concerns among academics about the standard of students enrolling in tertiary programs (Föbker and Imani 2017).

The main language hurdle in Australia is the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). IELTS is an international standardised test of English language proficiency for non-native English language speakers. It is jointly managed by Cambridge English Language Assessment, the British Council and IDP Education (IELTS 2015). According to research by Atay (2015) the English language proficiency of some international students entering Australian universities has become a matter of concern among academics. While university academics strive to manage this issue, students continue to take advantage of these easier entry requirements.

Many international students with poor English language skills tend to struggle in their academics within Australian universities. An increment in the prerequisite IELTS score could help admitting those international students with competent English language skills (Murray 2016). This strategy was implemented by the University of South Australia which however led to a drastic decrease in the enrolments of international students at the university and the decision to raise the IELTS score was reversed. On financial grounds, the loss of international enrolments could be too large to justify an increment in the minimum English proficiency standards. While the debate around raising the IELTS score continues, international students are aware of the low IELTS entry requirements within Australian universities against the English standards required by universities in the UK and the US. International students in Australia contribute to a \$32 billion-a-year international education industry and form almost 50% of all the students at some universities. To increase the IELTS score and to make the entry requirements more stringent is too much of a risk to this booming industry which discourages

many universities from increasing the English language prerequisites for entry into their degrees (Burton-Bradley 2018).

Apart from IELTS some of the popular and generally recognised entrance exams are the Pearson Test of English (PTE), the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). These exams are standardised, not vis-a-vis one another. Some are tougher than others, some test only English proficiency, whereas some test numerical skills too. The issue is not really the tests themselves, but the standards requested by the universities. Australian educational institutes are known to recognise almost all these tests for foreign applicants (ETS 2015). PTE draws on integrated, academic English skills such as paraphrasing, summarising and notes-taking to accurately assess each test taker's English level (Pearson 2015). IELTS is generally considered easier than TOEFL, GRE, SAT and GMAT (ETS 2015 & India Today 2016). While the difficulty level of an exam is debatable and subjective, it is not merely the ease of the exam, but the additional exams needed together to meet the selection criteria. Most programmes under the 573 visa in Australia only need IELTS, while similar programmes in the US and the UK need additional exams. Hence, many Indian students consider these factors and choose Australia as a study destination.

Other than the ease of clearing IELTS, another reason for choosing subclass 573 is the lower entry requirements at Australian educational institutions compared to those in the UK and the US. Most Australian universities outside the Group of Eight (Go8)⁸ require average marks of at least 65% in subjects in the Indian degree, whereas the US and the UK require an average of at least 75% and 70%, respectively, in addition to high scores in TOEFL, GMAT and GRE (La Trobe 2017, Monash 2017, Victoria University 2017, RMIT 2017, Swinburne 2017). While this may vary based on the university and programmes chosen, the degrees providing skills listed on the SOL are cheaper and have easier entry requirements in Australia compared to their counterparts in the US and the UK (Horton 2020). These trends and dynamics have changed in the COVID-19 times, with all the Western countries having their borders shut for international students. How these countries eventually open to international students will be interesting.

⁸ The Group of Eight is a coalition of the oldest, top ranked and most research-intensive Australian Universities.

Conclusion

This chapter has identified the changing nature of Indian immigration to Australia from the early 20th to the early 21st century. It has shown that Indian migration was minimal for most of the 20th century, largely due to the constraints of the White Australia policy. The end of this policy in 1973 was the basis for a steady increase in Indian immigration. It was the implementation of special visa categories in the early 2000s that led to the dramatic increases of the past 15 years and, more specifically, in migrants using the 573 visas as a pathway to obtaining both educational qualifications and permanent residency.

The complexity of these trends lies not only in the increase in subclass 573 arrivals to Australia from India, but in the usage of the 573 visas in sharply increasing high numbers of migrants using it as a pathway to permanent residency. My research has shown that, apart from tailoring their courses and universities, students are aware of the easier standards within the Australian PR-related points system. The 573 visa was increasingly popular until it was combined along with other student visa categories under the 500-visa grouping in July 2016. However, the popularity of choosing master's courses (which were under the 573 visa) under the 500 visa continues.

Factors such as the PR points system (the points test) favouring the 573 visa, the preference for Australian qualifications in the job market (attainable via the 573 visa), the role of migration agents in India in pushing the 573 visa and the easier language and university entry requirements for Indian students were identified and analysed in this chapter. As the subclass 573 application numbers increase, its importance also increases. The 573 visa is a unique student visa category tapped by Indian migrants as the ideal pathway to migrate and settle in Australia. What makes Indian migration to Australia via subclass 573 unique is the increasing dominance of a student visa subclass over other migration visas. Such migration trends are difficult to monitor. It is not easy to estimate how many students on subclass 573 will seek only education and head home on completion or stay in the host country and apply for permanent residency.

Chapter 5. Aspirations, Motivations and Opportunities – Push factors for Indian Student Migration

Introduction

The previous chapter described the structural context for increasing Indian student migration to Australia since the early 2000s, focussing especially on the introduction of the 573 visa and its relation to the PR application process. This chapter explores push factors as understood and experienced by young Indian students either contemplating moving to Australia, or those who had already made the move. Push factors are the forces that compel people to leave their country of origin. As discussed in the introduction, while economic deprivation in the home country is often acknowledged as a fundamental push factor for migrants, the interviewees appearing in this chapter show that other factors may also encourage people to leave.

The interviewees who appear in this chapter were interviewed in both India and Australia⁹. These interviewees belonged to different religious backgrounds, including Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Christian, Atheist, Parsi (Indian Zoroastrians) and Jewish (Bene Jews from India). This was necessary as interviewees of diverse backgrounds could hold different aspirations and motivations to migrate. As well as being religiously diverse, the study sample included students from different states in India for the same reason. India has a very state-oriented culture with unique histories and age-old traditions as a result, the cultural issues faced by the interviewees which compelled them to migrate varied based on the traditions of their states and local communities. Therefore, I chose interviewees from various regions, including Punjab, Delhi, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Haryana.

The key findings of this chapter are that a variety of complex factors compel young middle-class people to leave India, including the perceived inequities of the reservation system¹⁰ in education and job opportunities in India; the pressures created by the large number of higher education entrance exams in India; the perceived corruption of the Indian higher education system; the accessibility of student loans in India for overseas tertiary education; maximisation

⁹ They include 125 interviews conducted in 2013. The interviews conducted in India focussed on people residing in the capital city of New Delhi in the North, the economic and financial capital city Mumbai in the West, Pune in the West, and the city considered the IT hub of India, Bangalore. The interviewees were mostly Indian students in their mid-twenties and belonging to middle to lower middle economic class who were enrolled in either bachelor or master's degrees.

¹⁰ Reservation in India, also known as the "quota system", is a form of quota-based affirmative action embedded in the Indian Constitution (Das 2008).

of the dowry payment system, and the social prestige that is attained by studying overseas. Most interviewees reported that quite complex push factors influence their desire to leave India beyond broadly generalised factors such as the search for jobs and better earnings¹¹. These factors will now be analysed in detail.

Perceived inequities of India's Reservation System

Most of the interviewees mentioned India's 'reservation system' and its perceived capacity to marginalise those who do not belong to the so-called "backward castes" as a push factor for them leaving India. The system refers to the reservation of a certain percentage of seats (vacancies) in government institutions, schools, colleges and universities for members of the often termed "backward"¹² and under-represented communities, defined primarily by caste and tribe (Sharma 1984). These communities are categorised as Backward Classes (BC), Other Backward Classes (OBC), Scheduled Castes (SC), Downtrodden (DT), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Nomadic Tribes (NT) (Laskar 2010). The BC category contains communities that are classified as economically and educationally backward by a state, whereas the OBC category contains communities that are classified as economically and educationally backward by the federal government. The aim of the reservation system is to help minority communities progress in their own country without the need for emigration for better opportunities elsewhere (Borooah, Dubey and Iyer 2010) and to retain bright minds within the country through assistance programmes in education and employment (Gupta 2006). However, despite its good intentions, the system is perceived by many Indians to have become distorted and subject to abuse because of changing socio-economic conditions in India (Prasad 2015). This is because many Open Category (OC) people who are struggling financially cannot access the reservation system, whereas there are increasingly many reserved-category people with wealth and social status who access the reservation system.

Since its implementation in 1950, the reservation system is a factor in the mass emigration of non-reservation communities from India (Shastri 2009). The entry-level scores required to obtain employment in the public sector or admission to a tertiary educational institution are significantly lower for members of these reserved categories compared to those required from

¹¹ Refer to the appendix section for a detailed breakdown of the responses. See appendix A7: Breakdown of the Major Findings.

¹² Note: The term "backward" is used in official documents (NCBC 2015). "Backward class" is a collective term used by the Government of India to classify castes that are socially and educationally disadvantaged. In 1979, 52% of the total Indian population could be considered "backward" and currently almost 65% of the Indian population is considered backward.

the members of the OC (Parliament of India 1992). In 1990, 22.5% of the available seats in higher education institutions, public sector units and government bodies were reserved for SC and ST students (15% for SCs, 7.5% for STs). In 2008, this percentage rose to 49.5% following the inclusion of an additional 27% reservation for OBCs (TOI 2014). Additionally, this inclusion was also extended to private institutions such as Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and central universities (Goel and Walia 2015). In 2015, as reported by the *Times of India*, many OC students across universities and schools felt unwelcome and marginalised in India due to growing reservations within educational institutions. These students have little choice but to try to emigrate for both education and employment. Additionally, Indian academics have also raised concerns regarding the demand for the reduced number of seats for OC students in India and thus the increasing number of students exploring options for tertiary education abroad (Goel and Walia 2015). Not surprisingly then, the reservation system has been a topic of heated debate between lobby groups that support a caste-based education system and those in favour of a casteless education system (Tharoor 2015). Such debates are regularly seen in parliamentary sessions as well as on the national news channels. The increasing percentage of reservations is also attributed to voting bank politics where in return for votes in elections, bills for higher reservations are passed to appease the backward groups that form most of the population in India (Jaffrelot 2016).

Neither the Government of India nor the Australian Department of Home Affairs provide data on the caste and OC status of migrating Indians. The migration forms and visa applications do not have any questions that ask the applicants their caste or OC status. However, it is significant that of my 125 interview students, all of whom had diverse backgrounds and geographical origins within India, 98 interviewees identified as OC.

Because of the current reservation system, many talented students from the OC are leaving India to pursue educational opportunities overseas, as they feel their access to higher education is limited regardless of their academic performance. Certainly, concerns about the detrimental impact of the reservation system within educational institutions were shared by a lot of the interviewees. According to Bhat (2 December 2013, interviewed in Mumbai):

My brother and I have no scope in India due to the quota system. We both are Brahmin and belong to the open category. Although we are from a poor family, the government thinks all Brahmins are privileged and we need to

score above 95% to secure admission into a good college. My brother scored 89% last year in his bachelor's and I scored 91% in my year 12 this year and yet we both are unable to secure admission to master's and bachelor's courses.

Interviewee Pankaj (3 December 2013, interviewed in Delhi) echoed these concerns:

I have been studying for my MBA entrance since the first year of my bachelor's degree. Belonging to an open category means I need to break into the top two percentiles due to the reservation system. I will be eligible to take this MBA entrance exam on completion of my bachelor's degree next year.

Some students are not completely opposed to the reservation system; however, they take issue with who is eligible for the reserved seats. Some argue that the system should not be based on caste at all, but rather on economic and financial needs. This way those needing the system the most would benefit from it rather than those perceived as abusing it based on their eligibility alone. According to interviewee Anush (2 December 2013, interviewed in Bangalore):

These reservation policies will not change as the politicians favour them to please their supporters from the backward communities.

Despite these sentiments, Anush, who does not fall into the reserved category, feels helpless within the system and plans to leave the country to pursue better opportunities. Another interviewee who belongs to a middle-class reserved category, Pran, agreed (2 December 2013, interviewed in Delhi):

The reservation system is flawed. The cream of India continues to enjoy all the benefits and we will keep debating whether the reservation is needed. These reservations are taken advantage of by wealthy people in the reserved category, but the poor ones never benefit because these reservations are not based on the financial and economic status of people. The only option left for helpless people like me, and my friends are to move out of the country for foreign education before it becomes saturated.

We must revisit that the cohorts were interviewed based on their desire, willingness, readiness, preparedness, and ability to migrate to Australia. This was when the trend emerged that most of the students belonged to middle-class Indian families regardless of their religion and caste. These students have some level of privilege that they have access to the necessary infrastructure

needed to migrate to Australia. This infrastructure includes eligibility (credit rating & collateral) and access to loans, family support towards settling overseas, having the legal documents needed for police checks and visa applications, and a decent schooling wherein the grades are internationally recognised. However, for those students interviewed in metropolitan cities, none of these privileges was due to them belonging to an upper-caste family or an OC. Among the metropolitan students who planned education in Australia and those who were successful belonged to both reserved category and OC. However, the students interviewed in less developed, less urbanised, and within more rural settings, almost 99% of the students belonged to OC in the northern parts of India, and almost 90% within the southern parts – both showing similar trends. This is due to people of reserved categories having the privileges of the OC within metropolitan settings but not within rural or underdeveloped economic settings. While there are studies by Mannathukkaren (2016) and Nigam (2016) who have demonstrated such a lack of access and need for reservations within rural settings, the plight of the poorer OC students within rural settings remains neglected. A reserved category student in a rural setting has the quota system to assist and lessen their socio-economic burden.

In contrast, an OC student in a similar setting has the necessary infrastructure to move overseas. An OC student from a poor family has no infrastructure or access to a quota system to gain admissions into tertiary education. Often Australian and other Western universities provide scholarships for students facing financial hardships around the world, in this case, for students in India. However, the criteria for a financial hardship easily qualify a student from a middle-class or lower-middle-class Indian family owing to the differences in inflation, price levels and country-specific relevant poverty levels. Besides, legal documents in English or translated in English need to be submitted to prove the hardships and eligibility for scholarships. The translation in many cases is expensive and only the privileged can afford. Privileged students often pay for custom essays defending their scholarships' applications through education agents. Again, the ones seeking financial help from Western universities have sufficient access to funds for preparing their applications. However, the students in need, regardless of their caste and religion, who belong to poor families in rural settings fail to secure documents proving their conditions.

Entrance Exams

Another factor identified by the interviewees is the debilitating effect in India of too many complex and diverse entrance examinations for master's degrees (NPI 2016). These entrance

exams are compulsory to gain admission to various postgraduate technical courses and MBAs. In some cases, they are even required for undergraduate admissions (NPI 2016).

This fragmented and diverse system exists as there is no centrally accepted national exam or set of selection criteria for masters at these management institutes. Most of the institutes independently set standards for admission to their courses, for which a list of independently set entrance exams is prescribed. The existence of a large number of entrance exams is also financially motivated. Many colleges pay approximately \$2,000¹³ as an affiliation fee (Cheney, Ruzzi & Muralidharan 2005) and at times an additional \$2,000 per subject (Rubinstein & Sekhri 2011) or course (TOI 2011) to the parent university. To cover these expenses, the colleges conduct their own entrance exams, which students must pay a fee to complete (Chopra 2014).

For example, the Himachal Pradesh Technical University (HPTU) administers one exam per degree awarded by its affiliated colleges and a separate exam for direct admission (Sharma 2015). In addition to the separate exams administered by the affiliated colleges in the state of Himachal Pradesh, nine of the 17 private universities each administer another common entrance examination for various courses (TOI 2016). The remaining eight private universities either admit students through yet another entrance exam or make admissions based on national-level entrance exams that are conducted separately (Sharma 2015). Such entrance exams include the Common Admission Test (CAT), Xavier's Admission Test (XAT), the Xavier School of Management Test (XLRI), the Xavier University Bhubaneswar Test (XIM), the Symbiosis National Aptitude Test (SNAP), the Maharashtra Common Entrance Test (M-CET), and the Common Management Admission Test (CMAT) (Joshi 2012). The CAT is accepted at all branches of the IIM and over 100 other institutions (Rubinstein & Sekhri 2011); the XAT and XLRI are accepted at IIM Jamshedpur (Chopra 2014); the XIM is accepted at IIM Bhubaneswar, S. P. Jain and GIM (Chopra 2014); the SNAP is accepted at institutes affiliated with Symbiosis University (TOI 2011); the MH-CET is accepted at all colleges in the state of Maharashtra (Chopra 2014); and the CMAT is accepted at colleges affiliated to the All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) (Aggarwal, Freguglia, Johnes & Spricigo 2011).

One argument made in favour of entrance exams is that they enable students to value higher education and maintain higher educational standards by only letting smarter or hard-working

¹³ As explained in the introduction chapter, throughout this thesis, all prices/costs of various currencies are converted to Australian dollars for consistency while reading.

students gain admissions into the courses (Deshpande 2006, p. 127). Clearly, intellect and hard work are being judged here in terms of the results of the entrance exams. This is seen at a large scale in India owing to its population with too many students applying for these exams, and too many students getting rejected due to the limited capacity of educational institutions. This is particularly important as students unable to seek admissions into higher education, despite being talented and having a passion for higher education, are left to look overseas for higher educational opportunities. Interviewee Gaurpreet (10 January 2014, Mumbai) explicitly stated that the existence of multiple common entrance exams was a key reason for his decision to leave India to pursue his master's education overseas:

I did my bachelor's in microbiology in India and then planned to enrol in an MBA programme. I had to sit the MHCET state-level test, which was a prerequisite for all MBA colleges in the state of Maharashtra. I also appeared for the CAT, which is the national-level entrance exam for MBA across India. Since my educational consultant told me only thousands of students from the open category are selected among millions who appear for these exams, I decided to sit for college-specific exams such as the XAT and NAMT. However, this pressure was too much for me. I was stuck preparing for exams after exams with no guarantee of MBA admission. I thought moving out and investing in a foreign MBA degree would be a better option as it guaranteed enrolment in an Australian university without so many entrance exams.

For some students, it is the combination of the reservation system and the excessive number of entrance exams that acts as a push factor. Although India has 700 degree-granting institutions and another 35,000 affiliated colleges (UC India 2016), none rank consistently in the top 150 in the world (QS ranking 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020) except the Indian Institute of Management (IIM). However, IIM only offers MBA, and their highest ranking only holds for their MBA. According to interviewee Gansesh (11 January 2014, interviewed in Mumbai):

I wanted to get a master's degree for better job prospects. However, all my friends and senior students have been very busy taking so many entrance exams and spending years on multiple attempts that I questioned whether it was worth spending so much time with no guarantee of an admission. I do not want to secure an admission in a remote village where the lecturers

struggle with the content themselves. Such institutions would not get me a job anywhere. Hence, I need to sit for these entrance exams. Each entrance exam costs a lot of money too, and it is still less than what I would spend on a foreign degree. However, an international masters would place me better in the competition against an Indian university degree. There are almost 20 entrance exams in India for a master's degree, and if I don't clear one, the waiting time for another attempt is one year. I cannot risk waiting for years to get through these exams. Despite having so many entrance exams, via these exams, the chances of an open category student like me getting into a good college are scarce due to the quota system.

It is nonetheless difficult for OC students to compete with students from reserved categories for admission to the leading Indian universities, which are ranked in the top 500 or 1,000 in the world according to the QS ranking.

Corruption in the Indian higher education system

Another relevant factor apparently influencing Indian students' decision to pursue tertiary education overseas is corruption in the Indian higher education sector. The desire to emigrate is a reasonable reaction often driven by the observable absence of merit-based progress at workplace and lack of faith in local opportunities due to corruption and nepotism.

India undoubtedly has widespread political and social corruption (UNESCO 2018). This corruption has also affected the Indian education system (Myerson 2011), where it takes the form of bribery to ensure admission or simply to fast-track admissions paperwork (Saraf & Jain 2012). This type of corruption is so prevalent that much of the population accepts it as a part of life in India (Das 2015). However, many people also strongly resent it and seek to study overseas to escape such arrangements (Transparency International 2016). Although corruption alone does not directly influence people to emigrate, it is often a primary contributor that pushes migrants to seek psychological and physical safety elsewhere. It is due to the corruption in the educational industry in India that Indian students are willing to pay very high amounts to get admissions into private institutions or move overseas for education (Anandakrishnan 2013). However, it is only the wealthy students who get away with high payments to private institutions; the middle-class and poor students cannot afford these payments and plan to take loans to pursue overseas education. This issue has been consistently highlighted in the Indian media. Recently, the *Times of India* conducted a sting operation, exposing how Medicinæ

Baccalaureus, Baccalaureus Chirurgiae¹⁴ (MBBS) seats in medical colleges and universities were sold for between \$240,000 and \$800,000¹⁵ per student by two private colleges in Chennai. According to interviewee Jacob (2 December 2013, interviewed in Mumbai):

I am fed up with the corruption in our Indian education sector. People think corruption is limited to politics, but it is widespread within our education providers too. Right from the college principals of the degree colleges to the admin staff, everyone asks for money to get things done.

Krishna (5 December 2013, interviewed in Delhi) explained:

Where do I get thousands of dollars to pay for my admission? I cannot use the legal route as I belong to the open category. The next option is ‘management quota’¹⁶, where the lecturers are demanding \$20,000 to secure my admission into MBBS. I belong to a lower-middle-class family and my parents have not earned \$20,000 in their lifetime. I do not see a future for myself in India.

Legally, management staff are supposed to recommend students based on merit; however, they often ask for an illegal fee to process a recommendation (Chopra 2012). Such corruption arises from many factors, such as increasing competition among the growing Indian student-age population and a shortage of enrolment spaces for students as universities have reached full capacity (Goel & Walia 2015). Such desperate times have led to colleges and universities accepting bribes from wealthy students, thereby securing spots for the elite and leaving the middle-class, lower-middle class and poorer students with nowhere to go, especially if they belong to the OC (UNESCO 2019). In 2011, approximately 27 cases were made against students who had attempted to overcome this barrier by paying for fake certificates, claiming to belong to the backward categories or tribal communities when they were frustrated OC students (Joshi 2012).

While the illegal payments for securing admissions are high, unaffordability due to corruption is more prevalent in relation to specialised courses for high-earning professions (Choudaha 2017). The illegal corruption-based cost per year for a radiology degree in a leading private

¹⁴ Equivalent of a General Practitioner (GP) in Australia.

¹⁵ These are indeed very large sums of money. These examples are provided to highlight the extent to which some people are willing to pay to secure an admission into elite medical schools.

¹⁶ Krishna mentions the ‘management quota’, which refers to enrolments reserved for students recommended by the university management, including both teaching and non-teaching staff.

college-affiliated university was \$400,000 in 2012 (Livemint 2016, pp.-2). The high costs of illegal payments for specialised courses again leaves no option for middle-class students seeking an education. Other educational institutions such as schools and colleges have also started demanding bribes in the name of donations, which cost between \$4,000 and \$8,000 (UNESCO 2018). These amounts are so significant, that many families prefer to take out loans and spend this money on a foreign education instead.

Once the admission to a tertiary institution has been obtained, life does not necessarily improve, as corruption is prevalent among both academic and administrative staff. Bribes are needed at many points in a student's university career. A recent UNESCO International Institute of Educational Planning study on corruption in education states that teacher absenteeism in India, which is 25%, is among the highest in the world, second only to Uganda. The global average of teacher absenteeism is approximately 20% (Sunil BS 2014). The penalty for a lecturer skipping a lecture is easily compensated for by their earnings from one private tutorial which some conduct at the same time as their scheduled lecture (Appalla 2017, Sujatha 2014 & Beteille 2009). According to a report by *The Times of India* (2017), this conflict of interest—when a teacher misses a class to conduct a private class at an additional cost for selected students—has become routine in India. Often, these students are also guaranteed an illegal access to the exam paper beforehand and are unfairly favoured in their internal assessments. The private students often score very highly in these exams; a student who is not enrolled privately with a lecturer may be expected to pay the lecturer, separately and secretly, to obtain good grades (Livemint.com 2016). It is these excluded students who may consider options for enrolling in overseas education.

Since many of the interviewees were from lower-middle to middle-income backgrounds, they found these challenges financially burdensome. Many hoped to invest in an overseas education rather than pay bribes to complete their degrees. According to Jacob (2 December 2013, interviewed in Mumbai):

I came to know about a lecturer's private classes after my friend told me that the secret to him scoring 90% was paying the lecturer \$6,000 for the entire year and receiving good-quality private coaching at the lecturer's home along with access to exam papers beforehand.

Madhu (10 January 2014, interviewed in Pune) explained:

I was struggling with coding and the lecturer would only read the textbook in the lecture. I had to pay him \$5,000 to receive good coaching privately. I was also told what questions were important and what I needed to focus on from the exam point of view. Without these private tuitions, it is close to impossible for anyone to get a high mark, unless you are a genius in coding. I cannot continue paying such high amounts of money once I get into a master's course and I am considering moving out of India next year after I complete my bachelor's degree.

On many occasions, it is these middle-class students in the OC who are left without options, with insufficient money for bribes and no reservations to their advantage. While these students look for opportunities for education overseas, the next step in their possible journey is applying for education loans (Choudaha 2017) which, as we will see, are readily available in India. While these students are unable to cope with the bribery, they are still capable enough to fund their overseas education and access bank loans. The poorer students and the ones belonging to rural areas belonging to OC categories are often left out from admissions into decent Indian education institutions as well as overseas education providers.

Availability of bank loans to fund overseas education

Student loans for overseas studies are easily available for middle class and wealthier economic strata in India and have become a key factor in Indian students' capacity to fund their dreams to study at an Australian educational institution. Funding and easy finance availability such as loans is supposed to help retain population by giving people opportunities to build their lives within the country of origin (Beyer 2015). However, when such ease of finances is aimed at purposes enabling or focussing on overseas travel, such loans encourage emigration instead of retention of population (Bryant 2018).

This view was evident among the interviewees who used ease of education loans as a platform to emigrate rather than for local education. India introduced a student loan scheme in 2001–2002 to support tuition costs that can range up to \$120,000 per year for private tertiary educational institutions in India as well as overseas (India Spend 2013). Since then, the growth in the popularity of these student loans has been considerable, with the total loan amount from public and private banks increasing from \$600 million in 2003 to over \$9.6 billion in 2012 (India Spend 2013). The number of student loan accounts rose from 250,000 in 2003 to nearly 2,500,000 in 2012. Public-sector banks accounted for over 91% of the total educational loans

in 2018 (Indian Express 2018). According to a recent survey by the World Education Services (WES, 2018), half of all Indian students pursuing overseas education are supported by student loans received from Indian banks. This explains why so many Indian students can study at overseas universities at master's level. Many Indian banks offer student loans up to \$60,000 specifically for overseas education (with interest rates comparable to the non-educational loan interest rates of the respective banks), which is enough to cover tuition and part of the student's living costs (India Spend 2013).

With large numbers of loans being granted by Indian public-sector and private-sector banks, applying for a loan to fund overseas education has become the norm among students opting to study overseas. However, it is worth mentioning that not all students rely on these educational loans, especially those who are wealthy. Wealthy students who study overseas are usually funded by their parents or extended family networks (Kiyosaki 2012). These students usually choose the US or the UK as study destinations. Traditionally, these two countries have been popular choices for education due to their universities' high rankings, which exceed those of Australian institutions (Bass 2004). Additionally, the trend in India is for wealthier students to study at bachelor's level overseas, funded by their families and for middle-class students to fund their own master's level tuition fees (Brighouse 2016). It makes sense that students opting for bachelor's degrees are usually 17 or 18 years old and would need family support to sustain the expensive overseas education fees. It is middle-class students who rely on education loans for overseas education. As Raja (13 June 2016, interviewed in Adelaide), a master's student, explained:

I can easily get a student loan from any bank and then I will pay it back after I complete my course. It won't take time as my earnings will be in dollars. I would not have even considered Australia for my higher education if my bank had not made special loan arrangements to pay tuition fees for universities in Australia.

Middle-class students with a bachelor's degree and sometimes their first master's degree along with some post-degree work experience opt for master's-level education in Australia, as migration agents indicate that the cost of studying in Australia is lower than most Western countries (Gong 2015). In making such statements, these migration agents are systematically deceiving students by portraying the cost of living in Australia as affordable when it is more expensive than most popular migrant countries. This results in students from middle-class

families like Raja receiving study loans under the assumption that they will be paid off easily. According to the Australian Office of the Migration Agents Registration Authority (MARA) (2018), migration agents in India receive commission from universities for every student that is successfully enrolled via their agency. The number of agents with links to Australian universities is increasing in regions of India where most of the population belongs to the middle class (SKM 2015). As Rashmi (16 January 2014, interviewed in Pune), a master's student, said:

My agent has told me it is easy to get loans from the Bank of Baroda and HDFC as they have tie-ups with Australian universities. I will take a loan from these banks, and then work in Australia after my course completion and then pay off the loans, hopefully within two years.

The deceptive projections propagated by migration agents have pushed many Indians to travel overseas for higher education. Several interviewees described their perceptions of Australia as the most affordable place to study. For example, Raja (6 January 2014, interviewed in Mumbai), a master's student, said:

My first choice is the US, but it is too expensive there. I was not considering leaving India at all due to expensive American education. However, my agent told me Australian education is the cheapest and fees are low, so I will prefer Australia. If it is expensive like the US, then I must work too hard during my course to earn money, at least I won't have that pressure in Australia. Now that I have an option to move into a cheaper country, I am sure I will leave India.

Ease of access to student loans is offset, nevertheless, by the high cost of living in Australia – a fact many young people are not aware of until after they arrive. However, these loans are only available to those Indian families with sufficient financial assets to their disposable, which act as collaterals against the loans. The poorer classes without legal papers, property documents and payslips fail to receive these loans despite their easy accessibility to the privileged.

Maximisation of the dowry payment system

Many students see India's dowry system as a significant push factor. This is because an overseas education is seen as the key to a high dowry payment. In the Indian context, dowry is gifted by the bride's family to the groom's family as a condition of marriage (Vohra 2015). These gifts include durable goods, stocks, investments, property, household appliances,

furniture, crockery, utensils, gold, diamonds and even business partnerships (Patel 2016). Dowry payments depend on many factors and often increase with the socially sought-after attributes of the grooms (Bangdiwala 2015). These attributes include factors such as being the only male child, or having wealthy family, and allows the groom to demand a higher dowry from the bride's family (O'Connor 2017).

There is often a correlation between push and pull factors as a push factor in one country (the place of origin) sees another country offering a potential solution, i.e., a function as a pull factor. The prestige of certain countries in terms of enhancing dowry can likewise be seen as a pull factor, however, here, the dowry system is categorised as a push factor because young middle-class people face pressure from their families to leave for developed economies like Australia as it enhances the amount of dowry that will be received upon marriage

Acceptance of dowry is illegal in India under the Dowry prohibition Act 1961 and subsequently under sections 304B and 498A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). To avoid being caught legally, families often indulge in an indirect form of dowry through expense sharing and purchase of assets. These mean the bride's family may have to contribute for the school fees of their children and asset sharing may imply the bride's family may have to purchase a house for the groom and bride to live in. Additionally, many families request 'help' or 'mutual assistance' rather than a dowry per se to avoid legal trouble (Roy 2015). Such help may include the bride's family paying for the groom's overseas education. In return, the bride could live a much-sought-after Western lifestyle on a dependant visa with her husband. Such expense sharing is an indirect way of claiming dowry in return for the groom holding permanent residency in a Western country (Vohra 2015). When a groom's family seeks dowry from the bride's family, a larger amount can be demanded if the groom has studied or has settled in a foreign country. In more than 60% of Indian marriages involving dowry, there are instances of domestic violence and emotional abuse of brides failing to fulfil the dowry conditions of their marriage since some of these dowries are paid instalments after the marriage (Sekhri, 2014).

