

# ***The Effects of Migration on the Establishment of Networks: Caste Disintegration and Reformation Among the Indians of Fiji<sup>1</sup>***

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This article focuses on how migration auspices affect the formation of migrant networks and ethnic communities. Using ethnographic data and migration histories to focus on caste "reformation" in the subcommunities of the Indians of Fiji, the ability to reestablish and maintain subcaste group "extensions" in Fiji is shown as directly related to the migration auspices that originally established the community. By determining the characteristics of migrants, the reason for migrating, and the magnitude and duration of migration streams, migration auspices define a migration type. This migration type affects the strength and density of social ties present in migration streams. It also affects the strength and density of network ties that members of a migrant community can establish in a receiving society. By extension, this can influence the level of cultural reformation overseas.

Social scientists long have recognized the importance of networks to migrant communities. Migrant networks are sets of interpersonal ties based on kinship, friendship, and shared nationality that connect migrants, former migrants, and nonmigrants in origin and destination areas (Massey *et al.*, 1993), and as such they represent an important source of social capital (Portes, 1995a). Migrant networks also serve many important functions for individual migrants, such as reducing the costs and disruptions of migration, maintaining links between sending and receiving communities, serving as

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channels for information and resources, and influencing the rate of adaptation and assimilation to the destination society (Gurak and Caces, 1992).

Ties among members of a social network can vary in strength of connection. According to Granovetter (1973:1361), the strength of any tie is due to a combination of "the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie." Strong ties include primary relationships, such as family and kinship relationships, that are based on important emotional linkages and/or frequent, routine interaction. Strong ties are usually associated with ethnic communities because they imply cohesion. Conversely, weak ties include relationships among individuals that lack the same emotional strength, such as among neighbors or coworkers. However, weak ties are important because they unite diverse networks and increase the resources available to network members (Gurak and Caces, 1992). Granovetter (1973) argues that strong ties left unbalanced by weak ties result in the isolation of a network from broad segments of society. In this sense, the predominance of either strong or weak ties within any migrant social network can directly influence its continued isolation from or level of integration into the destination society.

The strength and density of social ties within migrant networks has implications for the development of ethnic communities. Yancey, Ericksen, and Juliana (1976) argue that "ethnicity" is not a category but rather an emergent phenomenon that continues to develop with the changing position of groups and individuals in the host society. In this sense, a migrant network can be seen as an early phase in the process of emergence of an ethnic group in a new context (Gurak and Caces, 1992). However, in order for an ethnic community to emerge, the members of a migrant social network must first be able to establish and then to maintain and expand the number of ties they have, both strong and weak, with other co-ethnics. In other words, a migrant network will develop into an ethnic community only if its members can establish and maintain the endogamous ties necessary to achieve social closure. Clearly, while migrants are members of social networks within their host societies, not all migrant networks develop into ethnic communities. This raises the question: What factors enable some migrants to develop the social ties necessary to establish and expand their networks into ethnic communities?

The research literature provides evidence that structural factors associated with both the sending and receiving societies can generate migration flows and influence network formation (Portes, 1995b; Kritz and Zlotnik, 1992; Gurak and Caces, 1992; Boyd, 1989; Portes and Borocz, 1989; Massey *et al.*, 1987; Portes and Bach, 1985). However, no study has specifically focused on the influence that the type of migration has on either the strength of social

ties or network formation. This article argues that the type of migration that originally established a migrant community directly influences the strength of the network ties its members establish in the host community. This direct effect exists because certain migration types encourage the dominance of either strong or weak ties within a social network. For example, migration based on the movement of individuals, such as labor or refugee migration, would encourage the preponderance of weak ties within social networks. Because these migrants arrive as individuals, with few or no family members in the same migrational stream, the number of strong ties available would be restricted, forcing the migrants to establish the majority of their ties with members of the host society. However, migration based on the movement of social units, such as family or chain migration, would encourage the preponderance of strong ties in migrant networks. Because these migrants arrive as social units, their need for additional ties with members of the host community is reduced. Since migration type influences the preponderance of strong or weak ties within a migrant network, it can, by extension, determine whether or not a migrant network develops into an ethnic community. Migrant networks based predominantly on weak ties would encourage more rapid assimilation and integration of members. However, networks based predominantly on strong ties would encourage social closure and slower assimilation and, when combined with the resources to maintain strong ties, would lead to the development of ethnic communities. In this sense, the type of migration that established a community can influence its ability to create strong network ties which, in turn, can influence the level of cultural reformation in the host society.

