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Editor's Note: South Asia at Large

As we approach the turn of the millennium, we encounter daily those who traverse an evermore bewildering variety of borders. The cultural dynamics of such deterritorialization are resilient, potentially transformative, and endlessly fascinating as people shift and adapt to new landscapes in the global world. Caught in this global flow, South Asians are people for whom the realities of place and imagination have become increasingly blurred.

This edition of *Sagar* focuses on the landscapes where South Asians imagine their lives. It questions the localizing strategies of traditional area studies by presenting scholarship that is not so resolutely localizing. The complex, overlapping, and disjunctive order that increasingly characterizes the South Asian experience calls for scholarship that stresses both life's negotiations and contestations in all their complexity. In this edition, *Sagar's* contributors trace peoples and objects as they slip in and through the many subtly changing landscapes of the global world. Their efforts not only illuminate how a world on the move affects small geo-cultural spaces, but also how these small spaces help us understand a world on the move.

Matthew A. Cook, *Editor*

Less Successful Than the Next: South Asian Taxi Drivers in New York City

Elizabeth Kolsky

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

This paper examines the history of South Asian taxi drivers in New York City against (1) the backdrop of U.S. immigration legislation, (2) communities of financially more successful South Asian immigrants, and (3) the changing face of the cab industry. It argues that working class South Asians in New York City are systematically denied representation in ethnographies that preach stories of success, and that these drivers have been left to battle alone a hostile police force and a mayor bent on discipline and punishment. This paper also argues it is high time to hear working class voices not only in the aisles of City Hall, but in the family rooms of the middle class desis who prefer to ignore them.

This paper seeks to create space for a group of under-acknowledged (and over-exploited) immigrants in New York City: South Asian taxi drivers. Struck by the contrast between their large numbers—who doesn't have an Indian cabby story?—and the sense (from talking to a few) that most are advanced degree-holders driving only temporarily, I set out to discover a bit more about the history of the community. Located in the cracks between a national history of discriminatory legislation and a diasporic narrative of success, the story of South Asian taxi drivers works defiantly against the grain.

A Brief History of U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Law

The first naturalization law, ratified in 1790, provided citizenship rights for all “free white persons.” In 1870, the law was amended to include the naturalization of people of African nativity and descent. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, free white persons, primarily from northern and western Europe, entered the country in large numbers and became citizens.

Asians, however, were not as well-received. The first “Orientals” to immigrate to the United States were Chinese laborers who came to California during the gold rush of the 1850’s. In the late nineteenth century, Japanese began immigrating. The first few years of the twentieth century saw Indians, mostly Punjabi Sikhs who had arrived by boat in Western Canada, crossing the loosely guarded border into Washington state. And by 1908, Indians were arriving directly into San Francisco’s port. These Asian immigrants, the “Chinks,” the “Japs,” and the “ragheads”—as the turbaned Sikhs were derogatorily called—were not eligible for citizenship.

When the United States began passing laws actively restricting immigration, Asians were the first to be shut out. As a result of successful lobbying by west coast unions that resented competition from Chinese labor, the Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 prohibiting the entrance of all Chinese immigrants. In 1917, the west coast labor lobby triumphed again, this time with the creation of the “Asiatic Barred Zone,” which banned immigration from all Asian countries except Japan. And in 1924, Japanese immigration was halted. These laws not only prohibited further immigration from Asia, they also formally denied citizenship to Asians living in the United States.

In 1924, the United States passed the Johnson-Reed Act, also known as the Permanent National Origins Quota Act. As its name suggests, this law established a series of quota laws targeted to (1) restrict the immigration of southern and eastern Europeans and (2) favor northern and western Europeans: “Quotas were set in proportion of the size of each country’s contribution to the total population of the United States in 1920 (1890 became the base year in 1927), and a limit of 115,000 was imposed for all countries outside the western hemisphere.”¹ As the northern and western Europeans were the earliest to immigrate in large numbers, their quotas were highest.

In the 1940’s, recognizing the political salience of its image of freedom and accommodation, the United States began opening its borders. The booming war economy had eased fears of unemployment and the bigoted aspects of West coast trade unionism that those fears engendered.² In 1943, to reward its wartime ally and demonstrate the generosity of American democracy, an annual quota of 105 Chinese persons was permitted to enter the country with naturalization rights. In 1946, India was given an annual quota of 100 persons.

In 1952, the U.S. passed the McCarran-Walter Act, increasing the total annual Asian immigration quota to 2000 persons, and establishing preferences for visa allocation. Interestingly, this law recognized as Indian

¹ Kenneth Jackson, *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 584.

² David M. Reimers, *Still the Golden Door: The Third World Comes to America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

any person of Indian ancestry coming from any country. Thus, a citizen of Britain whose grandparents came from India, would fall under the Asian Indian quota.

Finally, in 1965, the United States passed the landmark Hart-Celler Act, abolishing nation-of-origin restrictions. Effective June 30, 1968, immigration and naturalization exclusion on the basis of race, sex, or nationality was prohibited.

Focusing on South Asia

Under the Hart-Celler Act, new immigration criteria was based on kinship ties, refugee status, and “needed skills.” Between 1820 and 1960, 34.5 million Europeans immigrated to the U.S., while only one million Asians—mostly Chinese and Japanese—immigrated. An unintended, unanticipated, and highly evident effect of Hart-Celler was the burgeoning of Asian immigration.

Literature on South Asian immigration to the United States pays short shrift to pre-1965 immigrants, namely the Punjabi Sikhs who settled on the West coast in the early twentieth century. Indeed, one would think that the inclusion of India in the 1917 Asiatic Barred Zone was mere coincidence were it not for the work of Bruce La Brack and Joan Jensen, whose book, *Passage from India*, traces the struggles and successes of early South Asian immigrants.¹

In the early 1900’s, Indians came to the Pacific Northwest from Canada to work in lumber mills and logging camps.² As they moved down into California, they began working in mills, farms, and railroad construction. Though their numbers were small, there were violent racial incidents that directly targeted them—“anti-Hindoo” violence—in Washington, California, and Alaska. Indians were included on the list of enemies of California’s Asiatic Exclusion League, formed in 1907. By 1908, when a boat from India docked at San Francisco, the front page of the *San Francisco Call* displayed a photograph of a group of turbaned Sikhs. The headline read: “The Hindoo Invasion.”

South Asian immigrants have a history of legal controversy regarding racial classification. This confusion of classification had implications for naturalization rights. The slippage between racial and skin

¹ Particularly interesting is Jensen’s claim that Indian men were especially “successful” with Mexican women. Jensen notes that of 400 Indian families formed before 1946, 80% included an Indian man and a Mexican woman. She states: “Indians either kept to themselves or joined Mexican-American or black communities. Some Indians who had difficulty finding jobs in cities claimed to be Mexican or black, believing the prejudice to be greater against Indians,” from Joan Jensen, *Passage from India* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1988), p. 41.

² I speak here of Indians, rather than South Asians, as this is the pre-independence period.

color categories was problematic for the citizenship status of Indians in the early twentieth century. Because Indians were classified with Chinese and Japanese as Orientals, of the “mongoloid race,” they were denied the citizenship rights accorded only to “free white persons.” However, the courts had been interchangeably using the terms “white” and “caucasian,” making room for the Indian argument that while their skin color was brown, they were in fact caucasian, and thus deserved citizenship rights.

In 1920, when Bhagat Singh Thind, a United States World War I army veteran, was denied citizenship, he sued. In 1923, the Supreme Court ruled in *U.S. vs. Bhagat Singh Thind* that “white” and “caucasian” were not synonymous in the eyes of the “common man,” and that, “*free white persons* were words of common speech, words to be interpreted in accordance not with science but rather with the understanding of the ‘common man.’ And according to the common man *white* was not synonymous with *caucasian*.”¹ Between 1923 and 1926, the INS sought to revoke the naturalization certificates of seventy Indians. The issue of the racial classification of Indians had not, however, been resolved.

In direct contradiction of the federal stance of the 1920’s, and until 1977, the U.S. government (including the U.S. Census Bureau) formally classified South Asians as caucasian/white. The 1970 Census questionnaire provided the following categories for self-identification: White/Caucasian, Negro (or Black), Indian (American), Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Hawaiian, Korean, Other. In 1974, the Association of Indians in America (AIA) began negotiating with federal agencies for classification of South Asians as a separate category, and more specifically for recognition as a minority group eligible for federal protection against discrimination.² A February 18, 1975, memo distributed to staff of the Office of Federal Contract Compliance, a federal agency devoted to minority group rights, specifically included among minority groups “Blacks, Spanish-surnamed Americans, American Indians, and Asian Americans (or Orientals),” and specifically excluded Pakistanis and Indians. In 1977, AIA won the first stage of the battle, with federal acknowledgment of the category “Asian Indian,” which appeared on the 1980 Census questionnaire.

South Asians in the United States: A Demographic Profile

In the 1980’s, 46% of the yearly 600,000 immigrants entering the United States were from Asia. New York City became home to between 15% and 20% of these immigrants each year after 1965. Many South

¹ Jensen, *Passage from India*, p. 258.

² Maxine P. Fisher, *The Indians of New York City: A Study of Immigrants from India* (Columbia, MO: South Asia Books, 1980).

Asians have specifically designated New York City as their port of entry. The 1980 Census shows that the northeast had proportionally more Indians than any other major Asian nationality, 46,708 of whom lived in New York City.¹

Between 1870-1965, a total of 16,013 Indians immigrated to the United States. In the first decade following the passage of the 1965 Hart-Celler Act, 96,735 Indians immigrated. For the most part, these new Indian immigrants entered under the needed skills preference of the 1965 law. In 1975, 93% of Indian immigrants were either professional workers or their spouses and children.² In 1980, the U.S. Census Bureau claimed that the 361,351 Indians living in the United States formed the most highly educated, skilled, and paid group among new immigrants.³ As Jensen notes: "The second wave of Indian immigration was thus much different from the first, when workers had crowded the ships."⁴ By the 1980's, 25,000 Indians were immigrating to the United States each year, and among immigrant groups, they were among the quickest to naturalize.⁵

South Asians in the United States: A Seamless Success Story?

Very limited research has been done on South Asians in the United States. The CLIO electronic catalog in the Columbia Library system has only thirty books classified under the subject "East Indian Americans," the proper subject search line according to Columbia's South Asian librarian, David Magier. To put that number in context: the subject "Chinese Americans" draws 191 entries; "Japanese Americans" 293 entries; "Korean Americans" 57 entries; "Asian Americans" 225 entries; "Mexican Americans" 655 entries; "Hispanic Americans" 499 entries; "West Indian Americans" 9 entries; "Afro Americans" over 5000 entries; "Irish Americans" 141 entries; "Italian Americans" 205 entries; "German Americans" 200 entries; and finally, "European Americans" recommends a new search under "wasps persons."

¹ Elliot R. Barkan, "Portal of Portals: Speaking of the United States 'As Though it Were New York'—and Vice Versa," in William Pencak, Selma Berrot, Randall M. Miller, eds., *Immigration to New York* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1991), p. 222.

² Fisher, *The Indians of New York City*, p. 11.

³ David M. Reimers, "Recent Third World Immigration to New York City, 1945-1986: An Overview" in William Pencak, Selma Berrot, Randall M. Miller, eds., *Immigration to New York* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1991), p. 190.

⁴ Jensen, *Passage from India*, p. 280.

⁵ See Jose Salvo, *The Newest New Yorkers: An Analysis of Immigration into New York City During the 1980's* (New York: Department of City Planning, 1992).

The stories that books on South Asian immigration tell are one: the theme is success. The common narrative goes something like this. The Hart-Celler Act contributed to the “brain drain” from South Asia, funneling the passage of the economically and educationally advantaged. Indians in America are described as a well-trained professional elite, representing large numbers of doctors, engineers, and scientists. Of the post-1965 “new immigrant groups” (including Indians, Chinese, Koreans, Dominicans, and Mexicans), the 1980 Census indicated that Indians had the highest mean family income, above even that of native-born Americans (different from Native Americans).

In his 1977-78 survey of 345 Indians residing in New York City, Parmatma Saran found that 84% of them were college-educated (far above the 15% of college-educated Americans), more than 50% had received advanced degrees, and 75% held jobs as engineers and healthcare professionals before coming to the United States. Saran states:

Indian immigrants in the New York area have achieved occupational positions that demand high levels of educational achievement . . . this places them among the more affluent segments of American society.¹

In addition to Saran’s work, many fieldwork studies, including Maxine Fisher’s *The Indians of New York City* and Arthur and Usha Helweg’s *An Immigrant Success Story*, provide in detail the experiences of middle-class South Asian immigrants in the New York metropolitan area.