The link between the dowry system and emigration has not received much academic attention (Verghese 1997; Nishimura 1994; Singh 2006; Chaudhry 2011). This thesis briefly touches on the issue of dowry among Indians settling overseas, and a few articles in publications such as the *Times of India* (2016) and *Livemint.com* (2016) have attempted to expose the large dowry sums demanded by Indians living overseas. Given the lack of reliable academic literature on this issue, I have relied largely on the views of the interviewees to analyse the link between the

dowry and overseas resident status. In most of these interviews, rather than claiming that dowry played a role in their own decision to come to Australia, many of the interviewees mentioned dowry as playing a role in the decisions made by their friends and acquaintances. This may be because the interviewees did not want to be associated with the customs of dowry regardless of them perhaps practicing it and it is common for people to try to cover up the issue. These interviewees belonged to a wide range of castes and classes, and so it was clear that the issue of dowry was not religious-or caste-specific but was practiced more generally by Indians. According to interviewee Jayu (7 January 2014, interviewed in Mumbai):

Nowadays people are afraid to take the dowry directly or even mention it, so they ask for help. Help could be assistance with loans, or funding projects, business or sponsoring international tertiary education along with accommodation.

According to interviewee Diksha (7 January 2014, interviewed in Pune):

Two of my childhood friends got married recently and I got to know the details of the dowry first-hand as I was helping them out with the wedding preparations. As far I understand it, the higher the qualification and the better the developed country, the fewer the number of siblings, and the international visa status such as residency or citizenship increases the dowry rate for the groom. Namika's husband asked for a lower dowry compared to Renu's husband, as Namika's husband has a PR in Canada and has his own Subway sandwich store, whereas Renu's husband has citizenship in Australia and has completed his Master of Accounting in Australia.

Accepting a dowry is not uncommon among Indians, and a larger dowry is requested if the prospective groom is settled overseas. While it is subjective and just an impression, according to the interviewees, among the overseas countries, Australia drew the largest dowry among their networks due to PR opportunities and better liveability index scores compared to the US, UK or Canada. According to interviewee Natasha (7 January 2014, interviewed in Mumbai):

Two of my colleagues received offer letters for the Masters in IT from a university in the US and a university in Perth, Australia. Both decided to take up the Australian offer as they said it would help them in the long run; when they get married, they can recover all education expenses via a high dowry,

which will be possible with their Australian education. They believe that an Australian education will fetch them more dowry than an American education. They also said it was going to be easier for them to get a PR in Australia compared to the US or UK.

According to interviewee Neelam (7 January 2014, interviewed in Mumbai):

Everyone talks about it; Australia is the next big thing. My school friends who are settled in Australia who are now married received more dowry than one friend who is settled in the US. Probably because the US is saturated, and Australia is the new land of the wealthy lifestyle. The conditions in Australia are also better than the US.

It is plausible then that dowry is a contributing factor for many Indians seeking to move to Australia, not just those pursuing tertiary education, either as a significant motivation or a secondary factor, simply adding value to their migration to Australia.

Social prestige

Another push factor identified by aspiring student migrants is that an overseas education enhances one's social prestige within India and one's peer group. Many people migrate to places that will enhance their social acceptance among their peers (Bailey 2017). People migrate from regions or villages where they have less social value or prestige and move to regions where they will not be judged based on their social status (Biao and Shen 2009). Prior to 2000, visiting or living abroad was not common for an average middle-class Indian (Altbach 2014 and Rajpal 2013), consequently there is prestige associated with living abroad.

Most Indians, from a very young age, are told that living in the US is trendy and socially appealing (Bansal 2005). This perception extends to most Western countries, such as the UK, Canada and Australia. Perhaps subconsciously, many Indians view travelling or living abroad as creating prestige (Viswanathan 2011). Interestingly, the interviewees did not migrate to Australia hoping for better social prestige in Australia, rather they said they migrated because they believed they would receive better social prestige back in India if they lived overseas. This seemed largely related to notions of more progressive lifestyles in the West. When asked what traits they associated with being modern and progressive, 90% of the interviewees mentioned traits associated with the American or British lifestyle such as speaking in English, having relaxed norms on drinking alcoholic beverages and wearing Western clothes. Not only the

migrants, but their families in India too achieved higher social prestige for having children who migrated overseas. Savyasaachi Jain, a filmmaker, produced a documentary titled *Door Kinare* (NDTV 2012). The documentary sheds light on the reasons for many Indians' emigration from India to the UK (NDTV 2012). This documentary was inspired by earlier research with similar findings conducted by Gahlaut and Taparia (2003). According to the interviewees in the documentary, Indians are encouraged to go abroad and pursue the goals of living a better life and making more money than they would be able to make in India. This view is echoed by some of the interviewees. Jacob, for example, stated (2 December 2013, interviewed in Delhi):

I prefer to leave India for Australia as the life there appears to be very stylish, especially what we see on AXN with the Australian TV shows. Everyone there appears to be very stylish and trendy. Why wouldn't I want to live a stylish and trendy lifestyle in Australia and speak with an exotic accent and then become popular in my village on returning for holidays? All the prospective fathers of the brides would also look up to me as a potential groom for their daughters.

According to interviewee Neelam (7 January 2014, interviewed in Pune), who visited Australia as a tourist:

After I returned from Australia, my colleagues respected me more than before and my boss was not rude or abrupt with me the way he used to be before I had visited the Western country. Employees and senior management at my office find Australia very attractive. When I told them, I was visiting Australia to meet my distant family member residing in Melbourne, they started to treat me better.

There is clearly status conferred on overseas travellers by those around them who have not had the chance to leave India (Viswanathan 2011). According to interviewee Natasha (7 January 2014, interviewed in Bangalore):

My friend studies in the US and I study in Australia. Whenever we visit India on holiday and meet our school friends, everyone calls us the 'cool ones' and everyone treats us to dinner and cocktails. I find it awkward but also love the attention as nobody challenges anything we say, and whatever we say about Australia, or the US is accepted as fact.

The interviewees were not asked to reflect on the rationale of their attraction towards a Western lifestyle as it was not within the scope of the questionnaire at the time, however, this fascination with the Western lifestyle is perhaps a result of the long period of British colonial rule over India, during which Indians were made to believe in the white race's superiority over those of darker skin colour, as well as the superiority of the Global North over the developing Indian society (Altbach 2015 & Washbrook 2009). Again, those students who have the necessary means available to leave the country manage to do so. However, those who long for social prestige without any social backing, financial backing, government support, and societal support cannot move overseas for a better life. Some of these sections at the most manage to travel inter-state to developed metropolitan cities and attain their goals of a better life within India, but moving overseas remains an action of the privileged classes.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the factors that influence young Indian students' decision to leave India and study overseas. The analysis was based on face-to-face qualitative interviews. These factors do not apply to the entire Indian student cohort; however, they were significant for several of the interviewees and help us understand some of the complex and lesser-known reasons for student migration. The chapter also indicated that some push factors are more important than others. The key factors discussed above emerged as being impactful for the interviewees. The decisions to move are mainly those born out of a better and socially more prestigious life for students belonging to privileged middle-class Indian families. They are due to the frustrations of corrupt systems, excessive competition, and perceived inequalities between the OC and the reserved category students. Some contrasting factors have also contributed to the decision to migrate. For instance, lesser costs but higher returns from dowry. Although comparatively, the tuition costs in India are less than those in Australia, it would still cost the students less money than what they would need to pay for bribes in India. Overall, the middle-class Indians can move overseas which has led to these factors becoming push factors for their decisions to emigrate. Without the infrastructure to emigrate and the family backing, it would not have been easy for these students to leave the country based on their frustrations and longing for a better life. The poorer classes regardless of their castes and those belonging to poor rural families but of OC backgrounds do not have the privilege and the necessary means to overcome their hardships and longing for a better life. These experiences of the Indian education system have made the pull factors discussed in the next chapter more attractive.

Chapter 6. Aspirations, Motivations and Opportunities – Pull factors for Indian Student Migration

Introduction

This chapter analyses the social, cultural and economic pull factors that draw Indian students to Australia and make it an attractive destination for migrants. These pull factors motivate migrants to choose one country over the other (Wang 2016). The analysis in this chapter is drawn from the 125 interviews conducted in both India and Australia. The interviews conducted in India were from urban areas as these areas, not rural areas, comprised of the focus groups of this thesis who planned to migrate to Australia. These students were predominantly in their mid-twenties, belonged to the middle to lower-middle economic class, and were enrolled in either bachelor or master's degrees. Furthermore, these interviewees belonged to different religious backgrounds, including Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Christian, Atheist, Parsi (Indian Zoroastrians) and Jewish (Bene Jews from India). This was necessary as interviewees of diverse backgrounds could hold different aspirations and motivations to migrate. As well as being religiously diverse, the study sample included students from different states in India for the same reason. Since India has a very state-oriented culture, due to its federal system of government (Weiner 2018, pp. 27-59), I chose interviewees from across India to cover as many factors as possible that pull these students towards Australia. These interviews were conducted in Punjab, Delhi, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Haryana.

Indian students interviewed described a variety of pull factors that attracted them to Australia. They included economic factors such as the wages in Australia; cultural factors such as the Australian lifestyles portrayed in television programs broadcast in India and via tourism advertisements across India; the significance of sport, especially cricket; and last, social freedom in Australia related to alcohol consumption, nightlife, religion, sexual freedom and the relaxed university classroom environment. These factors were particularly important and influential in attracting most interviewees towards Australia as they belonged to middle-class families who were often denied these freedoms in India. These students had given up hope of achieving these liberties in India and saw Australia as a destination which would provide them. This cohort did not have the financial ability to enjoy such wealthy and comfortable lifestyles in India. Although these students were not wealthy or comfortable, they had enough economic capabilities to aspire for such a lifestyle overseas and to have access to Western lifestyles.

The interviewees demonstrated a range of factors that attracted them towards Australia and no one factor was not the sole reason for migrating. However, almost 90% of the interviewees cited social, cultural and lifestyle-based factors as attracting them towards Australia, and 75% of interviewees found economic factors attracting them to Australia¹⁷. These factors will be analysed in detail in the following sections. The factors analysed in this chapter although make Australia an attractive destination, other Western countries also offer similar cultural, social and economic incentives to their migrants. However, based on their tougher long term migration policies, availability of skilled labour jobs, entry requirements for university admissions and behaviours of settled Indian communities, Western countries like the UK, Canada and the US tend to attract those Indians who wish to live among large settled Indian communities, have more income at their disposal, with stronger academic backgrounds and hold the skills relevant to the migration policies of these countries.

Economic Pull Factors

The better economic circumstances of Australia compared to India clearly attract Indian students towards Australia. These economic factors are understood as superior financial opportunities in Australia, better economic amenities, higher wage differentials, and more employment opportunities (Haug 2008). An important factor in migration is knowledge about the differences in living standards and economic conditions between other places and the community from which migration occurs (Jajja 2017). Knowledge of higher average incomes in Australia attracted the interviewees the most. These interviewees had the privilege of comparing their incomes and lifestyle in India against a perceived and aspired lifestyle and income in Australia. This is the case because these interviewees belonged to middle-class Indian families whose total family income was between \$15,000 to \$60,000. It must be noted that this range is not that of individuals, but their entire family combined. This appears quite low if compared to the average per capita income of Australia which is approx. \$79,000 (World Bank 2017). According to Allan (25 August 2017, interviewed in Melbourne):

Even if I earn an average income in Australia, it would be more than the wealthy people earning in India. I have heard that even truck drivers and electricians in Australia earn more than white-collar jobs in India. Working and earning in Australia will be a life-changing decision for me.

¹⁷ Refer to the appendix section for a detailed breakdown of the responses. See appendix A7: Breakdown of the Major Findings.

Allan tends to compare the earnings of truck drivers and electricians in Australia with those in India since these professions in India are mostly taken up by people living in poverty or ones who earn well below \$15,000 annually. While the average annual earnings of truck drivers in Australia is \$70,000 (PayScale 2020), their counterparts in India earn only \$4000 (PayScale 2020). According to Farha (5 May 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

I can imagine how well off I would be once I work as a Business Analyst in Australia. My income is expected to be \$90,000 which is almost five times what I am earning in my IT job in India. This will be comparable or more than what the wealthy people in India earn and I could earn more than them! With this earning my family can walk with pride with their heads high in the wealthy society because then I will be earning like the wealthy in India.

These expressed wage differentials were a major economic factor that attracted the interviewees. The aspiration of moving out from a middle-class Indian family to a perceived very high earning Australian work landscape pulled them towards Australia. In fact, some interviewees also suggested the average wage in Australia was higher than the US and hence they chose Australia over the US. It is not clear whether these interviewees considered the living expenses in Australia as it was not mentioned by them in the interviews. There might be more awareness of this with an increase in people sharing their experiences on online forums and social media. It appears that they tended to translate the high average income in Australia against what they could buy with it and how they could spend it in India and at Indian daily living costs. With this middle-class aspiring to live the lifestyles of the wealthy-class in India, such high-income opportunities were very attractive in drawing them towards Australia over other Western countries because of the industries they would be working in. While the average incomes in the engineering sector would be higher in the US and the UK, there are more IT jobs taken up by Indian cohorts in Australia, which pay more than what they would be paid in India and have easier entry requirements than the US and the UK. It combines ease of entry and relative salaries that make Australia more attractive to this particular cohort.

It is not only the higher incomes but also the wage differentials that matter to the interviewees. Indian youth often contribute part of their incomes to their families. They often believe that this contribution will take up a small amount of their Australian income in contrast to the high amount needed from their Indian incomes. According to interviewee Mika (7 January 2014, interviewed in Melbourne):

My earning in Australia will weigh more once converted to Indian currency and my family will be happy with the remittance.

According to Mika's sister Preet (7 January 2014, interviewed in Delhi):

Even if I send 20% of my earnings to my family, it will be much more than contributing more than half of what I earn in India. I am earning \$10,000 annually in India with my current job and I am expecting to earn \$80,000 with the same job portfolio in Australia. In India I am contributing \$5000 annually to my family which is half of what I earn, but once I earn a higher wage in Australia, I could send more money, say \$16,000 to my family and yet it would only be 20% of my earnings.

The expectation of a higher income for similar experience and qualifications and the ability to contribute more towards their families make Australian wages a relevant economic pull factor for young Indians.

Culture and Lifestyle

Migrants are attracted to the culture and lifestyle of the host nation when the host nation offers what the migrants long for but do not get to experience in their home countries (Ashtar 2017). In addition, the changed lifestyles of Indians settled in Australia over a period combined with a change in their social manner and etiquette tend to attract middle-class students to move abroad (Rajpal 2013, Gahlaut & Taparia 2003). This was reciprocated within the middle-class Indian interviewees, who found certain factors to be attractive in Australia that they longed for in India. According to the interviewees, the entertainment industry, advertisements from the Australian Tourism Board, the lifestyle portrayed on Australian television and the popularity of cricket were highly influential in shaping their views of Australia as a country of leisure and vibrant culture.

The role of the entertainment industry

The entertainment industry of a country plays a significant role in the portrayal of the culture, values, social system and lifestyles of the people living in it (Song and Park 2015). This is seen in the case of Hollywood, where it has played a role in the portrayal of the lifestyle, culture and well-being of Americans in the US to rest of the world (Jones 2015). Television portrays locations and culture of countries as very attractive and influences people to travel to these destinations and take decisions to migrate at times (Butler 1990). Similarly, Australian

entertainment industry, even if not as dominant as Hollywood (Glover 2012), seems to have influenced the interviewees in their decision to choose Australia as a migration and education destination (The Conversation 2012). The TV shows project to the migrants' newness and sense of an unexplored territory, making Australia more attractive to the middle-class Indians compared to the US and the UK, which may appear more intimidating or too known to be attractive.

The Australian entertainment industry was able to distinguish itself in India in the early 21st century (TOI 2016) with the array of action-packed reality shows and charismatic Australian tv hosts. Indians have witnessed an increase in Australian television shows and films, including reality television shows (BBC 2016). AXN India is the channel responsible for this increase in Australian entertainment on Indian television (AXN 2016). Since the late 2000s AXN has provided Indians with Australian content that differs from the regular American or Indian content (Downer 2005). Having these unique shows among routine shows has created an 'exotic' image of Australia (Sears 2015). Reality shows on AXN are hosted by Australian celebrities with their unique accents which portray a unique Australian image to the viewers. At the very least, Australians' unique accents and the positive perception of Australian celebrities in India has created curiosity about Australia among Indians (Praet 2014). The 'Star World' television channel in India recognised the popularity of Australian entertainment and dubbed many Australian shows into Hindi to appeal to the rural non-English-speaking population (Australia TV 2016). AXN adopted a similar strategy, and soon Indian villages could watch former cricketer turned tv personality Mick Whitney hosting shows with a Hindi voice-over (The Hindu 2002). Following the success of AXN and Star World, in 2008, the Australian TV channel Australia Plus launched in India (ABC 2014). Australia Plus is dedicated to Australian TV shows, films and reality shows and is quite popular with the masses. Daily reality-style documentary shows set in rural surroundings are also screened, giving Indians an insight into the non-urban Australian lifestyle (Australia Plus 2016). Raj, one of the interviewees, made clear that the entertainment industry helped shape his view of Australian life (16 April 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

My favourite television show was the Australian version of Who Dares Wins. I was fascinated by the personalities of the contestants and the amazing accents they had.

Television shows that have become popular among Indians include *Who Dares Wins*, *Ultimate Fighter Australia*, *MasterChef Australia* and *Australia's Next Top Model* (TOI 2015). These television shows have created a new fan base for Australian celebrities. Jennifer Hawkins, winner of the Miss Universe title (*Daily Mail* 2015); Mick Whitney, a cricket show host (*Indian Weekly* 2014); the television host Tania Zaetta (*Business Standard* 2014); and actors such as the Hemsworth brothers, Nicole Kidman, Hugh Jackman and Eric Bana, stars of the movies *Thor*, *Australia*, *X-Men* and *Troy*, respectively (*Zee News* 2015), have all gained new fans. The uniqueness of Australian entertainment was addressed by some of the interviewees. According to interviewee Aslam (7 January 2014, interviewed in Mumbai):

Australians are better looking than Americans; you can see that in beauty pageants and movies. I hope I can visit Australia as my friends, and I discuss it as the land of models and beautiful girls. I am seriously contemplating moving to Australia by enrolling in a master's degree and then applying for a PR.

It is not only television hosts and action movie actors but also cooking show judges who have attained celebrity status in India (Thussu 2016). According to interviewee Rajin (11 April 2016, interviewed in Sydney):

After watching *MasterChef Australia*, I realised how rich the food culture was in Australia. I also loved how the Indian contestant was treated by the judges and fellow contestants. The treatment she received was enough for me to overcome my fear of racism. In fact, I saw how culturally aware the judges and fellow contestants were towards Indian culture and food. If I move overseas, Australia would be the country I would choose.

In 2012, *MasterChef Australia* judges George Calombaris and Gary Mehigan (Vora 2015) were surrounded by fans outside Mumbai Airport (Mehta 2012). The size of the crowd was comparable to that gathered for any A-list Hollywood celebrity. *Ultimate Fighting Championship* fighters such as John Wayne Parr have also gained celebrity status in India, especially on social media (UFC 2012). According to interviewee Dimpi (7 January 2014, interviewed in Pune):

My entire family watches *MasterChef Australia*, and I am a huge fan of George. My brother used to watch *Ultimate Fighting Championship* and his

favourite was John, and we hope they [AXN] bring back the show. My grandmother loves Australian reality series but watches it in Hindi and we have a fight at home whether we should watch the English or Hindi version. I wish I could live the Australian lifestyle. I would love to live in Australia.

The popularity of celebrities may influence how their followers perceive the celebrities' country of origin or residence. Undoubtedly, the increasing popularity of these Australian actors, models, fighters and television hosts gives young Indians a positive perception of Australia (Kim 2013). Similarly, the TV shows from the US and their Hollywood has been an attractive factor for many Indians even before the popularity of Australia. However, it is the attraction of a new destination with lesser Indian migrations compared to the UK and the US that make Australia attractive to those Indians looking for easier means to migrate with lesser restrictions and similar glamour appeal. There are many people who do not have access to Australian or Western television shows and are unaware and not exposed to what lies on the other side of the world. These less privileged sections dream to travel within India to metropolitan cities to meet their Bollywood or regional cinema celebrities.

Tourism Australia

The Australian Tourism Board also called 'Tourism Australia' has played a vital role in attracting Indians toward Australia. The tourism boards of various countries aim to attract tourists by engaging in catchy and welcoming promotions overseas (Tsui 2017). These tourism campaigns are localised and suited to attract the locals based on what they seek in a tourist destination (Baas 2015). This is important because such attractive and welcoming campaigns may not necessarily be a true representation of what the host country offers, but at times could be a misleading and deceptive representation to appeal to the expectations of the potential tourists. Hankinson (2001, pp. 127-142) supports these arguments by explaining how advertisements of exotic beaches are placed on billboards in countries without a shoreline or access to safe and beautiful public beaches. To create this appeal, the beaches in the advertisements are made to appear way more attractive than they really are.

Tourism Australia has been responsible for many successful campaigns in India promoting Australian tourist sites. From 2010 to 2015, Tourism Australia aggressively promoted Australia in India (Sathyanarayanan 2015), and this has continued until present day. Indian freeways and national highways were spotted with billboard advertisements promoting Australian tourism. The ubiquity of these advertisements has undoubtedly fed into the perceptions of Australia's

‘superior’ lifestyle. All these efforts are part of an integrated marketing campaign involving advertising, public relations programmes and trade shows—that Tourism Australia has launched as part of a campaign called the “India 2020 Strategic Plan” (Bhattacharyya 2012).



Figure 1

Figure 1 shows the ‘Nothing Like Australia’ advertisement by Tourism Australia, situated on top of a residential apartment in the crowded suburb of Andheri in Mumbai, India (Arya, pers. photo, 2014).



Figure 2

Figure 2 shows the promotion of the great barrier reef on a busy highway in Mumbai (Arya, pers. photo, 2014).

In addition to billboards, half- and full page-advertisements were also placed in mainstream Indian newspapers such as the *Times of India*, the *Economic Times*, *Mint*, *The Hindu*, *Lok Prabhat*, *Lok Satta*, the *Maharashtra Times* and the *Indian Express*, advertising Australia as ‘The Land Down Under’ (BMOI 2016, 2017 & 2018). Soon, Australia had become the talk of the town and the destination many families wanted to visit (Economic Times 2015). During prime time, there was hardly a commercial break on television without a commercial showcasing the splendid sights of Australia (Nair 2015).



Figure 3

Figure 3 shows a billboard in Delhi by Thomas Cook, a travel company in India, advertising tourism in Australia (Thomas Cook 2017).

These advertisements not only attract tourists but also business travellers, investors, and, more importantly students (SATC 2014). Students see a new and unexplored study destination in these advertisements. The advertisements promote Australia as a wonderful destination not just to complete one’s education, but also to experience the attractive environment and different Australian culture.

Furthermore, Tourism Australia has signed up prominent Indian celebrities to promote Australian tourism among young Indians who are the key viewer groups of Bollywood movies and Indian television.



Figure 4

Figure 4 shows Bollywood actress Parineeti Chopra appointed by Tourism Australia to promote Australian tourist destinations. This appointment is expected to further cement the close ties between Australia and India.

These students are influenced by Bollywood movies which have increasingly showcased Australia as an exotic location. This is because Tourism Australia has been very welcoming to Bollywood movie producers and has allowed entire movies, songs or action sequences to be shot in Australia (ABC 2009). Beyond the Bollywood industry, Tourism Australia also has partnerships with popular Indian television soap operas (Tellychakkar 2014). Television soaps such as *Kyuki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi* ('A Mother-in-Law was Once a Daughter-in-Law') and *Kahani Ghar ki* ('Story of Every Household') have included plotlines in which the protagonist plans their master's education in Australia (Tellychakkar 2014) and is then visited by their entire family (Hotstar 2004). Such overt messages have increased not only Australian tourism but also postgraduate-level student migration (Millennium Post 2015).

Additionally, partnerships between Tourism Australia and local Indian travel agencies have boosted Indian travels to Australia. Locals prefer to travel overseas through their locally trusted and reputed tourism providers as against 'international or unknown' providers (Pandey 2015). Partnerships between international tourism boards and local tourism companies help promote international tourism in the designated countries. This is because locals tend to trust their local tourist companies with a good reputation, and it allows them to take a big step towards international travel. Such indirect marketing by Tourism Australia includes partnerships in India with travel agencies such as Kesari Tours, Thomas Cook, SOTC, and Cox and

Kings (Businessline 2015, Prabhakar 2013). Additionally, airlines such as Singapore Airlines, Silk Air, Malaysia Airlines and Air India have also partnered with Tourism Australia to aggressively promote cheaper fares and special offers for customers to fly to Australia.



Figure 1

Figure 6 shows marketing material from Kesari Tours, one of the top travel agencies in Maharashtra, India, promoting Australian trips on a popular TV channel during a commercial break (ZEE TV 2017).

The Board's aggressive marketing strategies towards India are driven by projections that tourist, student and migrant contributions will amount to approximately \$2.3 billion by 2020 (Lazaro 2013). The campaign aims to increase the number of Indian travellers to Australia at a compounded annual growth rate of 7.2% over the next eight years (Travel Gateway 2013). Although such strategies and the accompanying special offers are aimed at tourists, they also influence Indian students, who can enjoy the benefits of reduced fares with travel partners of Tourism Australia (Joshi 2013). According to interviewee Ejuka (7 January 2014, interviewed in Delhi):

I travelled to Sydney and the Gold Coast in 2012 with my friends as the air tickets to Australia were cheaper than the ones to the US and as students, we were offered special accommodation discounts and a free University of Queensland tour. The very next year I was studying at the University of Queensland as I fell in love with the university during my travels as a tourist.

According to interviewee Raja (7 January 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

My cousin visited Melbourne in 2010 after he saw the Great Ocean Road advertisement on television as well as in the newspaper. The travel agent

provided special discounts, so the entire family visited. On return he said it was a great place where one visit was not enough to experience the culture. He is planning to do his master's in Melbourne. In a few years, his sister too is planning to do a master's course in either Melbourne or Sydney.

Tourism Australia's marketing campaigns have been noticed by extended networks of Indians, and this has led to an increase in not only new tourists but also repeat tourists. Often, these repeat tourists are families of students who move over to further their education (Lazaro 2015). For students like Raja's cousins above, the advertisements promoting Australian tourism have also promoted Australia as an attractive destination for tertiary education.

Cricket

Indians and Australians love their cricket to such a level that it is not just a sport but a medium to understand each other's cultures and establish diplomatic relations (Mustafa 2017). In 2012, almost 93% of Australians who participated in a survey conducted by *Indian Voice* had watched some form of cricket during the year (Indian Voice 2012). Both India and Australia have produced many cricketing legends who enjoy respect and status in both countries (Khondker 2018). Cricket fanatics in India have always been fascinated by the Australian cricket team, who are five-time One Day International (ODI) world champions (ICC 2015). Rivalries in games played in both India and Australia have attracted millions of viewers from both nations and have also caused a fascination about Australians within the cricket loving Indian population (Thakur 2016). According to interviewee Mahjid (7 January 2014, interviewed in Pune):

I used to play for our office cricket team at the district level in Pune (India), and I always wished to play cricket and face the fast pace of the Australian bowlers. India and Australia have a huge cricket rivalry comparable to the rivalry between India and Pakistan. Looking at the Australian cricket grounds, the Australian crowds and Aussie cricket players, I wish one day I could play cricket in Australia. It may not be possible without being Australian, and since Aussie life is so laidback, I may apply for a project transfer to Melbourne or look for a short master's course to experience the Australian lifestyle.

Cricket is beyond a passion shared by millions of Indians and Australians, and it acts as a mechanism to foster ties between the two nations (Halder 2018). Cricket has been known to

divide politics of Australia and India both internationally and intra-nationally (Crick 2009). For instance, in 2015, 30 young leaders from India and Australia were hosted by Cricket Australia to promote the Australia-India Youth Dialogue (AIYD). The AIYD had presentations about the role of sport in diplomacy from cricketing greats such as Doug Walters, Greg ‘Mo’ Matthews, Lisa Sthalekar and Gurinder Sandhu. In fact, cricket has been the basis for some student mobility as well. Scholarships are provided with industry partners for successful Sport Management students at La Trobe University such as Kings XI Punjab, a popular Indian Premier League (IPL) cricket team (LTU 2015). According to interviewee Rahul (7 January 2016, interviewed in Melbourne), who plays domestic cricket:

I received a 10% scholarship from my team management under the Australia–India cricket tie-up towards my Master in Sport Management. I have always been fascinated by the Australian cricket team and the sporting quality demonstrated on the field by their players. I always wanted to experience playing at any level within the Australian cricketing arena. I am hoping to play for a university-level Australian cricket team on arrival in Melbourne. I have already emailed the coach and they are willing to try me out.

The popularity of Australian cricket players has been pivotal in constructing a positive image of Australia and increasing the following of Australian cricketers within India (Jain & Mayer 2010). For example, Bret Lee has a large fan base among Indian women. Interviewee Anjali (7 January 2014, interviewed in Mumbai) explained:

I love Brett Lee; I would ditch my boyfriend for him. He is so handsome, so cute, just like all Australian men who are handsome. I can’t wait to see all Australian celebrities when I start my master’s course in two months. I hope I can drive past Brett Lee’s home.

It is not only Brett Lee’s world-record bowling pace that has attracted this fan following, but also his advertisements on Indian television selling Indian products and his lead act in a mainstream Bollywood movie (Frost 2018). Former Australian cricket captain Steve Waugh also has a strong fan following in India (The Hindu 2009). Waugh has supported poor Indian communities with his charity foundation (Banerjee 2017). This has created respect for Australians in the minds of Indians who viewed Australians as rude and racist following the

Ganguly–Chappell controversy¹⁸ and the racial attacks in 2009/10¹⁹ (Gupta 2006). Steve Waugh has visited his foundation on numerous occasions. The foundation, established in Kolkata in 2013, builds schools for female students from underprivileged families and provides a rehabilitation home for children suffering from leprosy (One India 2009). These well-publicised activities have deepened potential students' interest in Australia over time. The thesis makes it clear that one does not migrate to Australia because they are fond of some Australian cricketer, however, when these privileged migrants plan their eventual migration they rationally consider various cultural and lifestyle factors that appeal their interests and would cater to their social life after settling in a new country.

Social freedoms

It was evident from the interviews that a lot of young middle-class Indian students hope that studying in Australia would bring them social status and personal freedoms as they stem from a middle-class desire to escape specific social and cultural structures. Social and cultural restrictions and scrutiny are commonly faced by middle-class people in India regardless of their religion, caste or ethnicity. It is being middle-class that restricts them from accessing the world of freedom within their own country that is accessible by a select few from the wealthy-class. For instance, wealthy-class Indians enjoy freedom to wear clothes of their choice because they have personal car drivers who would pick them and drop them from door-to-door, i.e., Home to destination. This way by avoiding public transport the wealthy-class can avoid the interference of cultural vigilantes and religious clergies who would publicly object to their attire. Furthermore, the wealthy-class dines at 5-star hotels and high-class restaurants where there is no objection to their partner intimacy, attire and consumption of alcohol. Even if intoxicated, they are picked up and dropped home by their employed car drivers. This creates a safety bubble for the wealthy-class which the middle-class cannot access or afford. As a result, except for those who are wealthy enough, others are under a lot more scrutiny both culturally and associated with high levels of inequality.