Because the type of migration directly influences the strength and density of the social ties present in a migrant network, it has important implications for the emergence of an ethnic community overseas. However, migration types are not “self-generating” but occur within specific migration contexts. This raises the question: What aspects of the migration process determine the type of migration present within a migration stream? Ultimately, migration types are defined by the auspices under which migration streams are established and maintained. In this article, the term “migration auspices” refers to the social, economic, political and historical contexts within which migration begins and proceeds. By determining the characteristics of individual migrants, such as age and gender, the reason for migrating, the level of social organization present within a migration stream, and the period of time in which migration is possible, migration auspices define and are associated with a specific migration type. For example, the system of indentured migration, occurring under the auspices of the British colonial government, recruited

young, single and predominantly male laborers in India to work on agricultural plantations in overseas colonies. Because few of the emigrants were related, these migration streams were dominated by individual migrants. Conversely, because of the policy of family reunification, many migration streams into the United States are dominated by related individuals and chain migration. Thus, by defining a particular migration type, migration auspices initiate a process of movement that predetermines the strength and density of social ties available to migrants for network formation overseas. In this way, the auspices of migration influence the ability of immigrants to expand their networks into ethnic communities.

Indian diaspora communities established by migration streams occurring in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries offer researchers a unique opportunity to study the effects of differential migration auspices on network establishment and formation overseas. They also provide the chance to track the evolution of a network structure – specifically, the caste system – as the migrants moved from India and established overseas communities. There are a number of reasons why studying Indian diaspora communities provide these opportunities. First, numerous overseas Indian communities have been established around the world, each having a unique migration history. Second, migration from India is well documented and, although the migration history of each community is unique, most overseas Indian communities were established through a limited number of migration auspices. Third, many of these communities have been studied by anthropologists and sociologists, providing the ethnographic and historic baseline necessary for comparative analysis. Finally, many of these studies have specifically focused on caste in these communities. This information can be combined to examine the influence of the auspices of migration, with their defined migration types, on the patterns of network formation in overseas Indian communities.

However, this approach would only indicate an association between the patterns of network formation found in host societies and the auspices of migration that established the community. Further, it would fail to explain how migration actually prevented or enabled caste reformation overseas. What is needed is an analysis of a single overseas Indian community that was established through a number of migration streams representing different migration auspices and types. In this way, a historical and ethnographic comparative analysis of the subcommunities could show how the auspices of migration influenced the level of caste reformation in each group.

In this study, I analyze the association between network reformation in Indian diaspora communities and the auspices of migration that originally established the communities. Specifically, I focus on caste reformation in the

subcommunities of the Indians of Fiji. The Indians of Fiji are ideal for a comparative analysis of the effects of differential migration auspices on network reformation overseas for four reasons. First, the Fiji Indians divide themselves into five distinct subcommunities that were established through different migration streams. Second, each of these subcommunities was established through one of three different auspices of migration. Third, the migration streams that established each of the subcommunities occurred during the same time period (approximately 1880 to 1930), giving them comparable developmental periods and contextual histories. Finally, the history of the Indians of Fiji, including their ethnographic and migration histories, has been thoroughly documented by anthropologists, sociologists, and historians. This includes research specifically on caste.