A Seamless Success Story?: Probing the Profile

To a non-New Yorker, these narratives offer convincing evidence of a remarkably successful immigrant group. However, one need spend very little time in New York City to encounter working-class South Asians that contradict this fantasy scenario. On my daily morning errands, I pick up a newspaper from the neighborhood newsstand, operated by a South Asian man, and buy fruit from the South Asian greengrocer next door. If I decide to travel by taxi to one of the myriad Indian restaurants lining East 6th Street between 1st and 2nd Avenues, my chances of being picked up by a South Asian driver are 50%. In my neighborhood, the only *tamasha* rivaling the evening gathering of South Asian taxi drivers at the gas station on Lafayette and Broadway, is the morning crowd of South Asian food vendors filling their carts with roasted chestnuts or ice-cream, depending on the season, at Nice Ice on Bowery and Bond. Why are these

¹ Parmatma Saran, *The Asian Indian Experience in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Publishing Co., 1985), p. 31.

communities neglected in the literature? Might this be a third wave of immigrants?

As I bring to the foreground one large group of non-professional South Asian immigrants in New York City, taxi drivers, I will work towards resolving these questions .

A Brief Overview of the Taxicab Industry: The Industry's Point of View¹

Yellow taxicabs are a defining feature of the New York City landscape. The City is home to 45,266 licensed taxi drivers and 12,187 yellow medallion taxicabs.² (A medallion is a metal license bolted to a cab's hood that makes the car official.) Taxicabs are a \$1.5 billion industry, supporting 30% of public transportation in Manhattan. In 1991, the average cab traveled 58,200 miles and generated \$82,000 in revenues (including tips). The average shift was 10 hours, during which a driver took 30 trips to service 40 passengers. The average net income of a taxi driver in 1991 was \$22,000.

Taxi driving careers tend to be short. In 1991, 25% of first-year drivers failed to renew their licenses, as did 21% of second-year drivers and 17% of third-year drivers. Most drivers exit the industry within four years of becoming licensed. Low pay and crime are the primary reasons for the high turnover rates of new drivers. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health's (an arm of the Department of Health and Human Services) June 1996 report, entitled *Violence in the Workplace: Risk Factors and Prevention Strategies*, taxi driving is the most life-threatening job in America. Taxicab drivers have the highest risk of workplace homicides of any occupational group, nearly forty times the national average and more than three times the rate of liquor stores, which had the next highest rate. In 1994, eighty-six taxi drivers were killed. Homicide rates for taxicab drivers and security guards were one and a half times higher during the early 1990's than they had been during 1983-89. Taxicab services had the highest rate of work-related homicide during the 3-year period 1990-92 (41.4/100,000). This rate was nearly sixty times the national average rate of work-related homicides (0.70/100,000).

In 1992, 90% of new drivers were immigrants, as were over 80% of all licensed drivers. Of the new applicants in 1991, 37% were college graduates, while 59% had received some college education. Furthermore, 70% of these applicants had recently worked in a low-skilled job, and

¹Unless otherwise noted, data presented is from the *NYC Taxicab Fact Book*, compiled by the NYC Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) in 1991.

²These numbers reflect current statistics reported in the *New York Times* article, "Behind the Wheel," May, 15, 1998, p. A1.

9.5% of them in professional jobs. The median age of all drivers was 39 and the median age of new drivers was 32.

Next to English, the most common first languages among the 2,500 immigrant applicants in 1991 were Urdu (15.7%), Punjabi (12.7%), Arabic (11.1%), and Bengali (10.6%). (English, of course, is most common language because it is spoken by the Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Indian drivers who numerically dominate the industry.) In 1991, 43% of all applicants for licenses were born in South Asia (21% Pakistani, 11% Indian, and 11% Bangladeshi), a sharp increase from the 10% in 1984. In that same time period, U.S. born applicants dropped from 26% to 10.5%. Most drivers do not drive full-time, and some don't drive at all in a given year. There are approximately 16,000 licensed South Asian taxi drivers (43% of the total 40,000 licenses), and around 5,000 (43% of the 12,000 full-timers) full-time South Asian drivers.

The taxi industry, too, is tied up in America's botched history of South Asian racial classification. In 1984, when applying for licenses, drivers were asked to indicate their race/ethnicity. The choices given were: white, black, Indian, Asian, Hispanic. As a result, the TLC was surprised to find their drivers to be 34% white, 27% black, 15% Indian, 12% Asian, 11% Hispanic, because: "The Indian category, originally meant to refer to Native Americans, [was] selected by most drivers born in India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, as well as some drivers born in northeastern Africa." Recognizing the impossibility of a New York City workforce composed of 15% Native Americans, the questionnaire was amended in 1992 to include the category Asian Indian.

Each year since the 1980's, more Pakistanis and Bangladeshis applied for taxi driver licenses than arrive from Pakistan or Bangladesh. Half of all new applicants have lived in the U.S. for six years or more before applying for a taxi driver's license, and 73% of them know someone who drives a cab.

A Brief Insight into the Taxicab Industry: The Drivers' Point of View

In 1992, the Lease Driver's Coalition (LDC) was formed under the auspices of the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence (CAAAV) in order "to bring together predominantly South Asian yellow cab drivers to fight for civil rights and combat the oppressive conditions they face from garage owners, the TLC, and the NYC police."¹ According to the LDC, and the many drivers interviewed in Vivek Bald's documentary "Taxi-Vala/An Autobiography," life on the streets is far bleaker than is depicted in the *NYC Taxicab Fact Book*. Contrary to the TLC statistics, drivers work many more hours than are documented, often 12-hour days, 6 or 7 days a

¹From LDC newsletter *Peela Paiya*, p. 10.

week, netting \$50 *on a good day*. Each day, drivers face unsafe working conditions, racial discrimination, and police brutality. And while the police are quick to issue moving and parking violations, they drag their feet in responding to crimes against drivers, often turning drivers' complaints into opportunities to enact their own racist brutality.

For example, in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, on January 17, 1995, a Pakistani driver was assaulted by two officers against whom he had recently filed a complaint. According to the driver, the officers yelled: "The U.S. is a country only for white people! You Paks—you're not allowed to drive in our patrol area! You sand niggers have to go back to Pakistan."¹ On May 26, 1994, Saleem Osman, co-founder of the LDC, came to mediate a dispute between a motorist and a Pakistani cab driver. He was arrested by the police, and told: "Go back to your own country. There's no black mayor in New York anymore—so you better watch out."² In October 1993, after three cabbies had been found dead in a twenty-four hour period, the LDC organized a massive protest. In a rare and tremendous demonstration of solidarity, cabbies drove down the streets of lower Manhattan, shouting, "WE WANT JUSTICE." The third driver's body had been found by another driver, more than forty-eight hours after the murder, slumped over the wheel of his car on the side of the highway, the meter still running, *without even a violation ticket*. How, one driver from "Taxi-Vala" wondered, had the violation-maniac police failed to ticket this vehicle—much less discover the body!—sitting on the open road in a car that had been reported missing days earlier?

The LDC is highly critical of the TLC, claiming they have done little to protect the livelihood or lives of its drivers. The NYC Taxi Drivers Union, which was formed in 1966, has also been ineffective in securing benefits and improving working conditions for drivers. One reason for this is that since 1979, when the union acquiesced to the leasing system that exists today, the union's organizing power has weakened. Medallions are now disparately spread among large and small garages, some unionized and some not. Currently, there are approximately 1600 unionized medallions and exactly 12,187 medallions in total (a number limited by New York law). While the average driver, working over-time and under duress makes an annual salary of \$19,000, owners make on average \$1000 per cab per week. The cap on the number of medallions has driven their price up to \$250,000.

The LDC has faced similar organizing obstacles. According to ethnic niche theory, niches minimize one of union's biggest obstacles:

¹These and the following incidents are reported in *Peela Paiya*.

²This comment refers to former New York City David Dinkins, who preceded current mayor Rudy Giuliani.

ethnic rivalry.¹ However, Bhairavi Desai, Head Organizer at the LDC, notes that the biggest obstacle inhibiting solidarity among taxi drivers is the job itself. Most South Asian drivers are ashamed of their job, are unwilling to accept it as their lot in the land of opportunity, and do not rally around a worker identity. Johanna Lessinger remarks: "Indians holding such low status jobs are often deeply ashamed of their lack of success. Their shame is often intensified by the very high aspirations with which they arrived in the U.S. as well as by the proud self-image of Indian immigrants as a group."²

Taxi Drivers or Doctors?

How can the tale of a singularly successful and professional immigrant group stand in light of the evidence of a growing number of non-professional South Asian workers in New York City? The most frequently cited works on South Asians in New York City (e.g., Fisher's and Saran's books) make no mention of taxi drivers or of other non-professional groups.³ The TLC notes a marked increase in South Asian drivers between 1984 and 1991. Is the evidence growing faster than the literature, the bulk of which was published before the mid-1980's? Has a new immigration wave not yet been researched or documented? Do the aspirations and background of this new group bear any relationship to the post-1965 educated elite professionals?

The immigration profile of South Asians has been changing, and in the 1990's we are beginning to find some scant documentation. Published in 1991, David Reimers' article, "Recent Third World Immigration to New York City, 1945-1986: An Overview," cites the newsstand work dominated by Indians and Pakistanis, indicating a glimmer of academic recognition for working-class South Asians in New York City.⁴ Roger Daniels' *Coming to America* notes that in 1980, while the median income of a full-time Indian worker (the highest among Asian Americans at \$18,707) was almost \$2,000 higher than that of the next highest Asian American (Japanese), 7.4% of Indian families were below the poverty

¹Suzanne Model, "The Ethnic Niche and the Structure of Opportunity: Immigrants and Minorities in New York City," in Michael B. Katz, ed., *The Underclass Debate* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

²Johanna Lessinger, *From the Ganges to the Hudson: Indian Immigrants in New York City* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1995), p. 19.

³Fisher, *Indians in New York City* and Paratma Saran, *The Asian Indian Experience in the United States and The New Ethnic: Asian Indians in the United States* (New York: Praeger, 1980).

⁴David M. Reimers, "Recent Third World Immigration to New York City, 1945-1986: An Overview," in William Pencak, Selma Berron, Randall M. Miller, eds., *Immigration to New York* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1991).

level, as opposed to 4.2% of Japanese families.¹ Daniels states: “Characteristically, the more recent immigrants were less well off. Those who immigrated after 1975 earned much less—about \$11,000 per full-time worker—and more than one post-1975 family in ten was in poverty.”

It is important to remember that the *Taxicab Fact Book* states that most new immigrant applicants have been in the U.S. for six years or more, indicating, perhaps, the failure of other opportunities. Most South Asian cab drivers have been in the States for some time before they enter the industry, which they do with a high rate of education and a high rate of previous employment in low-skilled jobs. They tend to leave the industry within four years of entry, as new South Asians drivers continue to apply for licenses. Thus, it seems safe to say that while taxi driving does appear to be a stopover on some longer journey, the South Asian immigrants who enter the taxi industry probably do have different class backgrounds from the doctors and engineers of the late 1960’s.

Roger Waldinger claims that one factor which explains New York City immigrants’ success at capturing low-skilled employment sectors is that their social origins predispose them to take jobs native New Yorkers would not accept.² This theory does not seem to apply to South Asian taxi drivers—they are not driving because it is better than work they could find at home. Rather, it appears they are driving *temporarily* because they came here with unrealistic expectations of boundless opportunities and are unable to find work suited to their education and skills. So how have these thousands of disappointed laborers been pushed out of sight?

Johanna Lessinger’s ethnography, *From the Ganges to the Hudson: Indian Immigrants to New York City*, comments upon the South Asian community’s denial of its poor: “There is considerable debate among Indian immigrants themselves about who these people are and how they came to be here. Successful immigrants tend to regard these less successful fellow immigrants as something of an embarrassment to a group proud of its wealth and success.”³ Lessinger contends that Indian immigrants have subscribed to the myth of their own success, obscuring the poverty, discrimination, and racism that affect South Asians in the United States: “These stories of less successful Indian immigrants tend to undermine a common view of Indians as exceptional immigrants who have somehow bypassed periods of economic hardship, psychic pain, or the shock of adjusting to a new society Although most Indians settle into a prosperous middle-class professional life within a decade of arrival, a certain number of Indian immigrants never find the dreamed-of

¹Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life* (New York: Harper Collins, 1990).

²Roger Waldinger, *Still the Promised City? African-Americans and New Immigrants in Postindustrial New York* (Cambridge: Harvard Press, 1996).

³Lessinger, *From the Ganges to the Hudson*, p. 15.

professional job and remain members of the American working of lower-middle classes.”¹

On Wednesday, May 13, 1998, New York City’s 45,266 yellow cab drivers went on strike, blasting into the public eye in protest of Mayor Rudy Giuliani’s proposal for new “safety rules.” The Mayor’s proposal, a response to the 41% increase in the number of accidents involving all taxis (yellow cabs, car services, and liveries) between 1990 and 1996, includes mandatory drug and alcohol testing for new cabbies, heightened penalties for driving infractions, and higher liability insurance requirements.² These rules come in the heyday of a discipline-crazy mayor, who has made a name for himself by creating a quasi-police state bent upon cutting crime and cleaning the city’s streets by implementing such dubious measures as \$55 tickets for jaywalking in a city characterized by its teeming pedestrians. Drivers argue that they are already unfairly targeted by the police and by the myriad of existing city laws, and that these new measures are racially and xenophobically motivated. Vijay Bali, leader of the United Yellow Cab Drivers Association, questions: “Thousands will lose their licenses, and who will replace them? I ask you: Is this being done because the driver today is basically a minority person? Is this because of bad publicity and politics and a city that has a bull’s eye on the driver’s back? Has the taxi driver been made an object of hate?”³ Drivers claim that they have no problem with the implementation of new laws. What they object to is their exclusion from the legislative process and the system which indiscriminately revokes their livelihood for reasons big and small. Drivers plead for representation in the drafting of new regulations, and for the voice which they have historically been denied.