¹⁸ This controversy was caused between 2005-2006 between Indian cricket coach Greg Chappell who hailed from Australia and Indian cricket team captain Saurav Ganguly. This dispute led to the removal of Ganguly as the captain of the Indian cricket team. The matter escalated to the Indian parliament and led to mass street protests against Chappell across India.

¹⁹ In 2009, Australian and Indian media publicised reports of crimes against Indian students in Australia. These crimes were said to have racial overtones according to the media outlets. In June 2009, Victoria Police Chief Commissioner, Simon Overland acknowledged that some of the crimes were racist in nature, and others were opportunistic. A subsequent Indian Government investigation concluded that, of 152 reported assaults against Indian students in Australia that year, 23 involved racial overtones.

Migrants often consider the hostility of the host society and the social freedoms in the new country when making their migration decisions. As such, migrants may go to unthinkable lengths to migrate and experience social freedoms (Benson and O'Reilly 2009). This view accords with my own research, which shows that availability of social freedoms in Australia is a significant factor attracting Indians to Australia. Several the interviewees identified the following characteristics as desirable aspects of Australian life that they wanted to experience culture surrounding alcohol consumption, a lower legal age of consent for sexual intercourse, freedom of expression of religion for conservative students, fewer social stigmas attached to enjoying nightlife, and social freedoms within universities. These factors were not mentioned by the interviewees when they explained the reasons why they wanted to leave India. This is because, these social factors are important, but not enough to leave India. Most interviewees were unhappy because of all the cultural restrictions imposed on them in India and expressed these in detail in the interviews. However, it was the hope of receiving these freedoms that attracted them towards Australia. For instance, most interviewees did not want to leave India because they could not consume alcohol legally before 25 years of age, instead, they wanted to live in Australia because they could drink from 18 years of age. Hence, even though the interviewees focus on India's lacking, their narratives are driven by a pull from the perceived availability of their desired lifestyles in Australia.

Alcohol consumption

The lower drinking age in Australia compared to India and the more accepting Australian culture surrounding alcohol consumption was attractive for the interviewees. Many young Indians are not in favour of the social stigma around alcohol consumption in India and the high minimum legal drinking age. The legal age to consume alcohol in Australia is 18, which is lower than that in India. In India, the minimum legal drinking age differs from state to state; however, in most states 21 is the minimum legal age to consume beer and 25 is the legal age to consume any other form of alcohol (DelhiGov 2016 & Mukherjee 2015). Despite this distinction, to be on the safe side of the law, many restaurants do not serve alcohol to individuals under 25, irrespective of whether it is beer, wine or another form of alcohol (DelhiGov 2016). Interviewees David and Suresh were unhappy with these rules. According to Suresh (8 January 2014, interviewed in Delhi):

What a ridiculous rule is this! I can marry at 21, but cannot drink before 25?

According to David (7 January 2014, interviewed in Mumbai):

Our country is run by people who think drinking alcohol takes more responsibility than getting married and having children. My cousins in Australia start drinking at 18, and in India we must wait until 25, this is simply insane.

It is not only the legal drinking age with which many young Indians are unhappy but also the social stigma surrounding intoxication. In many parts of India, getting drunk or even slightly intoxicated is considered immoral by religious clerics and religious political parties. A drunk individual or anyone who consumes alcohol in public is looked down upon (Malik 2018, pp. 311-320), and this attitude is even stronger towards women than men (Rai 2015, pp. 162-167). Korpela (2016, p. 27) explains how individuals may choose to migrate to countries which do not have such constant societal interference in their daily activities. This point was echoed by some of the interviewees. According to Ramesh (7 January 2014, interviewed in Mumbai):

My family does not allow me to enter home if I smell of beer. The apartment's watchman [security guard] filed a false noise complaint against me last month to the chairman of our society [the Co-operative Housing Society in India is the same as the apartment system in Australia] after I came home slightly drunk after a party at my friend's place. My parents were angry at me and despite being an adult they banned me from entering our home ever again if I consumed alcohol and came home late.

Ramesh's treatment may perhaps be explained by the fact that he belongs to a conservative middle-class family who value traditional cultural norms and look down on Westernisation. Furthermore, the freedom to purchase a carton of beer without attracting attention and being stigmatised as a drunkard and a social outcast has been influential in attracting Indians to Australia. The interviewees did not mention wanting to leave India for the above reasons but focussed on how attractive Australia was since it provided freedoms these young Indians longed for. According to interviewee Lalubhai (25 January 2016, interviewed in Sydney):

I love Sydney. No matter what time of the day we can get up, walk to the neighbouring Dan Murphy's and buy a six pack for ourselves without anyone judging us. I cannot imagine walking to a liquor store in Chennai [India] like this. Here even the employees don't care who is buying the alcohol, but in Chennai once an employee called my grandmother and told her that I had

bought one beer can at this store and then my entire family was upset with me.

Naming and shaming of young Indians caught intoxicated by their family members or neighbours is not uncommon. The issue is not about drinking alcoholic beverages; the issue lies in the openness of such activities. Someone drinking an alcoholic beverage in a restaurant may not be negatively judged; however, if they do so on the balconies of their apartments, visible to the public, it is looked down upon. If someone consumes an alcoholic beverage with office friends at a local pub, it is not frowned upon; however, when these individuals' step into their neighbourhoods visibly intoxicated or smelling of alcohol, neighbours such as the gatekeepers or self-proclaimed 'cultural activists' disapprove of them. Often, such individuals also become social outcasts if they do not keep their alcohol consumption private and secretive. According to interviewee Dugadati (27 January 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

Australia is known for its alcohol culture. I have longed to live in that country (Australia). It was high time I left my city of Lucknow and my country India. We are a modern youth in the 21st century and it is impossible for us to stay restricted in our neighbourhoods where everyone drinks but all the hypocrites shame the girls if they are spotted consuming alcohol. If I must breathe the fresh air of freedom I must move out of India. I hate the hypocrisy that it is fine for men to drink alcohol but if a girl drinks it, she becomes characterless.

Interviewee Prahela shared similar views (23 December 2013, interviewed in Mumbai):

I have heard stories about Australia how people drive through liquor stores just like driving through a McDonalds drive through. Now that is the life you would want!!! I have never dared to buy a drink from the local liquor store in my colony [neighbourhood]. My boyfriend used to buy us alcohol from the suburb which is 10 kilometres away from my home and university, so no one would know him and report him. We then used to hang out at another friend's spare apartment and enjoy the drinks. Our parents were told by our friends that we are spending the night studying and all our friends used to verify and cover for each other. If anyone ever came to know we were relaxing and having beer, our family members and our colony members would beat us up.

Another interviewee explained how her family held conservative attitudes towards her behaviour but not that of her brother, suggesting a gender bias. However, a gender bias cannot be explained by alcohol consumption and double standards alone. Gender bias is very high in India. According to the World Economic Forum, India was ranked 113 in the world for its gender gap (WEF 2011), whereas in 2018, UNDP ranked India 132 out of 148 countries in their Gender Gap Index (UNDP 2018). The gender gap in India exists socially, economically as well as politically. Many social customs apply only to women or are laid on them more strictly than on men. For example, in cases of adultery, men are ‘purified’ with a holy bath, but a woman is ‘tainted’ all her life. Similarly, honour killings are common towards women compared to men. Economically, families would buy a car or vehicle for the men in their families and women must settle for public transport. Disturbingly, there have been instances where rural women who have deviated from social norms and village codes have been stripped naked in public or even gang raped (Hindustan Times 2017). While gender gap can be explored in more detail, it is the perceived lack of gender gap that the women interviewees expect in Australia that has pulled them towards this country. According to Praju (9 January 2014, interviewed in Pune):

Mum and Dad allow my brother to consume alcohol. Dad has a mini home bar in our lounge room, but Mum and I are not allowed to drink with them. Mum can drink alone, and I am not allowed to even come near the bar. I had only one glass of wine during my friend’s birthday, and someone told my father about this. That evening after I returned home, he spent the entire evening yelling at me and exclaiming how I was a disgrace to the family. When I move to Australia, I can have my own bar fridge in my apartment with no one bothering me.

In addition to family pressures, young Indians also face censure from religious organisations (Malik 2018, pp. 311-320). The Muslim organisation Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH) warned all Muslims in India against consuming alcohol and has issued a fatwa²⁰ against any Muslim caught drinking alcohol (Tiwari 2017). This organisation wanted the Indian government to call for a national ban on alcohol as it believed alcohol to contribute to increased sexual crimes (Tripathi 2012). It is not that no one consumes alcohol in India; many people do (*The Indian Express* 2012). However, the importance placed on social conformity and the fear it causes

²⁰ A fatwa is an Islamic, Sharia Law based, nonbinding and authoritative legal opinion based on the learned interpretation of a qualified Islamic Priest or Clergy.

among people is such that they shun others who do the same things they do (Tripathi 2010). According to Rajuli (27 January 2014, interviewed in Mumbai):

I wish I could finally be myself and get drunk for once in my life after I arrive in Sydney. I want to drink like Crocodile Dundee and Hugh Jackman without anyone bothering me.

Australia is viewed as a beer loving nation in India (Vosloo 2014) and Indian youth value their social freedom to drink which is not available to their satisfaction in India (Alekhya 2014). This is important as the anticipated and desired social freedom in Australia in terms of alcohol consumption is a drawcard attracting Indians to the country.

Freedom to enjoy nightlife

Access and freedom to enjoying nightlife has become an influential factor in the lives of modern Indian youth. They see this freedom available in Australia and that attracts them towards the country. Westernisation and influence of Global North media have influenced Global South and created a new demand and want for enjoying nightlife and Western festivals within their communities (Krishnan 2018, p.19). Both men and women prefer the freedom to party and enjoy nightlife without the confinements and cultural regulations of their society. This is important as such behaviour may also encourage them to migrate to countries that offer such freedom. This was also seen among some of the interviewees.

A great deal of public moral policing around partying exists in India, to the discontent of young adults (Aengst 2014). These discontent adults belong to different social and economic backgrounds; however, they all have the privilege to enjoy nightlife to some degree within the cultural norms and settings. It is the youth who belong to very downtrodden communities and within northern parts of India, ones belonging to reserved categories who are not allowed into nightclubs or beaten up for attempting to do so. These youth find it more attractive to migrate to Australia to overcome the abuse and experience the social freedoms they are denied in India. However, despite their caste, it is the financial backing or government support available to these communities that provide them an avenue to emigrate and dream of settling in Australia. Without these privileges, they would hardly dream of Australia, rather only plan to move to a better village with less abuse. In Australia, Indians do not have to worry about being beaten for expressing their love for someone, about being outcast by society for arriving home late, or about being publicly assaulted and humiliated by political parties for enjoying a night out at a nightclub. While some can enjoy nightlife to a certain degree in modern cities such as Mumbai

(BBC 2003), is not the case in other cities in India. Similarly, this freedom is experienced differently by wealthy and comfortable Indian youth and middle-class Indian youth. According to interviewee Deepak (15 January 2014, interviewed in Bangalore) from Bangalore:

Every weekend we secretly fly to Mumbai as Bangalore does not have the quality of nightlife and discos as Mumbai does. Moreover, the cops are very hard on couples coming out of the clubs. Many of my friends were arrested for no reason, purely due to police harassment, and charged for indecent intimate behaviour in a public space. We had to shell out money to bail ourselves out. If our parents come to know about this, they will throw us out of the house. A mutual friend who was also partying with us that night came from a poorer family and did not have money to pay the cops. He was not released on bail and later beaten up in the police lock-up.

Not all students are wealthy and comfortable like Deepak and his friends, and many middle-class youths must give up enjoying their social lives due to the fear of police harassment and being arrested under false charges simply for being seen with a girl at late hours (Regencia 2015). Such middle-class youth who cannot afford frequent domestic flights to cities with relaxed alcohol consumption laws would choose to permanently move to countries with such relaxed laws. Therefore, Australia is popular with middle-class Indian youths who see permanent migration to Australia as the only solution to their middle-class issues.

Not only the enjoyment of nightlife is at issue, but victim-blaming is common in India, and conservative groups often blame girls for being raped, with accusations that their provocative club wear was the cause of the rape. (NDTV 2016). Many girls carry Western clothes or short dresses with them when leaving home for work or university and change into clubwear moments before entering the nightclub. Once they are out of the club, they change back to their traditional or office outfits and head home as they do not want to be seen entering their neighbourhoods in nightclub wear (Kumar 2013). According to interviewee Ralima (15 December 2013, interviewed in Delhi):

In Australia I can wear what I please. I do not have to change clothes to please the society. This freedom is something I would really want to live in Australia for. In India, I wear a chudidar [Indian ethnic wear from the north] but carry a mini skirt in my handbag. Once I reach the mall, I get changed into the Western outfit and continue to restaurants with my friends for lunch.

I love Western outfits and my friends find me modern and chic when I wear them, but if I am caught wearing them in my neighbourhood my family will beat me up.

Australia is seen as a land of hope for enjoying social freedoms for these middle-class Indian youth. It is seen as a country where they can express themselves without the cultural and moral policing conformities of the Indian society.

Freedom from religion for conservative students

Some migrants escape their countries, so they can practice religious freedom and enter destinations without the freedom of being persecuted (Banaji 2018). Such instances could be termed as push factors; however, it isn't just the freedom to practice religion in a safe environment, but the freedom to practice religion the way they wished and with less interference of religious clergies and vigilantes that has attracted some of the interviewees to Australia. This factor is categorised as a pull factor because the interviewees found more freedom and religious tolerance in Australia that attracted them towards the country. It is not only Muslim students but also younger adults from orthodox Hindu, Christian and Sikh backgrounds who wish to experience this religious freedom of Australia (Gangoli 2018).

Within the interviewees, freedom from religious interference by clergy was explicitly expressed by Muslim students. According to the data retrieved from the Department of Home Affairs in 2018, 9% of the Indian students that arrived in Australia between 2015 and 2018 were Muslims (DHA 2018). This percentage has risen in the last decade, as prior to 2015 only 4% of the total number of international Indian students at Australian universities were Muslim. Muslim individuals in India are prohibited from missing their prayers (*The Hindu* 2012), eating pork, consuming alcohol, smoking and having sex before marriage (Al-Islam 2016). While such expectation may exist elsewhere, in India, the level of follow-up and scrutiny is very high. Muslim religious clerics have strong control over the Muslim families in their neighbourhoods (Saunders 2013), and anyone found disobeying Islamic rules or acting contrary to local fatwas is banished from the society. Often, these individuals are also brutally assaulted (DNA 2015). Ali, who belongs to a lower-middle-class Muslim family (9 January 2014, interviewed in Delhi), explained:

In Australia I do not have to hide and drink beer. I do not have to hide and smoke. I prefer to be myself and I can be so in Australia. This was not the case in India. In India, I hide and smoke in the basement toilet and if I drink,

I drink in the city away from this suburb where no one knows me. If I get caught, I am finished. If I get caught no one will marry my sisters and I will not be given space to be buried by the mosque authorities. You are lucky, you can do whatever you want in Australia. I am hoping to save enough money and elope to Australia. There I shall do a technical course and work as a hair stylist, earn in dollars, drink whenever I want and smoke wherever I want, no one to catch me.

The fear of religious clergies and orthodox families is so high that despite being in Australia, some of the interviewees feared how they portray themselves to their community in India. Interviewee Salima (15 March 2016, interviewed in Melbourne), originally from Mumbai and now living in Melbourne, explained why she had two Facebook profiles:

I have one profile for Australian friends. There we post photos from our clubbing nights, drinking and eating forbidden meat. Then I have my family profile with all family members where I only post photos in a hijab and at university, mostly in the library with books around me. I also post photos of me outside the prayer room, so my family does not force me to come back to India. I know I am doing wrong against my religion, but I think it is fine to casually smoke, drink or have a relationship before marriage if I am in Australia. At least I can be myself and enjoy my life without the fear of being beaten up publicly.

Salima is among the 11 Muslim students interviewed in this thesis enjoying her social and religious freedom in Australia at her own terms. However, she is careful not to let her social media profile inform her family in India about the life she is leading, for the fear of being forced to return home. Salima plans to obtain Australian citizenship so that she can be independent without the worry of being forced to go home to her orthodox and restrictive religious family. According to interviewee Kamilia (15 March 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

Back home we all chat with each other and within our community youth how we could be better off or enjoy the life of our choice once overseas. Everyone used to talk about the US in my childhood, but since 9/11, we prefer Australia as there is not as much hatred against us in Australia as in the US. Two of my school friends are also planning to enrol in a one-year master's degree in Adelaide and then get a PR in Australia.

Migrant communities consider Islam followed in Australia as 'Australian Islam' which is far more relaxed than that followed in their home countries (The Age 2018), and this contributes to the attraction of Australia as a nation where some migrants may practice their religion but in a relaxed form they prefer. Hence, Australia is home to many Muslim, Sikh and Christian students from India who arrive hoping to live a free life and often settle permanently (Economist 2012).

Sexual freedom

Australia is seen as a welcoming nation for young Indian adults who are increasingly demanding and fighting for their sexual freedoms (Shah 2006). In many cases people would escape from communities where there is interference in people's private and intimate relationships by the society around them (Fogues 2015). Such interference is getting common in the US, Canada, and UK as they host large numbers of Indian populations to a point where entire Indian diaspora-dominated towns are in these countries. The Indian emigrant community in the United Kingdom is now third generation. Indians in the UK are the largest community outside of Asia proportionally, and the second largest in terms of population, only surpassed by the United States, and closely followed by Canada. The US has over 4 million people of Indian origins, Canada has over 1.4 million and the UK has over 1 million. Compared to them, Australia only hosts just over 450,000 people of Indian origin (ABS 2021). This allows the new migrants to perceive freedom from religious and social interference of their extended diaspora in Australia compared to other Western countries.

In addition, people migrate from rural to urban areas or from villages to cities or simply different countries to experience this freedom (Santos 2016). These arguments are important as they relate to the sexual freedom longed by the middle-class interviewees who unlike their wealthier counterparts are unable to manage these freedoms with the power of financial leverages.

Girls in India under 18 often become social outcasts if they are known to have had sex. In some rural areas of India, girls younger than 18 who are known to have had sex are forced to marry the boy involved (Gill, Strange and Roberts 2014). Similarly, pre-marital sex is also frowned upon. Many men, regardless of their own status, refuse to marry women who have not maintained sexual chasteness before marriage. When youth are educated about these freedoms in Australia through television or their networks, it makes Australia socially attractive and welcoming. According to interviewee Anita (27 January 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

I have seen on TV that it is not a big deal in Australia to have sex under the age of 18. I think this freedom is very liberating for young girls who can enjoy their intimate life the way they wish. While I do not prefer people having sex under the age of 18, I would like to live in a liberal society that does not make a big deal of someone's private life.

According to another interviewee, Prerna (27 January 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

I am glad I moved to Australia. Here, I am living with my boyfriend with no one to bother me from my family and relatives. I have not told my family about my live-in relationship with my boyfriend or else they would disown me. Australia is like a very modern and progressive society where people are not judging me simply because I am living with someone. I cannot imagine continuing this lifestyle back in Chandigarh, so I am hoping to settle here permanently on completion of my final semester.

In India, there have been many cases of youths being assaulted by the police for renting rooms in hotels for intimate privacy, despite being over 16 or 18 years of age (Devnath 2015). Often, girls are ostracised from their residences after being seen with their boyfriends late at night. For girls like Prerna, it is not impossible to have sex before marriage; however, it is complex and mentally tiring to maintain such relationships in secrecy with the constant fear of being caught and punished by the society as well as family members. These occurrences are changing slowly in cities like Mumbai and Delhi, where people from wealthier families have begun to accept pre-marital sex and cohabitation before marriage for girls. Additionally, the attractiveness of Australia in providing these sexual freedoms are felt by middle-class Indian youth more than the wealthy-class youth because of their living conditions in India. Middle-class youth in India live in clustered neighbourhoods or a 'chawl' community which resembles Australian residential colleges with shared floors, toilets, showers and lounges. With such layouts and crowded housing, the middle-class youth find it difficult to achieve sexual freedom and personal space. According to Moushina (27 March 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

I was told by my cousins in Melbourne that none of the neighbours in their apartments interfere with their private lives. There is no fear of gossip about whom they spent the weekend within their apartments. I wish to have such a relaxing life without the constant fear of being reported to the social vigilantes.

According to Sunnie (27 March 2016, interviewed in Sydney):

I am a Sikh, and my husband is Muslim. I think we can live peacefully only in Australia as it is way more progressive than India or even UK or Canada. We have a lot of our communities in Canada and UK where they may mimic the vigilante behaviour seen in India. Australia is quite diverse, and it is the new migration destination for private freedoms.

These youth find Australia attractive based on the stories of personal and sexual freedoms achieved by their networks in Australia. Unlike other Western countries, Indian migration to Australia is relatively a new phenomenon. Indian communities in Australia are not as well established and not as high in total numbers compared to the UK and Canada (Trending Statistics 2018). In the UK and Canada, like India, settled migrant Indian communities may interfere with the lives of new migrants and their sexual freedoms. Hence Australia provides the much sought-after escape for middle-class Indian youth towards the attainments of their sexual freedoms.

Relaxed classroom and campus culture within universities

Another factor that attracted the interviewees to Australia was the friendly nature and approachable attitude of Australian academics and the relaxed, socially accepting, warm and welcoming culture within Australian university campuses. This warm treatment not only promotes in-class participation of students but also creates a perception of a safe environment where their issues are catered to (Jacob and Khan 2016, pp. 42-46). Such approachable attitude may also help in detecting issues faced by students at early stages (Hughes 2018). Indian students value this atmosphere, as it is absent from Indian universities.

Social policing in India is not restricted to general society and communal areas alone, but also occurs within universities (The Hindu 2015). The common protocols found in most universities and colleges in India vary depending on the city, whether the college²¹ is in a rural or urban area, and the general financial and political status of students seeking admission to the college (HT 2015). Most Indian colleges have rules regarding students' behaviours (Bellamkonda 2016). This includes militaristic and disciplined communication between staff and students, a requirement to carry an identification card around the neck, moral policing over romantic relationships between students, hazing, compulsory attendance and tougher examination

²¹ In India, degree lectures are conducted in classrooms within colleges. These colleges are affiliated to centralised universities and provide university-approved degrees (The Hindu 2015).

structures. The interviewees believe these factors are relaxed or absent within Australian universities making them very attractive. According to interviewee Prem (13 January 2014, interviewed in Mumbai):

I am looking forward to starting my degree at UQ [University of Queensland]. I cannot wait to experience the freedom at this Australian university. I simply cannot contain my excitement towards this new liberal lifestyle I am about to experience. I am sure it is going to be fun and liberating.

Many Indian colleges prescribe what students may wear while on campus and when attending lectures (*Indian Express* 2014). Often, Western outfits that college authorities consider too revealing are banned from the premises. Outfits considered inappropriate range from sleeveless shirts, shirts that reveal one's midriff or cleavage, and pants and skirts that end above the knees for women. Singlets, spiked hair, and shorts are often forbidden for men (*Indian Express* 2014). The freedom from such issues on Australian university campuses have attracted some students to Australia. According to interviewee Surita (5 January 2014, interviewed in Mumbai):

At Australian universities I can wear what I feel like. I have watched movies where students at Australian universities are shown to be wearing very revealing clothes on campus and at lectures. I would like to experience such a campus life while I am young and enjoy my university life to the fullest.

Many students like Surita wish they had received admission to colleges such as St. Xavier's and Mithibai in Mumbai, where there is freedom in terms of men's and women's attire. However, these two colleges alone cannot accommodate the entire student population of India (HT 2015).

Other university behavioural protocols include standing while talking to academic staff, greeting the academic staff whenever they are encountered, and using titles such as Sir and Madam rather than their names (Harzing 2016). Some students consider this too militaristic in a civilian educational organisation. According to interviewee Anil (5 January 2014, interviewed in Mumbai):

I once did not greet my professor while he was passing me and the next thing, I know is I was called into the principal's office and warned for being rude and a spoiled brat. My parents were accused of not bestowing proper cultural

values on me and I was threatened with receiving lower grades if this offence happened again. I did not do it on purpose, it was a genuine mistake.

With the increasing exposure to foreign travel, Western television, movies, internet and social media, many students believe that these rules are relaxed in Australian universities; they long for this liberty in the Australian educational institutions. In India, once on campus, students are not allowed to kiss or hold hands (Ruparel 2016). Many students leave campus during lunch breaks or miss lectures to spend time with their partners (Chaturvedi 2016). Having the freedom to date someone without any restrictions and social constraints in Australia was a welcoming factor for the interviewees. According to interviewee Rohan (5 January 2014, interviewed in Mumbai):

At Australian universities it is fine to hold hands and openly confess to be dating someone. The staff do not interfere with the love life of students. I have been told this by my seniors who already study there and seen this on a tv show on AXN.

These social pull factors have made Australia an attractive destination for young Indians. These students were living their routine lives and somehow managing their restricted social freedoms in India, however, with networks and media exposure they have begun to long for the more liberal social freedoms in Australia.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the factors, goals and aspirations that influence young Indian students' decision to study and live specifically in Australia. The analysis was based on face-to-face qualitative interviews and reflects the factors that affect and are relevant to the interviewees. The analysis of these factors has shown that Australia is in a favourable position, as it has set itself up as not only a tourist, business and leisure destination but also an educational provider for the Indian market. Australia may not attract as many Indian student as the US, the UK and Canada, but in recent years it has shown the largest percentage increase in the number of Indian student migrants. Indians attracted to the US usually belong to upper-middle class Indian families or richer Indian families. They have qualifications from elite institutions, have scored higher grades at their previous degrees and wish to work in the sectors welcome by the US labour migration programs. The Indians who migrate to the UK and Canada often wish to live within their communities in a Western country. For these migrants' economic

freedoms matter more than the social freedoms. They are willing to spend time among their nationals overseas who may hold similar social and cultural mindsets as those in India. The migrants to Australia are the ones who do not wish to experience similar social and cultural norms in the UK or Canada from their Indian communities as they would have faced back in India. Often these Indians also wish to live with their already settled extended family networks. Similar migrations were seen to Malaysia and Singapore but have declined recently. These countries are making their migration policies tougher than before and increasing cultural and social freedoms to non-Malay people or non-Singaporeans. Similarly, Gulf countries and African nations do not provide the same incentives to non-business communities as they offer to business families. This is where Australia becomes the migration hub for middle-class Indian students who can attain all their cultural, social, economic freedoms, enjoy the sports and lifestyle and not be bothered by large Indian communities overseas. The entry requirements, migration rules surrounding financial backgrounds and educational scores, and the list of occupations allowing work after study complement the social, economic, and cultural factors that make Australia an attractive destination over other Western countries to this select cohort of middle-class Indian students.

The analysis of the pull factors in this chapter was complex in nature. It is because most of the attractive factors in Australia were a result of them being denied in India. These factors were particularly experienced and longed for by middle-class Indian students as they find economic and social freedoms in Australia more attractive than their wealthy-class counterparts do. Furthermore, these pull factors by themselves would not necessarily attract Indian students in all cases, unless they were harshly denied to them in India. This denial was once again experienced by middle-class Indian youth compared to the wealthy-class youth. Television, celebrities, sporting events, tourism boards and information received from networks about social freedoms have made Australia an attractive destination for young middle-class Indian youth.

Chapter 7. Migration Experiences - Australian University Life

Introduction

This chapter comprises an analysis of a variety of experiences faced by Indian students within Australian universities. The most important area in the life of an international full-time student is their university life. While students may have other motivations, they still need to complete their degrees as a condition of their visas. Students may spend time elsewhere socially and at their workplaces, however, the primary institution these students are exposed to are their educational institutions. The experiences at these institutions both academic and extracurricular form the foundations of their other related experiences outside the campuses. Similarly, the attitudes of orientation staff, student leaders, academic staff as well as peers were among the first experiences of an Australian migration journey faced by the interviewees. These experiences are also an important driver for further student enrolments into Australian universities and a platform to understand the interaction and integration of these students with the broader Australian society outside the campus life.

The analysis is a result of 125 face to face interviews²² of Indian students within Australian universities. To ensure the diversity of the cohort and to gather as many diverse experiences as possible, students from different states in India and belonging to diverse religious backgrounds were interviewed. The interviewees included students who were Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Christian, Atheist, Parsi (Indian Zoroastrians) and Jewish (Bene Jews from India). Since India has a very state-oriented culture, due to its federal system of government (Weiner 2018), it is likely that the educational systems in different parts of India are not the same and hence the perceived experiences of the students could vary depending on their geographic backgrounds in India. Hence, interviewees from various regions, including Punjab, Delhi, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Haryana were interviewed.

While most of the interviewees were enrolled in master's courses, some were also reading for bachelor's degrees. Some of the interviewees who participated in the round of interviews for the topics covered in Chapter 5 were interviewed again to understand whether their anticipated outcomes from university study in Australia were met. These interviews were conducted with

²² Kindly refer to the appendix section for the details of the interviewees and a detailed breakdown of the responses. See appendix A1: Participant Bio Sheet data for the demographics of the interviewees and A7: Breakdown of the Major Findings.

an eye to three main aspects of university life: academic experiences, extracurricular experiences and social experiences. These topics were chosen because they featured strongly in the interviews I conducted. They show that students evaluate their Australian university experience not just in terms of the formal education they receive, but broader social and cultural skills and knowledge. As we will see, the academic experiences of the students varied, depending on whether they were enrolled in master's or bachelor's degree courses, mainly because those pursuing their master's degrees had attained their bachelor's degrees in India and therefore tended to compare the educational standards in India with those in Australia. By contrast, the students enrolled in bachelor courses did not engage in such comparisons.

Overall, most of the interviewees were satisfied and happy with their interactions with academic staff and the study support they received from their respective universities. However, students showed frustration towards the overall value for money received through the content delivery inside the classrooms. Extracurricular activities received an overwhelming positive response from the students as they gained access to engaging opportunities via university clubs and societies, residential leadership programmes and university award programmes. Last, while racism was seen an issue for some interviewees, most were happy with the personal freedoms on campus such as dating, wearing clothes of choice and the freedom to express their sexuality. Multiculturalism within Australian universities was also well received by the interviewees.

The following sections will analyse these interactions and experiences in areas of academic studies, extracurricular activities and social life. These interviewees were mostly belonging to middle-class Indian families and hence did not have access to private schooling and expensive private tertiary education in India. The amenities, support services and behaviour of staff towards students in private institutions in India is different to that within public institutions accessed by middle-class Indians. Hence, these experiences expressed by the interviewees is to a large degree related to middle-class backgrounds.

Experiences in Academic Studies

Within the area of academic studies, the interviewees focussed on their interactions with academic staff, the support they received in their departments, the quality of lectures conducted by international teaching staff and the value they received for the money they spent on their degrees.

Interaction with Academic Staff and Support in Studies

The interviewees found the approachable nature of academic staff and various student academic support services very useful and contributing positively to their university experiences in Australia. Hofstede's concept of Power Distance (high-power and low-power) helps understand this phenomenon. According to Hofstede, Power Distance deals with the inequalities in the societies where individuals fall under a social and cultural hierarchy of influence and authority (Sweetman 2012).