The study first discusses the relevance of migration to caste reformation in overseas Indian communities. The structure of the caste system is reviewed, emphasizing the effects migration would have on its reformation overseas. Next, the article focuses on the auspices of migration that established the overseas Indian communities and theorizes how the differential migration auspices would affect the level of caste reformation found in those societies today. After briefly describing the establishment histories of the Fiji Indian subcommunities, specific examples are provided of how different migration auspices either prevented or enabled the migrants to establish subcaste groups in Fiji. This is accomplished by focusing on two Indo-Fijian subcommunities: the "caste-free" descendants of the indentured laborers that arrived in Fiji between 1879 and 1916 and the "caste-based" descendants of nonlabor migration that occurred from the state of Gujarat between approximately 1900 and 1930. I conclude with a discussion of the Fiji Indian subcommunities in the wider context of Indian diaspora communities worldwide and the implications of this study on network reformation in host societies.

## *METHODOLOGY*

The historic and social data about the Indians of Fiji presented in this article are based on a combination of primary and secondary resource analysis. The primary data were collected during fieldwork conducted from February 1989 to September 1990 and include material based on interviews and participant observation. A snowball sample of face-to-face open-ended qualitative interviews was obtained from members of the Indian subcommunities. The interviews focused on assessing the level of caste ideology and caste-related behavior found in the modern Indian culture. Over 50 people were interviewed in 33 separate interviews. The interviews were done either individually or in

small groups of related individuals, usually in the respondents' homes. They were conducted in English or in Hindi, with a translator present when necessary. The majority of interviews were conducted in rural, suburban and urban areas of Viti Levu, one of the two main islands of Fiji. I collected additional ethnographic data through participant observation during several short-term rural settlement visits with families of north and south Indian descent and an extended stay of approximately 24 months with a family of north Indian descent.

Information regarding the migration and establishment histories of the Indian subcommunities was derived from a critical analysis of the published literature. This includes a review of the historic and ethnographic research that has focused on caste in Fiji and other overseas Indian communities. This information was supplemented by archival research conducted at the Fiji National Archives in Suva, Fiji, from June 1990 to September 1990. The archival research focused on British colonial government documents dating from the beginning of the indentured period in 1879 to approximately 1940. Specific emphasis was placed on reviewing documents that discussed issues and events concerning the Indian community.

### *THE RELEVANCE OF MIGRATION TO CASTE REFORMATION OVERSEAS*

Although it is generally agreed that some elements of the caste system may survive outside of India, many specialists in overseas Indian populations have concluded that caste as a system of social, political and economic organization is unable to survive the migration process (Schwartz, 1967c). Previous studies have described either the "reformation" or "disintegration" of caste in Indian diaspora worldwide, with many focusing on specific aspects of caste-related behavior (for examples, *see* Schwartz, 1967a; Brown, 1981). However, no study has clearly explained the reasons why the caste system has historically failed to be reestablished in overseas Indian migrant communities.

Few scholars have considered the effects of migration on caste reformation overseas. Those who have, emphasize what occurred to the emigrants as they migrated from India and settled in their countries of destination. For example, it is generally viewed that the primary cause of caste disintegration in Fiji was the ritually polluting conditions of the voyage from India and the exploitative nature of life on the indenture plantations (Jayawardena, 1971; Mayer, 1961; Schwartz, 1967a; Gillion, 1962; Brown, 1978, 1981). When considering caste reformation, however, this orientation is deficient for three reasons. First, it fails to consider the structure of the caste system as it was experienced by the

migrants before leaving India. Second, it fails to consider the effects that the migration process had on the structure of the caste system. Third, it places emphasis on the individuality of migrants and fails to see them as members of interrelated social groups that were part of the regionally based caste systems within India. In short, because earlier studies relied on before-and-after comparisons rather than analyzing structural change as a continual historic process, these studies failed to clarify the reasons why the caste system could not be reformed overseas.