This paper is a preliminary inroad into a much needed field of research. Students of the diaspora must do a better job than the ethnographers of yesteryear in recognizing the implications of class differences and other intra-community fault-lines. Factors which have shaped the manifold marginalization of South Asian taxi drivers include not only a changed job market, the absence of workplace rights, and a hostile police force, but also their erasure from the immigrant community and its singular narrative of success. Currently, drivers are taking their protest to the streets, demanding recognition and rights in a society built on the rhetoric of freedom and justice for all. The voice they seek is a voice denied by not only by the American legal establishment, but by their fellow immigrants who continue to deny their presence. As one young South

¹*Ibid.*, p. 83 and p. 156.

²Police statistics cited in “Behind the Wheel,” *New York Times*, May, 15, 1998, p. B6.

³Quoted in “Behind the Wheel,” *New York Times*, May, 15, 1998, p. B6.

Asian journalist, candidly commented: “this is a group of South Asians whom most of us middle class *desis* prefer not to recognize!”¹

¹Biju Mathew, “Cab Drivers in New York Organize Against Violence” (World Wide Web) 1993.

Riva's Story: A Case of South Asian Linguistic Dislocation

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Ethnolinguistic community provides a cognitive base-line for a child's educational and social development by organizing "patterns of behavior" and "pattern for behavior." Riva's is the story of a South Asian child skirted between several such communities without fully absorbing the codes of any. This paper analyzes the educational, psychological, social, and emotional problems she now confronts in a Maryland grade school.

To a large extent, we define our humanness by our use of language. Language is a funnel through which we filter our perceptions of the physical world, our cognitive processes, and our emotional responses. While language may not strictly shape or define thought, it guides our humanness and acts as the principal mode through which we express and mediate our creative and learning energies.¹ As such, it is the vehicle by which we express different segments of our reality and function within different segments of our society.

All human cultures develop language as a means of expressing social context and development. Historically, societies have used the encoding and decoding of language as a tool to define and manipulate social status (both overtly and covertly). Ethnolinguistic populations that "float" within the "mainstream" frequently do not share patterns of behavior or patterns for behavior with the dominant culture.² Neither is there a shared usage that determines a "standard for ways of thinking, feeling, acting, and judging which are learned from and shared by a group of people."³

¹Benjamin Lee Whorf, *Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956).

²F. Erickson, "Transformation and School Success: The Politics and Culture of Educational Achievement," *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 18(14): 335-356.

³Ward Goodenough, *Culture, Language and Society* (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1971).

Large and dispersed ethnolinguistic minority populations (Spanish speakers, for example) have opportunities to have their native languages validated.¹ Educational reforms and programs respond eventually to community pressures brought about by the needs of a large ethnolinguistic community. But immigrants who come into new social milieus from cultures without strong linguistic support communities may find themselves even further alienated than the predominating ethnolinguistic subcultures. They become what I would term an “embedded” ethnolinguistic minority population. Such immigrants exist within the larger ethnolinguistic subculture (which, in turn, functions within the majority-language culture), but without the political “clout” to affect school policy vis-a-vis programs or curriculum. The students of embedded ethnolinguistic minority populations may frequently feel too little cultural validation. Without any kind of community to relate to, or derive social or political reaffirmation from, they may find themselves on an educational journey without maps.²

Methodology

The story of Riva Dube, a child of the South Asian diaspora, illustrates one such a journey. Riva is the subject of this analysis, which examines her language samples and how linguistic interference and other linguistic factors affected how she was perceived (and misperceived) by her classmates. The paper is informed by a four-month period of observing and interviewing Riva, her family, classmates, teachers, school counselor and social welfare caseworker. Actual school records were not examined because of privacy issues, however; general test instruments used by the school in order to evaluate Riva as well as Riva’s general score ranges were discussed at length with her teachers and guidance counselor.

In this paper, I hope to examine how Riva’s language usage mediated her connection (or lack of connection) to her peers in school. I will explore some theoretical frameworks for analyzing Riva’s jeopardized linguistic situation. I will take the position that Riva’s linguistic situation affected her social development to such an extent that she had difficulty sharing either patterns *of* behavior or sharing patterns *for* behavior.³ I will conclude that Riva was prone to being misunderstood and manipulated by those who could code and decode language more effectively than Riva.

¹M.E. Matute-Bianchi, “What is Bicultural About Bilingual/Bicultural education?”, *The Urban Review* 12: 91-108.

²G. Green, *A Journey Without Maps* (New York: Penguin, 1952).

³F. Erickson, “Transformation and School Success: The Politics and Culture of Educational Achievement,” *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 18(14): 335-356.

Riva's language learning was not additive;¹ target languages (L2) for Riva were not supported and developed in parallel with her home language (L1). Riva is what might be termed a sequential multilingual—or what I would term a simultaneous “reduced lingual.” I do not use this last term flippantly and hope to expand my meaning throughout this paper. Riva's history illustrates that defining L1 for Riva remains a confused issue—one which has had serious academic consequences.

Riva's Family and Personal History

Riva is 12 years old and was born in the western Indian state of Goa. Her family is part of a large South Asian diaspora population. She lived in Europe, Africa, and Fiji before coming to the United States eight months ago. Her early childhood education was marked by dislocation, disruption and social prejudice as an “outsider.” Sometimes, her family moved for economic reasons, other times, for political reasons. Her family was expelled from both Tanzania and Fiji because of political or social unrest. In the process of these many moves, Riva returned periodically (for a couple of months at a time) to Goa in order to live with relatives.

She and her family represent an example of migrations increasingly common in this age of globalization.² Such migration patterns—mixed with the rapid flow of transportation and media images—create a new order of instability in contemporary images of subjectivity.³ These mixtures form a potential plethora of self images, physical and psychological breaks in social identity. These social ruptures reflect linguistic dislocation; the linguistic dislocations also reflect social ruptures.

Her father is what is termed *bania* in Hindi.⁴ This mercantile caste designation would most certainly have meant that he would have known

¹J. Cummins, “The Influence of Bilingualism on Cognitive Growth: A Synthesis on Research Findings and Explanatory Hypothesis,” *Working Papers on Bilingualism* 9: 1-43.

²James Clifford, James, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (New York: Routledge, 1996), Peter van der Veer, *Nation and Migration: The Politics of Space in the South Asian Diaspora* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995).

³Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

⁴Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966). For ethnographic examples of caste “in action” see Nicholas Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: The Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993); Andre Beteille, *Caste, Class, and Power: Changing Patterns of Stratification in a Tanjore Village* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); Edmund Leach, *Aspects of Caste in South India,*

Indian English (a distinct dialect) and used it in his work life. Nonetheless, he spoke Hindi, as well as the colloquial Hindustani, and Konkani at home. When Riva was a small child, her mother spoke Kannada (a Dravidian, non Indo-European language) to her. During Riva's L1 acquisition period, she had *four* L1 language inputs in her home environment.

This language mix was further compounded by the introduction of Portuguese early in Riva's life. Goa was originally colonized by the Portuguese in the 16th century,¹ and Riva's father and mother both had roots in Portuguese language and culture, as well as Hindi, Kannada, and Konkani. This European language was absorbed further into Riva's life by Goa's Portuguese culture and the fact that her family went to live with distant relatives in Portugal when Riva was barely two. When Riva was almost four, her family moved to Tanzania where she was exposed to Kiswahili among her playmates. When she was almost six, her family moved to Fiji where she attended primary school. Throughout this multiplication sojourn, Riva went back to India and Portugal for months at a time, losing valuable schooling in the process and processing multiple linguistic inputs at critical stages of language development.² Her family continued to use Kannada, Hindi, Hindustani, and Konkani in the home. (If any major L1 could be determined for Riva, it would most likely be Hindi since that language alone enjoyed the status of official usage and literacy as well as continued home usage from the time Riva was born.)

When Riva was almost twelve, her family came to the United States, where her father works as a travel agent and her mother works at Walmart. Her older brother, who lives with the family, is married to a Fijian woman who also lives in the household (a one-bedroom apartment in an ethnically mixed, lower working class neighborhood in Maryland). Her older brother works sporadically as a security guard and his Fijian wife is unemployed. There is no extended family or Indian community with a similar background in the area to provide support systems.

In addition to a disrupted school and family life, Riva suffered from malaria at age four and sustained kidney damage. The counselor at her current school reported that Riva had been classified as LD and LEP, was currently in LD and ESL classes, was socially non-involved with peers and seemed to have special problems relating to female classmates. Her teacher reported that Riva could not control her behavior in class, exhibited either a flat affect, inappropriate outbursts of verbalizations, or infantilized behavior. The teacher reported that Riva indicates that her father and

Ceylon, and North-West Pakistan: Cambridge Papers in Social Anthropology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962).

¹Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Career and Legend of Vasco da Gama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

²E.H. Lenneberg, *Biological Foundations of Language* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1967).

brother both drink heavily and that her sister-in-law hates Riva and beats up on her. (This statement has never been substantiated by school or social welfare workers.) Neither parent had ever visited the school on parent evening or responded to the school's requests for a parent-teacher conference.

I have offered this rather extensive personal history to give background information and clarify factors which may have complicated Riva's problem with language learning and acquisition.

Riva's Language and Socio-linguistic History

It is not uncommon for South Asians to move freely between Hindi, local dialects and English.¹ There is also a long tradition of English among the educated classes and English writing usually presents no special problems, even though the high Hindi Devanagari script differs significantly from English script. There are eighteen officially recognized languages on the Indian subcontinent. Since the days of the British Raj, it has been common for speakers of Hindi to have at least a working knowledge of Indian English. English has had an indirect influence on many subcontinent languages and there are English loan-words.²

Yet Indian English differs from American English in many significant ways and Riva's English-language production was limited to some extent by interference with Hindi. For example, there is a distinction between English and Hindi vowels. Aspirated and unaspirated sounds are clearly distinguished in Hindi and there are no alveolar sounds. Instead, dentals are made with the blade of the tongue behind the teeth and with retroflexes were the tip of the tongue curls back behind the alveolar ridge.³

Since Hindi has tenser articulation, Riva produces English with her vowels further back in the mouth. This tenser articulation leads her to lose some vowel distinction. There is no aspiration on voiceless consonants, and alveolar consonants sound like English retroflex consonants. The diphthong is transformed so that Riva pronounces English words like "made" as "mede." Fricative consonants become aspirated dentals and unaspirated, so that for Riva "them" becomes "dem."

¹J. D'Souza, "The Relationship Between Code-Switching and New Varieties of English: Issues and Implications," *World Englishes* 11 (2/3): 217-23; Charles A. Ferguson, "South Asia as a Sociolinguistic Area," In E. Dimock, Jr., Br. Kachru, and Bh. Krishnamurti, eds., *New Dimensions of Sociolinguistics in South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford & IBH Publishing, 1992).

²Colin Masica, *The Indo-Aryan Languages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Pp. 74-75.

³Manjari Ohala, *Aspects of Hindi Phonology* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1983); R.S. McGregor, *Outline of Hindi Grammar* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1972), Introduction; Colin Masica, *The Indo-Aryan Languages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Pp. 86-122.

Ending and beginning consonant clusters are fairly “wide” in English.¹ In Hindi, however, beginning two-segment clusters get prefixed by /i/ so that for Riva “street” becomes “istreet.” Alternately, Riva breaks her beginning consonant clusters by the insertion of a short vowel and “free” becomes “faree,” and slow becomes “salow.”² (Whether this is a function of interference or her particular idiosyncratic usage is unclear.) Riva breaks her final consonant clusters or omits the consonant altogether, so that “film” is pronounced as “filam,” and “toast” is pronounced as “toos.” Riva also places a schwa on the end of many of her words ending in /l/ or /n/. (Again, this may simply be a product of an idiosyncratic schwa usage.)

Hindi has only one sound area for some phonemes, which produced some comical difficulties for Riva between the words “wet” and “vet.”³ Hindi is also a phonetically spelled language and Riva was often over-faithful to the written form. She would always pronounce the final /r/, silent /h/, and /ed/ endings, as written and pronounce the /s/ of a plural even after a voiced consonant.

All of the above linguistic features led Riva to produce a sing-songy type of English that her classmates found annoying and ridiculous. The prosody of English is time-stressed, heavily marked, and not predicable.⁴ Hindi, on the other hand, is syllable-stressed. Stress is secondary to rhythm and rhythm is based on the arrangement of short and long syllables.⁵ Consequently, word stress is weakly realized and always predicable. This feature led Riva to frequently stress incorrectly the beginning syllable of a word. Since Hindi has a weak (almost nonexistent) stress pattern, the contrast between similar nouns and verbs (for example, *re'cord* and *re cord'*) was lost on Riva. All of these language features caused Riva to produce an English that was ridiculed by her classmates (many of whom were from working-class African-American families, who had developed their own variations from the “standard” English.)