This social and cultural supremacy is often practiced within Indian universities where students express low-power and academic staff members are bestowed with high-power. This power-distance is measured on a scale of 100, where a higher score demonstrates a high-power distance. India has a power-distance score of 77 compared to a world average of 56.5 and Australia's score of 38 (Hofstede's Insights 2021). This Power Distance score of India indicates a high level of inequality of power and wealth within the Indian society. Within Australian universities, the low-power distance between the academic staff and most interviewees was a valuable attribute as these Indian students were used to a high-power distance between them and their academic staff in India. Apart from high power distance, a high level of discipline is enforced in the classrooms by Indian lecturers. There have been instances where students were caught using cell phones for looking up concepts in the classroom and the lecturers have smashed the students' phone in front of the entire classroom (Bangalore Mirror 2018). Similarly, in India, many lecturers prefer not to interact with students outside the lectures at all. Jacob (2 June 2017, interviewed in Melbourne):

My lecturer encourages us to use mobile phones or laptops for research purposes during the lectures which allows us to look up information to back up our queries. This is very engaging, and it gives me an opportunity to question and challenge the ideas presented in the class. In India, if students use a laptop or phone, they would be thrown out of the class. Besides, I also found that my views were respected, and I was not insulted for giving incorrect responses to questions. In my Bangalore university, my lecturer once called me an idiot who is good for nothing when I failed to answer his question during the lecture.

Madhu (11 January 2017, interviewed in Sydney) shared a similar story:

All my lecturers and tutors so far have been very supportive and approachable. Their friendly nature has encouraged me to speak up my doubts in the class and ask questions where concepts were unclear. My professors were also very prompt in replying to my emails and on several occasions my lecturer for networking had coffee with me in the university café casually discussing my start-up venture plans. I cannot imagine in my wildest dreams having a coffee with my lecturer in India, in fact we students in India were not even allowed in the vicinity where the staff would be having their lunch.

Since Indian students had an engaging experience with staff for the first time in their academic life, they find it very welcoming and positively contributing to their academia. Students in Australian universities mostly do not feel judged or called by names based on the level of their classroom participation. It helps them open, speak up and seek help for their conceptual difficulties (Closs 2021). These learning environments influence the learning experiences of students within Australian universities.

Apart from the assistance received from the teachings staff, Indian students also appreciate the abundant support services available for the students outside their lectures. These support services help in enhancing the international student experience with the provision of necessary amenities to students such as pre-semester support programmes, in-semester study support, financial guidance and support for low-income students, counselling, medical facilities, student IT support and disability support (LTU 2019). Interviewee Arun explained (16 April 2017, interviewed in Melbourne):

I have loved my experience in Australia so far, especially the amount of support provided for students. I had access to free counselling service when I needed it the most and I also had access to free accounting services provided by my university.

In her first interview in Delhi, Krishna (3 May 2017, interviewed in Melbourne):

The library services in my university are fantastic and the librarians are very helpful. We also have student wellbeing seminars and activities that have helped me relax in times of stress. Last, my university also has free locker

and electronics charger stations. These tiny essentials are so useful that I wish I had them in India during my bachelor's degree.

The facilities set for providing academic support to international as well as local students in Australian universities are much better than what is provided in India (Petre 2014). At times, such facilities are totally absent within most Indian universities since they are only seen as institutions providing education and no additional support. Contrary to these cases are certain private educational institutions which provide amenities to students like those provided by Australian universities. However, these private tertiary educational institutions have very high tuition fees only afforded by the wealthy-class. The interviewees mostly belonged to the middle-class who would not afford enrolling in such elite institutions. Hence, back in India, they have never imagined or experienced the academic and amenities support received in Australia. None of the interviewees showed discontent with the amenities and academic support provided to them in the Australian universities they were enrolled in. In fact the social and support related experiences in Australian universities were not only met but also exceeded the expectations of the interviewees.

Lectures delivered by International academic staff

Notwithstanding the welcoming and diverse work culture at Australian universities, some interviewees identified concerns regarding the quality of lectures due to the strong accents or language skills of international or migrant background academics.

Sometimes, students are inclined to present negative attitudes towards non-native accents, especially in cases in which the lecturers or tutors are individuals of non-English-speaking backgrounds (Munro et al. 2006). This occasional phenomenon is explained by the reduced 'cognitive fluency' of international lecturers who have English as their second language, meaning the ease with which the brain processes interactions between the teacher and the student is reduced with these international teachers. Sometimes, heavily foreign-accented speakers are evaluated more negatively than mildly foreign-accented speakers because they are perceived as more representative of their community and their speech is difficult for their listeners to process (Dragojevic 2017). These attitudes are usually understood as an interaction between native and non-native speakers, where only one party is of non-English speaking background. However, in the case of the interviewees, the situation was more complex as both the students and the lecturers were of either migrant or of non-English speaking backgrounds. This does not mean Indian students would have a prejudice against other foreign language

speakers alone, but they could also develop a negative learning attitude against Indian academic teaching staff belonging to a different state in India where speakers speak different languages and have a state-based accent²³. Several interviewees²⁴ noted how that they expected better teaching standards in Australia prior to their arrival. They tended to associate quality of education or quality of course content with the quality of the lecture delivery. For these students acquiring a successful place in an Australian university was a matter of pride and they expected to be taught by local staff. Having lectures delivered by international staff who struggle with English was seen negatively. According to Allan from ANU (25 August 2017, interviewed in Melbourne):

This Chinese lecturer is the worst. She can't speak English and I can't understand what she is trying to explain. I have given her a very poor rating in the feedback and hopefully our university maintains some level of competency among the teaching staff.

Priya, who is studying computer science at La Trobe University (21 August 2017, interviewed in Melbourne), complained:

We have the worst lecturer for one of the networking subjects. He is from Bangladesh, and no one understands what he says. Most of us have stopped attending the lecture because there is no point in sitting for two hours and not understanding a word he says. We have complained about him to the school, but we have been told he has great experience and a reputation in Bangladesh.

According to Raja, who is studying IT at RMIT (25 August 2017, interviewed in Melbourne):

Our lecturer for programming is from Vietnam and I failed the first two assignments because she does not convey the concepts clearly. When I met her for consultation, again, I had no idea what she was saying. She has written a lot of programming papers so the faculty will not remove her from her position.

²³ This issue is further explained in chapter 8 where Indian employers from a certain state in India had a discriminatory attitude towards student employees from another state within India.

²⁴ Kindly refer to the appendix section for a detailed breakdown of the responses. See A7: Breakdown of the Major Findings.

It is arguable that international students experience the same sort of problems when trying to understand native Australian English accents at universities. However, none of the interviewees mentioned issues with native Australian accents. This could be partly since the interviewees prepared themselves for hearing the Australian accent. However, they were not prepared for the non-Australian, foreign accents of foreign-origin lecturers. According to Upasana, who is studying Finance at Deakin (26 August 2017, interviewed in Melbourne):

I have done all my education at English schools and most of my interactions are also in English. Yet, I have heard from many friends and on television that Australians have a very strong and weird accent that is difficult to understand. Hence, I bought a few Australian accent training DVDs and practiced them for two months prior to my arrival. This has helped me easily understand what the locals speak.

It is apparent that students like Upasana were not prepared to train themselves to understand strong Chinese or other international accents.

Value for money spent

Some of the interviewees stated that they received less value for money than what they expected for their tuition fees. This was in relation to both learning activities, add on costs associated with student amenities, the absence of campus placement programmes and the degrees not proving enough to work fulltime in the relevant industry.

International non-sponsored students, inclusive of Indian students, pay an average of \$4,000 per subject, and this amount of money often creates certain expectations about the educational quality and return on investment they will receive. The chief issues were not receiving face to face time in class for the money spent, mainly because of the introduction of blended learning²⁵ modules which the students did not expect. Blended learning in many instances has led to face-to-face lectures being cut and traditional lectures and tutorials being replaced with problem-based learning workshops. This is a growing trend at many Australian universities, as well as at universities in the US, the UK and Canada (Freeman and Strong 2017). Despite the prevalence of such systems, many of the interviewees expressed dissatisfaction because they

²⁵ Blended learning involves a variety of activities. Sometimes lectures are recorded and uploaded on the university's LMS. Also, podcasts and reading material might be made available online for students to prepare for the classes beforehand. This helps the students to access and watch the videos and podcasts from the comfort of their homes or on the university computers, prepare homework allocated to them, read the recommended reading lists on the subject outlines for the week, and, in some cases, also complete some tasks prior to attending the tutorials or lectures (Freeman and Strong 2017).

value face-to-face time, and perceived the hours spent in actual lectures and tutorials as more valuable than online learning. This might reflect views shaped by learning experiences in their home country, which tend to be based on face-to-face relationships with at least two lectures per subject each week and nearly 40 hours of total face to face teaching and learning time within universities (TOI 2018). Time spent in the classroom is perceived to be tangible, but the students might view the learning experience via reading materials and podcasts as intangible and therefore difficult to quantify with a monetary value. According to interviewee Yadui (5 July 2015, interviewed in Melbourne):

After spending \$55,000 for my master's degree [course], I feel unsatisfied because we had only two hours of classes per week for each subject and that is something like \$90 per hour that I spent. I did not feel that what I learnt in each class was worth \$90. If Australia charges us so much, we need more hours with the lecturer.

Pilli, a student from Belgaum who is enrolled in Master of Business Information Management, (3 August 2012, interviewed in Melbourne) stated:

I am spending around \$100 per subject per hour in the classroom and I do not think having online lectures does justice to this cost. I feel ripped off. After paying such high fees and coming all the way to Australia, I expected lecturers to be available for more than two hours per week. Most of the time, they rush through the lectures and run away when we meet them later with doubts. Some lecturers do not even reply to emails for days and some reply stating all information was available online. This is very frustrating.

Ranbirwala (20 June 2015, interviewed in Melbourne) opined:

I am not paying \$4,000 per subject without any face-to-face lecture and where students are expected to listen to online recorded lectures. I was not told there won't be face to face lectures at my university before arriving here.

Janakya (16 July 2015, interviewed in Sydney) argued:

It was not made clear during the admissions process that my lectures would be online. Why should I pay so much money if things are to be done online? I might as well pay less and enrol in an online degree.

Apart from tuition fees, students had issues with having to pay additional money for printing, student cards, academic transcripts and enrolment confirmation certificates, which they expected would be covered by their student amenities fees (SAF). SAF is what students pay at the start of the year towards student life amenities within Australian universities (De Corte 2010). Nowadays, universities have followed a neoliberal model that relies more than ever on user pay systems, which can disadvantage students. At most universities in Australia, students pay²⁶ \$40 for proof of studentship, \$50 for proof of eligibility to work, \$80 for extra academic transcripts, \$100 for graduation ceremonies, \$80 for original copies of graduation certificates, \$20 for student cards and \$100 for lost student cards (new copy). Students within Indian universities do not pay additional fees for these services. They are surprised and disappointed when they are effaced with such costs in addition to the SAF and tuition fees. These features of increasing user payments have contributed towards the negative perceptions of Australian university studies. Priya, who is studying computer science at Monash (21 August 2017, interviewed in Melbourne) said:

Despite paying \$55,000 for my degree, my university is trying to mint money from students as much as possible. I had to pay for my graduation ceremony which was ridiculous. Why did I have to pay for something that should be provided by the university to the students. Even Indian universities have free graduation ceremonies.

Raja, who is studying IT at Monash (25 August 2017, interviewed in Melbourne), noted:

I was shocked when I had to pay \$80 only to receive an official university letter about my enrolment. I also ended up paying \$50 for receiving my graduation ceremony photo and an additional \$100 for a lost student card. It seems the university wants to loot us as much as possible.

Another source of dissatisfaction noted by some interviewees was the absence of on-campus placements. In India, most universities compete by advertising their on-campus placement programmes. Higher-ranked universities offer placements through high-paying and highly rated employers, whereas low-ranked universities provide industry placement options with small businesses or firms (Goyal 2017). There is an on-campus placement programme at most Indian universities and industry employers visit universities and interview students on

²⁶ Fees averaged out across all universities. Data obtained from the student services of each university mentioned.

completion of their degrees. On-the-spot job offers are made and it helps to place students in the workforce directly (Economic Times 2018). These on-campus placements do not include online job applications and are done directly, face to face, on the spot and for all students enrolled at the university. The interviewees expected similar on-campus placement programmes at Australian universities and were disappointed to discover such programmes did not always exist at the universities in which they were enrolled. According to interviewee Marun (20 June 2015, interviewed in Melbourne):

I was surprised when, on completion of my degree, I was told there were no on-campus placements. I did not investigate this prior to my completion as it went without saying that universities ought to have campus placements. I just cannot comprehend why we do not have them in Australia.

Satish (16 July 2015, interviewed in Sydney) stated:

I was disappointed in semester two when my seniors informed me about the absence of campus placements.

Gahen (27 January 2014, interviewed in Canberra) complained:

I was told by the career advisor that I was on my own and that our university did not offer campus placements via on-the-spot campus interviews for their students. I feel cheated and I cannot believe that after spending thousands of dollars and making so many sacrifices I must look for a job on my own. What is the point of paying such high fees if the university cannot get us an interview?

The final issue some of the interviewees discussed was the necessity of enrolling for a professional year²⁷, despite completing their degrees at an Australian university. When local students complete their master's degrees, they can apply for jobs without necessarily needing their degrees to be assessed again. However, when an international student looks for full time work, on most occasions, they need a permanent residence (PR); for a PR, they need their degrees assessed by government appointed independent bodies. These bodies do not give a positive assessment for most master's degrees without an additional professional year course. For instance, a student completing Master of Financial Analysis needs to complete a

²⁷ It is an eight to 12 months course that runs on weekends and costs around \$10,000, where enrolled students are trained in business etiquette and professionalism.

professional year course in addition to the master's degree for a positive degree assessment to be qualified to work in the field of finance (DIBP 2017). This is where students question the relevance of their degree. It should be noted that students could apply for jobs in their home countries or countries outside Australia based on their Australian qualifications and without the professional year courses. In any case, the gap between students' expectations prior to arrival and what they later learn about legislative requirements results in negative feelings. Gaurpreet (10 June 2015, interviewed in Melbourne) stated:

I am very disappointed that a degree from a reputed university is not acceptable for the skills assessment bodies. I am frustrated with this money minting business where we must spend again on a professional year despite successful completion of our master's degrees to get the skills assessed.

Bhavya (20 June 2015, interviewed in Melbourne) protested:

I am annoyed that my \$70,000 master's degree does not qualify me for a positive skills assessment to work in Australia. Now I must spend another \$10,000 for this useless money minting professional year. It is just appalling how much money the government wants to make from us susceptible students.

Bhavya (20 June 2015, interviewed in Melbourne) exclaimed:

I don't get it. If my degree is recognised by the Australian qualifications' framework, why do I need a professional year?

These thoughts and responses suggest confusion between their expectations of utilising their Australian degrees to work in Australia via a PR and their evaluation of the quality of an Australian education (Robertson 2011). For some, the thin line between using an Australian degree as a tool for migration or using it for knowledge and academic experiences becomes blurred. When they do not achieve expected outcomes, some question the authenticity and value of the education system itself (Baas 2006).

Experiences in Extracurricular Activities

The interviewees were very content and satisfied with the extracurricular activities available within Australian universities. Particularly these positive experiences were expressed in

relation to activities conducted by the university clubs and societies, residential leadership programmes and various university award programmes.

Experiences with University Clubs and Societies

Indian students found activities organised by cultural clubs very welcoming and providing them with a platform to further develop and showcase their leadership skills. Apart from the larger community groups, smaller clubs based within the universities play similar roles in uniting Indian students and creating a platform for mutual assistance. Most of these clubs and societies are run by the student unions and some are funded by academic departments. Clubs run by the student unions often include those for students from various regions such as a Malaysian students' club, an Indian students' club, and an African students' club (RMIT 2019). Others, such as gamers clubs or vegan clubs, are based on special interests. Societies such as the Law Students' Association and the Commerce Students' Society are usually funded by university departments. Ghanshamji (2 August 2016, interviewed in Melbourne) comments:

I was a part of the culture club of our university in Pune. I am passionate towards working for cultural bodies. When I arrived at Deakin University, I found that the Indian club was doing nothing and was stale, so I ran for the elections and took up the role of a president of the Indian club of our university. Now I am responsible for organising *Diwali* and Holi events on our campus. This role has also allowed me to expand my friends circle on campus. The Indian students' club also organises free food events and movie nights for students to come together and make new friends.

Interviewees like Ghanshamji become involved in university-based clubs and societies to work for their fellow students and thus contribute towards the overall Indian community. The Holi event organised by Ghanshamji gained media attention and was covered in *The Indian Weekly* (Arya 2015), the most influential Indian magazine in Australia. Coverage of this sort notifies Indian students about events organised by their peers, informs isolated students about social opportunities, encourages other clubs to organise similar events, and generates awareness among non-Indians about Indian festivals and cultural celebrations (AII 2008). However, not all Indian students are involved in India-related clubs and societies; some have become involved in larger organisations, relevant to the entire international student community. According to Anusingh (9 August 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

I am the president of the International Students' Association of our university campus in Caulfield. I was elected because I had experience in volunteering for students back home, and I feel passionate to help new students coming to university. I wish to help those students who face similar issues that I faced in my first semester and to guide them in how to tackle such issues. Being an Indian, I did not want to restrict myself to the Indian club but rather wanted to work for a broader section of all international students. At the International Students' Association, we have a common room for all students to eat and relax; we have microwaves and a laptop charging port as well. The events we organise have helped students from all communities to interact with each other.

Indian students like Anusingh play a pivotal role in helping international students of all nationalities. Other students are involved in religious groups on their campuses. Famesingh (9 August 2016, interviewed in Melbourne) reports:

I am the president of Sikh Wave (a Sikh club) in Melbourne for La Trobe University and my cousin Amritsingh is the president of the RMIT [Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology] Sikh Wave. Our aim is to create awareness of the Sikh culture and to help people familiarise with our thoughts and practices. We usually organise big events once a semester. The event we recently organised was to celebrate 'Vaisakhi' festival. We at Sikh Wave practice what our guru (literally translating to someone who takes from darkness to light) guides us to do, which includes selfless service and protecting anyone and everyone from oppression. There was no Sikh representation on campus where Sikh students could gather.

The interviewees who started religious clubs in Melbourne were not active members or founders of such organisations in India. The fact that Indian students who are not involved in religious groups in India sometimes become involved in them in Australia tells us something about the change Indian students experience on foreign soil. Indian students in Australia may feel the need for a sense of belonging and a want to create their own identity, being surrounded by Western and other cultures from around the world. Although they may not have felt the need to belong to a religious organisation or cultural group in India, they may do so in Australia to overcome cultural isolation (Museus, Yi & Saelua 2017). Indian Sikh students like Famesingh

follow the principles of their own religion to reach out and help students across broader communities. Often this follows from students' own experiences of receiving help from Indians in influential or leadership roles, which in turn inspires them to take on such roles themselves and help newer students. Such an experience was described by Navisom (29 August 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

When I was new in Melbourne, I had arrived at midnight and had no clue how things work in Australia. I only had the number of the Indian club's president from Facebook. I called him, and he drove me to his place. He got me a pizza. I cannot forget this night when I was the most vulnerable and hungry and was fed by a stranger. From that day, I told the president that I would help the club in whatever way I could.

Navisom is planning to contest the forthcoming student union elections at Monash. As an international officer, he aims to help new international students, because of the initial help he received from the president of the Indian club.

Experiences with Residential Leadership Programmes

Indian students found leadership opportunities provided by the respective residential services of their universities very rewarding. While students who live on campus receive excellent pastoral care and find themselves in an empathetic and diverse environment, it is the residential leaders who are at the forefront in providing this care (Montesi 2018). It is the experience of providing this pastoral care that was deemed very precious and unforgettable for the interviewees.

The leadership roles such as 'residential assistants' or 'social and activities team' within residences, provide pastoral care, emotional support, mental health support, study support and organise socialising events. Hence, students living in campus accommodations have far better experiences than those living off campus, in terms of pastoral care and opportunities to socialise and engage with wider Australian multicultural communities. My interview findings on this point were supported by published research by the La Trobe Division of Residential Services (LTU 2016), as well as research by Monash Accommodation Services (Monash 2016). Many Indian students living on campus also take up leadership roles within months or weeks of their arrival in Australia. Information obtained from NAAUC (2016), Monash (2016), La Trobe (2016), the University of Melbourne (2016), the University of Queensland (2016) and ANU (2016) shows that each of these universities has a minimum of three Indian students in

leadership roles, such as residential assistants, cultural or activities representatives or study mentors. According to Jairoop (8 July 2016, interviewed in Sydney):

I was a part of the residential assistants (RA) team at our university accommodation for international students. In this role, I provided pastoral care to all the residents. Our team comprised of 12 RAs, and I was the only Indian RA on our team. When I arrived in Sydney, I was greeted by my RA who explained to me about the campus and where I could get help. The events conducted by my RA helped me socialise with students from other countries and get to know about Sydney culture and interesting places for students. This could not have been possible if I had not lived on campus and without the help of my RA, so in my second year I applied for the role in the new team and got appointed. Now I feel happy to help the new students just the way I was assisted by my RA last year.

For many Indian student leaders, it was their own initial experiences with campus leaders that inspired them to take up leadership roles within their accommodation colleges. It is not always a pre-planned decision to take up such leadership roles. Many students view the opportunities and choose to get involved based on past experiences or interests. Vaity (9 August 2016, interviewed in Melbourne) relates her experience in such a role:

I am a part of the cultural team at Chisholm college, the on-campus accommodation service at our university. We organise alcoholic as well as non-alcoholic events for students. The non-alcoholic events are targeted at students who do not drink or prefer to stay sober. These events include café crawls as well as zoo visits or chocolate-tasting tours. We also organise sporting events and competitions as well as movie nights and free food nights. Other than me, there is only one other Indian on the team. Most Indians shy away from such roles, but I have always been an extrovert and a people person, so I applied for this role as soon as I arrived in Melbourne. I knew this was one of the ways I could also gain knowledge about the city and expand my organisation and leadership skills.

Jairoop, Vaity and Marashu (1 July 2016, interviewed in Adelaide) were all undergraduate students, which is reflective of my overall findings which suggest that students taking undergraduate courses are more likely to take up leadership positions within their colleges.

While some postgraduate residences have Indian leaders, most of the residents are Indians, so it is not surprising or unique to find them in these leadership roles. While undergraduate residences have a mixture of local and international students, it is noteworthy that the interviewees had taken up RA and other leadership roles within their multicultural residences. The number of Indians participating in on-campus leadership roles has been increasing, not only in pastoral care or event organisation roles, but also in academic roles, such as the study support student leaders. Marashu is an example:

I do not like going out for events and parties and I am quite an introvert who prefers to hang out with small groups. However, our accommodation services had a student leadership programme where they had three teams: the RA team for pastoral care, the cultural team who were the party people and then the study support team. I could not see myself fitting the RA team as I needed pastoral care as a new student and was not in the state to provide it to others, yet the cultural team did not suit my personality; however, the study support team was perfect for me as I love to study, and I always score A grades, so I was more than happy to assist other students with study-related issues. I am glad our accommodation service had this opportunity, or else I may not have participated as a student leader at all.

Involvement in University Award Programmes – Volunteering for Community and City Councils

Indian students have been involved with various projects funded by city councils but recognised by their universities. This participation contributed towards university leadership programmes where students were awarded for outstanding community service both on-campus and off-campus.

Such involvement provides an opportunity to integrate with the wider Australian society, encourages social participation and benefits the communities (Jupp 2002). According to Hakimtai (9 August 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

I was introduced to the Darebin Overseas Students Association (DOSA) programme through an Indian student who was very socially active. I found it interesting and, since they were looking for volunteers, I became a part of the DOSA programme. The DOSA programme was an initiative by the City of Darebin, and it provided funding to the committee for organising social events to encourage student interaction with the local Australian society as

well as to encourage isolated students to engage with people around them. Most of the students that participated in our events were from India, China and Sri Lanka. I was one of the three Indians on the DOSA committee. This involvement provided me with a platform to meet the local mayor and interact with heaps of newly arriving students who felt isolated in the new environment. This involvement also counted towards my leadership award nomination.

Such participation is mainly due to university-based leadership opportunities and certification-granting programmes. These university certificates are seen useful to enhance their CVs while applying for jobs later. According to Alokji (29 August 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

I was a part of the peer mentor programme as well as the Sunday Lunch Club where we visited old age homes and church-sponsored lunches for old people, and we cooked for them, served them food and chatted with them. I loved all these experiences as it gave me exposure to different sections of Australia that I wouldn't have experienced. The reason why I volunteered was because I was enrolled in the La Trobe Gold Award programme, in which the university certified students and gave them a reference letter on completion of 40 hours of community work through volunteering. I received the Gold Award on two occasions for my exhaustive volunteering in whatever programmes I saw an opening. It was through these programmes that I could interact with Australians one-to-one and rethink the perceptions I had about them prior to my arrival in Australia. In India, the education agents, the media and news channels often generalise that all Australians are racist but after my volunteering at more than 15 different organisations and events, I saw how the perceptions were wrong and in fact how friendly the locals were towards us Indians.

Instead of searching for volunteering opportunities or waiting to be contacted by organisations, having university-based and university-run leadership programmes makes it easier for Indian students to become volunteer leaders and reach out to the wider communities. Through university leadership award programmes, students are motivated to invest a certain number of hours to qualify for the awards. In doing so, they seek out more and more volunteering opportunities. Such volunteering opportunities are often with university-approved

organisations that commit to quality and provide useful, community-based, safe volunteering opportunities for registered students (Monash 2016; UQ 2016; La Trobe University 2016). The diversity of the volunteer programmes allows Indian students to interact with international students from all over the world. Furthermore, such programmes give Indian students hands-on experience working for organisations that they were not likely to have heard of in India prior to their arrival. Sometimes students find such organisations to volunteer based on issues they have witnessed in India and view these organisations as platforms to support their home country. According to the WHO (2016), 'It is easier for a person from the Global South to relate and realise the intensity of the social issues around them compared to someone who has never faced these issues in their lives'. When a person works for a cause that they have witnessed firsthand, it gives them a unique perspective on that cause (Wong 2009). The interviewees, in this instance, are not only involved in local projects aimed at Australian communities but also in raising funds in Australia for projects aimed at helping communities in India. Tisaq (9 August 2016, interviewed in Melbourne) comments on volunteering for an Australian-based Indian charity:

I volunteer for the Muskaan Support Australia, a not-for-profit association in Eltham because I got to know about them through our campus leadership programme where our volunteer hours counted towards a certificate and possible award at the end of the year. I spotted their stall at the university orientation programme. I spoke to them and found out that it was a bunch of retired local Australians working towards building schools in India for the slum kids. I felt embarrassed to see locals working in their retirement age to help slum kids from my country. It was then that I decided to help, too. I have helped them at their stalls at various community and family events in parks, such as the Darebin Kite festival, where I was drawing henna on the hands of the visitors, and in the process, I was explaining to them what our organisation does. This was my express pass to learning about different cultures and experiencing the responses and attitudes of various visitors of diverse backgrounds towards India and Indians in general. The Muskaan founders have become like my family away from my real family and it was nice to receive the warmth and support of local Australians right from the start of my migration experience in Australia.

Indian students like Tisaq find contentment helping slum children in India while they are in Australia. Organisations such as Muskaan, whose focus is on helping slum children or on other Indian causes, tend to attract Indian students as volunteers. This is a win-win situation, whereby the organisation receives the support of the volunteers, and in turn provides the volunteer Indian students with hands-on skills in leadership and event management, as well as providing them with job application referrals.

Social experiences: Personal freedom on University Campuses, Multiculturalism and Racism

Social experiences have mostly met or even exceeded what the interviewees expected from their Australian university life. Apart from racism, which was an occasional issue²⁸, most satisfying experiences came from personal freedoms and multiculturalism.

Personal freedoms on University Campuses

The three personal freedoms experienced on university campuses providing the interviewees with very positive experiences were freedom of sexuality, freedom to wear clothes of choice and the freedom to date fellow students on-campus.

Interviewees belonging to the LGBTIQ community found their freedom of sexuality on Australian university campuses a very welcoming experience. These positive experiences were despite a broader acceptance that LGBTIQ community within Australian universities faces harassment and acts of violence. According to Scott (2000, pp. 98-178), educational institutions are expected to spearhead reforms towards inclusion of minorities in the key institutions. The Australian education system has a high world reputation, and it draws students from different backgrounds (Verghis 2017). The growing diversity of students necessitates that universities set up policies and procedures that promote the respect and dignity of the minorities by the rest of the university community. The institutions also have a responsibility of ensuring that they support members of the community expressing their diversity. Promotion of ideals of human dignity and respect in education institutions has a positive long-term effect towards integration of minorities in the society. The universities have a role of guiding their students towards learning to accommodate alternative beliefs and practices of other people. Once this tolerance is instilled, the students leave the institutions and spread their influence at their workplaces.

²⁸ While racism was not a major issue for the interviewees within universities, it was at their workplaces (analysed in chapter 8).

Although cases of homophobia have remained low over the years, Australia did not legalise these relationships until 9 December 2017 (Winter, 2018). Australia is one of the 25 states recognising same-sex marriage. In most countries, recognition of same-sex marriage has been a long process characterised by wide-debated amendments in the laws. Therefore, recognition of same-sex marriage in law is an indicator that societies have recognised the rights of sexual minorities and the need to protect their freedom. However, there exists a section of the population still undermining the rights of sexual minorities. The students need to understand the basic aspects of embracing sexual freedom since it is through such acceptance that human rights are also embraced. Despite these concerns, the interviewees had only praise for their treatment at Australian universities. According to Prem (13 May 2017, interviewed in Brisbane):

I am gay and I find the environment at my university very liberating. I am not judged as much as I was judged and mocked at my Indian university. I have a large support group on campus, and I am part of the queer club too. I had hoped that I could be myself in Australia and my dream has come true. There are people who obviously judge me, and in fact many fellow Indians still bring their Indian mentality to Australia and judge people. However, I have a diverse group of open-minded friends from different countries, and I am not at all regretting coming to UQ.

Bhaurao (30 June 2016, interviewed in Adelaide) said:

I used to be quiet about my sexuality because the conditions in India were not favourable for me to speak about it. However, at my university the staff, student leaders and peers were vocal about sexuality in general and very supportive and protective against homophobic behaviour, that I came out publicly for the first time in my life. This feeling is the best feeling I have experienced, and I do not want to lose it ever again.

Alif (9 August 2016, interviewed in Melbourne) explained:

I learnt my university had staff who undertook ALLY training, and our student union had a dedicated queer officer which made me confident and less intimidated for who I was. I still have not been very vocal about my sexuality as I fear the response I would get from my Muslim peers; however,

I hang out with like-minded and non-religious people on campus who are in plenty and with them I can truly be myself – a feeling I had given up in India.

These students viewed their treatment at Australian universities in a positive light because they compared these with what they faced in India. Compared to Indian universities, Australian universities may stand out as progressive and welcoming, yet, based on the research discussed earlier, they still need to work on inclusion.

Indian students also appreciated that they would wear Western clothes and were not punished or shun upon for wearing short pants or revealing clothes at their universities. This was the freedom of expression these students struggled to achieve in their Indian universities. In India, these students could face expulsion from their university and risk being arrested by the police, since the law views revealing summer clothes as obscene under section 294 of the Indian Penal Code (Devgan 2019). Surita (5 August 2017, interviewed in Melbourne) said:

At Patkar College in Mumbai, I was taken to the principal's office and given a warning for wearing short pants. Of course, I did not come to Australia, so I could wear shorts, but the freedom I have at my university to wear what I wish without being judged is amazing. In fact, during summer, some of our lecturers' wear shorts too. This is very relaxing because I can focus on other important things in life instead of fearing punishment for wearing short pants. I am glad things turned out the way I expected them to be at my Australian university.