While knowledge of the structure of the caste system is necessary to understand what changed, the key to understanding the reasons why changes occurred is migration. Moreover, the auspices of migration that historically established any overseas Indian community ultimately determined those aspects of the caste system that were "lost" and those that could be reestablished by the migrants in their new homes. The auspices of migration not only determined who migrated but also determined which social groups were able to establish migrational streams that lead to their reformation overseas. This is important when considering the presence or absence of caste-related characteristics among Indian diaspora communities. Because the caste system is a socioeconomic system based on the relationship of interdependent, integral caste groups, much of what can be considered caste-related behavior derives its structural basis from these groups. Thus, it is the auspices of migration that enables or prevents these social groups from reforming overseas and therefore determines the level of caste-related characteristics in any overseas Indian community.

However, it is inaccurate to discuss the reformation of the caste system overseas because caste as a total social, political and economic system cannot migrate. Because migration occurs at the level of the individual, it is more accurate to focus on those parts of the system that are based on groups of individuals that could establish migrational streams and reform along traditional lines overseas. Within individual caste systems, this would be at the level of the subcaste group. As shown below, the reestablishment of subcaste groups overseas is dependent on the auspices of migration that established the community. In turn, whether or not a particular community was historically able to reestablish these groups directly affects the level of caste-related behavior found today.

### *THE STRUCTURE OF THE CASTE SYSTEM AND ITS RELEVANCE TO CASTE REFORMATION OVERSEAS*

The caste system of India can be considered a representation of an institutionalized social network. To understand why migration prevents or enables subcaste reformation overseas, it is first necessary to understand the structure

of the caste system network as it was experienced by the migrants in India. There are a number of approaches to the structural definition of the caste system present within the literature. For this article, I use the structural model as put forth by Mayer (1960), Ghurye (1961), and Kolenda (1978) among others. In this literature, the caste system has been generally defined as an organization of interdependent, stratified social units, integrated into a network of economic, political and ritual relationships that is unique to a given region within India. A caste system is made up of a number of caste groups hierarchically ranked on the basis of beliefs of ritual purity and pollution and integrated through the reciprocal exchange of commodities and services associated with traditional occupations. A caste group is made up of a set of subcastes, which are characterized by endogamy and hereditary membership; these subcastes share the same name, ritual status, same or similar occupation, ethnic history and common cultural features, including rules of intercaste commensality and social intercourse. Each subcaste is composed of a number of exogamous, patrilineal clans that are believed to have a common ancestor and among which marriage is deemed appropriate.

There are numerous studies focusing on the caste system (*see*, for example, Blunt, 1931; Hutton, 1946; Cox, 1948; Hocart, 1950; Mayer, 1960; Ghurye, 1961; Srinivas, 1962; Beteille, 1965; Lewis, 1965; Kolenda, 1978). While a complete review of this literature is beyond the scope of this article, there are a number of points that have direct implications on caste reformation overseas. First, both the caste system and its participating social units are geographically based. There is not a single, all-encompassing caste system within India, but instead many local systems, each operating within a limited locality, such as a single village or a few contiguous villages. While the caste systems are locally based, both the caste and subcaste groups are regionally based, encompassing a number of villages or an entire region (Kolenda, 1978; Mayer, 1960; Ghurye, 1961; Srinivas, 1962). Although the traditional *varna* categories of *brahmin*, *kshatriya*, *vaishya*, *shudra*, and untouchable do have an "all-India" application and can place caste and subcaste groups into an ideological hierarchy, they have no actual structural application. For example, although there are Brahmins all over India, they do not represent a single caste or subcaste group (Srinivas, 1965; Kolenda, 1978). Second, it is the subcaste, and not the caste, group that is the organized social unit within the caste system. Each subcaste manages its own affairs and enforces the moral and economic rules of the group upon its members through the authority of local subcaste councils (*panchayats*) and through the use of sanctions. It is at this level that both the subcaste rules of endogamy and the clan rules of exogamy are maintained (Mayer, 1960; Kolenda, 1978; Ghurye, 1961).