Riva had another significant problem with intonation that caused her no end of trouble among her classmates. In Hindi, raised pitch, rather than heavier articulation, is used to indicate emphasis. Additionally interrogatives are produced with a raised pitch, followed by a fall in

¹C. Prator and B. Robinett, *Manual of American English Pronunciation, 4th Edition* (San Francisco: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1985); K.C. Bhatia, “Consonant Sequences in Standard Hindi,” *Indian Linguistics* 25: 206-12.

²P. Pandey, “Shwa Deletion in Hindi: Synchrony and Diachrony,” *Indian Linguistics* 17: 116-128.

³Punya S. Ray, “Hindi-Urdu Stress,” *Indian Linguistics* 27: 95-101.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵R.S. McGregor, *Outline of Hindi Grammar* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1972); R. Caldwell Smith and S.C.R. Weightman, *Introductory Hindi Course* (Mussoorie, U.P.: The North India Institute of Language Study, 1979).

intonation. Original tense is maintained after past reporting verbs,¹ so that a sentence like “He asked if we were going to the movies” became the more preemptive, abrupt and rude (to the English-language ear) “He asked that we are going to the movies.”

Compounding this intonation feature was the fact that Hindi speakers use the future tense instead of the present tense to express conditionals.² (For example, “If he will come, then we may go.”) Since there are no modal equivalents in Hindi,³ polite requests utilizing “will” and “may” became problematic for Riva. “Will you please do this for me?” became “You will kindly do this for me” and “Can I go now?” became “I can go now.” What Riva perceived (linguistically) as a polite request was being received as a preemptive and rude command by her classmates. This linguistic feature did not endear her to any of her classmates and was frequently misinterpreted by her teachers as well.

Grammatically, Hindi is a more inflected language. Like English, Hindi expresses nouns in both singular and plural. However unlike English, it also differentiates between masculine and feminine nouns.⁴ The fact that Riva didn’t have to worry about this in English was one of the few “bright spots” that she expressed about English.

Unlike English, Hindi lacks linguistic markers for comparative and superlative adjectives (an interesting concept in a society based originally on a strict caste system) and has no corresponding word class for English articles.⁵ This caused problems for Riva, since she only used the word “one” for the indefinite equivalent and completely omitted the word “the” when she wanted to express a definite article concept. In Hindi, verbs are placed at the end of the sentence and Riva frequently misplaced her verbs in English sentences. The word “do” is not used in questions and Riva would often say things like, “When we go out to eat, we want to eat Indian food.” Since she produced the aforementioned commanding intonation and omitted the word “do,” her classmates frequently thought that she was insisting on her own way, instead of simply inquiring whether they would like to eat at an Indian restaurant (“When we go out to eat, do we want to eat Indian food?”).

While all of these differences between Hindi, Indian English, and American English may seem minor individually, when taken *en toto*, they produced profound ramifications for Riva scholastically and socially.

¹*Ibid.*

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.*

Riva's School and Peer History

We first encountered Riva in a school setting when a colleague asked me to meet her. In the few weeks after her family arrived in the United States, their apartment building burned down, along with most of their belongings. In the confusion, they managed to find another place to live for a few weeks. One night, shortly after their apartment was destroyed, Riva was walking along the street and she met three girls from school. These girls did not like Riva because they thought that she was “stuck up” and “dumb” (possibly a result of her linguistic miscuing). For reasons unknown, the girls proceeded to beat her up. They beat her so seriously, according to the school counselor, that Riva sustained additional damage to a kidney already weakened from early childhood malaria.

Because she came into class a few weeks after the start of the term, the teacher had her sit in a seat at the back of the room that had not been assigned. This position accentuated her lack of classroom integration. At first, the class would laugh at her numerous and frequently inappropriate questions. No one spoke to her in any manner that vaguely resembled friendship.

Riva ate up all the attention she could get. She sat in the back of the room next to some Latino and African-American males, who she “pretended” were bothering her. While she got along, for the most part, with the boys in her class, she particularly did not like the Latino boys, who she derided for “talking to her in that foreign language.” Even though Riva’s English language production was poorer than the Latino boys in all domains—speaking, reading and writing—Riva perceived of herself as a “better” speaker of English than the Latino boys, who spoke that “foreign” language. This dislocation from reality frequently characterized many of Riva’s language encounters.

Riva’s problems were further exacerbated by teachers, counselors and peers who assumed that because she was Indian, she “of course, had to speak English.” Everyone was totally unaware of the linguistic puzzle that Riva had to unravel and rewrap daily. In a very real sense, Riva operated in a subtractive bilingual situation since L2 (English) learning was impeding cognitive development in L1 (Hindi), and Hindi usage was becoming lost entirely.¹ This situation is particularly critical for Riva because recent educational research indicates that continued cognitive development in L1 enhances L2 academic performance.² For Riva, L1 development was so confused and dislocated that it muted L2 academic development to less than a whimper.

¹J.A. Fishman, *Bilingual Education: An International Sociological Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass.: Newbury House, 1976).

²V.P. Collier, “How long? A Synthesis of Research on Academic Achievement in Second Language,” *TESOL Quarterly* 23: 509-531.

Her teacher decided to institute a “constructivist” approach in the classroom, using more peer group work and having students work constructively on projects. Riva generally did not appreciate mutual collaboration on projects and did not express concern about helping others. For Riva, the constructivist process did *not* involve her collaboration with peers on group work. Nonetheless, she had no difficulty utilizing her peer’s inputs in order to further her own linguistic, cognitive, and academic understanding. She compared this new constructivist technique with a multiple choice test. When four different people explained a problem in four different ways, Riva felt that she had more linguistic choice for understanding. Initially, her motivation was purely instrumental, *i.e.*, getting through class. When linguistic inputs increased as a result of the new constructivist intervention, her motivation became more integrative.¹ Riva now had to “teach” as well as learn and her motivation for linguistic expression became more purposeful.

Theoretical Concepts for Riva’s Language Development

Riva certainly had absorbed concepts of a universal grammar (or innate LAD) as a child,² especially with her multiple language inputs. Even though she experienced frequent family and schooling disruptions, her multiple language acquisition process exhibited the same non-random, selective process as any average L1 acquisition process.³ In a very real way, Riva was able to construct a linguistic awareness and reality for herself that facilitated (albeit with great difficulty) her frequent movement between linguistic milieus.

Researchers have concluded that L2 learners need 5-7 years of L2 input,⁴ coupled with continued L1 cognitive development in order to achieve proficiency in the context-reduced and cognitively demanding environment of academic language.⁵ Proficiency in basic survival/socially-

¹R.C. Gardner and W.E. Lambert, *Attitudes and Motivation in Second Language Learning* (Rowley, Mass: Newbury House, 1972).

²N. Chomsky, “Review of Verbal Behavior by B.F. Skinner,” *Language* 35: 26-58.

³P.M. Lightbown, “Great Expectations: Second Language Acquisition Research and Classroom Teaching,” *Applied Linguistics* 6(2): 173-189.

⁴J. Cummins, “The Role of Primary Language development in Promoting Educational Success for Language Minority Students.” In National Evaluation, Dissemination, and Assessment Center, ed., *Schooling and Language Minority Students: A Theoretical Framework* (Los Angeles: California State University, 1981).

⁵V.P. Collier, “Age and Rate of Acquisition of a Second Language for Academic Purposes,” *TESOL Quarterly* 21: 617-641.

contextualized English (L2) skills can be achieved in 2-3 years.¹ Basic L2 proficiency skills are not highly correlated, however, with the context-reduced language skills required for academic performance.² Given this research information, it is understandable that Riva was having difficulty with the cognitively demanding aspects of school language.

While there were important parallels between Riva's individual language acquisitions, each language acquisition differed in personal characteristics and the conditions under which it was learned.³ Riva was always learning a new language, while processing multiple home languages. She was always learning in both formal and informal settings. The linguistic expectations that school demanded were at odds with Riva's actual linguistic production capabilities. While she was expected to function academically in English (L2), Riva also needed extensive cognitive support in Hindi (L1). Riva did not receive L1 cognitive development from either her home environment or any larger ethnolinguistic support community. The linguistic hopscotch that Riva had to perform daily in an L1 vacuum left her feeling psychologically a "little off center."

There was also a high degree of language mixing from age two through six. In fact, by the age of six, Riva was processing and producing so many different languages—Kannada, Hindi, Hindustani, Konkani, Portuguese, Kiswahili, Indian English, Fijian—that she frequently (according to her mother) could not differentiate the different sounds in the various languages, confused the vocabulary and grammar regularly and was still mixing languages freely by age six. At age twelve, Riva still engaged in prefabricated routines and language chunking when learning new English language concepts.

Unlike studies of bilinguals,⁴ which examined language mixing of simultaneous bilinguals, Riva needed to guess more often at what the

¹J. Cummins, "The Role of Primary Language development in Promoting Educational Success for Language Minority Students." In National Evaluation, Dissemination, and Assessment Center, ed., *Schooling and Language Minority Students: A Theoretical Framework* (Los Angeles: California State University, 1981).

²V.P. Collier and W.P. Thomas, W.P., "How Quickly Can Immigrants Become Proficient in School English?," *Journal of Educational Issues of Language Minority Students* 5: 26-38; M. Gottlieb, "Communicative Language and Academic Proficiencies of Limited English Proficient and Native English-Speaking Elementary School Students." A paper presented at the 1985 meeting of the American Educational Research Association at Chicago (ERIC Document Reproduction Service # ED 260 593); M. Saville-Troike, "What Really Matters in Second Language Learning for Academic Achievement?," *TESOL Quarterly* 18: 199-219.

³J.G. deVilliers, *Language Acquisition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978).

⁴M.N. Vihman and B. McLaughlin, "Bilingualism and second language acquisition in preschool children's progress in cognitive development," In C. Brainerd, ed., *Verbal Processes in Children* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1982); V. Volterra and

interlocutor was saying because the language kept changing and the language message was frequently difficult and confused. Additionally, both these studies dealt with preschool simultaneous bilinguals and Riva was just reaching puberty—maturational constraints on her language production were already beginning to be in place.¹ One of the problems in evaluating Riva's linguistic situation is that very few studies exist that deal with translingual children who function in fractured and dislocated multilingual situations. Riva's story raises questions about how multicultural children with a number of different cultural and linguistic inputs integrate into a specific dominant cultures and languages. One common reaction is, "somehow it will all work out." It is clear that, for some students, it does not "work out." While the ideals of multiculturalism may appear attractive, serious problems that children may have due to multiple cultural and linguistic displacements have been underestimated by linguists, educators, and researchers alike.

Riva's metalinguistic awareness caused her some degree of nervousness,² rather than providing her with what W.F. Leopold would view as a precocious understanding and manipulation of symbols.³ As a result of this obvious nervousness, Riva frequently received modified linguistic input from her teachers in the form of simplified structures (*i.e.*, "teachertalk"). Riva also depended heavily on paralinguistic cues, which she often misinterpreted because of the changing cultural milieus she had experienced as a child. Gestures, body language, and facial expressions which were appropriate to one culture were frequently misunderstood and got her into trouble when she had to function in another culture. Riva's language mixing and interference problems were not just bi-directional,⁴ they were multi-directional!

At the outset of learning a new language, Riva would focus intently on one aspect of learning, *i.e.*, pronunciation, or grammar, or writing, and then tried to transfer each newly-learned operation to the new language structures that she was acquiring so that each new language segment would

T. Taeschner, "The Acquisition and Development of Language by Bilingual Children," *Journal of Child Language* 5: 311-326.

¹M.H. Long, "Maturational Constraints on Language Development," *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 12: 251-285.

²L.S. Vygotsky, *Thought and Language* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).

³W.F. Leopold, "Speech Development of a Bilingual Child: A Linguist's Record, Vocabulary Growth in the First Two Years (Vol. 1-4) (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1939); W.F. Leopold, "The Study of Child Language and Infant Bilingualism," *Word* 4: 1-17.

⁴J.G. deVilliers, *Language Acquisition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978).

become automatic.¹ Riva constructed internal representations of the language patterns she was focusing on and created “mental pictures” of the target language she was functioning in at the moment.² But since her initial L1 was not clearly in place in early childhood, it remained unclear to her which L1 structures she was actually transferring, and since her target language kept changing before learning was complete, it was unclear which target language “mental pictures” she was creating!

According to Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis,³ there are two ways to approach communicative language instruction. A second language learner can *learn* a language either through a conscious pattern of study and attention to linguistic forms in formal classes or can *acquire* a language through a meaningful interaction in an L2 system which is intuitive and leads to natural, fluent communication.

Riva repeatedly tried both methods with minimal success. While she has linguistically become minimally *functional*, she, thus far, has been unable to become fully *expressive*, either in terms of her verbal competency or literacy. She cannot function at grade level in any subject in any language.