Qazi (1 June 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

In Melbourne at my university, I can enjoy the freedom to not wear my Muslim cap and wear Western outfits without any fear of being targeted by religious vigilantes. I went to a Muslim university in Hyderabad, and we had very strict protocols over the outfits we wore, in fact I started wearing Western outfits of my choice for the first time in my life after coming to Melbourne and after receiving a warm welcome at my university.

These experiences do not mean that all Indian universities are so conservative that they frown on Western clothes. It is not always the Western clothes that are frowned upon, but the university defined modesty in dressing based on how much skin is visible in the outfits.

Indian students also appreciated that university staff were not concerned with their private lives and dating status with fellow students. Moreover, they were not subjected to frowning or bashing for dating someone at the university. Rohan (5 July 2017, interviewed in Melbourne) was equally pleased:

While in India, I would never hold hands with my girlfriend because I was suspended for a week once for being caught doing this on campus. My girlfriend and I were accepted at Monash University in 2015, and now we are about to graduate. During these two years, we have both had the most freedom we could imagine in expressing our relationship openly. No one has mocked us, no one has complained about us, and no one has punished or reported us. The administrative staff and lecturers focus on their jobs rather than on judging people. We got what we hoped for, and our overall experience has been delightful since we were not stressed about our relationship.

Tamano (26 April 2017, interviewed in Melbourne) confided:

One of the liberties I like being provided at my university in Melbourne is to openly date the person I like without the fear of being tagged as a characterless person as I would in my Jalandhar university in India.

Sania (11 April 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

I feel comfortable hanging out with my boyfriend on the university campus as well as in the workshops. In the lectures and tutorials, we sit together, sometimes hold hands and no one has objected. This freedom is not possible in Pune where I studied for my bachelor's degree.

Fayal (1 June 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

All my friends are dating someone on campus...it is so common, and no one bothers you. I can express love without the fear of political vigilantes beating us up like in Delhi.

Since educational institutions have most of the student population in a similar age range, these campuses also provide venues for students to meet, mingle and explore their romantic possibilities (Wu 2015). These students are at an emerging adulthood period (Arnett 2000)

which is typically at a developmental stage of transition from late adolescence to adulthood (Erikson 1968). During this stage students seek and establish romantic relationships with their peers and a successful and respectful relationship could foster a successful identity formation (Eccles & Gootman 2002). For most of the interviewees Australian universities have provided very positive experiences through the building up of such social bonds. The availability of this freedom has helped create a sense of being loved that can be developed and their self-worth can be boosted further.

Multiculturalism and Racism

The interviewees mostly denied facing racism and focussed more on their positive experiences with multicultural interactions within Australian university campuses. Indian students were able to experience such multiculturalism on Australian university campuses they had not experienced in India. As a settler society with immigrants from all around the world, Australia enjoys a high degree of cultural diversity (Griffiths 2010). Here, international, local, and Indian students all receive access to world cultures, whereby the world comes to them, instead of them reaching out. The presence of a diverse range of students from around the world creates opportunities for further cultural understanding and first-hand lessons in diversity. Additionally, students also learn how to co-exist despite differences (Possamai et al. 2016). For many Indian students, the multiculturalism on Australian university campuses (some universities have students from more than 120 countries on their campuses²⁹) acts as an excellent platform for building cross-cultural networks and enabling them to become more culturally literate. The interviewees explained how these engagements helped them to overcome prejudices and stereotypical judgments. Maswant (19 July 2016, interviewed in Melbourne) asserted:

I had no idea that Iranians were not Arabic; no idea that Japanese and Chinese were not fond of each other; that the Chinese have a slang term for us Indians just as we have a slang term for them; that Canadians and Americans don't have the same culture; and I had no idea that Sri Lankans had Sinhalese communities. Today, when I reflect, I have learnt so much about Australia and Australians, as well as international cultures at my university. I jokingly call my university "the United Nations" when I chat with my parents. I have learnt a great deal about various cultures due to so many students across the

²⁹ La Trobe University reported having students from 135 nations studying across its Victorian campuses in 2016 (LTI 2017).

world coming to my university. The multicultural festivals hosted by our university-based student clubs and working in groups for group projects with students across different backgrounds have made me realise how ignorant I was when I was in India.

According to Omar (18 July 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

I was astonished to learn the difference between Turkish and Arabic cuisine. While in India I used to think all Middle Easterners ate the same stuff, but I realised how their spices and cooking styles differed when our international students' organisation hosted a week-long international food festival, where students cooked their traditional home cuisine dishes and explained their significance and history to other students. Besides, I never imagined I would have close friends from Pakistan. This thought was unimaginable when I was in India. Now I have learnt that Pakistani students do not hate us, and my friends and I have shown them we too have no issues with them. In fact, many of us study in the library together and celebrate festivals together too.

Srinivas, a local community leader with the Australian Green party (23 July 2016, interviewed in Melbourne), enthused:

I had no idea that Chinese was not a language and that they had more than three languages and more than a dozen dialects. I learnt more about Chinese culture and Confucius' teachings from my friends with whom I did my group project and group presentation.

These experiences show how universities as institutions of professional background have moved on from the elitist institutions which were based on the British model that entailed access by a specific small proportion of society. They now have become units of mass systems whereby students of different cultures come together and freely interact without having issues on one another's' perspectives in life (Forrest et al., 2016).

Last, the only negative social experience Indian students faced within Australian universities was mild forms of racism, although most students did not report any racism within universities. Many Australian institutions of higher learning are multiracial. They draw students and staff from various backgrounds. Universities have come up with strategies to enhance inter-group relations. The relations allow students from different cultural backgrounds to interact, thus

eliminating stereotypes that fuel hate and violence. Mansouri and Jenkins (2010, pp. 93-108) noted that society-wide intercultural tensions have spilt into educational institutions. It is the role of policymakers in the education system to ensure that the learning environment is safe and free from fear of physical and verbal abuse. The research analysed empirical data from a national project on cultural tensions among Australian youths. The findings showed that learning institutions are yet to fully play their role of neutralising cultural tensions by allowing the learners to interact and eliminate stereotypes and become tolerant to cultural diversity. Despite this, the interviewees mostly denied any form of racism against them. According to Josh (6 April 2016, interviewed in Canberra):

I have not faced racism on campus at my university. Everyone has been very friendly, and I have no clue why people call Australians racist.

Raj (16 April 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

The student union at my university is very strong and they stand firmly against racism. I have attended their rallies against racism but frankly I have only had good experiences at my university. At times I have felt that the local students and Chinese students only stick to their groups, but when I approached the local students, they were very welcoming towards me.

While none of the interviewees expressed direct forms of racism from the academic staff, a few expressed facing varying levels of racism from their peers who were either fellow international students or local Anglo-Saxon students. According to Arjun (16 April 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

Once outside the lecture theatre a student who had middle eastern appearance, but a strong Australian accent asked me whether I was Indian and whether I drank animal urine. I explained to him that some Indians drank cow urine as an Indian traditional medicine, but I did not. To this response, he laughed and falsely explained to his friends that I was a cow urine drinking Indian. I felt humiliated and had no clue how to respond to this embarrassment.

According to Anilu (29 May 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

I have faced racial mocking by some white students. This happened twice and then I stopped sitting in the café to have lunch. A bunch of white students were looking at me and laughing at me in the university café. I neglected them but I kept hearing them say ‘curry’ followed by a loud laughter apparently aimed at me.

According to Mahi (22 May 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

A group of Anglo Australian girls used to make faces and roll their eyes every time I answered to the questions raised by the tutor in the tutorial. I was not sure what problem they had with me. Once I did not answer to the tutor’s question and I overheard these girls explain why the curry girl (that is me) was not answering the question on that occasion.

According Simrun (16 August 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

I once insulted by a local Italian student who works as a chef at the local campus based Italian café. I had requested him to add more salt on my pasta to which he suddenly shouted and said that next time he will cook some salt and sprinkle pasta over it for all Indian students.

Racism can disrupt the academic life of the victims and could negatively impact their social life causing loneliness and depressive symptoms (Priest and Perry 2014). Racism faced at schools tends to affect the mental wellbeing of students and in turn also affects their academic performance. One of the leading causes of this decline in their performances is feeling alienated from the educational institutions and the resulting drop in attendance (Biddle 2014). Research conducted by the ‘Foundation of Young Australians’ a not-for-profit organisation focussing on the experiences of students of migrant backgrounds or ones whose families were of migrant backgrounds found an alarming rate of racism within Australian educational institutions. The study was conducted across 18 Australian schools and found that 80 per cent of the non-Anglo students were reporting that they had experienced racism during their lifetime and over two-thirds of those experiences had happened at school, 65% of the interviewees agreed that they had faced either direct or indirect form of racism and half of the students were aware that some form of racism being experienced by their peers (Priest 2014). With a growing number of students of Indian backgrounds, not only within universities but also within high schools has shed light on how these students face constant nagging, bullying and racially tone-deaf

comments by their Anglo Australian peers. Such comments have made these students wish they were not Indian and have created significant identity crisis due to the racial comments targeted towards the food in their tiffin, physical appearances and cultural ornaments such as Indian bangles, religious threads, religious turban and the Sikh 'kada' (Acharya 2017). While racism has caused hinderances for some students, multiculturalism has assisted them integrate with the diverse Australian society and helped establish a dialogue between different communities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Indian students have a diverse range of university experiences in Australia. Based on narratives of the interviewees, it could be concluded that the experiences Indian students have at Australian universities have helped them realise their aspirations pertaining to social freedom, multiculturalism and access to leadership roles. In fact, these interactions have also laid foundations towards their integration with the broader Australian society. The helpful and approachable nature of Australian academics along with a wide range of support services gave students experiences that exceeded what they expected. However, some experiences, albeit not necessarily related to expectations that they had prior to their arrival, were a disappointment to the students, such as being taught by international academics, having issues with blended learning modules and the assessment of their degrees. These have led students to believing their money was not well spent on Australian education and they have not received the skills they anticipated prior to arrival. While this chapter analysed university life, the next chapter will cover the interviewee experiences at their workplaces giving a different insight into their journeys in Australia.

Chapter 8. Migration Experiences - Casual and Part-Time Workplaces

Introduction

The experiences of Indian students working in Australia in various types of jobs are unique and together tell an interesting story. This chapter analyses the workplace experiences of such students, thus reducing the knowledge gap that exists in relation to their varying expectations prior to taking up employment. It also analyses how these expectations align with actual workplace experiences especially regarding wages and treatment from their employers.

To understand their workplace experiences, I interviewed 125 interviewees in various locations across Australia, including Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. These interviewees³⁰ belonged to middle-class Indian family backgrounds and were enrolled in master's degrees in Australia. All the interviewees worked in either casual or part-time employment as they were students and not permitted to work full-time. While the citizenship status of the employers was not known by the interviewees, the various cultural or migrant backgrounds of the owners were noted. 72% of the interviewees worked for Indian-owned businesses, 16% worked for other migrant-owned businesses, while 12% worked for owners of Anglo-Saxon origins. Finally, 64% interviewees worked in suburbs dominated by migrant populations, whereas 36% worked in suburbs with mostly non-migrant populations.

Furthermore, these interviewees belonged to different religious backgrounds, including Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Christian, Atheist, Parsi (Indian Zoroastrians) and Jewish (Bene Jews from India). As well as being religiously diverse, the study sample included students from different states in India. This was important, because India has a very state-oriented culture, due to its federal system of government (Weiner 2018). Hence, I chose interviewees from various regions, including Punjab, Delhi, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Haryana. This diversity of backgrounds proved useful, as the students' experiences were sometimes affected by whether their employer was from the same ethnic background.

Based on these interviews, it was found that Indian students faced mild racism at their workplaces from their co-workers and not necessarily employers. Racism was also faced by these students at suburbs with low migrant intake and those with high crime records.

³⁰ Kindly refer to the appendix section for the details of the interviewees and a detailed breakdown of the responses. See appendix A1: Participant Bio Sheet data for the demographics of the interviewees and A7: Breakdown of the Major Findings.

Interestingly, these students reported Indian bosses to be the most prejudiced and judgemental based on the Indian ethnic groups these students belonged to. Besides racism and discrimination, underpayment was another significant issue faced by the interviewees. These issues experienced by the interviewees have also placed some of their lives in a limbo wherein they continue to work in odd jobs and continue to be exploited even on completion of their degrees and change in visa status from students to permanent settlers. The following sections will analyse the experiences and reasoning linked with the expectations of the interviewees.

Rationale and Expectations of Indian students

The interviewees belonged to middle-class Indian families and working casually or part time while studying in Australia was necessary for them to manage their finances. The interviewees expected to work in casual jobs related to their fields or at least odd jobs that paid a legal minimum wage. Like any other employee, Indian students expect to receive a fair wage within the legal norms and to be treated ethically in the workplace. All students do not work for the same reasons; some work to gain skills, some work for paying their education loans while others work to pay for their living expenses or a combination of all these factors. Owing to these reasons, especially financial pressures, these students considered job hunting a top priority after arriving in Australia.

With most of the interviewees belonging to middle class families, it was expected of them to cover their living expenses once in Australia without financial support from their family. Students needed this work to afford basic amenities, such as food and accommodation. Students who underestimate both the difficulty of finding legal paid employment and the high price index in Australia end up in desperate circumstances, looking for whatever work is available (Sandel 1996). These financial issues are perhaps the most pressing reason to work in any job regardless of its relevance to their education. For instance, jobs at fuel stations, restaurants and cleaning services were more common. The interviewees worked late at night to accommodate their university schedule and hence mostly ended up in jobs where late staff are needed. Rahul (7 January 2016, interviewed in Melbourne) reports:

I did not want to compromise my tutorials, but I also needed money and hence looked for work after 5 p.m. on some days and after 7 p.m. on days when my tutorial ends at 6 p.m. I found a job at a warehouse to pick up industrial boxes from 9 p.m. to 2 a.m., so I chose it. I work on my homework

and readings in the university library until 8 p.m. and then head to work. Unfortunately, I was not expecting to be paid only \$10 hr.

According to Suraj (21 May 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

I was hired at Pizza Hut as a cook. I am a vegetarian, but I do not mind handling the meat. I must do this for survival. I had hoped to work for an accounting firm as I have a bachelor's degree in accounting, but none of these firms want to hire individuals on a temporary student visa. I was hoping that an internationally reputed company like Pizza Hut would pay me well, but they too pay me only \$14 hr.

Madhu (5 June 2016, interviewed in Melbourne), who was actively looking for a part-time or casual job at the time of the interview, reported:

I have \$800 cash given to me by my parents to use until I get a job. If I run out of this money before getting a job, I won't have money for food.

Prajita (16 May 2016, interviewed in Melbourne), who was also looking for a part-time or casual job, declared:

I had planned to get a job as soon as I arrived; I had \$1,000 with me to use until I found a job ... I ended up using \$700 for my rental bond the same day I arrived. This is when I realised the urgency of finding a part-time job.

Apart from living expenses, it is also common for students to be burdened by student loans and to spend a long time repaying these loans during their candidature and even after graduation (Gobel 2013). Most Indian students focus on repaying their loans after completing their degrees rather than after finding a job (John 2013). While some students have student loans to repay on their own names, some of them owe the debt to their families who have their houses mortgaged against the loan amounts (SBI 2016), and this additional family pressure puts significant pressure on the students to start earning in Australia as soon as they arrive. Madhu (5 June 2016, interviewed in Melbourne) explained:

I have taken a student loan from India worth \$50,000³¹ with a condition that I pay it back on completion of my studies. It is not possible to earn that much

³¹ As explained in the introduction chapter, throughout this thesis, all prices/costs of various currencies are converted to Australian dollars for consistency while reading.

in India if I return, so I should earn this money in Australia. It is better that I start earning from now instead of later. If I save enough, then even if I end up returning to India, I will still have enough money saved to return the bank loans ... it is easier to earn in dollars and convert it to rupees against earning in rupees to repay the heavy loan ... now most of my seniors I had contacted prior to arrival have told me that I need to start earning to survive in this country and repay my loans. If I fail to repay my loan, the bank will confiscate my parents' house as our house was kept as a mortgage against the loan ... I have a lot of pressure.

Apart from loans, some of the interviewees also indicated that the orientation briefing they received when leaving India contributed to their desperation to find casual and part-time jobs. These orientation sessions often inform students that it is easy to find jobs that paid well and repaying loans through this casual earning was a common trend. According to Prajita (16 May 2016, interviewed in Adelaide):

During my pre-departure orientation, my education agent told our departure group that it would be a shame if we students cannot find a job. He told our parents that if your child complains that there is no job, your child is lazy and is avoiding work. Now that I am here, I have realised how difficult it is to find a decent part-time job. I have one, but it underpays me and having just one job is not enough. If I let my parents know about this, they would feel I am lazy. At my age, it is also embarrassing to ask for money from parents who are nearing their retirement age.

Last, some students plan to work casually while being enrolled in their degrees to gain skills. However, to gain these skills students need to be working in jobs relevant to their educational fields which was not the case with the interviewees. Working to gain skills remained an unfulfilled expectation of these Indian students as other financial pressures pushed them to take up any available casual jobs even at the cost of underpayment, discrimination and racism. Manikumar (11 December 2015, interviewed in Melbourne), a master's student, explained:

I thought I could work in IT because I have two years' work experience in India, but my work experience and qualification are not counted here because I am an international student, and I must rely on part-time and casual work. I clean toilets at Any time Fitness Gyms. It is so embarrassing.

Workplace Experiences

The interviewees faced a wide range of workplace experiences based on whom they interacted with and where they worked. The significant issues that surfaced were racism, underpayment, ethnic discrimination, ethnic groupism, blackmail, sexual harassment and abuse, and violence. Although some interviewees also reported having positive experiences with their local non-Indian employers. The experiences of these students with their co-workers, customers and employers are analysed below.

Relations with co-workers

Interactions between co-workers at workplaces form an integral part of work experiences. Indian students faced groupism and racial taunts from their Australian co-workers, whereas Ethnic groupism³² and prejudice from their fellow nationals.

Many local Australian co-workers lacked cultural knowhow and were not very keen on reaching out to Indian students. While some wished to reach out, they did so through occasional racial jokes and curious but inappropriate questions (Robertson 2011). Such behaviour could be due to lack of respect for diverse cultures or lack of international exposure causing cultural inappropriateness. According to Farha (5 May 2016, interviewed in Melbourne), who works at a pub in Melbourne:

My workplace has a mix of Indians and Australians. Most of the Australians work as waiters, while we Indians work as cleaners and kitchen hands. I have not faced racism as such, but the Australian staff do not talk to us or hang out with us after work. I did not expect them to hang out with us, but sometimes when we all leave work together on weekends, they do not talk to us and just leave in their groups. My friend had a weird experience on a few occasions, when the Australian waiters passed taunts about us working for cheaper rates and taking away Australian jobs. With almost no interaction with each other, we rarely experience any other negative or positive behaviours.

Farha does not consider her experience to be negative; she has accepted it as routine. Not all students hold the same view as Farah. For some students groupism and avoiding contact with

³² “Ethnic groupism” in this thesis refers to people forming cliques based on the language they speak, the food they eat and the state-based historic culture they share.

international students also constitutes racism (AEI 2007). Like Farha, Darsha (11 June 2016, interviewed in Melbourne), who works at an express fuel station, did not complain about negative experiences. However, she commented:

My workplace has a few Australian casual staff. I have not had any major issues and my overall experience has been good. The only issues are a few racial jokes based on my skin colour and vegetarian eating habits. However, my colleagues have learned more about my culture with time and now we get along very well.

Unlike Farah, Darsha has gradually let her colleagues know that such taunts can be hurtful and demeaning. This has enabled her workmates to accept her habits and learn more about her culture. Unlike Darsha for some Indian students culturally inappropriate jokes also constitute racism and contributes towards their negative experiences in Australia (AEI 2007). Darsha's boyfriend, who works at Dan Murphy's, shared similar experiences. According to Jack (19 June 2016, interviewed in Brisbane):

At the beginning, I felt very left out and targeted with the sarcastic jokes of my Australian colleagues, but with time I learned that it is their sense of humour that is based on racial jokes. I have explained to them things I am not comfortable about being joked and we get along well.

Such taunts and jokes may even be a way of making friends for some. However, from the perspective of most Indian students, such jokes and taunts constitute racism. This racism is experienced by not only new migrants but also second-generation migrant youth who relate to the Australian culture but feel targeted due to their physical appearances. Such racism is prevalent in the Australian society, sometimes subtle and sometimes very aggressive. These prejudices extend beyond physical appearances to cultural customs, religions as well as food. Subtle racism includes commenting on the smell of the international cuisine or show of surprise towards fluent literacy skills of some migrants (D'Souza 2020). Jack's housemate Jabbu (10 May 2016, interviewed in Melbourne) shared her experiences of working at an Italian restaurant:

I never had issues with my colleagues who are all Italian Australian. At the beginning, they would keep asking awkward questions about our curries but

that is it. All my colleagues are friendly, and I have had a very welcoming experience at my restaurant as a kitchen hand.

Farha, Darsha, Jack and Jabbu all faced similar experiences of racism that they did not feel was deliberate, however comments involving usage of the word ‘curry’ targeted towards some interviewees on university campuses had previously been perceived as racist in nature. Hence, it may not always be the racial slur but the context and the attitudes of the perpetrators that matter towards how they are received. It took the interviewees some time to adapt to the sarcasm and to the racial jokes (AJHR 1994, p. 315), such as calling someone a “brownie” or a “bastard”, or even joking about someone arriving in Australia on a boat, despite their travelling on a student visa. Such were the specific comments directed at the interviewees. Regardless of the unclear friendly or racist intention, such comments are still inappropriate.

Further, the interviewees who worked in Indian workplaces experienced pressure to conform to cultural norms at the expense of individualism and cultural diversity. These issues rose mainly at business with Punjabi employees. Punjabi communities are known for enthusiastic demonstrations of cultural pride (IJPS 2008, p. 199), and this clearly has a negative impact on the workplace experiences of non-Punjabi Indian students. According to Jaya (20 May 2016, interviewed in Melbourne), who works at an Indian restaurant:

I have had many issues with my colleagues. I work at an Indian restaurant where all the staff members, from managers, waiters, chefs and cleaners, all are Indian. At the start, I felt I would be comfortable working in an environment with people from my country, but sadly we are all split and have ongoing issues with each other. Our issues are not necessarily based on the states we come from, but we have ended up in groups of us coming from certain states. All the north Indian staff, West Indian and South Indian staff have been clubbed together, and they do not interact with each other much, apart from the necessary interaction in the workplace. Overall, this is not a big issue, but it exists. The main issue is the Punjabi staff, who are very loud and proud of their background. Being a Marathi student, I have been mocked about my Marathi accent and our affinity to rice over the Punjabi affinity to bread. I have also been mocked as being ‘Ghati³³’ by the Punjabi staff.

³³ An inappropriate slang used for indigenous people living in hilly regions.

It is noteworthy that Jaya did not label this conduct ‘racist’, as it is common for Indians to keep to their ethnic groups (Varma 2011). Besides, such issues were not experienced earlier in the university experiences chapter and may show that clashes or perceived discriminatory behaviour among these interviewees maybe more prevalent under tense conditions such as workplaces and not necessarily under relaxed environments such as social settings within universities. However, occasional instances of disagreement and discrimination arise when some Indian students may consider themselves to be Punjabi first and Indian second (Varma 2011). It is these state-based divisions that led to the interviewees facing taunts and culturally demeaning jokes from fellow Indians. According to Gaurpreet (10 June 2015, interviewed in Melbourne):

We Punjabis stay together in one house and work for a Punjabi restaurant. I cannot tolerate the boring food South Indians eat and they are very aloof and not full of life like us.

Simrun (10 June 2015, interviewed in Melbourne) reported:

In Melbourne, we Indians stick together. There is no South Indian in my group, as all South Indians stick together. So, automatically our group has no one other than Punjabis...I am an upper caste Jatt, and my best friend Nimmi is Jatt. We are the upper caste community in Punjab. However, I do not know whether other mates in our group are Jatt or not. We don’t care about it here (in Australia). We need to stick together with people who speak our language and eat similar food... Caste is an issue with uneducated people in India.

Some of the interviewees had a casual approach to this behaviour, especially those from Punjab. Not only did the non-Punjabi interviewees complain about their Punjabi colleagues, but the Punjabi interviewees showed no empathy towards their non-Punjabi colleagues either. Such behavioural patterns are observed in Indian metropolitan cities as well, where diverse ethnic Indians work under the same roof (Varshney 2001). Daler (21 September 2014, interviewed in Melbourne), who is a Punjabi and works at an Indian restaurant, commented:

My experience has been very good. All Indians work at my restaurant. There are a few South Indians and West Indians, who only converse in their languages, which we don’t understand, and they keep to their groups, maybe

because we are Punjabi, and they are not. Our workplace is very harmonious, and everyone looks after each other.

The non-Punjabi interviewees complained about the rowdy nature and excessive pride of their Punjabi colleagues in the workplace, whereas the Punjabi interviewees blamed the distance non-Punjabi workers kept from the Punjabi workers for their dislike of them. Such issues have roots in India and are also seen among ethnic Indian groups that are not Punjabi. For instance, In Gujarat, Gujarati Indians may have workplace compatibility issues with Tamil Indians and in Maharashtra, Maharashtrian Indians may have issues with Bihari Indians. Such clashes happen because ethnic Indians from their respective states have intolerance against ethnic Indians from other states taking away local jobs and introducing culture from the migrant state to the host state (Varshney 2001). The exploitation of 7-Eleven workers had made headlines in Australia and overseas, however, for Indian employees it was more concerning that 80% of 7-Eleven's franchise owners are Asian and over 70% of these Asian owners were of Indian backgrounds (Kumar 2015). When Indians migrate overseas, some of them often travel with their prejudices and bigotry towards their own nationals from different Indian states. This racism and bigotry include discrimination based on languages spoken, state backgrounds as well as physical appearances. The west usually generalises a typical Indian accent, but Indians notice the differences in their accents too. Indians mock each other's state based accents as well as state based clothing and cultural customs (Vetticad 2017). The increase in racism is asserted to the colonisation of India and the discriminatory policies surrounding the 'divide and rule' tactic of the imperial colonisers. Racism in India grew with different treatment offered by colonisers to Indians across different states and of diverse physical appearances (Gupta 2017). The divide among Indian states also arises with the variations in their cultural epics such as the Ramayana. Different versions of the epic portray prejudices towards certain physical features such as the shape and size of the lips, curls in the hair and colour of the skin. Due to such disparities, the Ramayana popular in the north of India 'Tulsidas' Ramacharitmanas' does not have acceptance in the south states who again have their own versions such as the 'Kamba Ramayanam' in Tamil Nadu, 'Dwipad Ramayanam' in Andhra Pradesh, 'Torava Ramayana' in Karnataka and 'Adhyatma Ramayanam' in Kerala (George 2020). Such divides reflect beyond the acceptance of the epics to the daily lives including treatment of workers from other states. This divide has also resulted in these workers being physically assaulted (McDuie-Ra 2015). Such assaults are common in the states of Gujarat, Karnataka and Maharashtra inflicting violence on migrants from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Similar stories have been witnessed the

capital city of India New Delhi where migrants from the north-east, Bihar and Haryana have been beaten by mobs for bringing in a perceived alien culture from their home states (India Today 2020).

Relations with customers

Indian students have different experiences with local Australian customers and with customers of Indian origins. Furthermore, experiences varied in suburbs with high crime rates and in suburbs with low crime rates. These experiences mainly revolved around rude or polite behaviour of customers and judgemental prejudice in some cases.

The interviewees working in non-migrant suburbs that have not seen many migrant populations, tended to be inquisitive and culturally ignorant about what could be rude for some cultures. According to Anilu (29 May 2016, interviewed in Melbourne), who works in the non-migrant suburb of Bangholme:

I work at a fruit shop in Bangholme as a cashier. Most of our customers are local white Australians. I have not faced any major issues of racism or anything that would compel me to leave the job. Most of the time, the conversations we have are professional. However, on a few instances when there hasn't been much of a crowd, some white Australians have asked me some ignorant questions, which I did not mind but felt surprised as to how much the people did not know about Indian culture. I was asked on few occasions if I spoke Hindu. I had to tell them that Hindu is a religion, and India has many languages that people speak. I was also once asked the reason why I was not dark skinned, despite being an Indian. It was not about me, but the way this person exclaimed that Indians had to be dark skinned, which felt a bit demeaning. Once, an old lady shook hands with me and said I was the first Indian she had touched. All these experiences were new to me, and some were strange, but none were bad experiences.

Experiences such as those faced by Anilu could be attributed to ignorance, cultural differences or to a lack of cultural finesse, but not necessarily to prejudice. The interpretation of such actions and behaviours as racist requires additional discussion that goes beyond the scope of the thesis; however, it has been introduced in this section owing to the complexity and relevance of this debate. It is possible that the interviewees interpreted a lack of cultural finesse

as racism. Locals in a non-migrant suburb such as Bangholme (ABS 2011) are often curious when they meet migrants and ask questions that some of the interviewees found offensive.

Interestingly, the experiences shared by the interviewees who worked in suburbs with less migrant populations in non-migrant suburbs were like the experiences of those working in low-crime suburbs. Based on the crime statistics for each suburb available from the ABS, I identified two Melbourne suburbs in which to conduct my interviews: Toorak and Heidelberg West. Toorak is a low-crime suburb and Heidelberg West has a high crime rate (Crime Statistics 2016). These suburbs also differ in many other interrelated respects, such as high- and low-income groups and educational backgrounds. As a suburb with a low crime rate and higher incomes, in which more importance is placed on education, Toorak has been positively experienced by the interviewees who work there. Although they face occasional awkward questions, they do not experience violence or find themselves in life-threatening situations. No suburb is free of crime; however, suburbs with lower crime rates had the interviewees face less prejudice, and fewer accounts of racism. Poorna (23 May 2016, interviewed in Melbourne), who works in Toorak, reported:

I work at our local IGA. I have not had any bad experiences with our customers. Most of them are quite nice to the staff. I have not faced any racism, but people have made comments about my level of English. I belong to a Christian community in India, where our first language is English, and my education has been in an English-medium school. Hence, when I converse fluently, some customers ask me first where I'm from and then express their surprise about the fact that I speak English fluently, despite being an Indian. I find these comments funny and not racist. In fact, I take time to explain to them more about India and Indian English usage when these surprising questions arise.

Experiences Indian students had in high crime suburbs were mostly negative. They were called racist names and threatened at times. According to Daru (7 May 2016, interviewed in Melbourne), who works in Heidelberg:

I come from the South of India, from the state of Tamil Nadu. I have had a very bad experience working in the local bottle shop in Heidelberg. When I got this job, I was not aware that the suburb has a high crime rate. However, on the second day of my work, I had my first bad experience. Our bottle shop

is often visited by drug addicts and people of low income. For some reason, they don't like me, and I have faced all sorts of racist comments. I have been called a black dog; I have been called a bloody wanker and a filthy Indian. Most of us South Indians are dark skinned, and it is very difficult for us to tackle racism in Australia. I believe most Australians are racist, and they incline towards crime as they have convicts' blood. This shows when our store faces robberies at least twice a week. Once a drunk customer asked me if I was a 'Porki' referring to students from Pakistan. He simply continued to abuse me with swear words and attempted to punch me. He left the store by spitting on my face and using the 'f' words for India and Indians as well as Pakistanis.

Daru's reaction to his experience is itself somewhat judgemental, betraying his prejudice towards all Australians. To me, Daru's story is intriguing, not only because of the attempted assault he faced, but because of the reported use of the word "Porki" in addition to "Paki" for people of Pakistani origin. This is not a commonly used racial slur in Australia, and this interview brought to light the fact that such words are still used by certain people harbouring hatred for migrant communities in high-crime areas. The word "Porki", used deliberately to insult Muslims who do not eat pork (Abbas 2005), was widely used in the UK during the late 1990s and early 2000s (Akhtar 2012). Similarly, Sikhs too have been subjected to bias, prejudice and racial hatred (Troyna and Hatcher 2018), and this was reflected in the experiences of the interviewees as well. Sikh Indian interviewees underwent disturbing experiences in the highly populated and multicultural Sydney Central Business District (CBD). Harpreet (15 February 2016, interviewed in Sydney) reported:

My workplace experience has been a nightmare. I am a Sikh and I wear my Sikh turban. I have nothing against Muslims, but unfortunately many of our ignorant customers mistake me for being from the Taliban and swear at me. I work in a local 7-Eleven store in the Sydney CBD, as well as at a convenience store in Liverpool. My experiences in both these places have been similar. Although the crime rate in Liverpool is higher than in the CBD, and one would consider the CBD to be safer, I have faced equal abuse in both of my workplaces: I have been spat on a dozen times; I have been called a terrorist; I have been shown the middle finger; I have been told to leave the country; and once a customer also tried to smack my turban. It is very

difficult to be a Sikh in Australia, especially in Sydney. I cannot wait to finally receive a full-time job and work in a secured office space. My worst experience was when some drunk bogans swore at me, and at closing time they got a bunch of their friends with baseball bats and hockey sticks outside my store. I did not leave and decided to call the cops; however, my boss told me not to call the cops as the cops would record that I am working without a TFN [Tax File Number] and deport me. I had to stay in the store that night, until these hooligans left around 3 a.m.

Harpreet's experience may only be one among many such incidents. In Australia, many specific issues have been reported by the Indians of the Sikh community, some of whom experienced bigotry and racism in the workplace due to their turbans and beards. According to Bawa Singh Jagdev, the secretary of the Sikh Council of Australia (Marriner 2014), much of this is due to a lack of understanding of what the turban represents.

I interviewed students who worked in suburbs with large Indian populations, as well as some whose workplaces employed mostly Indian staff, to understand the experiences of those working in an all-Indian environment. These interviews revealed cases in which Indian customers mocked Indian staff based on their social class. Customers who belonged to an older wave of migration in the 1990s viewed new student migrants such as the interviewees as ones desperate for PR and not representative of Indian values and culture. Older migrants look down upon more recent migrants based on their belief that recent migrants have easier access to permanent emigration compared to the tougher regulations the established migrants faced (Dhanji 2017). The interviewees were not aware of this perception when they experienced prejudiced and rude behaviour at the hands of older and more settled migrants from India. According to Pippu (13 May 2016, interviewed in Melbourne), who works in a section of Dandenong known as Little India:

Most of our customers are Indian, but we also have local Australians dining at our place on weekends. I had no issue with the Australian customers, but I was surprised when I experienced how rude our fellow Indian customers were to us. I initially felt comfortable knowing that I would be working for an Indian boss and serving Indian customers. How hard could it be? I thought. Although I have not faced any extreme bad experiences, on a few occasions a few Indian families have mocked me, saying that people like me

only come to Australia for PR and that I should focus on education and get a real job. I felt very offended that these words came from people from my own country. I expected them to understand the situation of students like me; instead, they were mocking us and talking to us with hatred. One of our clients once told me after I got him that wrong dish that it was because of people like me that Indians get a bad name, and I should go back to where I came from if I could not get the dish right. I was literally in tears, as well as very angry at these comments. No Australian has ever told me to go back to where I came from, but the first time I heard this it was from my countrymen.

Last, one of the experiences, among the least expected by the interviewees, was the treatment they received at the hands of their Indian employers.

Relations with employers

This section discusses the final category of workplace experiences, that of workplace relations between Indian students and their employers. The interviews revealed acts of discrimination, underpayment, blackmail, sexual abuse and violence, all of which are analysed below.

Underpayment and Ethnic Prejudice

Underpayment and prejudice were faced by Indian students mostly under Indian management. This section describes the exploitation of vulnerable Indian students by nationals of their own country. Some Indian business owners pay local employees a fair legal wage due to the fear of them speaking up and reporting the business to legal authorities but pay a very low hourly wage to Indian students as they don't speak up. Talim (24 June 2016, interviewed in Sydney), a master's student employed at an Indian-managed Foodworks franchise, explained:

Uncle [a respectful way of addressing an older person in Indian communities, which here refers to the boss] at least gave me a job when I needed it, I owe him big time for giving me a job! He pays me \$8 per hour on weekday shifts and \$10 per hour on weekends. There are two other ladies working who are local, but they demand an official Tax File Number (TFN) salary, so uncle pays them \$25 per hour. I have no say, so I go with the \$8 I get. If I speak up, he will find someone else. Last week, I skipped university lectures, as I couldn't wake up in the morning after working 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Sunday. I must work long hours to cover the living expenses. I hope I get to work under a TFN somewhere, so I can earn more in fewer hours.

Students are often in such desperate need of a job that they tolerate exploitation, preferring to avoid the legal processes associated with complaining against their employers. They do not have the time or energy for court hearings, as their priorities are to earn money and attend university. According to Manali (11 December 2015, interviewed in Melbourne), a master's degree student working at an Italian restaurant:

At least I have a job now, so I am earning something, and it is better than nothing. Who has time for complaints? I know they are underpaying me, but at least I get paid \$2 more per hour here than my previous job at the Indian restaurant.

Although employers are required by law to provide workers with pay slips, very few organisations do so to their migrant employees as it increases the chances of being tracked on illegal salaries and debts; hence, subjecting migrants to unnecessary losses. Moreover, it prevents employees from questioning their working conditions (Russell & Meldrum-Hanna 2015).

The case of Indian student Imran Khan was covered by *The Age* in 2014. Khan arrived in Australia in 2010. After two years of education, he obtained a master's degree in business administration and IT. Soon after, he applied for and received PR. During his student years, Khan earned his living by driving taxis late at night and felt exploited by his boss. Deducting the goods and services tax, he received only \$4 an hour (*The Age* 2014). Khan's story is not uncommon. Wages as low as \$6 per hour are reported in the Australian casual workforce, and most of the time the exploited workers are students from the subcontinent and other parts of Asia (Fair Work Ombudsman 2011). The exploitation of Indian students has come to light since their numbers have significantly increased, especially at casual workplaces. Bijay Janardhanan, an Indian aerospace engineering student, was interviewed by ABC as part of a story on the exploitation of international students at work. He reports on being exploited in the construction industry:

I was promised to be paid \$12 an hour but even after one month of working
I was not paid and fired without any explanation.

The student claimed not being paid by his employer for a month (ABC 2013). Restaurants and convenience stores have also played their part in exploiting Indian and other international students. In January 2013, Fairfax Media determined that several restaurants and food outlets

across Sydney and Melbourne were grossly underpaying staff and flouting regulations. Forty such businesses were discovered to be paying their staff as little as \$8 an hour. In 2015, Fairfax again received reports of foreign workers being exploited. This latest group of students claimed that they were only receiving \$8 per hour and that they were paid cash in hand, which meant that no records were kept of their employment. These students explained to Fairfax Media that the practice of underpayment was widespread and was tolerated because most of the exploited workers were unaware of their rights (Robertson 2014). However, some of the interviewees were aware of their rights, yet chose not to report their bosses. According to Vilas (11 December 2013, interviewed in Melbourne), a master's student working at a convenience store:

If I complain against my boss, he will get jailed or lose his business. He has a family to feed, and he is a nice guy otherwise. He gave me my first job when no one was employing me without PR. So, I wouldn't be comfortable complaining against him to the Fair Work Ombudsman. I do feel bad that Uncle pays the two local ladies [employees] the legal wage and pays me only \$10 an hour, but it is okay. I need to earn whatever I can get and focus on completing my course.

Students like Vilas feel morally pressured to not cause trouble for their employers, which results in them tolerating exploitation without complaining. In some situations, students do not speak up because they are threatened with violence. Such case was reported in 2017, where a café by the name 'Canteen Cuisine' in Albury was fined \$532,000 for threatening to kill their Indian staff if they complained against unfair wages. Jess Walsh, the Victorian secretary of the United Voices Union, told ABC that Australian workplace laws do not discriminate between workers who are citizens and those who come to Australia from other countries (Australian Affairs 2013).

Another form of underpayment is literally not paying the employees. This entails Indian employers tricking students into working as trainees without pay, sometimes for months. According to Mahi (22 May 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

I was called for a trial at Bundoora Subway. I was happy to get a call for a part-time job within a week of my arrival in Melbourne. I was also happy that it was a reputed franchise and that they would pay me well. The franchise owner was Indian, and I found communicating with him easy as we spoke the same language. During the trial, I was asked to work for a six-hour shift

for free. I was told that I needed training and needed to prove my work efficiency. Then I was not called for two weeks. After following up, I was called back for a one-week unpaid trial. I worked for 30 hours during that week without pay. I was then not called for work for a week. After following up again, I was told I was not good enough and had to prove myself worthy of the job. I was told that I would be paid \$5 per hour for the next month. This continued for two months. The trial period did not seem to end, so I finally left the job. I was told by my mate that many businesses run by Indians often use these tactics to get free labour. As soon as I get time from my existing job, as well as university assignments, I am planning to lodge a complaint against this owner.

Mahi's boss may genuinely want to hire her in the future and may be waiting for her to reach the required level of skill. However, giving the benefit of the doubt in this way seems naïve. Based on the trend of exploitation identified in this research as well as other research conducted on workplace exploitation in 7-Eleven stores (Fair Work Ombudsman 2016) and the Australian fast-food industry (Crellin 2016), it is fair to assume that such tactics are used to exploit free labour for an extended period. This issue extends beyond 7-elevens to the medium scale Indian owned companies. Exploitation of Indian workers, especially student employees are rampant where the students are not provided employer sponsored insurance covers and paid cash without any record of the working hours. These companies literally operate with an unaccounted 'ghost' labour force of Indian students (Acharya 2019). It is common to see Indian employers overseas exploit the newly arriving Indian students regardless which part of the world these students migrate to. Such exploitation of Indian students at the hands of Indian employers is also seen in Berlin where some Indian students are paid 3 euros per hour which is far less than the minimum legal pay for casual work (Mich 2019). These experiences have highlighted the fact that the exploitation of Indian students is perpetuated by other Indians. The issue here is the different levels of power within the Indian-Australian community, and the exploitation of those with little power by those with more power. Max's sister had an experience like Mahi's. According to Max (8 May 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

My sister was told by her Indian boss at her first restaurant job to work for one month as a trainee without any pay. She was told the restaurant was doing her a favour by giving her hands-on experience. She worked as a kitchen hand for three weeks and as a waitress for one week without pay.

After one month, she was told to find another job. After she begged the owner to retain her, she was paid \$7 per hour since she was still inexperienced, according to the owner, and did not deserve the same pay as other waiters, who had worked for years at the restaurant. She finally left that job after three months, when she found another restaurant job that was paying \$12 per hour ... during her unpaid trial and months of low payment of \$7 per hour she would ask her colleagues why they did not speak up against their low wages or if they would support her to speak up against her very low wage ... no one helped my sister and all suggested that she keep quiet or else risk being reported to the immigration department and being deported for working without a TFN.

Max's sister's experience not only highlights the unfair and unscrupulous practice of employing staff for unpaid trials that in some cases continue for months. It also raises the issue of blackmail, whereby students are told to stay quiet about the exploitation they face.

Racism is another profound issue faced by international students, however, at workplaces, the interviewees did not report significant instances of racism under their local bosses. Instead, many of the interviewees explained how they faced issues under fellow Indian employers. The following interview excerpts highlight the need to challenge the assumption that racism is restricted to Anglo-racism (where Anglo-Saxon populations have a discriminatory attitude towards non-Anglo-Saxon people) and to accept that non-Anglos can also be racist or offensive. According to Rima (30 May 2016, interviewed in Melbourne), who works in a Subway store:

I had an Indian boss once at Subway and I had a very bad experience with him. He was very racist towards anyone who was not a Punjabi. He was very rude towards me. At first, I felt he was probably rude to everyone, but later I started noticing a pattern where he would laugh and joke around with his Punjabi employees and would be very harsh with me while giving instructions. He has also made some strange comments about my Bengali [East Indian] cultural norms. He once said all Bengali women were dominating men in Bengal, but a Bengali woman would not be able to dominate a Punjabi male. I was shocked by these comments. I needed the job, so I did not leave it right away; however, I left that job within a month.

Apart from this, the only ongoing issue has been low payment. My racist owner paid me \$13 per hour and my current owner pays me only \$11 per hour; however, my boss is very kind, although he is also a Punjabi, and hence I am continuing to work here despite the lower wage.

Instances where Indian employers of Punjabi origin are discriminatory and derogatory in their attitudes towards non-Punjabi Indian student migrants in Australia deserve further research. I interviewed one such student named Alok, who works under Punjabi management in an Indian restaurant. Alok (24 May 2016, interviewed in Melbourne), who is not a Punjabi, described his experiences with his Punjabi boss:

I have had some issues at my current workplace. I get paid only \$13 per hour. Sometimes he mimics my Tamil accent while chatting with his wife on phone in front of the staff. He has also teased my traditional customs, outfits and food. He has told me people from my state are weaklings because we eat rice instead of roti the way Punjabis do. This humiliation is on-going, and I am used to it. As far I have a job that pays for my bills, I am willing to tolerate his demeaning attitude towards people of my ethnic background.

Based on my sample it is not appropriate to claim this North-South divide is a national trend in India, however, the interviews are pointing in that direction and highlighting a possible broad issue that needs further investigation.

Blackmailing by employers

Students fall prey to blackmail by employers when they are party to the illegal payment cycle. Having accepted an illegal cash-at-hand form of payment in the first place, students fear getting into trouble and having their visas cancelled if they are drawn into legal battles with their employers. Unfortunately, the employers are aware of this situation and take advantage of the fears of Indian students. Many Indian students as well as other international students work for more hours than their visas permit (DIBP 2016). The reasons for this relate mainly to the need to work extra hours to make up for money lost through underpayment and for managing their financial pressures. Working more hours than legally permitted means that Indian students often become trapped in low-paid employment, because they risk being reported to immigration officers and being deported if they complain (DIBP 2016). The issue of powerful Indian employers exploiting those with little power is once again relevant here. Arjun (2 May

2016, interviewed in Melbourne) has repeatedly been threatened by his employer, who illegally pays him below the minimum wage:

I work under an Indian store owner. His son often manages the store. I have not faced any major issues; however, whenever there have been differences of opinion, the owner's son threatens me with arrest. I work for cash in hand, and I get paid only \$13 per hour, so I need to work extra hours. Sometimes, I work for 30 hours a week, but we are only allowed a maximum of 20 hours a week. Whenever I have a difference of opinion with the owner's son, he threatens to call the cops and report me. He told me that if I get arrested no one will hire me in the future; hence, I must comply with his demands to lift heavy stuff without machinery assistance and be on call for work 24/7.

Many Indian students become trapped in situations such as this, where they work illegally for more than the permitted 20 hours per week due to the low wages they receive and the fear of being reported and jeopardising their university degrees as well as their chances of obtaining PR. Since the interviewees were not sure whether Australian legislation provides a one-off amnesty for students in such a situation, they assumed that they would be deported and accepted the exploitation. Bhat (3 May 2016, interviewed in Melbourne) had an experience like Arjun's. He too worked for more than the legal maximum of 20 hours per week (Fairwork 2016). He explains his reasons for remaining in his low-paying job:

I began working for \$7 per hour under an Indian uncle. I was told I was a trainee and had no experience. I was told that once I gain experience, my hourly wage would be increased to \$12 per hour. My first year at work was average. I used to work some weeks for 35 hours, as \$7 an hour was simply not enough. After one year, I began pushing for an increase in my wage, but instead my owner threatened to report me to immigration and get me deported if I demanded a higher wage. I thought of leaving this job, but no other jobs available were paying any better. The ones paying \$11 per hour were far from my place and needed me to work during university times. So, I am stuck with this job and this wage.

Not all the interviewees worked for more than 20 hours per week, but many were still blackmailed by their bosses. Rasika (13 May 2016, interviewed in Melbourne) explained that

her boss gave her a choice between working for less than the legal minimum wage or losing her job altogether:

I started working under an Indian management. I was initially paid \$6 per hour but after three months at work it was increased to \$10 per hour. I have been working at this rate for the last one and a half years. I once tried to ask my boss to increase my hourly wage, to which I was told I was annoying, and if I continued to annoy him, I would get less shifts. My boss asked me if I wanted to work for just one hour per week and get paid \$25 for it. My boss has threatened me on all three occasions I requested an increase in wage. Once I was not called to work for two weeks, because I bothered my boss about a pay increase. My boss told me he would permanently remove me and call up his friends from other businesses to ensure I did not get a job, if I did not stop bothering him about a pay increase.

Rasika's account reveals the various blackmailing methods used by Indian business owners to exploit Indian students, and similarly the wider international student community could also be facing these issues daily at their workplaces.

Instances of abuse and violence

The final part of workplace employer relations examines the sexual abuse experienced by the interviewees at the hands of Indian employers. This issue has not been widely analysed with respect to Indian students in Australia. Although only three of the interviewees opened about the sexual abuse they had faced, and only one interviewee spoke about experiencing violence at the hands of an employer, these findings call for a detailed investigation into the human rights abuses faced by international students in part-time employment. The interviewees only pointed out at sexual abuses at the hands of Indian employers and mentioned safe working conditions under local employers, however, it does not mean local employers do not engage in sexual abuses at all. According to Pallavi (1 May 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

I work under an Italian boss at our restaurant, and I have not faced any issues of violence. In fact, my boss is very friendly and treats me like his daughter. Apart from occasional racial taunts and inappropriate descriptions of my culture, the overall experience has been good, and I feel very safe at work. Last week, my boss threw a birthday celebration for me, and all the staff

members joined in. I have never felt unsafe working with my boss or my colleagues.

Some interviewees may tolerate verbal racial abuse because they view themselves as fortunate not to be subjected to physical violence or sexual abuse. Interviewees like Pallavi may be uncomfortable with initial racial taunts, but choose to overlook such behaviour, since their bosses are kind to them in other ways, in this instance by celebrating their birthdays. Similarly, Rajveer (7 May 2016, interviewed in Melbourne), who works for an accounting firm, has faced no uncomfortable situations:

I work under a Greek accountant. My boss is very aggressive with his approach to work and pushes all of us a lot to meet the deadlines. I have not faced any major issues at my workplace. My boss has passed some silly taunts about my culture at times, but nothing beyond that.

Sometimes migrants expect the worst, and in the absence of the worst, compromise by accepting the lesser evil (Arora 2017). For example, some exploited migrants may not speak out against underpayment, because they consider themselves lucky not to have been subjected to physical assault. The accounts of both Rajveer and Pallavi suggest that they chose to overlook racial taunts, which did not seem so abusive to them when compared to other potential forms of exploitation or abuse. It must be surmised, given the small number of cases of (sexual) violence in my study, either that such violence is indeed rare among Indian student employees under Indian employers in Australia, or that such experiences are common, and my other interviewees did not mention them due to discomfort in discussing these issues. Parul explains (4 May 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

I work for an Indian Punjabi boss. My boss has not directly caused me any issues; however, it is my boss's inability to act that concerns me. My boss has hired fellow Punjabi delivery men and truck drivers for his business. One of these truck drivers, who delivers veggies and meat to our restaurant, has been blocking my way on many occasions. He stands blocking the entrance and exit of the kitchen, and whenever I should enter the kitchen to grab the plates, I must brush past him, as he does not move. I have told my boss that I am not comfortable with this behaviour, being a woman, but my boss has told me that it is only me who is creating this fuss, no other waitresses have faced this issue. My friends told me that this was not an acceptable

behaviour, and this was clearly workplace harassment. I spoke to other waitresses about this issue, but they simply avoided the topic. I have told the delivery man to move, but he has always told me to walk past him, and he refuses to move. This is an ongoing issue, and I am desperately looking for a new job.

It was unclear from the interviews whether the interviewees decided not to act against such abuse due to fear of being reported for working illegally, whether they were scared, or whether they simply did not wish to complain about fellow Indians. It could be that they do not have time, after working long hours and attending university, to file complaints and fight legal battles. After all, the judicial system in India has a reputation for taking decades to solve complaints (Mahajan 2016). The students know that the system is inefficient in India and so they assume the same about the Australian system and therefore might not file a complaint. According to Mahavi (15 May 2016, interviewed in Melbourne), who works as a cleaner:

I currently work as a cleaner for a very low wage of \$5 per hour at University of Melbourne; however, this low-paid job feels safe compared to the experience I had in my previous job. I used to work for a Punjabi restaurant owner. I was always mocked by the Punjabi staff for being from the west part of India. The mocking ranged from our preference of rice over the Punjabi preference of flat bread. I was okay with this and carried on as I needed a job. However, things took a bad turn when my boss began to molest me after work. He used to ask me to stay back and finish the cleaning and shut the restaurant. Despite repeatedly telling him to back off, he continued to molest me for three continuous days, after which I left the job. My boss tried to call me and messaged me to accept this as part and parcel of job experience in Australia. He told me I would be molested wherever I go, and what he did was nothing different to what other Indian restaurant owners would do to me. After this, I blocked his number. I did not complain to the police as I had no support from my colleagues, who did not want to get involved in this matter, due to the fear of losing their jobs. I decided not to complain to the police, also due to the fear of legal proceedings and the time I would need to spend for years to follow up with this case.

It was not only the Punjabi employers whose inappropriate actions were mentioned in the interviews; one situation of physical assault also involved a South Indian Keralite employer. Shilpi (16 May 2016, interviewed in Melbourne) reported the following:

I used to work for a Keralite Indian boss at a South Indian restaurant. I had to leave the job and file a police complaint when my boss slapped me and started verbally abusing me with very derogatory and sexually explicit words. My boss was angry at me for being late to work by 15 minutes. He first started screaming at me and then got very close to me and slapped me. His wife and five-year-old daughter were present in the restaurant when this incident took place. It was a setup time an hour prior to opening the restaurant for dinner, hence no customers were present. After filing a complaint with the local police, I have left the job and joined a new one.

Interviewees like Mahavi, Shilpi and possibly a large cohort of Indian students not interviewed for this study, suffer physical, mental and sexual abuse at the hands of their employers without reporting the offenders to the authorities. The treatment of the new student migrants at the hands of their nationals could be contributed to the rift and sight hostility between the groups. These attitudes are deeply embedded in the way these groups view each other. The newer students expect the previous migrants to help them with employment and skill-building. In contrast, the older migrants view the newer ones are privileged and expecting their migration goals instantly. The older Indian migrants to Australia were the ones who built the Indian communities in Australia. They were the first movers who did not have access to cultural know-how, diversity, multiculturalism accepting the Australian environment, infrastructure for setting their businesses, and incentives from various levels of government. These previous migrants had to undergo sacrifices and hardships to establish themselves and an Indian community within Australia. They were subject to abuse, racism, and discrimination in a newly diversifying Australia. For these migrants, fairness does not lie in paying legal wages but in overcoming their early losses through the underpayment of new migrant students. They view the legal grants and frameworks set for new migrants as privileges unavailable during their migration days. The newer migrant students anticipate such behaviour and take for granted assistance and fair treatment from their own previously settled community members. They do not view these as privileges, but the necessary ethical behaviour from established communities towards newer members from their homeland.

Such issues within different levels of migrant communities are also observed among Chinese Australians with rifts between newly migrating Chinese nationals and Australian-born Chinese diaspora (Kassam & Hsu 2021). It is not uncommon to see this phenomenon in other Western countries where migrations have been occurring for decades leading to cultural and social disagreements among various groups of migration waves. What makes the Australian phenomenon different to other nations is the newness of Indian migrations to Australia compared to other nations. Indian migrations to the US and Canada began in the early 19th century. The ones to the UK began around the 1950s. Compared to these countries large scale migrations to Australia from India only began in the late 1990s. It means that even the older settled communities in Australia are not as old as those settled in other Western countries. While other Western Indian communities may have rifts due to the long gaps between two conflicting groups, in Australia it is only a few decades of at times less than a decade gap between the exploiting business owners and the abused Indian students.

Effect of these Experiences on Indian students' lives

One of the major implications of these workplace experiences, especially being underpaid is that students are unable to find a job relevant to their education even after completing their degrees and receiving a PR. PR is not the issue here, because these students would not be struggling to such an extent in the first place if they were paid a fair legal wage. A legally paying job makes it easier to focus on a PR that leads to a full-time job later.

Tolerating routine exploitation has many negative implications for students, many of whom find themselves in limbo, unable to obtain permanent, full-time, legally paying employment despite a PR, but also needing to work long hours for exploitative wages to repay loans and sustain a reasonable life in an expensive country. If these students were paid fair wages, they would have to work only a third of the hours to earn the same amount they earn under existing conditions. For instance, students with the required paperwork and who work legally can earn anywhere from \$18 to \$30 an hour for their casual part-time work and the legal minimum wage for casual workers is \$18.93 (FWO 2018). In the same workplace, some students may be paid as little as \$6 an hour. Hence, it can take legally working students three to five hours to earn \$100, whereas an international student, earning less than the legal minimum wage, needs to work more than 16 hours to earn this much. Illegally working students therefore often end up neglecting their education and spending more time working. This not only diverts their focus from their studies, but often leaves them exhausted from working long hours late at night and

depressed due to their exploitation. According to interviewee Mika (17 May 2017, interviewed in Melbourne):

People from my village have a lot of love for Australia, as it offers higher incomes compared to what we earn here. I have already spent more than \$1,200 on IELTS exams, \$60,000 on tuition fees, and \$12,000 on rent, and I am still only earning \$9 per hour. I had no idea that in a high-income country like Australia, migrants would only earn \$9 an hour. My financial planning has failed, and I still cannot believe I am being exploited, even after two years in Australia, at the hands of my Indian employer.

According to Mika's sister Preet (9 May 2017, interviewed in Melbourne):

To move to Australia, we needed to sell our land, our farm and one of our houses. We expected to earn a lot of money in Australia because of the higher incomes compared to India. In fact, even reliable websites mention that the Australian national income is higher than the Indian national income. This is where I feel cheated. How can I still only earn \$10 per hour in a wealthy country like Australia? I am happy with the overall quality of life, but very disappointed with my income and continued exploitation at my workplace by a fellow Punjabi employer. I never had a goal of cleaning toilets at a mall, coming from a family of landlords. I feel ashamed to tell my family what I do here for a living and the amount I am paid for it. I also need to work almost four times that of people getting a legal pay! It is very frustrating, because some locals earn same money as me by only working for a few hours wherein I slog for the entire day.

Since students are unable to get a job in their fields without a PR, they continue to work in jobs that underpay even after completing their degrees. Working for so long in unrelated fields also jeopardises their competency on completion of their education when they wish to work in fulltime contracts in fields relevant to their education.

To work full time in Australia, students either need a PR or a post study work visa that entitles them full time work rights for two years. However, students spend most of their time in these two years accumulating money for paying off their loans, for managing their living costs and for the PR application fees. Besides, the PR process takes around two to three years on

completion of their degrees. During this time many students lose touch with the knowledge obtained in their degrees.

Furthermore, once they receive a PR and are eligible for a full-time employment relevant to their education, the employers turn these students away due to the gap in the skills acquired from their university education. This makes the students remain in their previous underpaying casual jobs for a long period of time. Due to this phenomenon, many Indian IT and engineering master's degree graduates are seen driving taxis, cleaning toilets at shopping centres and working at 711s. According to Mandeep (19 December 2015, interviewed in Sydney), a master's student in IT, who works as a taxi driver:

I have been driving a cab for five years since I got here. I got my PR last year ... I am unable to get any IT job now because I finished my master's degree two years ago, and I didn't work in any IT job right away ... How could I? It was not available without PR, and now that I have PR, the employers find my qualifications outdated.

These students' lives in a limbo are not restricted to unrelated casual jobs that underpay, but also fulltime legally paying jobs, however unrelated to their fields. Many Coles Express employees move from an underpaid job to a full-time, legally paying job, but one in the same store. It is easier for them to get promoted within the same workplace but with annual packages between \$50,000 and \$60,000 (McArthur, Kubacki, Pang & Alcaraz 2017) although they can receive packages between \$70,000 and \$90,000 at an entry level job relevant to their master's level education. While these jobs pay for the students' expenses and loans, they also provide them enough money to live a decent life. However, this does not inspire them intellectually. According to one former student, Akhilesh (2 December 2015, interviewed in Sydney), who holds a Master of Financial Management and now works as a store manager at Coles Express:

I am applying for 5–6 jobs a day, but in the last six months I only received one call for an interview. After the interview, I was told I was unsuccessful as someone else had completed a degree recently, and the employer preferred freshly qualified applicants. I have good knowledge in the banking sector and hold a key interest in investments, but the employers think I have lost touch with the market and now I am looking after a fuel station! It frustrates me at times when I reflect how my banking skills are wasted while working at a fuel station.

Mandeep (12 March 2014, interviewed in Sydney) comments:

I have lost touch with the coding taught to us at university, and my fear turned to reality when I was unable to perform the computer coding correctly during my second-round interview for an IT professional coder job. I think I have spent too much time driving a cab, that I am losing touch with the skills gained from my degree.

Neither interviewee here had issues with the income they received but were frustrated with the underutilisation of their educational knowledge and skills.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed a very complex issue within the international student workforce in Australia. What financial pressures such as educational loan repayment and managing living costs contribute to Indian students getting into underpaying and exploiting jobs was analysed. Further to getting into such jobs, the cultural reasons as well as lack of awareness and fear that leads to these students not standing up to the exploitation was also analysed.

While the issues of international student exploitation are published widely, the focus tends to be towards the actions of the employers but not their cultural backgrounds and neither towards the period separating two migrant cohorts within the larger diaspora. This chapter has focussed on the Indian student cohort and in doing so analysed a relatively unknown phenomenon of students being exploited by their own nationals running businesses in Australia where most of these business owners were migrants having arrived in Australia about a decade or two before the interviewees. In exploring the issue of being exploited by their own nationals, it was further found that a North-South divide among Indians was one of the root causes for this phenomenon. This North-South divide was owing to different states in India having their own state-based language, culture and customs. Such discrimination and underpayment were not the only issues analysed, but accounts of violence and sexual abuse again at the hands of their own nationals were explored.

Last, this chapter has shown how workplace exploitation sets up further issues for Indian students after they complete their education. This chapter has analysed how these negative experiences have led to their lives in a long-term limbo wherein these students continue to work in fields unrelated to their education and how it becomes difficult for them to enter the fulltime

workforce of their choice where they would be paid legal wages and be able to apply the skills acquired from their Australian degrees.

Chapter 9. Experiences and Integration – Social, Cultural and Religious Organisations

Introduction

This chapter analyses what Indian students experience during their attempts at social and cultural integration in Australia. These experiences extend beyond their interactions with local Australian nationals to the diverse Indian communities residing in Australia belonging to culturally diverse states of India. Earlier chapters have analysed how Indian students interact and reach out to the broader Australian community via university based extracurricular activities and leadership programmes, whereas this chapter investigates the dynamics of their involvement outside university and work life. Such interactions of migrants have been pointed out in the literature review; however, this chapter will further add knowledge about the engagement of young Indians with Indian ethnic groups, dance troupes, temple and religious groups and Indian political parties in Australia. Such exchanges are an integral part of their integration process. Except for a few political parties and some religious groups, most of the analysed social interactions relate to the communal avenues run by the extended Indian diaspora within Australia. It helps understand that within the Australian and the interviewees context, the integration process does not have to be limited towards experiences with local and Anglo-Saxon Australians only.