This situation may be due to the fact that her frequent moves and linguistic dislocations have not afforded her enough time to stress language forms or learn the rules of language in a predictable, ordered fashion.⁴ Linguistic input has, for Riva, frequently been significantly more complex than Krashen’s Comprehensive Input Hypothesis presupposes (*i.e.*, “slightly beyond” her abilities),⁵ and neither comprehension nor learning has had the opportunity to develop fully.

Just as children need linguistic inputs “slightly beyond” their capabilities, they also need adult guidance in order to develop beyond their current capabilities.⁶ At home, Riva received little interaction with adults. Both her parents and older brother worked evening hours and her sister-in-law rarely spoke to Riva, except to yell at her. (In my interviews with Riva’s family, it was clear that her sister-in-law did *not* like Riva very much and was happiest when she didn’t have to interact with her on any level.)

At school, Riva’s teachers often engaged in a similar shunning behavior since her frequently inappropriate behavior was annoying to them and disrupted classroom routine. When Riva was “behaving,” her flat affect simply made her “invisible” to her teachers. (During the several

¹B. McLaughlin, *Language Acquisition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).

²S. Krashen, *Principals and Practice of Second Language Acquisition* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1982).

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*

months I observed Riva, I rarely saw her positively reinforced by any of her teachers!)

It would seem that, for Riva, there have been sufficient environmental factors—moving, disruptions in language learning and schooling, family stresses, peer interaction problems, serious medical problems, etc.—that have screened out comprehensible language inputs. Riva was frequently stressed, angry, anxious, self-conscious, or bored. In Krashen terms, Riva’s “affective filter” was always up.¹ Since she had not experienced any real academic or social success in any language, she exhibited a very low-level of motivation. Even the “constructivist” classroom intervention instituted by her teacher failed to produce lasting results for Riva.

Crucial components for language acquisition were not consistently present in Riva’s environment. Since she interacted little with her peers in any meaningful way, she had little opportunity to develop a linguistic social process through L2 peer interaction. Even though Riva was in a social setting conducive to natural linguistic interaction, she failed to interact. Her cognitive processes were not strengthened at home and, at school, her intense “affective filter” restricted stimulation of her thinking process.²

Riva expressed little awareness that she even needed to *learn* or *acquire* American English in order to function effectively in the United States.³ She also saw little reason to complete high school, yet maintained that she wanted to be a police officer when she grew up. When her teacher tried to talk to her about the necessity of education in order to obtain this goal, Riva blankly replied, “Then I do something else or go someplace else.” It would seem that generally, for Riva, there was little clearly-defined integrative or instrumental motivation going on.⁴ If one situation wasn’t working out, she would just pick up and move elsewhere.

Riva’s Experience as an “Outsider”

Immigrant children internalize the social and economic inequities that exist within their society and the collective identity of their community group and this awareness significantly affects their approach to school.⁵ Children whose families have not entered the United States of their own volition are viewed as “caste-like minorities” (Mexican Americans, African

¹*Ibid.*

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*

⁴R.C. Gardner and W.E. Lambert, *Attitudes and Motivation in Second Language Learning* (Rowley, Mass: Newbury House, 1972); J. Ogbu, *The Next Generation: An Ethnography of Education in an Urban Neighborhood* (New York: Academic Press, 1974).

⁵*Ibid.*

Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Eritreans, Vietnamese, Hmong, etc.) or “immigrant minorities” (Costa Ricans, Punjabis, Hondurans, Koreans, etc.).¹

Among caste-like minorities both the identity system and the cultural frame of reference are in opposition to those of the dominant group. Caste-like minorities, furthermore, tend to equate school culture with dominant-group culture, so that the cultural frame of the school is also in opposition to that of the minorities. [They] view schooling as a one-way acculturation or assimilation process There is, therefore, the possibility of conscious or unconscious opposition and an “affective dissonance” toward learning in school or “acting White.” The dilemma for . . . [a] caste-like minority student is that he or she has to choose between academic “success in the White way” and being a member of his or her own group.²

Riva did not share a cultural framework with any of the “caste-like” or “immigrant minorities” within her school. While many of these children were able to separate those aspects of the school culture which facilitated academic success, and learned to conform to them in ways considered essential for school success within general white American culture,³ Riva had no such reference point. She had no stable “group” to be a member of.

Within Riva’s school community, there was, quite literally, no one “like her,” no one with whom she could identify; she never experienced any solidarity with the “oppositional cultural frame of reference” experienced by caste-like minorities.⁴

On the surface, Riva does not precisely fit Ogbu’s definition of a “caste-like minority” (*i.e.*, groups incorporated into a society against their will who have been exploited and depreciated through slavery or colonization), but rather, fits the definition of an “immigrant minority,” (*i.e.*, those who choose to leave their original environment, presumingly to enter a more self-advantageous social realm).⁵

On a deeper level, however, I would like to suggest that Riva, as the child of a frequently immigrating diaspora family, more precisely fits Ogbu’s definition of a caste-like minority. She was, in fact, a “caste-like”

¹J. Ogbu, “Variability in Minority Responses to Schooling: Non-immigrants vs. Immigrants,” In George Spindler and Louise Spindler, eds., *Interpretive Ethnography of Education: At Home and Abroad* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1987).

²*Ibid.*, p. 274

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.*

minority within a “caste-like” minority, bereft of effective family interaction, community resources, or any immediate support-community whatsoever. She operated almost constantly in a personal condition of affective dislocation. This situation was mirrored within the minority subculture of affective dislocation in which Riva was a “nested.” This minority subculture was, in turn, operating within the structures of the dominant white school community. Riva was, thus, multiply removed from an understanding of what it took to “make it” in school or the larger society.

For many of Riva’s peers, “homelife” behaviors and languages were reinforced in school texts and special “ethnic” programs. They were able to integrate perspectives of behavior and language appropriate to “school life” because the posture of their home community validated “home life” behaviors and languages. Riva, on the other hand, had no dynamic, interconnected culture on which to rely and so, appeared to be a “cultural dope” to both her ethnolinguistic and dominant-culture peers and teachers.¹ Riva was unable to develop a “cultural repertoire”² of identification since her experiences and existence as *translingual* and *transcultural* left her with no stable community to use as a resource for her development, no validation of her experiences, and no positive acknowledgment of her linguistic or cultural difference.

In a very real sense, the school community failed Riva. She “fell between the cracks” because she was never “bad enough” to warrant social services or counseling intervention. While Riva’s problematic linguistic and academic situations may be attributable to a myriad of broader issues—inter-group relations, socio-economic conditions, family dysfunctionality etc.—her more immediate situation of not having shared patterns of behavior or shared patterns for behavior could have been ameliorated to some extent if some adult had taken the time to introduce her to other translingual/transcultural children that lived outside of her immediate home and school environments.³ In this sense, the larger societies—both ethnolinguistic and language/dominant—perpetrated Riva’s dislocation and alienation. To quote Erickson:

Domination and alienation do not simply happen by anonymous workings of social/structural forces. People do it.⁴

¹Harold Garfinkle, *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967).

²G.P. Guthrie and W.S. Hall, “Culture and the Bilingual Classroom,” In H.T. Trueba, G.P. Guthrie and K.H. Au, eds., *Studies in Classroom Ethnography* (Rowley, Mass: Newbury House, 1981).

³F. Erickson, “Transformation and School Success: The Politics and Culture of Educational Achievement,” *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 18(14): 335-356.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 352.

In Riva's case, "people did it."

“India is America’s Business:”¹ Britain, the United States, and India 1942-43

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The United States was increasingly involved in Indo-British affairs during 1942-43. This paper examines American diplomatic missions by Louis Johnson and William Phillips to British India during these years through oculus of British and U.S. documents. It argues that the shifting status of the British-American relationship, with respect to Indian issues, was primarily driven by the greater needs of Allied forces during the global conflicts of World War II.

After the Japanese invasion of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill got what he had been hoping for: the United States officially entered World War II on the side of the Allies. However, this alliance was accompanied by increased American interest in the status of Britain’s Empire, particularly India. This region, which the United States had neglected for so long, suddenly became extremely important as the main barrier between Japanese troops in the East and German forces in the West. While Britain welcomed American participation in the war effort, it adamantly opposed American intervention in what it saw as the internal affairs of the British Empire, and it only tolerated the American presence in India in order to maintain the alliance. The United States saw Indian independence as an important goal, but its efforts were limited by the need to maintain British goodwill. Beneath the facade of solidarity that Britain and the United States presented to the world lay an underlying conflict over the future of India.

During the years 1942-1943, when American interests in India were represented by two Personal Representatives of the President, Louis Johnson and William Phillips, the need to maintain a united front and to promote the interests of the war shaped the policies of both Britain and the United States. Britain needed the support of its American ally in the war

¹ Wendell Willkie, quoted in M.S. Venkataramani and B.K. Shrivastava, *Quit India: The American Response to the 1942 Struggle* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1979), p. 307.

effort. The United States had to put aside its idealistic goals of Indian independence in order to further the greater goal of winning the war and maintaining solidarity with Britain. World War II and the demands of Allied unity proved to be the decisive factors in relations between Britain and the United States over the question of India.

By the beginning of World War II, Britain had grudgingly realized that it would eventually have to offer India independence and dominion status. Viceroy Linlithgow presented the "August offer" on August 8, 1940, which made the vague promise that: "His Majesty's Government would readily assent to the setting up, after the conclusion of the war, with the least possible delay, of a body representative of the principal elements in India's national life, in order to devise the framework of the new constitution."¹ The British government insisted that this independence must wait until after the war, as it felt that making major changes during such a time of upheaval would only lead to anarchy and threaten the war effort. This stance alienated the Indian National Congress, which demanded immediate independence.

When the United States entered World War II on the side of the Allies, it also became a central player in the India issue, much to Britain's dismay. Members of the National Congress felt that they had strong support from the United States, and they idealistically looked to America as a friend to democracy. As Nehru wrote in an April 1940 article in "Atlantic:" "India is far from America . . . but more and more our thoughts go to this great democratic country, which seems almost alone to keep the torch of democratic freedom alight."² While there were some Americans who supported the movement for Indian independence on principle, for the most part the country was ignorant of Indian issues, and it had its own prejudices, as demonstrated by the strict laws against Indian immigration.³ However, the war made India an important factor in the Allies' plans due to its strategic location between the armies of the two main Axis powers. As Viceroy Linlithgow explained to Churchill: "we must have anxious regard for the continuing soundness of the Indian Army which alone stands between the Japanese and their ultimate objective which must be a union, military and economic, with the German Army on the Persian Gulf."⁴

India had the potential to become a major resource for the war effort, due to its location and large population, but American officials were concerned that the people's general apathy towards the war effort would

¹Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 26.

²*Ibid.*, p. 26.

³Gary R. Hess, *America Encounters India, 1942-1947* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), p. 7.

⁴Linlithgow to Churchill, 2/14/42 in Nicholas Mansergh, E.W.R. Lumby, eds., *The Transfer of Power, 1942-7, Vol. 1* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1971), doc. 124. All future references to *Transfer of Power* documents will be cited as follows: sender and recipient, date, TP: volume, document number.

hamper any attempt to mobilize them. The Indians had little incentive to fight, as they would only be fighting to perpetuate the rule of the British. President Roosevelt expressed his concern over this situation to Ambassador Winant: "From all I can gather the British defense will not have sufficiently enthusiastic support from the people of India themselves."¹ After his visit to India, Chinese General Chiang Kai-Shek expressed similar concerns in a telegram forwarded to President Roosevelt: "If the Japanese should know of the real situation and attack India, they would be virtually unopposed."² The United States generally supported the idea of granting India independence during the war because it was in the Allies' strategic interests. An independent country would be more likely to feel that it had something worth fighting for, as the United States Foreign Relations Committee explained in a meeting with Assistant Secretary of State Breckinridge Long: "The only way to get the people of India to fight was to get them to fight for India."³ The Senators on this committee felt justified in demanding that Britain listen to their request, because the United States had given so much assistance to the British war effort through Lend-Lease agreements and later through direct involvement.⁴

Regardless of how justified the United States might have felt in asking Britain to consider granting independence to India for the sake of the war, all early efforts in this direction were quickly rejected. Churchill wrote in his memoirs that when Roosevelt broached the topic in their 1941 meeting in Washington: "I reacted so strongly and at such length that he *never raised it verbally again*."⁵ Britain desperately needed the cooperation of the United States in the war effort, but it was unwilling to budge on the underlying issue of Indian independence. Instead, it adopted a general policy of making small concessions to American demands, such as recognizing American officials in India, and by launching a major propaganda campaign in the United States.

An examination of British correspondence regarding India during the years 1942-43 reveals that Britain was increasingly obsessed with the need to maintain a positive image in the eyes of the American public but also to prevent the United States government from getting actively involved in the debate over India's future. These goals become clear through the British response to Chiang Kai-shek's visit to India in 1942 to discuss security issues. Numerous telegrams flew back and forth between Britain

¹Welles to Winant, 2/25/42, in *Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1942, Vol. 1*, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960), 604. All future references to these documents will be as follows: sender and recipient, date, FR: year and volume, page.

²Soong to Roosevelt, 2/25/42, FR: 1942 volume 1, p. 605.