My analysis relies largely on interviews³⁴ conducted between 2013-2017 of a diverse cohort to gather as many distinct experiences as possible in relation to the role of Indian community organisations towards the integration of Indian students. To assist the analysis of the interactions of the Indian students with the Indian ethnic, political as well as religious groups in Australia, students from different states in India and belonging to diverse religious backgrounds were interviewed. The interviewees included students who were Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Christian, Atheist, Parsi (Indian Zoroastrians) and Jewish (Bene Jews from India). Additionally, interviewees from various regions of India, including Punjab, Delhi, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Haryana were interviewed. Interviewees also included students who held leadership roles in sports clubs, religious associations, local and community based political parties, university-funded

³⁴ Kindly refer to the appendix section for the details of the interviewees and a detailed breakdown of the responses. See appendix A1: Participant Bio Sheet data for the demographics of the interviewees and A7: Breakdown of the Major Findings.

engagement programs and on-campus accommodation. The background of these students continues to be of middle-class Indian families.

Overall, the interviewees showed positive experiences and attempts to integrate with the Australian society. These attempts were through participation with Indian ethnic community groups that provided some opportunities of a broader integration. These students were keen to be involved and devoted at least some time outside university activities and workplace commitments. Through such participation, some Indian students benefit greatly from social inclusion, social engagement and cultural exposure, while others who were not social, faced isolation. Such experiences tend to influence their migrant journey and influence what potential migrants hear about life and society in Australia when they make their own decisions to eventually travel to Australia. Such experiences of integration will be analysed in the following sections.

Integration of Indian Students in Australia

When Indian students arrive in a foreign country, they are usually faced with the dilemma of how best to integrate with the host society to enable them to co-exist peacefully (Wrench, Rea, and Ouali 2016). As pointed out in the introduction, this integration process requires that both the migrants and the host community become actively involved to enable a smooth integration process. This is where the cultural, social and religious organisations help these students to interact with the local society smoothly and safely through community events and reach out programmes. It is not only an opportunity to integrate with the wider Australian society but also the support provided in tough times that keep these students hopeful to engage further. For instance, we have seen in Chapter 8 how some Indian students faced racial comments and taunts from their local employers and certain local customers at workplaces; this is when the cultural and religious organisations provide these students with moral and emotional support and a sense of belonging in these tough times. These religious organisations have interactive sessions provide by members who are both international, of Indian backgrounds as well as of Anglo-Saxon backgrounds. Such comforting interactions with likeminded people of diverse backgrounds provide Indian students a positive exposure with the wider Australian society beyond their university and workplaces.

In Australia, Indian students have a variety of Indian groups to engage with based on their interests. Indian students have been involved with ethnic Indian groups based on their Indian state-based culture such as a Bengali Association for people from West Bengal or the

Maharashtra Mandal for people from the Indian state of Maharashtra. There are ethnic groups funded by local councils to promote Indian festivals such as *Diwali* and some groups formed for promoting Indian movies within Australian cinemas. Even the number of Indian dance schools have been growing that focus on different forms of Indian classical dance forms. Temple and religious groups have also played their part in engaging these students. Last, Indian political groups registered in Australia, but with affiliations with major political parties in India have also gained momentum in reaching out to Indian students and providing them with avenues to participate. These groups have helped students maintain a loyalty to their traditions but also helped them to interact with the local cultures. Such engagements have provided Indian students with a platform to showcase their talent and involve in their interests. This could be the first step towards a broader integration process. Instead of being forced to integrate immediately and directly, such platforms provide a scope to realise the interests and confidence to present themselves to a diverse society. This phenomenon was also observed among Polish migrant communities in London where associations and interactions with community organisations assisted these migrant groups to gradually integrate with the broader English communities (Louise et. Al 2008). Similarly, migrant operated community services and social network groups in Shanghai were successful in assisting migrants to integrate with the Chinese society (Ya & Jill 2016). The interviewees also found such avenues useful as they felt safe within their own cultures or religious groups. This feeling helped them reach out to the wider Australian community slowly and steadily. This phenomenon has also been highlighted in the official policy documents on Australian multiculturalism (Australian Multicultural Bill 2018) that explains how migrants feel comfortable within their community groups with shared cultural backgrounds. Living in community environments with shared food, common languages, and histories helps these migrants find comfort and build the self-confidence needed to work in the wider Australian society.

Involvement with Indian Ethnic Groups

The interviewees found an abundance of Indian cultural groups to get involved with. Students reached out to these groups, participated in their activities and had very positive experiences with the platforms made available to them towards integrating with the broader Australian society. Such cultural groups not only engage students with the local communities but do so through activities that help the survival of their home culture overseas (Ward, Bochner & Furnham 2001).

Within Indian communities, these organisations represent Indian ethnic and often regional groups whose welfare they strive hard to care for. Most of the time, however, because they are legally prevented from stopping anyone applying for membership, they look after the welfare of all Indians, irrespective of their communities. This allows the regional communities to celebrate events specific to their region or sub-culture together with other Indians, as well as non-Indians. This facilitates alliances between various cultural groups and communities, which otherwise may not have had the opportunity to interact. An education-focused South Indian community (Ghosh 2013) would have a slim chance of interacting with the business-focused Gujarati community (Patel 2013) had they not attended each other's communal events. The Victorian Bengali Association may not be able to stop non-Bengalis from joining and attending the club's events; however, the program they arrange is culturally related to the state of West Bengal in India, and includes '*Durga Pooja*', a prayer ceremony performed in mass numbers by Bengalis honouring the goddess 'Durga', who is sacred to Bengalis (BPCSV 2016 & Cohen 2004). The Victorian Bengali Association receives funding from the Victorian government for specific Bengali events, which are open to all but tend to attract mostly Bengalis (ViC Gov Grants 2016). According to Kisanlal (8 July 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

I am a part of the *Rajasthan Kutumb*. We are a cultural organisation in Victoria dedicated towards organising events and preserving the Rajasthani culture in Australia. I am currently a general member and help my brother who is the president of the club. As a new student, I found this club useful to meet people from my community and celebrate our festivals just the way we celebrate them in India. I also received support for my accommodation, which made volunteering for the club and managing my studies easier.

For many Indian students, their cultural celebrations are almost as important as their religious celebrations (Thomas 2016). For instance, Hindu students from Rajasthan celebrate the same festival as Hindu students from Maharashtra, but under different titles and blending the state culture with common religious practices (Sarma 2016). Hence, a Hindu Maharashtrian student does not celebrate a festival the same way as a Hindu student from Rajasthan, but with slight state-based variations. Indropant (21 August 2016, interviewed in Melbourne) comments:

I am the youth conveyer for our Bengali association. Since I was attracted to this club for conducting our Bengali *Durga Pooja*, I felt I would also help

them out by promoting and advertising their events on social media and to new students arriving in Australia.

Indrapant's involvement with the Bengali association is related to the cultural importance of *Durga Pooja* (Bhattacharya 2016). Indian students from other states also perform *Durga Pooja*, but on a smaller scale and not as a public event, whereas a Bengali person celebrates it on a grand scale at a public event that attracts thousands of Bengalis (Bhattacharya 2016). According to interviewee Makwana (8 August 2016, interviewed in Adelaide):

I am a member and board member of the Gujarati Association of SA. Every year, we organise a *Garba* event and invite megastars from India such as Falguni Pathak, Devang Patel and Atul Purohit to perform at the *Garba* event. I got involved with this club because, just like in India, we Gujaratis are a close-knit community: here in Australia, too, we help each other out and stick together. This helps us in networking among each other for our businesses as well as for providing support for our studies at university. The main support I have received from this club that compelled me to run for the role of a board member was the moral and pastoral support I received from them when I was new to Australia. Working for this organisation has given me exposure to event planning, and it feels good to help and provide support to new Indians in Australia.

Such ethnic associations create a sense of belonging among Indians with different cultural backgrounds. Having cultural celebrations in a neutral foreign land tends to bring all Indians closer together (Sahasrabudhe & Kashyap 2016). Some of the interviewees find that they enjoy celebrating their cultural festivals in Australia more than they did in India, as it gives them the sense that they are contributing towards the survival of their culture and spreading awareness about it overseas. Murlifan (27 August 2016, interviewed in Melbourne) comments:

When I was in India, celebrating *Eid* was very common and routine, but I felt different when I celebrated it in Melbourne. I had many local Australian friends, many peers from Pakistan and Bangladesh and a few Lebanese who joined me at my place to host the *Eid* lunch. The feeling to stick to your roots on foreign land gave me a much better feeling of accomplishment than it ever did while I was in India.

Simba (8 July 2016, interviewed in Sydney) explains:

When I performed for *Diwali* at Parramatta's annual *Diwali* celebration, I felt special to see lots of Chinese and Australians clap and celebrate with me. I felt I was doing something good to preserve my culture and festivals.

The interviewees felt more Indian and more engaged with their cultures and religions than they would have been if they were at home. They professed to feeling that the responsibility lies with them to keep their culture alive and promote it to locals of a foreign country.

Involvement with Indian Dance Troupes and Schools

There was an increasing interest in Indian dance schools especially among the female interviewees. India has over eight recognised classical dance forms and each of this form has dozens of dance schools in each major city of Australia. These forms include *Bharatanatyam*, *Kathak*, *Kuchipudi*, *Odissi*, *Kathakali*, *Sattriya*, *Manipuri* and *Mohiniyattam*. Students involve with these schools as dancers, teachers and special event performers for locally organised ethnic community events. According to Paligati (22 August 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

I love dancing. I have been dancing since the age of five; it is in my blood. In India, I was a part of the *Shamak Davar* dance troupe. With them I had performed for the Commonwealth Games in India. When I arrived in Australia, I had already checked and found out that the *Shamak Davar* dance troupe had an official branch in Melbourne. I immediately joined them, although the fees were high; I managed to save on partying and spend my money on the dance enrolment fees. The dance troupe here had mainly Indians but a few local Australians too. This is when I made friends with these local Australians through our dance practice sessions.

As well as an increase in the number of Indian female students who are involved with dance acts and schools, the number of dance schools registered by Indian students has also increased. I interviewed Enakshadri (9 August 2016, interviewed in Melbourne), a student who has opened an Indian dance school while pursuing her master's degree in biotechnology:

I am a trained *Kathak* dancer, and I was happy to find out that Melbourne had four major *Kathak* schools. I did some research online and joined the school closest to my residence. I have been with this school for one and a half years now and participated in more than 15 stage shows with them,

including the ICC Cricket World Cup Opening Ceremony of 2015. I usually stick to my part-time job at the Indian restaurant, my university tutorials and my dance class. My dance class has a mix of Indian and local dancers, so it has given me a platform to not only make friendships with them but also to interact with them at a professional level. The shows I perform at have given me an exposure into the arts and cultural side of Melbourne. For instance, I had no idea what the White Nights festival and Day of Remembrance were until we were scheduled to perform at these events.

Dance performances and dance shows not only provide Indian students with a platform to showcase their skills in a foreign land, but also allow them to build their knowledge and awareness of local Australian cultural celebrations, especially when they are invited to perform at such events (Arya 2015). However, an interesting pattern is observed by the heads of some dance and community project organisations regarding the participation of Indian students. According to Lalshirnika (4 August 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

We run a dance school in Melbourne, and our dance school is one of the most popular schools in the eastern suburbs. Most of our regular dancers are parents of children of Indian origin, as well as Indians who have settled in Australia. But we also get around a dozen new Indian dancers who are new students to Melbourne. They usually participate with us for a few shows, but as their finances get tighter and their exams approach, they phase out.

From the accounts of Lalshirnika and another interviewee Madhav Rao (2016 interviewed in Melbourne, 6 August), it seems that short-term participation in activities other than study and work among Indian students might be an issue. Although this pattern is not established, it does make sense, given that the main priorities of the interviewees were to obtain PR and pay off their loans. These priorities could correlate with another suspected pattern, whereby participation in leadership roles is also only temporary. Madhav Rao, who is the president of an Indian non-profit charity organisation, confirmed these patterns, stating:

Every year we get a lot of Indian student volunteers in semester one of their terms, but we never see them again. They usually help us and stay with us for one event only.

Involvement with Temples and Religious Groups

Indian students have also been involved with activities conducted by their temple groups in Australia. These students are usually drawn to the social activities hosted by these groups and with time extend their engagement to hosting events and reaching out to wider communities themselves.

Koenig, Maliepaard and Güveli (2016) explains the participation of migrants in religious events in their host countries. Migrants feel comfortable and safe at religious events, where they meet like-minded people in a foreign country. This helps them to overcome alienation in the new country, which is why they look to associate themselves with religious organisations. According to ABS (2006), migrants in Australia regularly involve themselves in organised sport, recreation or hobby groups. In 2006, more than a third migrants in Australia were involved in recreational or religious groups (ABS 2006). Religious clubs and groups backed by religious organisations and temples in Australia welcome new international students (Afes 2016). Irrespective of their motives, which in some cases might even be religious conversion, these groups are empathetic and supportive of newly arriving students. Many Indian students, regardless of their religious backgrounds, have found such groups helpful during their initial period of settling into the new country and being away from their families. A few of the interviewees were approached by Christian groups within a few days of their arrival in Australia. According to Radhe (19 July 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

When I arrived in Melbourne for my studies, I was approached by a Focus group member at the university orientation week. I was told that they were organising a free pizza night for new international students, and it would be a good venue for me to meet new students and make friends. As promised, I attended the event and loved how friendly everyone was at the gathering. I got involved in this group, and later realised it was a Christian club, but I did not mind and continued to participate in their activities. I made a lot of new friends who were very supportive in my daily life and stood by me when I was missing my family.

Students seeking moral support or an introduction to local cultures can find these groups useful. Cultural games and quiz nights based on aspects of local cultural, such as cinema, cuisine, history and language create a sense of welcome for students. It also helps into their transition to Australian cultural norms. Although some students were aware that certain religious groups

intend to convert them, many of them have continued with their involvement because of the support and pastoral care they receive. Some of these organisations appoint students of different religious faiths to their leadership committees. Such gestures are warm and inclusive, and appreciated by newly arrived students. Indropant (19 July 2016, interviewed in Melbourne) reports on his experience:

I was approached by my UNICARE group during orientation day, and they had organised a free city walk and movie night for all new international students. I was told it was a Christian group, but I could continue to follow my own religion. I was happy with this approach and decided to run for a position in their elections. Surprisingly, although I was not a Christian, the members voted for me and now, despite being in Melbourne for only three weeks, I am already a club executive with UNICARE at La Trobe University.

It is not only the warm welcome provided by these groups that attracts Indian students but also social platforms leading to friendships that they provide (Meld 2016). For interviewees like Indropant, taking up leadership roles in these organisations provides a safe beginning for migrants in student leadership roles, instead of being plunged directly into the cutthroat world of student union politics. Tamano (18 July 2016, interviewed in Melbourne) explains:

My story is the same as my friend. When he went for the role of president, I went for vice president and got elected. Now, both of us have planned a series of events for all new international students arriving in semester two in the July intake.

While some Indian interviewees are approached by religious organisations and clubs, some made attempts themselves to reach out to organisations of their choice. According to Madhu (8 July 2016, interviewed in Sydney):

When I arrived in Sydney, I Googled the address for the nearest Hindu temples. I wanted to know specifically where South Indian temples were. After I found the address, I began attending the temple once a week and slowly got to know the priest. The priest introduced me to some older students who had arrived before me, and now I have a group of friends who speak the same language as me and who are around to guide me with any issues concerning my university education. I love this support system.

Students such as Madhu often make plans prior to their departure from India, about groups, organisations and clubs that they believe might provide them with emotional and pastoral support. Religious students attest to researching the available religious organisations to help them to settle in on arrival. ISKCON is one such religious association, with which my interviewee Manali (20 July 2016, interviewed in Melbourne) was involved:

I was always involved in ISKCON while in Mumbai. Once I arrived in Melbourne, I visited the ISCKON temple in St. Kilda. I got to know that my university had many students attending ISKCON who were from India as well. I found out that ISKCON also had a study focus group at my university every week. As a new student, I was very happy to find out that there were Indian students like me who were proud of their beliefs despite being in a foreign land and were not feeling ashamed of practicing their religion in Australia. Not only did I feel relieved from the fear of being ridiculed, but also felt a sense of belonging due to the affection and welcoming nature of the study group. I now have a big group of almost 40 temple friends. We are always there for each other. We hang out together; we help each other out to find part-time jobs; we pray together and host each other's families when they visit Melbourne. We have become a small close-knit family where everyone respects each other and allows each other to understand the essence of Prabhupada's teachings and of becoming better people. I now convene the ISKCON group in Melbourne's Western suburbs and recruit new students who are interested in our teachings.

For students like Manali, it is clear which temple groups they want to associate with on their arrival. These groups are aware of the needs and wants of the newly arriving Indian students, mainly because they number many Indian students among their members. The older students provide support and peer advice to the new students, thus expand the group's network. This not only helps the religious groups to grow locally but also extends their reach to larger communities across India and other countries (Muldoon & Godwin 2003). Some religious groups extend their support beyond emotional and pastoral care to the provision of financial and accommodation services. According to Neela (20 July 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

I am the president of the youth wing of our temple. Our temple is open for all, and every student can find financial guidance and support away from

home at our temple. I help spread this word and try to reach out to as many students as possible who need support.

The financial support provided by religious groups is often in the form of scholarships and discounted living options within the religious communities. Although Sabu did not make it clear what financial assistance his temple provided, another interviewee revealed the details of the financial and accommodation services provided by his Sikh temple, known as a Gurudwara. Preet (15 July 2016, interviewed in Melbourne) explains:

When I arrived in Melbourne, I was feeling very scared. I was bad in English, and no one could understand what I was saying. Then I met this uncle at our local Gurudwara. I began providing service to visitors and helped uncle cook for the Gurudwara followers. Uncle told me I could live in the Gurudwara-sponsored quarters specially meant for students who would like to dedicate themselves to the Gurudwara. Now I do not have to pay rent, my food is taken care of by our trust, and all I do in return is what I love to do, that is to serve people visiting our place of worship. I have now been elected as the student recruitment officer by our trust, and I focus on spreading awareness of the support system our Gurudwara provides to new Sikh students.

These examples show how deep the networking goes within the religious groups: from allowing students to become presidents of their branches to providing financial support and accommodation, these religious organisations work for the Indian students' welfare, providing support far beyond the visible religious rituals (Gong 2003). While some of these religious groups hope to convert Indian students not belonging to their faith and some hope to spread their own network through these students, some only engage in community work and believe that helping these students in need is their moral and religious duty (Schindler & Hope 2016, 180-192). Irrespective of their intentions, the supports offered by religious organisations in Australia are useful for looking after the well-being of new Indian and international students.

[Involvement with Indian Political Parties in Australia and Politically backed Student Unions](#)

Almost 65 of my student interviews involved themselves in activities and events on campus, including political clubs and forums. A significant number communicated that their participation within university-based unions, political clubs and societies, or campus-based political activism formed an integral and often very positive part of their experience in Australia. Indian students' involvement with politics is not restricted to campus-based student

union politics. The political involvement analysed in this section relates to Indian students participating in activities organised by, or organising events for, Australian branches of Indian political parties and running for office bearer positions within Australian university based political student unions. This involvement also includes memberships of these parties and unions. Some of the interviewees belong to Indian political families and aim to diversify their political connections and activities overseas. The major political parties in India have branches overseas (AAM 2016; OFBJP 2016), and not only are the volunteers and members of these overseas branches active in spreading awareness about their parties to NRIs, they also actively recruit young Indians settling overseas (AAM 2016). In Australia, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) are both very active (AAM2016; OFBJP 216), and I expected to find many of the interviewees actively involved with these parties. However, this was not the case. Most of the Indians I interviewed are interested in student union politics and are opposed to associating themselves with their home country political parties, since these parties are not focused on student welfare in Australia, but instead focused on Indian domestic issues. Branches of Indian political parties in Australia focus only on promoting the policies of their ministers around election time rather than attending to the needs of the NRI population in Australia. Most of the interviewees who are involved in politics in Australia are looking for exposure to the Australian sphere, as well as seeking hands-on experience with the running of a political body. According to Satish (8 July 2016, interviewed in Sydney):

I work with the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) party in Tamil Nadu, and I expect to engage in politics once I return home. My parents have told me to get political experience in Australia while I complete my master's course. Once I am done, I aim to do a PhD in London and get political experience in the UK. Then, I plan to work in the US, and then head home, where my father, who is an influential politician, will nominate me for a powerful role in my local political party. My party will accept me as someone who has been around the world and gathered global political experience. I am not involved with the AIADMK members here, because they are only active during elections and will not provide me with the experience I am looking for.

Interviewees like Satish are very focused on their long-term political goals in India and know exactly what they need to achieve and learn during their stay in Australia to pursue their goals. Clearly, for Satish, the active nature of, and the level of exposure he receives through, his

political activities with the student unions is far more than he can expect to gain from involvement with an Australian branch of an Indian political party. Satish wants to develop a political CV, which showcases his achievements within the Australian student political sphere, and which may make him appear an international achiever on his return to mainstream politics in India. His involvement in Australian student politics, as well as his enrolment in the Australian tertiary education system, are clear building blocks for his long-term goals. Another interviewee, Jairoop (9 July 2016, interviewed in Sydney), is a member of the AAP branch in Perth, which is relatively active. Jairoop explains that his first interaction with AAP Australia was in 2014, during the Indian federal elections. Jairoop is not active with any union and prefers to focus on studying for his bachelor's degree and occasionally contributing to AAP activities. He comments:

I am a member of the AAP in New Delhi. I was supporting AAP while I was working for the student union at my university in Delhi while I was studying my bachelor's degree. After coming to Sydney, I realised that AAP support was quite strong, and I thought of taking membership in Australia so that I could offer my support for AAP from this country.

Students like Jairoop are willing to devote time, in addition to their university classes and part-time work, to political participation, due to their genuine support for their home political party. While it may be difficult to get noticed among the millions of party members and volunteers in India, participation in Indian political parties in Australia is easier. This is due to the lower number of party members in Australia. While some students seek exposure and some simply want to lend their support to their political parties, other students see participation in Australian student unions as ladders to reach their Indian or Australian political party goals. Such students are determined to run for executive roles and add the title of being an office bearer in Australian student unions to their profiles. One such student is Jabbu (7 July 2016, interviewed in Melbourne), who reports:

I have always been involved in politics back home. My parents are MPs in Bangalore. It is in my DNA to join politics, so I have begun volunteering for our student union, and I hope to run for a position within the union next year to make my family proud.

Students like Jabbu, who claim that politics is in their DNA, are very passionate about student politics and regard it as a family tradition, in which young family members should be involved.

It may also be a platform to demonstrate their loyalty towards politics in general. In Indian politics, leadership is not only determined on talent, but largely depends on the family ties candidates have with the founding members of the parties. When family members of party heads or influential party members visit Australia, they are expected to gain international experience and to accustom themselves to dealing with international clientele. They can then use this experience within their political parties in India. For the interviewees with political family backgrounds, it is important to be involved and to gain experience in Australian student politics. While some Indian students want to gain experience in Australian student unions to launch their political careers in India, some are purely interested in student unions as their first step towards an entry into Australian mainstream politics. According to Omar (18 July 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

I was told by my student mentor that I needed to be a part of the student union if I wished to enter mainstream Australian politics. I wish to participate in Australian politics after a few years and this is my steppingstone.

For students such as Omar, whether this political career will be in India or Australia, such involvement and experience helps them to climb the political ladder towards a full-time political career in the future. If they return to India, they will have an international portfolio that showcases international exposure and political activism. This may, in turn, give them a competitive edge over their political peers in India. Allan (13 July 2016, interviewed in Canberra) had similar intentions to Omar:

At a career expo at our university, I was told by the student union of our university that international students like me could be a part of their union and we could run for office bearer roles. I was under the impression that we Indians were not allowed to take part in local politics, but after I understood this, I decided to run for a general member's role in our student union. During our training, I also realised that there was a ladder to climb and being a part of that ladder system was necessary if I was to seek a career in national politics.

Most of these Indian students were given a clear idea by their senior peers about the prerequisites for entering Australian politics and this led them to join and actively participate in the student unions.

Some of the interviewees were active within the Australian student political sphere, despite having no interest in politics *per se*. They viewed politics as another field of networking for career purposes. Involvement in student politics provides decent pay (for those who work as office bearers) of approximately \$800 per month (NUS 2016), which is significant compared to the time students devote to these roles (ANU 2016), unlike the exploitation encountered in the workplace, as explored in chapter 8. This involvement also assists them to make new contacts that could be helpful for a long-term career growth. According to Maswant (19 July 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

My senior peer and housemate told me that one needs to network in Australia to get a job. It is not possible to get a job without networking. I was observing the office bearers of the previous student union and I realised that if I was to win a position within the union, I could network more compared to regular students, and this would make it easier for me to get a job on completion of my education.

Students who received advice from career coaches, as well as their peers who had experienced Australian student and work life, emphasised that networking was an essential activity for long-term career benefits. For Maswant, entering student union politics was a way of networking with influential people who might prove useful in the future as referees or even employers. These thoughts were echoed by Maxter, an office bearer with the Swinburne Student Union. Maxter (9 July 2016, interviewed in Melbourne), who commented:

Being a part of the student union is an excellent platform for students to network and sharpen their communication skills, both oral and written. We provide our office bearers with various skills and certifications that also help them to get jobs outside the union. We provide free enrolment in courses such as general first aid, mental health first aid, food handling and crowd handling training and certification to our office bearers. These skills are useful for them once they move to the real world seeking full-time employment.

The skills mentioned by Maxter are indeed sought after in many companies (ACECIS 2019), which demonstrates the relevance of such exposure within the industry. Skills such as managing teams, working in small groups, working with people of diverse backgrounds and demonstration of leadership skills are sought after in many organisations, apart from the

position-specific skill requirements (ACECIS 2019). For instance, most jobs advertised within residential accommodations across Australia require applicants to have a mental health first aid certificate, a first aid certificate and experience working with young adults (DRS 2016). These skills are provided to office bearers by student unions free of cost. Students who saw beyond receiving PR and were working towards a specific future goal found these networks rewarding, in contrast to those students who neglected these opportunities and focused on their PR goals alone.

In a similar manner to the Indian students who view working within Australian student politics as a platform for networking, there are some Indian students who treat their jobs within the student unions as full-time occupations. A union office bearer can earn in one hour what a student working in an illegal, underpaid job will earn in four hours. In other words, it is not necessarily a passion for union activism or student welfare that attracts students to the student union. As the student unions pay a fair wage, although to a minority, some of the interviewees were inclined to treat their roles as the only part-time or casual jobs that would earn them money without monetary exploitation. According to Mahavi (14 July 2016, interviewed in Melbourne), who is a postgraduate officer with the Swinburne Student Union:

I ran for this role because I love to help students and because this job is paying me well. In fact, I quit my casual job as a waiter after I won the elections and got a job as a postgraduate officer. As a union executive committee member, I perform the roles of pastoral care and organising seminars, events and campaigns, and earn \$800 per month. This is much better compared to the time and energy I had to put in as a waiter, where I was paid only \$8 per hour and earned around \$400 a month.

Students such as Mahavi have a clear understanding of the money they earn in relation to the hours they work. For some students, like Mahavi, getting a better hourly rate of pay and working fewer hours is an important factor with respect to their work conditions, and the unions fit these criteria well. Similar thoughts were echoed by Marun, who calculated the hours she had to work, her total earnings and the hourly wage received. Marun (19 July 2016 interviewed in Melbourne), who is an ethno-cultural officer with the RMIT student union, echoed Mahavi's thoughts:

Working as an ethno-cultural officer has allowed me to earn money for the position I hold as well as work casually at a convenience store and earn more

money. It feels like I have two jobs. The union job pays well and allows me to interact with other students, although the work hours are less, whereas my store job takes up many hours but is poorly paid. The combination of a low-paying store job with more hours and a high-paying union job with low hours has worked very well for me.

The Indian students who work part time for the student unions do not face time management issues such as missing or skipping lectures or tutorials due to work commitments. This experience is in sharp contrast to the experiences of their peers, who work at underpaying casual jobs for longer hours explored in chapter 8. Some also work part time outside the student unions, but in those cases, they do not need to work so many hours that their academic work is affected.

There are many students at different universities at which Indian student participation was absent, who have helped to set up a base for new students by getting involved themselves without precedent Indian leaders to look up to. One such student was Anilu, (2 August 2016, interviewed in Melbourne), who said:

When I arrived in Australia and began my life as a master's student at Victoria University, I noticed that Indian students were absent from the student political landscape. No Indians were active in the union. I immediately began learning and investigating ways in which I could participate in the union. After I found a helpful group called Unity, I joined them, as well as the local Young Labour club. I soon got a chance to participate in the union elections and won my position as an editor for their magazine. This was the beginning of my career in student politics. I strongly felt the need for the increased participation of Indian students in student politics because there were so many Indian students enrolled at the university. Everyone worked at restaurants and complained about the exploitation they faced, but no one took up a leadership role to do something about it. Since my appointment, I have been trying to generate interest among the new Indian students to participate in union politics.

While Anilu has set up a platform for newly arrived Indian students to join the Victoria University student union, there were students at Monash who were dissatisfied with the work

of their senior leaders and felt the needed to take up the responsibility of running clubs by themselves. According to Bhavya (2 August 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

After I arrived at Monash, I tried to contact the Indian students' club, but there was no response. The president and the vice president never answered their emails. I was frustrated that my university lacked a support system for Indians. The club did not even organise any events for us Indians. I contacted a few people and figured out a way to restart the club by myself. I conducted a new AGM and got elected as the new president with a new committee. We were provided with a decent budget by our parent union to run the club, and since then I have organised more than three major Indian events at our university. This has also drawn new passionate Indian students to participate in our club.

Anilu and Bhavya had different experiences. Anilu's experience was more the case of a 'political entrepreneur', whereas Bhavya's seemed to be the role of an activist. Indian students like Bhavya and her team intend to reach out to existing and newly arriving Indian students, and host events that will create a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere for new students. These students are passionate about student welfare and want to provide a smooth transition and feeling of belonging for their new peers that they themselves missed out on. These aspirations have led Indian students, especially the interviewees, to actively participate in student politics at university level through various student union groups and university-based political clubs and societies. This student-level political involvement provides the students with some unique experiences that they otherwise might not have had. It can significantly improve their sense of participation and belonging in the life of the university.

Also, during these interviews, a surprising trend emerged, whereby right-wing students who supported the nationalist ruling party in India, the BJP, were involved in the Australian left-wing Labor movement. This can be accounted for by the similar political opinions on most issues held by Indian right-wing and Australian left-wing students. According to Janakya (8 July 2016, interviewed in Sydney):

I am a member of the BJP. BJP has done a lot for India compared to any other party... In Australia, I have joined the Labor club as their representatives were very welcoming. I have been told that Liberals hate migrants and after doing my own research, I realised it was not that simple

to say someone hates migrants, however, I can relate my views with the Labor more than the Liberals.

Maswant (18 July 2016, interviewed in Melbourne) had a similar view:

My family and I have always been supporters of BJP. It is a family tradition to be loyal to BJP...I support the Labor club in Australia as I agree with their progressive ideologies. I have heard a few Liberal party politicians' speeches on YouTube, and I felt they are not very welcoming towards us internationals.

Madhu (14 July 2016, interviewed in Sydney), who was an office bearer at the University of Sydney Student Union, also supported both the BJP and the Australian Labor party:

Since I was eligible to vote, I have always voted for BJP. I agree with their economic policies as they are very beneficial towards the infrastructure of India... I support the Labor club in Australia as all my local friends support the Labor party. My friends are very nice locals, and it gave me a sense that Labor party supporters were friendly people.