³Long to Welles, 2/25/42, FR: 1942 volume 1, p. 606.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵Venkataramani and Shrivastava, *Quit India*, p. 48.

and India over the question of who should be allowed to visit, and how he should be received, all with the intent of providing a favorable picture of India to the rest of the world, particularly to Chiang Kai-shek's close ally, the United States. The Chinese General's concerns over the status of India, as quoted above, worried British leaders and resulted in their attempting to counteract his influence in the United States. Secretary of State for India Leopold Amery expressed these concerns to Viceroy Linlithgow: "The fear of breakdown of Indian morale is being worked to death by the American press as argument for the grant of Indian independence without delay I suggest that something be done to check these alarmist fantasies at the source."¹ Britain attempted to do this by sending eloquent spokesmen to the United States to argue on behalf of the empire in lecture tours and by controlling press releases and propaganda.

President Roosevelt proceeded with caution when dealing with Indian issues. After Churchill's abrupt response when he brought the issue up during their meeting in Washington, Roosevelt resorted to less direct means of expression. In February 1942 he wrote to the American Ambassador to the United Kingdom, John Winant, asking him to try and find out what Churchill thought about the state of relations between India and Britain. He added: "I hesitate to send him a direct message because, in a strict sense, it is not our business."² Later on he did bring up the India issue again with Churchill, but he adopted a cautious tone to avoid insulting his close ally. He wrote: "I have felt much diffidence in making any suggestions, and it is a subject which, of course, all of you good people know far more about than I do."³ He continued by offering the historical example of the original American states under the Articles of Confederation as a possible means of solving the difficulty of arranging for India's independence. He concluded by writing: "I hope that whatever you do the move will be made from London and that there should be no criticism in India that it is being made grudgingly or by compulsion It is, strictly speaking, none of my business, except insofar as it is a part and parcel of the successful fight that you and I are making."⁴ While the superficial tone of the letter is quite deferential and friendly, underneath it is the message that the United States is concerned about the situation in India and sees it as a priority in the war effort.

America's diplomatic presence in India had traditionally been small and unimportant. Thomas M. Wilson had been serving as U.S. Consul General to India since 1941 but he had little power and the Viceroy ignored

¹Amery to Linlithgow, 3/8/42, TP: volume 1, p. 280.

²Welles to Winant, 2/25/42, FR: 1942 volume 1, p. 604.

³Roosevelt to Churchill, 3/11/42, TP: volume 1, p. 311.

⁴*Ibid.*

his presence for the most part.¹ However, the demands of war forced Britain to give the United States a larger role in Indian issues. After the fall of Singapore to the Japanese on February 15, 1942, India took on a new importance to the Allies. The subcontinent was the main obstacle left that was preventing the Japanese from joining with the Germans in the Middle East, and it was imperative to the Allied effort that India should not fall. Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai, the Agent General for India in the United States, approached numerous state department employees about the possibility of sending an American mission to India for the purpose of examining India's wartime production system and offering suggestions on how to increase output so that it would be better prepared for a possible invasion.² Both the British and American governments agreed that this could be a useful mission, and so the American Technical Mission was organized under the leadership of Colonel Louis A. Johnson, a former Assistant Secretary of War.

The purpose of the American Technical Mission was "to make recommendations after investigation concerning ways and means by which the United States Government could assist in augmenting India's war production."³ In a letter to Viceroy Linlithgow, Roosevelt explained that Johnson had been chosen to head this mission because he "had broad experience with problems relating to military supply" while serving as Assistant Secretary of War.⁴ While the purpose of the mission seemed clear, Johnson's role was not. After he objected to the title of "Commissioner" due to this term's negative connotations in the American South, the United States government called him "Personal Representative" of the President. This led to confusion as to what his new title entailed. The British insisted that the American mission must not interfere with Indian affairs, and the United States agreed to this, but popular opinion in India assumed that the title of "Personal Representative" meant that the United States Government was going to take an active part in Indian negotiations. The situation was further confused by the fact that Johnson did not know himself what his role was to be, as is evident in a conversation that Assistant Secretary of State G. Howland Shaw had with him before his departure for India:

I told him that I understood he would assume his duties as Special Representative at New Delhi immediately upon his arrival and that this would take precedence over his work as Chairman of the Mission. He said this was the first precise information he had had on this point. He asked me whether

¹Venkataramani and Shrivastava, *Quit India*, Pp. 49-50.

²Alling-Memorandum, 1/23/42, FR: 1942 volume 1, 595-597 and Berle-Memorandum, 1/28/42, FR: volume 1, Pp. 597-598.

³Donovan to Secretary of State, 5/20/42, FR: 1942 volume 1, Pp. 654-656.

⁴Roosevelt to Linlithgow, 3/19/42, TP: volume 1, p. 350.

I thought he could do much with the Nationalists in India. I said I thought that in view of the present situation in India he probably could but that it must be done with the utmost care.¹

This statement reveals the American ambiguity as to what the role of the mission would be in India and the confusion over Johnson's role. Unfortunately, Johnson took advantage of the vagueness of his mission and used it to interfere in Indian affairs, which offended the British and created more tensions in British-American relations.

Johnson arrived in India at one of the most crucial points in the history of British-Indian relations. His visit coincided with that of Sir Stafford Cripps, who was sent by the British government to present a plan on the future of India. Due to India's increasing strategic importance, the British realized that they needed to get the country mobilized for the war effort. Cripps' proposal, which promised independence after the war and increased Indian participation in the government, was meant to rally the Indians to the side of the Allies. However, the Indian National Congress rejected this offer because it did not give independence until after the war, and it limited Indian participation in the defense effort. While Johnson was not officially charged with acting as a mediator in this dispute, he tried to take on this role and met with Indian leaders in an attempt to rally support for Cripps' proposal. He met often with Congress leaders, particularly Nehru, and urged them to accept Cripps' offer and the war effort. In a report of his conversation with Nehru, Johnson explained that he had told the Indian leader that:

If he himself were associated with the Peace Conference he would do his best to see that an India which had wholeheartedly backed the war effort obtained America's fullest support in attaining her ambitions. But the matter would be far otherwise, if at that time the American people felt that American blood had been spilt unnecessarily and the war prolonged by dhilly-dhallying.²

In Johnson's eyes, American support for the Indian independence movement rested on the level of Indian support for the war movement.

Johnson saw himself as having a vital role in the ongoing negotiations between the Congress and the British. In a report to Washington he wrote: "At the request of Cripps and Nehru, both absolutely on their own initiative, I have been acting as go-between since last Sunday. Sir Stafford indicates this morning as did Nehru yesterday that the fact that they have not already failed has been due to the efforts of

¹Shaw-Memorandum, 3/11/42, FR: 1942 volume 1, p. 617.

²Pinnell to Turnbull, 4/6/42, TP: volume 1, p. 540.

your personal representative”¹ However, the British leaders in India did not appreciate this interference. Viceroy Linlithgow was particularly disgusted by Johnson’s involvement because he felt that it gave the Indians the impression that the United States was planning on supporting their demands for independence. Johnson did not help the situation when he presented a revised plan to Congress without first consulting the Viceroy. Linlithgow wrote: “The fact that Johnson had shown it to them made the position all the worse, given the U.S.A. position in the business. If I were now to differ from the draft, my position might well be rendered intolerable, as I ran the risk of being held up to the U.S.A. as the obstacle to a settlement.”² He was also concerned that Johnson’s views might influence Roosevelt and general American opinion and turn them against the British.³ However, Harry Hopkins, Special Assistant to the President, reassured Churchill that Johnson was acting on his own and that Roosevelt did not intend for him to get involved in internal affairs. Churchill passed this message on to Cripps: “Colonel Johnson is not President Roosevelt’s personal representative in any matter outside the specific mission dealing with Indian munitions and kindred topics on which he was sent.”⁴ Hopkins’ discussion with Churchill discredited Johnson and reassured the British that the United States had no intentions of getting involved in Indian politics.

Johnson returned to the United States in May 1942 due to illness, and much to the relief of the British, he did not go back to India. The American mission ended, and the Cripps Mission was a failure, but Johnson’s visit had a long-lasting effect on US-British relations. While Johnson may have had practical experience with supplies that could have benefited the British, his personality and his lack of diplomacy ruined any chance that he may have had to be of use. Indian historian M.S.Venkataramani describes Johnson as “a flamboyant, back-slapping extrovert” who “frankly confessed that this entire acquaintance with India had been confined to Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* and G.A. Henty’s *With Clive in India*.”⁵ Johnson’s interference and his inexperience with Indian affairs only confirmed the British view that Americans were generally ignorant of matters concerning India and wanted to get actively involved in the debate over India’s future. As Linlithgow later wrote to Churchill: “My experience of peripatetic Americans which is now extensive is that their zeal in teaching us our business is in inverse ratio to their understanding of even the most elementary of the problems with which we

¹Johnson to Secretary of State, 4/7/42, FR: 1942 volume 1, 628-29.

²Linlithgow-Note, 4/8/42, TP: volume 1, p. 553.

³Linlithgow to Amery, 5/27/42, TP: volume 2, p. 91.

⁴Churchill to Cripps, 4/9/42, TP: volume 1, p. 564.

⁵Venkataramani and Shrivastava, *Quit India*, p. 104.

have to deal.”¹ Johnson made the mistake of interfering in British affairs and aligning himself too closely with the Indian Congress, particularly Nehru, which alienated him from the British government. The 1942 correspondence between Viceroy Linlithgow and Mr. Amery shows that the British had absolutely no intention of allowing Johnson or any other American to interfere with India. They accepted America’s military presence and the technical mission as necessary parts of the war effort, but they drew the line at direct American involvement in Indian politics. Thus, Johnson’s visit to India made the British cautious about allowing further American representation in India, and made them even more adamant about insisting that these representatives must not interfere with Indian politics.

Although Cripps’ mission was a failure with the Indian Congress, it did succeed in turning American opinion in favor of the British for a short while. The majority of the American press condemned the Congress for rejecting the proposal, and praised the British for their attempt at solving the conflict.² This change in public sentiment allowed Roosevelt to focus on other issues and leave the question of India to the British for the moment. India’s worth to the Americans rested on its military value, and during the summer of 1942 the United States government believed that its interests were best served by allowing the British to keep control. President Roosevelt expressed these views to Johnson, who was frantically trying to salvage the Cripps mission in May 1942:

The position in India today is largely military. Therefore any proposal for settlement has to be weighed from the viewpoint whether if successful, it would aid the military effort to an important extent and whether, if unsuccessful, it is likely to hamper that effort An unsuccessful attempt to solve the problem along the lines which you suggest would, if we are to judge by the results of the Cripps mission, further alienate the Indian leaders and parties from the British and possibly cause disturbances among the various communities. On balance, therefore, I incline to the view that at the present moment the risks involved in an unsuccessful effort to solve the problem outweigh the advantages that might be obtained if a satisfactory solution could be found.³

For the moment, American interests were served by preserving the status quo in India, and the press’ support for Britain allowed the government to step back from the India issue without inspiring a public reaction.

¹Linlithgow to Churchill, 8/31/42, TP: volume 2, p. 662.

²Venkataramani and Shrivastava, *Quit India*, Pp. 131-3.

³Hull to Johnson, 5/8/42, FR: 1942 volume 1 ,p. 650.

While the Cripps mission may have temporarily quieted the Americans, it certainly did not appease the Indian Congress. In April 1942 Gandhi formulated his "Quit India" campaign, which demanded that the British leave India or face massive civil disobedience. Gandhi explained his views in a letter to Chiang Kai-shek: "Our proffered help has repeatedly been rejected by the British Government and the recent failure of the Cripps Mission has left a deep wound which is still running. Out of that anguish has come the cry for immediate withdrawal of British power so that India can look after herself."¹ The Working Committee adopted Gandhi's proposal on July 14 and agreed to submit it to the All-India Congress Committee for a vote at their next meeting, scheduled for August 7, 1942.

The British government responded to these resolutions by deciding ahead of time to arrest the leaders of the Congress in the hopes of "nipping in the bud a movement which, if allowed to develop, would undoubtedly be a cause of the gravest embarrassment to the conduct of the war in India."² British Deputy Prime Minister Clement Attlee informed Roosevelt of the government's decision prior to the Congress' vote, and explained that it was necessary for Britain to take this action to protect the war effort.³ The British followed through with their plan, and the arrest of the Congress leaders resulted in mass rioting, which Viceroy Linlithgow described as "by far the most serious rebellion since that of 1857."⁴

The American response to this serious situation reveals the extent to which Roosevelt supported Churchill and based his policies upon the immediate needs of the war effort. In response to Chiang Kai-shek's suggestion that China and the United States intervene in India, Roosevelt wrote that he was very interested in promoting independence, but he did not think that they should intervene unless invited: "I think that you and I can best serve the people of India at this stage by making no open or public appeal or pronouncement but by letting the simple fact be known that we stand ready as friends to heed any appeal for help if that appeal comes from both sides."⁵ This policy of strict non-interference is also evident in a Department of State press release, which stated that the American forces in India were only there to fight the Axis powers, and that they would not intervene in India's internal situation.⁶ The government's reasoning for this policy was that its primary concern was the war effort and defense, and it would not get involved in any situation that might threaten this goal. Assistant Secretary of State Adolf Berle clearly presented this policy in his

¹Merrell to Secretary of State, 6/21/42, FR: 1942 volume 1, p. 675.

²War Cabinet Paper, 8/5/42, TP: volume 2, p. 422.

³British Embassy to Department of State, 8/7/42, FR: 1942 volume 1, Pp. 703-5.

⁴Linlithgow to Churchill, 8/31/42, TP: volume 2, p. 662.

⁵Roosevelt to Chiang Kai-shek, 8/12/42, FR: 1942 volume 1, p. 716.

⁶Press Release by Department of State, 8/12/42, FR: 1942 volume 1, Pp. 720-21.

discussion with a member of the India Supply Mission: "I added that our national doctrines here were in favor of independence . . . but that if it were a question as between defense and independence for India, we should of course choose defense. Without defense there would be no independence for India or anyone else."¹

In addition to the reasons mentioned above, United States policy was dictated by the larger considerations of the war effort outside of India. During the spring and summer of 1942, the Axis forces were challenging the Allied war effort in North Africa, while Churchill was facing political opposition at home. As Venkataramani explains: "At such a time of personal crisis for his admired comrade and of military crisis for the Allied Nations, Roosevelt was in no mood to countenance any suggestion that the United States should exercise some pressure on Britain over the India issue."² Unity among the Allies was of paramount importance, and all other concerns were secondary.

In the midst of these hard times, Roosevelt was increasingly pressured by the American press to respond to the British suppression of the Quit India movement. This same press, which had earlier supported the British efforts at reconciliation through the Cripps mission and condemned the Indian Congress, was now in favor of American intervention due to the violence that had erupted. The British were well aware of this change in public opinion. The British ambassador to the United States, Viscount Halifax, expressed these concerns in a note to the Foreign Secretary Mr. Eden: "The Cabinet should realise how strongly public opinion is moving on these lines and I hope it may be possible to say or do something to counteract it. Otherwise I fear [the] American press, which on the whole has stood by us remarkably well in recent Indian crisis, will rapidly and perhaps completely change its attitude."³ In the same document Halifax also mentioned that Harry Hopkins spoke with him about the pressure that Roosevelt was under to intervene in Indian affairs. The British responded to the changing attitude of the American press by suggesting that the United States should send a new representative over to India. Eden suggested that the presence of a high-ranking American in India could provide a more favorable view of the British position to the President, since "I am very doubtful whether we can expect to get the results we want unless the tale is told to the President and to America by an American."⁴

While the benefits of such a representative were obvious, the British government was also concerned that the presence of an American official would lead the United States and the rest of the world to expect him to intervene in Indian affairs. The British had learned from their experience

¹Berle-Memorandum, 8/18/42, FR: 1942 volume 1, p. 724.

²Venkataramani and Shrivastava, *Quit India*, p. 191.

³Halifax to Eden, 9/16/42, TP: volume 2, p. 749.

⁴Eden to Amery, 8/22/42, TP: volume 2, p. 610.

with Louis Johnson, and they were determined not to make the same mistake twice. In defining the role of the representative Eden wrote: "Their main duty as we conceive it would be to observe and interpret, and we would not like appointment to go through under any impression that a Legation or an Embassy could be set up in India."¹ He also sent Halifax a "wish list" of the qualifications that the British government would ideally like to see in the new representative: "We would welcome someone of substance who is an experienced observer, who has the confidence of his Government and who is ready to tour as much as possible in order to enlarge his contacts."²

Roosevelt chose William Phillips to fill this delicate diplomatic post. Phillips was an experienced and respected diplomat, who had formerly served as Ambassador to Italy. He was the complete opposite of Louis Johnson with respect to personality, experience, and his approach to Indian issues, as Joseph C. Harsch noted in the "Christian Science Monitor:" "If Colonel Johnson was the bludgeon approach to the Indian problem, Mr. Phillips is the velvet glove approach."³ Phillips was the perfect man for this formidable mission, and his appointment was approved of by both the Americans and the British.

Despite widespread approval of Phillips' appointment, it nevertheless inspired a heated debate over his title and his actual role. The British were not going to accept the new representative until the United States had clearly stated his title and responsibilities. They wanted him to have the title of Commissioner rather than Personal Representative, as Eden explained to Halifax: "If there is any doubt about this please explain to United States Government that in view of India's experience of what happened in the case of Louis Johnson, Phillips' description as President's Personal Representative would greatly increase danger of belief arising in India that he has a mission of mediation."⁴ Phillips' illustrious career and high position demanded a more respectful title, but the British, particularly Linlithgow, were concerned that addressing Phillips as "Ambassador" would imply that the United States was taking an active role in Indian affairs. The two governments finally agreed that Phillips would have the title of "Personal representative of the President with personal rank of Ambassador."⁵

While the exact wording of Phillips' title may seem like a trivial matter, it was actually seen by both sides as an extremely important issue, due to what it implied about his role in Indian affairs. A large number of documents were sent back and forth between India, Britain, and the United

¹Eden to Halifax, 10/10/42, TP: volume 3, p. 85.

²Eden to Halifax, 9/28/42, TP: volume 3, p. 42.

³Roosevelt quoted in Venkataramani and Shrivastava, *Quit India*, p. 65.

⁴Eden to Halifax, 11/20/42, TP: volume 3, p. 202.

⁵Halifax to Eden, 12/03/42, TP: volume 3, p. 240.

States over this issue, and Linlithgow identified it as a “point of real importance.”¹ Amery sought to reassure the Viceroy by writing: “Rank of Ambassador would be personal and would not mean that Commissioner’s post becomes an Embassy even temporarily. . . . This should I hope ease [the] embarrassment which you contemplate.”² The debate that developed over this issue illustrates the extent of Britain’s fear that an American representative would interfere in India, and the delicacy of Phillips’ position.

Phillips was in London working for the Office of Strategic Services when he received the letter asking him to serve as Roosevelt’s representative in India. After accepting the post, he spent two more months in London meeting with various officials, including Churchill and Cripps, in an attempt to get a grasp of the situation before his departure. He also received instructions from Secretary of State Hull concerning his upcoming mission and Roosevelt’s expectations. Hull stated that the U.S. government supported independence for India as soon as it was practical, but that it was most concerned with maintaining good relations with both sides in the interest of the war effort: “The President and I have not become partisans of either Great Britain or India in the existing exigencies . . . objectionable pressure upon either side would probably result in no progress but only in exasperation and, in the case of the British, a possible disturbance of the unity of command and of cooperation both during and following the war.”³ Phillips was encouraged to engage both sides in a discussion of a possible settlement, but Hull strongly stated that he was not to take these discussions to the point where either side would accuse the United States of intervening.⁴ Just like the British, the Americans learned from the experience of Louis Johnson, and they were determined not to repeat their mistakes.

Phillips’ initial contacts with the British were quite successful, and reveal his skill as a diplomat. Even Viceroy Linlithgow, who had been the most hesitant of the British officials to allow a new American representative come to India, gave Phillips a glowing review: “He could not have had a better press, and it is impossible to imagine a greater contrast to Johnson. He has admirable manners, is most friendly, and seems to me better really than anything we could reasonably have hoped for.”⁵ Phillips proceeded with the caution that the situation required in setting himself up in India: “As I see it, my job is first to secure, if possible, respect and confidence, not merely among those at the top, but as far down the line as I can go. Probably it would be wise to keep as far removed as possible from political

¹Linlithgow to Amery, 11/25/42, TP: volume 3, p. 214.

²Amery to Linlithgow, 11/28/42, TP: volume 3, p. 227.

³Hull to Winant, 11/20/42, FR: 1942 volume 1, p. 747.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 748.

⁵Linlithgow to Amery, 1/11/43, TP: volume 3, p. 336.

subjects until I have achieved some success in gaining confidence.”¹ Phillips implemented this strategy by receiving Indian and British leaders representing all points of view, and going on numerous trips throughout India in an attempt to get a well-rounded picture of the Indian situation. The Viceroy encouraged these visits as a way for Phillips to see firsthand how difficult the situation in India really was.² Phillips did indeed soon become familiar with “the terrific problems which face this country,” but much to the chagrin of the British, he did not place all of the blame on the Indians. Rather, he commented that while in London he had the impression that Britain was truly prepared to grant independence to India, but in India the British civil servants held the opposite view: “The British whom I have met seem unaware of the changing attitude in England and cannot really envisage a free India fit to govern itself.”³

Although relations between Phillips and Linlithgow started out well, they soon became choppy over the issue of Gandhi. Phillips’ mission corresponded with Gandhi’s 1943 fast, a crucial episode in British-Indian relations. As stated above, Phillips set out to meet with all sides of the conflict, but he soon found that he was unable to meet with Gandhi, a key figure in the Indian Congress. On February 8, 1943, Phillips asked the Viceroy for permission to see Gandhi, and his request was promptly denied: “I would tell him at once in the politest but most definite language that the answer to his request was No.”⁴ Linlithgow then informed Phillips that Gandhi was preparing to begin a fast. While this response temporarily sealed the issue, it was not the end of the issue for Phillips.

When it became evident that Britain would stand firm in opposition to Gandhi’s demands, Indian public opinion looked towards the United States for support. Phillips, as the American representative in India, became the focus of questions concerning America’s role. However, at the beginning of his mission Phillips had been warned not to intervene in Indian affairs. He wrote that: “When it became evident, as it soon did, that I could not intervene without instructions and that the President would not intervene with Churchill, American stock in India fell rapidly.”⁵ Phillips also had to deal with the frustrated American press, which faced “severe censorship” from the Indian government.⁶ Phillips expressed his frustration at not being able to act in a letter to Roosevelt: “I feel acutely the fact that public attention is centered upon me in the hope and even expectation that I can do something constructive, and yet here I am, quite

¹Phillips to Secretary of State, 12/19/42, FR: 1943 volume 4, p. 179.

²Linlithgow to Glancy, 1/27/43, TP: volume 3, p. 364.

³Phillips to Roosevelt, 1/22/43, FR: 1943 volume 4, Pp. 180-183.

⁴Linlithgow to Amery, 2/11/43, TP: volume 3, p. 455.

⁵William Phillips, *Ventures in Diplomacy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1952), p. 363.

⁶Phillips to Secretary of State, 2/13/43, FR: 1943 volume 4, p. 192.

unable to do anything but listen to appeals, realizing as I do the importance of not prejudicing my position with the British authorities."¹ The American government finally listened to Phillips' demands and gave him permission to express American concerns over Gandhi's fast to the Viceroy.² Secretary of State Hull also relieved the pressure that Phillips was experiencing by telling him to tell those who demanded action by the U.S. that such decisions were being made by government officials at home, and not by the representative in India.³

In mid-February Phillips received a message from Hull requesting that he return to the United States in late April.⁴ As his departure date approached, Phillips decided that he would ask the Viceroy again if he could visit Gandhi. As he explained to Roosevelt: "If the record shows that I have never made a serious effort to obtain the views of the Congress Party from Gandhi, then indeed my future usefulness here is at an end. For it would be assumed that I have not been interested in the picture as a whole and have been satisfied to give my Government a one-sided and incomplete report of the situation."⁵ Phillips also requested permission to tell the Viceroy that the Department of State would like for this visit to be approved, but the government denied this request. This was a bitter disappointment to Phillips, but he proceeded to bring the matter up with the Viceroy.⁶ Linlithgow refused to allow the visit, but he did give Phillips permission to state at a press conference that he had asked to visit Gandhi and been denied by the Indian government. Such a statement would allow him to publicize his intentions and his efforts to arrange a meeting with Gandhi and prevent Indian opinion from accusing him of being one-sided in his investigation. Phillips' experiences in India with Gandhi's fast further illustrate both Britain's determination to maintain control of India and prevent the Americans from interfering, and the United States government's unwillingness to challenge the British position. Phillips was an able diplomat, yet his ability to be of real use in India was hindered because he did not receive the strong support of his government, as the above examples show.

During his trip to India, Phillips came to the conclusion that the United States should be involved in Indian affairs. He observed the lack of Indian enthusiasm for the war effort, and the British refusal to budge on Indian policy. He strongly felt that Britain had a responsibility to try to come to an agreement with the Indians: "Even though the British should fail again it is high time that they should make a new effort to improve

¹Phillips to Roosevelt, 2/11/43, FR: 1943 volume 4, p. 191.

²Hull to Phillips, 2/17/43, FR: 1943 volume 4, p. 195.

³Hull to Phillips, 2/20/43, FR: 1943 volume 4, p. 199.

⁴Hull to Phillips, 2/16/43, FR: 1943 volume 4, p. 194.

⁵Phillips to Roosevelt, 4/19/43, FR: 1943 volume 4, p. 219.