This was also the case for Shamin (2 August 2016, interviewed in Brisbane):

My brother and I have been regular volunteers at BJP rallies and party events. BJP has always supported the common man and small businesses. Small businesses are the heart line of our country and BJP has done a great deal to support them... I know Labor party is left wing, but it does not matter to me. They are very welcoming towards us international students and hence I support them.

The stories of these four interviewees are worth studying in more detail as migrant groups in Australia predominantly vote for the Labor party regardless of their left-wing or right-wing inclination prior to arrival in Australia (Pietsch 2017). However, the trend of supporting the Labor party is more common among populations other than those from northern European (mainly British) migrant populations (McAllister 2015). furthermore, there is significant scope to analyse in greater depth this phenomenon whereby migrants who are right-wing supporters in their home countries join or follow left-wing politics in their host countries. The similar political views may not fully account for the phenomenon. Rather, it may have to do with how a citizen of one country who becomes a migrant in another, views the world differently. A

right-wing BJP follower in India may support a ban on migrants to India from Bangladesh and Pakistan or may view them as incendiaries. However, the same right-wing person becomes a migrant in a new country and realises the challenges and difficulties encountered when exposed to a political group with a similar ideology. Most Hindus in India do not eat beef, and a ban on beef consumption or slaughter of cows is the political agenda of BJP. By contrast, these right-wing BJP members in Australia are supported by the animal-friendly and ecologically friendly campaigns of the Greens, who align themselves with left-wing tickets in Australian universities. The vegan, vegetarian and animal rights societies and clubs are supported by the Labor Clubs across all Australian universities. The welcoming arms of the left-wing groups are comforting for formerly right-wing students from India, who, irrespective of their political alliances at home, often become involved in left wing politics.

Experiences of Students who do not Participate

Indian students who did not participate in social and cultural activities organised by various associations were left disengaged and isolated. They either missed or let go of opportunities to integrate with the local Australian society because of earlier unpleasant experiences with locals, due to racism, living at residences away from cultural activities and missing their orientation programs.

All it takes is one bad, unpleasant or misunderstood experience to affect a person and lower their morale (Obermann 2010). Indian students with poor communication skills and who are not proficient in English may be ridiculed by locals, and even by their Indian peers, or they may also misunderstand the sarcasm or friendly humour of some Australians. Any of these factors may be enough to lower morale and cause social isolation. According Simrun (16 August 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

I had a bad experience at the airport when the immigration officer looked at my passport and said it was the worst passport to have. I felt humiliated right from the start and even before I entered the streets of Melbourne. My taxi driver was Indian who drove me from the airport to my booked accommodation told me to be careful around Aussies as they hate Indians, and they would bash up Indians once they are drunk. I want to complete my master's and migrate to some other country.

Simrun's comments show how an early prejudice can develop among Indian students towards local Australians due to early unpleasant experiences. These experiences may be genuinely

driven by racial behaviour, or may appear racial in nature, because of a gap between what both parties perceived to be appropriate and acceptable according to their cultural backgrounds. The immigration officer may have been a racist who did not like Indians or might have intended a friendly joke, which may have been interpreted as racist by the Indian student. In addition to the bad experiences that some Indian students undergo, the advice they receive from fellow Indians in the early stages may also contribute to social isolation.

Similarly, racism and bullying can also be detrimental to a person's self-esteem, especially for young adults, children and students (Verkuyten & Thijs 2010). If an Indian student endures unpleasant early experiences of racism or bullying, this may lead to fear and prejudice against Australian society in its entirety and to social isolation and disengagement (Donnelly 2016). Tamano (12 September 2016, interviewed in Melbourne) reports on his choice to avoid attending university events:

I faced racism on public transport. When I was travelling on a train to my university, a white woman said, "...you Indians and Pakis are filthy people and you like to rape women – get the fuck out of our country, this place is not for uncivilised people like you...". No one on the train supported me and everyone looked away. I was in tears and did not know how to react. Since then, to avoid using public transport, I have been avoiding going to university as much as possible. I try to attend the compulsory workshops, but I do not risk travelling for social events.

Furthermore, during my interviews with seven isolated Indian students, an interesting aspect regarding university orientation programs came to light that explained why some of them were socially disengaged. Both the orientation programs conducted in Australia by the universities and the pre-departure orientation programs held by education agents in India (RIT 2016) emerged as important factors for determining the levels of Indian students' interaction with, or dissociation from, Australian society. These programs introduce students to the basics of local culture, public etiquettes and local history (Salter 2011), which can prevent students misunderstanding or misjudging Australian slang and often crude humour (SBS 2015). For those who miss these orientation programs, it can be difficult to understand the difference between a crude, but non-racially motivated joke and a racist slur (Salter 2011). Early unpleasant encounters with Australian humour and culture may therefore lead to the isolation of Indian students. In addition to the cultural knowhow, a lot of friendship groups and cliques

are formed. Students who miss orientation programmes, tend to miss out of these groups, and some struggle to find friends even during the remainder semester. Prem (16 August 2016, interviewed in Brisbane) explained:

I missed orientation as I did not get my visa on time. When I arrived, I had missed two weeks of university. I found that students had already formed their workshop groups on each table, and no one looked welcoming, so I sat on a random table. I couldn't connect with anyone outside my class either as everyone was already hanging out in groups, they had formed during orientation activities. I feel left out, and I am unable to connect with people.

The pre-departure and post-arrival orientation programs conducted by migration agencies in India and universities in Australia, respectively are important. Many of the interviewees who missed these orientation programs, especially the post-arrival sessions held in Australia, had strikingly different experiences to their counterparts who managed to attend the sessions. The interview findings suggest a need for universities to host mid-semester orientation programs for students who missed those at the beginning of the academic year. The disengaged students in my interviews all missed their orientation programs and had no contact with any of the clubs and societies run by the universities and the student unions. At the very least, contact from the clubs might have encouraged these students to engage socially with local communities. Unfortunately, privacy laws forbid the universities from providing lists that give student nationalities to respective clubs and societies, which prevents the clubs from contacting students. These clubs and societies depend on students signing up during orientation week, so those students who are absent during orientation often miss out on the opportunity to contact these clubs. This can mark the beginning of a vicious cycle of isolation.

Another factor that resulted in social isolation and disengagement among Indian students was their choice of accommodation. It was clear from my interviews that students who choose to live in on-campus accommodation adapt better to life in Australia, are quicker to make friends and socialise, and perform better academically than students who choose to live off campus. This view is supported by research published by the NAAUC in association with Monash, the University of Melbourne, ANU, UQ and La Trobe residential services (NAAUC 2016). My interviews also revealed that it was not just living off campus but living far away from campus that led to social isolation and disengagement from campus social life. According to Rahul (16 August 2016, interviewed in Melbourne):

I live off campus at Tarneit with my distant relatives as they do not charge me rent. However, my university is three hours away by public transport, so I attend only the most important lectures or presentations needed for assignments. I have no idea what social activities are conducted at the university or elsewhere as all social events are organised away from my residence.

These factors have resulted in the disengagement of some students who miss out on the social and cultural activities both on university campus as well as elsewhere. Despite a lot of platforms available for these students to engage culturally and to reach out to the broader Australian society, they either remain uninformed or avoid these opportunities based on their perceptions of the society or unfortunate early experiences.

Conclusion

The existence of a variety of social and cultural associations has been pivotal in engaging Indian students in social activities. These religious, cultural and special interest clubs have proved beneficial to many Indian students, as some have gone on to form close knit social circles with these groups which thus helping them develop a sense of belonging in Australia and integrating with the society. Since, Indian students have shown keen interest towards getting involved in community engagement, these platforms have benefited them in some way or the other; it is by allowing students to stay close to their own culture and reach out to foreign cultures. The true essence here lies in the existence and active operations of a diverse range of social groups providing students with an option that suits their comfort. The backing and support provided by these organisations have helped students overcome any negative experiences or cultural misunderstandings with the wider Australian community. Instead of backing out of any future engagements and remaining isolated, these groups have helped students overcome their fears and negative experiences to bounce back and continue with their engaging community activities. Increased funding towards cultural projects has been a major contributing factor in attracting new Indian members to both broader Indian organisations and ethnic associations. Indians are united by both their nationality and their ethnic groups, both of which present opportunities to interact with members of their own communities. Being away from India creates a need for supportive ethnic associations, which are viewed by many interviewees as facilitating personal development and cultural survival. This chapter has also explained the importance of political organisations and how participating in their activities

have benefited the social life of the interviewees and assisted them in development of leadership skills. In fact, it is through this participation that some Indian right-wing students have also campaigned for Australian left-wing political parties and gathered an insight and an experience that would have been difficult to achieve in India.

In contrast, some students were left isolated despite the existence of these associations. The foundation of their isolation was based on their early experiences of racism, perceptions made towards Australians prior to arrival, choice of accommodation and missing out on orientation programs. Early instances of racism took a mental toll on some students and in this emotional state, they shied away from any socialising opportunity available. Living away from university also created a sense of isolation due to the absence of campus culture and socialising events at the doorstep. The lack of repeat induction programs or orientation events also affected students missing these scheduled events thereby being left on their own to figure things out, which again stressed them and pushed them away from their peers. Unfortunately, some of these students continued to stay isolated from such social engagements and did not integrate with the Australian society as much as their peers.

Chapter 10. Thesis Conclusion

This thesis has analysed the attitudes and experiences of young Indian students arriving in Australia to pursue their aspirations. In doing so it has analysed the fulfilment of their goals as they interacted with the Australian society through their exposure with the social life at universities, the university education, workplace colleagues, and social and cultural organisations. Indian students are the second largest student cohort migrating to Australia when this research was undertaken (after Chinese students). This thesis sets out to find the underlying cultural norms and traditions that might prompt such large migrations. The thesis also sets to analyse the diverse experiences of Indian students who engage with the Australian society beyond the university campus. Such experiences help understand whether and how these aspirations were met or not.

During the analysis of the interviewees, it became evident that this Indian student phenomenon in Australia is quite complex. It is not clear what amounts to a *successful* experience, as every student's journey seems to involve major trade-offs. The gaps between the aspirations and experiences of the students varies depending on their intentions and achievements, i.e., for someone intending to settle permanently against someone focussing on gaining knowledge through the degree programme. Furthermore, for these diverse groups, their goals may be realised or may deviate from the original intentions, i.e., someone intending to achieve knowledge from their degree programmes may be lured to settle permanently in Australia, whereas someone intending to work in a certain industry might end up working in unexpected, odd jobs for a prolonged period.

Rarely did the interviews reflect success stories in education, the workplace, and permanent migration, all at the same time. Where education is concerned, it depends on what success means; it could be the migration experience and the entire educational experience within Australian universities, and it could also be as simple as successfully completing and achieving an Australian degree. The completion of formal qualification and achieving an Australian university degree has not been a major issue for most Indian students. An ability or incompetence to deal with the Australian education degree content has not been a major concern for most either. In this sense, this could be interpreted as a success story for the cohort of Indian students in Australia. After all, they are classified as students, and the primary objective of any international student on a student-specific visa is to achieve the Australian university degree for which they travelled.

The overall educational experience, though, differs with different Indian students based on their real motives and involvement within Australian universities. While some students actively participate in university campus-based social activities as well as campus-based union politics or award programmes concerning community leadership, many view the platform and opportunities they receive in Australia as a very rich, skills- and experience-building experience. Hence, a success indeed. Education in Australian universities extends beyond classroom education and includes the social aspect and activities that provide students with a diverse range of venues to integrate with Australian multiculturalism and diversity. Students engaging in these activities, as well as taking advantage of these opportunities and giving appropriate importance to their degrees as well, may certainly be viewed as success stories. However, it may differ with students who may not be socially active, but who rather focus their time in Australia on casual or part-time work to manage their financial burdens. The time spent on this work in addition to attending their university classes could become time-consuming and a trade-off with the university-based social activities. While they may earn money by working and complete their degrees successfully, their migration experience does not include the social aspects and the complete Australian university experience gained by others. Hence, whether these migration experiences are successes or failures depends on the intentions and core goals of these students.

Students may or may not regret missing out on the complete university experience, if their goals are not about the experiences at all, and if their goals lie in completing degrees that will allow them to apply for and receive PR. For these students, the success or failure of their life in Australia will depend on the completion of their degree, their permanent residency status, and their work life after permanent residency; however, once again, for some, work may not be the initial priority and it may be overshadowed by the focus on PR. For these students since the degree programmes are only pathways for achieving a PR, they may find the journey less successful due to the lack of some Australian degrees in providing a clear path for PR that students only realise on the completion of these degrees. To achieve PR in Australia, students are required to have their skills assessed through authorised skills assessment bodies, and most of these assessment bodies require students to complete a professional year in addition to their university degrees to have their skills successfully assessed. This proves the inadequacy of the Australian degree alone towards receiving a PR as perceived by the students.

Finally, the student migrants who received their PR and some who later receive a citizenship status may view their journeys as successful but sometimes with certain unwanted trade-offs.

In some cases, this relates to their trade-off with jobs in their relevant qualification-orientated fields. Here lies another significant gap between what these migrants expected prior to arrival and what lives they lead after arrival, and beyond PR and citizenship. At times, when PR and citizenship is the core goal of migrants, not working in relevant fields or not working full-time jobs and being stuck in casual employment could mean success in migration but failure as an efficiently contributing member of the Australian labour force. Sometimes the satisfaction of being successful in settling permanently in Australia may be short lived as on the long run the lack of satisfaction at work due to working in unrelated industries may feel like an unsuccessful story. These cohorts either accept this as a permanent fact of their migrant life and a trade-off that cannot be undone or continue to hope that their situation will change one day. Once the short-term goal of settling in Australia is fulfilled, the long-term implications of leading life as an Australian citizen become clear and the next focal point of their lives from there on.

There were some experiences of the interviewees that stood independent of their status of completion of education and achievement of a PR. These were their social experiences which were mostly positive with regards to participation in social activities conducted by Indian social and cultural organisations. These experiences were overall very positive in their on-campus social lives including their interactions with other local and international students as well as multicultural clubs and societies on campuses. Their social experiences also met their aspirations to experience freedoms of expression from certain Indian social and religious norms faced by them in India. However, a standout negative experience these students faced apart from their university life was the workplace exploitation, mostly at the hands of their own nationals. Most of the interviewees had not anticipated exploitation from employers of Indian backgrounds as they hoped to be supported and treated with dignity by their fellow Indians.

Scope for further publications

There is lot of scope for further publications based on some of the points raised in this thesis. These could be further developed into stand alone journal chapters. For instance, there is much more that could be researched within the sphere of Indian student migrants in Australia beyond their numbers and contributions to GDP. First, these include the role of the dowry and intentions to migrate, as well as the existence of the practice of dowry among Indian migrants living in Australia. This is particularly relevant and important as there have been cases of dowry induced domestic violence on women within Australian-Indian communities (ABC 2018, SBS 2017). Many Indian women marrying Australian-Indian men have faced marital abuse due to

delays in their family paying dowry to the groom's family. The role of dowry payments and maximising them in Australia is only the tip of the iceberg. They could be more underlying issues in both India and Australia as well as illegal conditions of migration imposed on women students by their in-laws which could be investigated further as such instances affect not only the victims but also the larger Australian society.

The scope for further journal chapters also extends to the lives of former students who are stuck in professions irrelevant to their skills after receiving PR. Policies that could help ease this issue and further research into how to tackle these growing numbers and the possible strain on the workforce could be analysed. This is needed to ensure a long-lasting, long-term-orientated, and sustainable peaceful and harmonious coexistence between local and migrant Indian communities. Moreover, there is scope for additional work on the issues of racism among Indians and between members of different Indian ethnic or language-based communities. Although the implications of this issue may be limited to the Indian communities only and may not affect non-Indian communities, from a social perspective, the existence of this phenomenon among migrants away from their homes calls for further research for a deeper understanding of the dynamics of these Indian ethnic groups.

Recommendations for better assisting students

Since students feel so close to a range of civic associations, these organisations could conduct training, skill building, cultural awareness programmes, information sessions, and hands-on interactive sessions for Indian students with local Australians to create a mutual platform for a cross-cultural dialogue and interaction. Such programmes do exist, but they are conducted either by the departments of universities for a couple of hours during orientation (which is explained in the thesis as something many Indian students end up missing), or by smaller not-for-profit organisations that conduct such sessions, but not exclusively for Indian students, rather for the larger international students' cohort. If such sessions and orientations programmes are planned by these cultural and religious organisations, and efforts are taken by them using their established resources and capabilities to reach out to the newly arriving students, it could help these students to enjoy a smoother transition. It could also assist in overcoming commonly seen cultural misunderstandings with local Australians, as these cultural misunderstandings at an initial stage set the course or sculpt the direction in which Indian students see Australian society during their stay in the country. Since many Indian students prefer to contact these groups closer to their sub-cultures, these groups could help

Indian students to establish wider and more multicultural contacts and interactions with the wider Australian society beyond their own cultures. This may not be their focus, as their focus may lie in preserving and prompting their own cultures; however, these could be additional services and provisions to help prepare the students of their own cultures in becoming more aware and culturally literate future residents of Australia.

Universities too could conduct multiple orientation sessions throughout the semester with the help of campus-based student unions. Student unions could combine their resources along with the international department of the universities to conduct a more relevant and ground-reality driven orientation program. Such programs could harness the experiences of the student leaders who could share their journeys to the newly arrived students. This peer assistance could also help break barriers where some students may feel intimidated or embarrassed to ask routine questions to staff or faculty members. These sessions could also be utilised to lessen biases and perceptions of what is seen as being ‘Australian’ by students with pre-conceived notions based on the projections of ‘Australianness’ by Indian media and education agents. This could be a welcoming platform for students to interact with staff of diverse backgrounds. Interacting with staff members outside the classroom before the semester commences would also help students empathise with the journeys and experiences of the diverse academics and feel motivated to learn from them rather than take issues to their accents.

While these recommendations are mostly applicable once the students arrive in Australia, there could be some efforts towards the way students are prepared for their Australian journeys while in India too. Universities need to take responsibility to the way their institution as well as Australia is projected by their partner education agents in India. It is misleading and deceptive for university and educational agent’s brochures to include disproportional and incorrect presentation of the diversity of both students and staff in the photo images of campuses and classrooms. The lack of correct presentation of the rich and diverse Australian society may be a marketing tool used to attract students to Australia, however, it is at the cost of presenting these students with the true picture of Australia. Similarly, universities could collaborate with their overseas offices and teams to conduct financial consultation workshops for potential students. In these workshops offshore students could learn about the lives of their onshore peers and how a significant portion of international students work part time or in casual jobs. They could also learn about their rights at workplaces, the legalities surrounding breach of these laws especially if the students were subject to underpayment or exploitation. These workshops could also include assistance towards time management and finance management to cope with

lectures, workshops, homework as well as casual work. Such workshops are conducted offshore but through the partner educational agents who usually only portray the glorious side of Australian education and lives of international students, instead, under the scrutiny of the universities, these workshops could shed light on the potential challenges students could face as well as opportunities available towards integration to prepare these students for a life in Australia with less shocks and surprises.

Relevance of research during COVID-19 and beyond

Australia closed its international borders on 20th March 2020 on the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This resulted in the stranding of already enrolled international students, internationally travelling domestic students as well as created a barrier towards the entry of potential new international students. The education industry has been deeply affected due to low new enrolments because of the closed borders, fall in the expected revenue from international students and in managing the infrastructure designed around the pre-Covid influx of international students. Some students chose to enrol and take up online classes, however, this hasn't been a successful alternative. The research in this thesis helps understand why this option was not viable and sustainable as it has explored the aspirations towards social freedoms both within universities and socially within the Australian society which can also be experienced if the students are onshore. The aspirations and motivations understood in the thesis are independent of the pandemic and would continue to push Indian students out of India once India opens its international borders, similarly, the pull factors of Australia as a migration destination are independent of the pandemic and once borders open again and universities get ready to welcome international students to the level of pre-Covid times, the data collected will hold more relevance as trends, aspirations, and experiences from 2013-2017 could reemerge within the Indian student communities in Australia.

Appendix

A1: Participant Bio Sheet data

[illegible]

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A2: Participant Bio Sheet

Gender	E.g., Male, Female, Do not want to Disclose, etc.
Age	E.g., 18, 20, 30, etc.
Residence	E.g., Mumbai, Pune, Melbourne, etc.
Education completed	E.g., Bachelor, Master etc.
Nationality	E.g. Indian, Australian, etc.
Ethic Background	E.g. Bengali, Andhraite, Punjabi, etc.
Occupation	E.g., Accountant, Student, etc.

A3: Information Sheet & Consent Form

PROJECT TITLE:

Destination: Australia

A Qualitative Case Study of the Aspirations, Experiences, and Integration of
Indian Student Migrants in Australia 2013-2017.

Project Contact Details:

Principal Research Student: Eshan Arya College of Arts, Social Sciences and Commerce La Trobe University Bundoora PhD in Politics/ Social Sciences <u>Email: e.arya@latrobe.edu.au</u>	Chief Investigator: Dr. Gwenda Tavan College of Arts, Social Sciences and Commerce School of Humanities and Social Sciences Department of Politics Email: g.tavan@latrobe.edu.au Phone: 94791287
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I _____ have read (or, where appropriate, have had read to me) and understood the participant information statement and consent form, and any questions I have asked, have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that even though I agree to be involved in this project, I can withdraw from the study at any time, and can withdraw my data up to four weeks following the completion of my participation in the research. Further, in withdrawing from the study, I can request that no information from my involvement be used. I agree that research data provided by me or with my permission during the project may be included in a PhD thesis, presented at conferences and published in journals on the condition that neither my name nor any other identifying information is used.

Participant's name (printed):

.....

Signature:

.....

Date:

.....

A4: Withdrawal of Consent Form

PROJECT TITLE:

Destination: Australia

A Qualitative Case Study of the Aspirations, Experiences, and Integration of
Indian Student Migrants in Australia 2013-2017.

Project Contact Details:

Principal Research Student: Eshan Arya College of Arts, Social Sciences and Commerce La Trobe University Bundoora PhD in Politics/Social Sciences <u>Email: e.arya@latrobe.edu.au</u>	Chief Investigator: Dr. Gwenda Tavan College of Arts, Social Sciences and Commerce School of Humanities and Social Sciences Department of Politics Email: g.tavan@latrobe.edu.au Phone: 94791287
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I, _____ (the participant), wish to **WITHDRAW** my consent to the use of data arising from my participation. Data arising from my participation must **NOT** be used in this research project as described in the Information and Consent Form. I understand that data arising from my participation will be destroyed provided this request is received until December 1, 2016. I understand that this notification will be retained together with my consent form as evidence of the withdrawal of my consent to use the data I have provided specifically for this research project.

Participant's name (printed):

.....

Signature:

.....

Date:

.....

A5: Participant Information Statement

PROJECT TITLE:

Destination: Australia

A Qualitative Case Study of the Aspirations, Experiences, and Integration of
Indian Student Migrants in Australia 2013-2017.

Project Contact Details:

Principal Research Student: Eshan Arya College of Arts, Social Sciences and Commerce La Trobe University Bundoora PhD in Politics <u>Email: e.arya@latrobe.edu.au</u>	Chief Investigator: Dr. Gwenda Tavan College of Arts, Social Sciences and Commerce School of Humanities and Social Sciences Department of Politics Email: g.tavan@latrobe.edu.au Phone: 94791287
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Project Aim

Push and Pull factors: To understand why and how Indian students leave India to peruse higher education as well as settle down in Australia against Canada, the UK or the US.

Thank you for your involvement towards this project. Most of the interviewees in this project fall under these categories:

- Indian ethnicity
- Migrants from India to Australia
- Migrated after year 2000
- Arrived in Australia first as students/on a student visa
- Minimum second-generation Australian citizens of non-Indian ethnicity

- Australian unemployed individuals of non-Indian ethnicity

Nature of Study

This study aims to identify the aspirations and experiences of Indian students migrating to Australia and in doing so aims to shed light on the issues faced by Indian students during this phase of studentship and residency. The interviews conducted will be one on one, face to face, qualitative type question and answers.

How could you be involved?

You will be required to sit in for a face-to-face interview with the principal research student for an estimated duration of 1 hour, the time and location for this interview will be arranged according to your convenience and a room inside your university will be booked to maintain confidentiality. Interview questions would be aimed at finding out your rationale behind migrating to Australia, your expectations prior to arrival, your experiences after arrival and the factors that made you leave India and choose Australia as a new home. Kindly note that your interview would be audio recorded on a professional recording device as well as on a mobile phone recorder (as a backup) simultaneously.

We will Ensure our Participant Confidentiality

Participants' name and place of part time or casual work and employer's details will not be mentioned anywhere in the research and on any publication that may arise from this research. Participants' names would be coded to always preserve their confidentiality, e.g., 'Raj Malhotra' would be called 'Pandya' – a completely different identity. Any document bearing the participants name and details will be secured in locked cabinets. Electronic documents relating to this research will be always kept under password protection. We respect and acknowledge participant's privacy and confidentiality and will not disclose their identity.

Interviews will be tape-recorded, and the interviewer would take down written interview notes. Participants will be provided with an opportunity to review their respective transcripts of their interview(s) for verification prior to submission of a thesis or publication of reports or papers.

The participants may request for a copy of summary of the results of the research. The data collected for purposes of this research would be stored on campus in a secure and protected location.

Risks and benefits

This research or interviews conducted for this research do not pose any risk or threat as a consequence of publication of this research to any of the interviewees.

This research will benefit the Indian as well as local community in Australia on the long run by providing a better understanding between locals and Indians in Australia and shed light on the struggles faced by Indian students in Australia.

Obtaining Personal Data

The participants will be able to request their personal data be made available to them and the requested data will be sent to the participants.

Refusal to Answer

Participants may only answer those questions they feel comfortable to answer; they may inform the interviewer their refusal to answer questions they may not want to answer.

Right to Withdraw

You have the right to withdraw from active participation in this project at any time and, further, to demand that data arising from your participation are not used in the research project provided that this right is exercised within four weeks of the completion of your participation in the project.

Participants will not be penalized nor face any adverse consequences for not participating or for withdrawing prematurely from the research.

You are asked to notify the investigator by e-mail or telephone that you wish to withdraw your consent for your data to be used in this research project. In addition, you would be required to complete the “Withdrawal of Consent Form”.

Questions Relating to Project

Any questions regarding this project may be directed to the principal research student, Eshan Arya at e.arya@latrobe.edu.au or the Chief Investigator as stated above.

Results

The results of the study conducted using the interviews will be used in the Ph.D. thesis and may also be published in journals and presented at conferences.

Complaint

If you have any complaints or concerns about your participation in the study that the researcher has not been able to answer to your satisfaction, you may contact the Senior Human Ethics Officer, Ethics and Integrity, Research Office, La Trobe University, Victoria, 3086 (P: 03 9479 1443, E: humanethics@latrobe.edu.au). Please quote the application reference number E15/112.

We thank you for your time and valuable information. Your feedback is extremely crucial to this research. We really appreciate your participation.

Yours sincerely

Eshan Arya

Dr Gwenda Tavan

A6: Interview Guide

Sample of details interviewees were asked to fill before the interviews. This information was used to classify the interviewee backgrounds.

Please provide the below information if you agree to be interviewed:

1. Full Name.
2. Age.
3. State of origin.
4. With which state do you identify yourself to? E.g., Are you a Marathi, Punjabi, Tamilian etc.?
5. Do you follow any religion? Please state your faith.
6. What is the highest education you have completed so far?
7. What is the annual cumulative earning of your family with whom you live?
8. How many cars does your family own?
9. How many houses/apartment flats or land does your family own?
10. In what type of dwelling do you live?

Sample of Questions asked during the face-to-face interviews. Since these were face to face, based on some responses, certain questions were asked differently, or additional questions were also asked. These were asked in a different order to different cohorts.

- What is your name, age, gender, education, occupation, nationality, ethnicity, residence status?
- Do you intend to study in Australia? Why?
- What attracts you about Australia? E.g., education, society etc.
- Is there any reason or experiences why you want to leave India?
- Describe in detail your educational experiences in India and Australia.
- Describe in detail your workplace experiences in India and Australia.
- Do you participate in extracurricular activities? Which ones, how and why? Why not?
- Do you work in Australia, where why and what are your experiences at workplace?
- How did you settle in Australia? Describe your journey from the time of arrival.
- Are you content and happy with your decision to study in Australia? Why, why not?
- Could you reflect on your social life in India and your social life in Australia?
- Could you reflect on your academic experiences in India and the ones in Australia?

- Could you reflect on your short- and long-term goals and their attainment in India and in Australia?
- Could you reflect on your financial situation while in India and now in Australia?
- What aspirations about Australia you had, have been met and which ones have not been met?
- Would you like to share any experiences not covered so far?
- Would you like to share any insights and information you have seen around but not covered in the interview so far?

A7: Breakdown of the Major Findings

125 students were interviewed, and the following were the percentages of the key findings

Key Findings: Interviewees who	Proportion of students³⁵
Find the Indian reservation system unfair & promoting inequality.	95%
Find the Indian reservation system as a significant push factor.	89%
Find factors other than reservation system as significant push factors.	14%
Find lack of jobs & employment opportunities in India as push factors.	62%
Find too many entrance exams a push factor.	43%
Are frustrated with the corruption in the Indian education system.	88%
Had access to bank loans for funding their Australian education.	91%
Felt dowry could be a factor pushing students to migrate overseas.	11%
Related Australian migration as means to boost their social prestige in India.	78%
Were attracted to economic factors and higher incomes in Australia.	75%
Were attracted to Australia due to the portrayal of Australia in media.	36%
Were attracted to Australia based on the projections by Tourism Australia.	44%
Idolised Australian cricket players.	27%
Longed for social and cultural freedoms in Australia.	90%
Longed for freedom to consume alcohol in Australia.	21%
Longed for enjoying nightlife in Australia.	24%
Wished to experience freedom of religion in Australia.	18%
Wished to experience sexual freedom in Australia.	16%
Wanted to experience the low power distance in Australian universities.	15%
Wanted to enjoy the Australian university campus life.	57%
Found Australian academics helpful.	86%
Reported positive experiences interacting with Australian academics.	77%
Reported positive experiences towards efforts by university support staff.	79%
Reported negative experiences towards international academic staff.	9%

³⁵ Percentages have been rounded to the closest decimal.

Were discontent towards the value received from degrees against the money spent.	33%
Faced racism at workplaces from customers.	12%
Were involved in extracurricular activities and leadership programmes.	23%
Were content with their social, religious and sexual freedoms within universities.	94%
Experienced racism within universities.	20%
Valued the exposure to multiculturalism within Australian universities.	87%
Worked for Indian employers.	72%
Experienced negative experiences at Indian owned workplaces.	88%
Worked for Anglo-Saxon employers.	12%
Experienced negative experiences at Anglo-Saxon owned workplaces.	14%
Worked for migrant employers of non-Indian backgrounds.	16%
Faced negative experiences at workplaces owned by non-Indian migrant owners.	46%
Worked in suburbs with mostly non-migrant populations.	36%
Faced negative customer experiences in suburbs with mostly migrant populations.	42%
Faced negative customer experiences in suburbs with mostly non- migrant populations.	22%
Felt isolated and regretted their decisions to arrive in Australia.	9%
Changed their political allegiance in Australia (e.g., Right-wing to Left-wing).	32%
Found extracurricular groups and clubs helpful to integrate with the locals.	88%
Found religious organisations useful for gradually integrating with the locals.	71%

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