⁶Phillips, *Ventures in Diplomacy*, p. 381.

conditions and to reestablish confidence among the Indian people that their future independence is to be granted.”¹ He urged Roosevelt to get involved in India because “in view of our military position in India we should have a voice in these matters. It is not right for the British to say ‘this is none of your business’ when we alone presumably will have the major part to play in the future struggle with Japan.”² Phillips used the necessities of the war effort as the rationale for American intervention, while Roosevelt used this argument to justify non-intervention in India. This was an incredibly radical position for Phillips, who was considered to be a strong supporter of British policy. However, his experiences in India convinced him that a settlement was necessary and that the British were not going to offer one of their own free will.

Phillips never returned to India, but he retained the title of “Personal Representative” until 1945. He told Roosevelt that he did not want to go back to India until there was a change in British policy and the possibility that an agreement might be reached: “I told him that in my opinion I should not return to Delhi unless the existing political deadlock was broken, that is unless there was a change of policy on the part of the British.”³ After Phillips’ departure, the India issue lost its immediacy for the US Government. Britain had managed to reign in the National Congress by arresting its leaders and quieting the Indian press, leaving “a sullen silence” in India.⁴ The United States’ interest in India had always centered on the war effort, and once Britain proved that it could keep the subcontinent under control, the Americans were content to focus on more pressing affairs.

In examining American involvement in Indian affairs, Venkataramani writes: “A country’s attitude towards a foreign issue not perceived as affecting its basic interests may . . . undergo modification only incrementally. Drastic changes may take place only in extraordinary circumstances when the country’s own interests are seen to be involved in a time of crisis . . . considerations of immediate national interest assume crucial importance.”⁵ America’s involvement in India and its relations with Britain closely follow these general observations. From the beginning American interest was dependent upon the war effort, and its policy was determined by whatever action promised to be most fruitful in furthering this end. When the threat of a Japanese invasion was most urgent, the United States supported Indian independence, but when the greater needs

¹Phillips to Roosevelt, 5/14/43, FR: 1943 volume 4, p. 221.

²*Ibid.*, p. 222.

³Phillips, *Ventures in Diplomacy*, p. 391.

⁴H. W. Brands, *India and the United States: The Cold Peace* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990), 24.

⁵ M.S. Venkataramani and B.K. Shrivastava, *Roosevelt Gandhi Churchill* (India: Radiant Publishers, 1983), Pp. x-xi.

of the war demanded Allied unity, the country quietly gave in to British pressure. These considerations affected the missions of both American representatives to India, and both failed to achieve any change in the Indian situation because their government was more concerned with the demands and needs of the war. In the end, the American ideal of independence had to be sacrificed for what it saw as self-preservation.

Book Reviews

The Career and Legend of Vasco da Gama, Sanjay Subrahmanyam. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997. Pp. 400.

Sanjay Subrahmanyam, an economic historian who wears many hats, has taken a detour from his usual course of faithfully producing volumes on early modern Indian Ocean mercantile history. This new course is not so much a detour, but a fresh approach: an attempt to bring his area and time period of expertise—in all of its intricacies—to life through the genre of historical biography. Vasco da Gama (?1469-1524), the great argonaut and national hero of Portugal, is the subject of Subrahmanyam's innovative attempt at something like "total biography." This biography is an apt choice for review in light of this May's marking the quincentennial of Gama's completion of the first European sea voyage to India.

Subrahmanyam side-steps prevalent theoretical debates on the legitimacy of biography as history by admitting his work is "as much about the environment of Vasco da Gama as it is about the man himself" (p. 22). This said, he plunges into the formidable task of recreating the historical contexts in which Gama lived and "discovered." Subrahmanyam, as is his forte, weaves together descriptions from contemporary material in a staggering number of European languages, from non-European sources (*i.e.*, Arabic and Persian, and generally working from translations), and from a growing body of secondary literature on the time period. This strategy provides a foundational picture of the economic and political contexts (and to a lesser extent the social and cultural milieu) wrought by Gama's (in)famous 1497-9 voyage to India.

Subrahmanyam first addresses the Portugal of the Infante Don Henrique (Prince Henry the Navigator) into which Gama was born. On a wave of anti-Islamic Christian rhetoric accompanying Iberia's reconquest—under Papal sponsorship—from the Moors, Portugal engaged in military and economic expansion in West Africa and the Atlantic region. Between conflicting attitudes regarding maritime expansion, a lingering crusader mentality, a hope of discovering Christian allies south of Morocco, fears of long sea journeys, and attempts to consolidate the lands of *Lusitania* we find Vasco da Gama. Gama was a petty noble and a member of the military Order of Santiago. Both these groups were deeply enmeshed in both Portugal's reconquest and its religio-military maritime expansion. The complexity and turbulence of early modern Portugal (a nation with absolutist tendencies, as well as conflicting attitudes towards expansion and moves toward centralization by royalty) is captured by Subrahmanyam in the figure of Vasco da Gama: a curious man to continue the enterprise of discovery (nobles had previously not been mariners), but

nonetheless the choice of Gama reflects a Portuguese regime torn by conflicting interests.

Gama's first Indian voyage provides the narrative (drawn from the manuscript of an anonymous sailor and supplemented by later chronicles) that Subrahmanyam augments with analyses of the economic, political and social systems prevalent in the Indian Ocean at the end of the fifteenth century. Key to this narrative is the Portuguese belief in a quest for the discovery of eastern Christians (led by the elusive figure of Prester John) who might be made allies against the *Moors*, or Muslims. During this first voyage we find a fixation on seeking co-religionists (interestingly defined as all people not obviously Muslim) that surfaced during the stops in East Africa. It was full blown by the time Gama reached India. This fixation is reflected in Portuguese attempts to force the Samudri Raja of Calicut (the Hindu ruler of a southwestern Indian mercantile empire) to exclude the "white Moors," or Arab Muslims, from the region's flourishing spice trade.

Subrahmanyam's examination of early Portuguese colonial mentality in the context of Gama's journey is expanded in his analysis of changes wrought upon the political and economic systems into which our explorer voyaged. The author clears the ground for the presentation of his vision of a "connected history" by debunking scholars (André Wink foremost among them) who portray Islam as virulently monolithic. In doing so, Subrahmanyam turns the tables on these scholars by analogizing Islam in the western Indian Ocean to Christianity in the Mediterranean. Finally, he pinpoints the fundamental way in which the Portuguese made a difference in the Indian Ocean region through the systematic and expert use of maritime violence. In contrast to India, where organized force was previously used only on land (with the notable yet isolated exception of piracy), Gama modified the "rules of the game" by dictating his own terms (*e.g.*, his demand for the expulsion of "white Moors") and then backing them up with armed attacks.

Chapters on the second voyage of Gama to India start with his conscious utilization of the "symbolic capital of his legend" and appointment as admiral. In this capacity he voyages to India to continue advancing the Portuguese goal of excluding Arabs from Indian trade, often through brutal means. This exclusion is perceived as being in the spirit of economic pragmatism and with an eye on the prosperity of nobles whose trade interests conflict with the monarchic and messianic interests of Portugal's king Don Manuel. This dispute concludes with Gama's return to Portugal and Portuguese expansion being placed in the hands of Afonso de Albuquerque, the king's chosen. Subrahmanyam emphasizes Gama's reliance during this period on his own legend to retain his prestige and wealth in Portugal when he had fallen out of political favor. This part of Subrahmanyam's analysis serves as occasion for inserting a detailed summary of Don Manuel's reign, and the origins of his messianism and anti-Moorish crusades (qualities echoed in the policies of Albuquerque).

We see in this section a centralizing monarchical attitude which is coupled with a renewed attempt to blockade Arab trade routes and to enlist the Christians of Prester John. Subrahmanyam contrasts such attitudes and actions with those of the more pragmatic Gama. He insightfully identifies this contrast—reflected in the differences between Gama and Albuquerque—as the “two poles in the Portuguese nationalist historiography” (p. 258). Frustratingly, he never illustrates exactly how these manifest in the historiography itself.

The final historical chapter of Subrahmanyam’s book covers Gama’s third and final voyage to India. The demise of the King Don Manuel in Portugal results in Gama being named the viceroy of Asia, a position through which he sets out to enact a new agenda. The posture of Portugal is now one of guarding against rising Ottoman forces in Arab lands to the north. This new Portuguese strategy was designed to consolidate strong holdings in the Indian Ocean. More specifically (for Gama at least), this strategy involved wresting control of the Malabar pepper trade from the Samudri Raja and the Mappila Muslims. This shift in strategy contrasts with previous attempts to ally with this king and prevail upon him to oust Arabs from the trade. Gama, for his part, acted ostensibly in the name of economic pragmatism and hoped to get a better value on pepper by dealing with Syrian Christians rather than the Mapillas. Nonetheless, this pragmatic preference for Christians only resulted in the Portuguese having “quite literally to pay a price for imagined religious solidarity” (p. 330). Upon Gama’s death, there were no real resolutions to either this Mappila/Syrian Christian question, or the Ottoman threat to Portuguese ascendancy.

In conclusion, Subrahmanyam (all too briefly) steps back and looks at the pose Gama strikes for the current observer. As an argonaut in opposition to the monarchical crusading of Albuquerque, he stands as one of two competing mythological constructs of the Portuguese in India. However, precisely what Gama represents is still unclear. The author gives no definitive statement, as perhaps there can be no simple consensus. Yet Subrahmanyam has certainly succeeded in painstakingly showing the contexts in which Gama lived. The political, social, and economic systems between which he negotiated, and the shifting understandings embedded therein, are given vivid expression (though the work is decidedly stronger in the portrayal of the nuances of mentality from the European side [there is only one real incident where an Asian text is closely analyzed, and that a modern Bengali one]). Perhaps it is too much to ask that our author go beyond the task of a historical recreation that traces the changes in a legend foundational to Portuguese national identity. But without such a discussion, Subrahmanyam’s promise of presenting the career and *legend* of Vasco da Gama remains only partially fulfilled.

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Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities, Avtar Brah. New York: Routledge, 1996. Pp. 276.

In this collection of previously published and new material, sociologist Avtar Brah presents an engaging discussion of South Asian diaspora, feminism, social activism and critical theory. In elaborating the relevance of critical theory to social activism through empirical (ethnographic) and theoretical arguments, this book develops a framework for the study of diaspora(s) and transnational communities. Part of this project is to chart new terrains in the study of global migration and movement.

Brah's central focus in the ethnographic chapters explores how nationalism and racism relate to South Asians in Britain. Her writing of the history of struggle for diasporic South Asians--referred to in Britain as "Asians" and "Blacks" for various popular, colonial and coalitional reasons--departs from much conventional diaspora research by foregrounding the analysis of gender and feminist positioning. By focusing on South Asian women and Asian youth, Brah describes the complexity of the South Asian diasporic experience through the categories of race, nation, gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity, and generation. Using this analytical framework to enter popular debates of "commonsense" racial representations of South Asians, her argument makes an important intervention into discourses that perpetuate racism. Brah's simple, yet cogent, argument is that racism has resulted from histories of imperialism and colonialism. Her critique of racism is directed at the political practices and institutions responsible for state policies in Britain.

In conducting her ethnographic interviews, however, it is unclear how ethnographic interviews are conducted and how this material should be interpreted in response to the political location of the author. To what degree and in what form is Brah's research and political position made clear to those interviewed, and how does this positioning interact with the kinds of responses elicited in interviews? This question has important implications for the interaction of theory and political action in elucidating the critic's role for the subject/agent. Its answer is a pivotal aspect, in my view, of the politics of location that Brah endorses. This weakness notwithstanding, Brah succeeds in describing a diverse array of experiences and identifications in the South Asian diaspora in Britain.

Brah's chapters on feminism and difference are the building blocks of her remaining theoretical framework. As Brah maintains, the articulation of difference is the essential component of a critical analysis of political mobilization. As Brah argues, difference is "construed as a social relation constructed within systems of power underlying structures of class, racism, gender and sexuality, and so on" (p. 88). Difference is also distinguished between collective histories and personal experience. The dynamic that Brah pursues in questioning how the collective and personal can come together. Differences in histories and relations to power between

black and white women in the feminist struggle in Britain are part of the terrain that Brah explores in thinking about these issues.

In theorizing political mobilization and the relations of power for diaspora and transnational communities, Avtar Brah frames an innovative methodology for this study. Based on the concepts of diaspora, border, and the politics of location, Brah argues that the struggle over meaning is the struggle over different modes of being, that is subjectivity and subject positions. Through this struggle the political is imagined through the collective. Here the concept of diaspora has its strength as a form of coalitional politics. Diaspora, understood by Brah in terms of historically contingent genealogies, offers the insight of historicizing different trajectories of diaspora(s). Diaspora is then relational to other diasporas through the creative tension of “home” and “dispersion.” This points to the interaction of communities, relations of power, and the concept of migration as multiple rather than one-way. Diasporas are “contested cultural and political terrains where individual and collective memories collide, reassemble and reconfigure” (193). They are sites of dislocation, trauma and dissonance, but also potentially sites of new beginnings.

Although, some of the chapters in the book seem awkwardly written, especially in the context of particular global, political, and historical junctures, as a whole, this book is a good response and synthesis to many of the issues surrounding the study of diaspora. It offers an insightful and informative history of the South Asian experience in Britain with particular sensitivity to the underwritten aspect of South Asian women.

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