Third, caste and subcaste membership define for the individual the level of interaction appropriate with the members of the various groups present within the entire regional population. Caste membership determines how its members interact, both ritually and economically, with other caste groups (Kolenda, 1978; Lewis, 1965; Ghurye, 1961). Subcaste membership goes beyond this and defines for its members those groups of people within the total regional population as actual or potential kin, with whom interaction is deemed appropriate, or as "strangers" with whom no social interaction is due. While members of one caste group will recognize their own internal divisions, they will view other caste groups as undifferentiated wholes, maintaining consistent intercaste behavior towards all subgroups (Mayer, 1960; Ghurye, 1961).

It is clear from the above description that the structure of the caste system is made up of a hierarchy of interdependent social units. However, each of those social units, including the caste and subcaste groups, represents a collection of individuals. Because the migration process normally occurs at the individual, as opposed to group, level, it can now be asked: What structural aspects of the caste system, if any, can actually migrate? The caste system, because of its geographical specificity and caste group structural basis, could never migrate in its entirety. The same is true of the caste group, which is made up of numerous, regionally based subcastes. Only at the level of the subcaste, composed of a number of organized, intermarrying clans, could migration and overseas reformation take place. This would depend, however, upon whether or not the auspices of migration that established the Indian diaspora community enabled the founding migrants to maintain a level of subcaste integrity. In other words, subcaste reformation would depend on whether or not the auspices of migration that established the community enabled enough members of a specific subcaste group to migrate and reorganize themselves overseas.

### *THE EFFECT OF MIGRATION AUSPICES ON SUBCASTE REFORMATION OVERSEAS*

Why were some Indian diaspora communities able to reestablish subcastes overseas while others were not? I argue the ability to reestablish subcastes overseas is directly related to the auspices of migration that originally established the communities. Most overseas Indian communities were established during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through one of three types of labor migration. These include the indentured, *kangany*, and *maistry* labor migration systems (Kondapi, 1951; for a good overview of Indian inter-

national migration, *see also* Visaria and Visaria, 1990). The system of indentured migration, which began in 1834, bonded laborers to five years of service on large agricultural plantations. Planters obtained their labor through agents representing recruiting governments or independent European recruiting firms based in India. These agents would recruit individual laborers from districts throughout India. Although both men and women were recruited, migration was dominated by males until 1868 when a recruitment ratio of 40 women to 100 men was standardized. Indentured migration transported Indians mainly to the sugar-producing British colonies in the West Indies and the Pacific, but indentured labor migration was also used to construct railroads in East and South Africa. By the time indentured migration was finally abolished in 1917, over 1 million laborers had left India to work in overseas colonies (Kondapi, 1951; Lal, 1983).

The *kangany* system of labor migration, which also began in 1834, provided laborers for large agricultural plantations in the former British colonies of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and Malaya (Malaysia). When additional labor was needed, plantation owners would contract with their own Indian laborers, usually estate headmen, to return to India and obtain the required number of recruits. The headmen would use money provided to them by estate owners to pay advances to intending emigrants and to cover travel expenses. In this way, the laborers would arrive in debt to either their headman or the estate, a debt that had to be cleared at the end of the contract labor period. The headmen would either return to India themselves or would have the necessary labor recruited by their relatives in India. To promote permanent settlement, plantation owners encouraged their laborers to bring their wives and children. Even as the government of India placed greater restrictions on emigration to these areas, eventually banning it altogether in 1938, exemptions made the emigration of additional close relatives possible, including immediate family members, such as wives and children, as well as caste-mates (Kondapi, 1951; Jayawardena, 1968).

The *maistry* system of labor migration, which lasted from 1852 to 1937, was similar to the *kangany* system but occurred only to the former colony of Burma (Myanmar). However, instead of headmen recruiting their relatives and caste-mates, large agricultural estates would enter into agreements with contractors who would supply and supervise the laborers; these contractors recruited locally in Burma and in India. The *maistry* system emphasized individual rather than family recruitment and appears to have been dominated by male migrants (Kondapi, 1951). Both the *kangany* and *maistry* laborers were popular with the planters because they were cheaper than indentured laborers and were less subject to government control and intervention. Because

both systems were unregulated and unsupervised, they were poorly documented. However, an indication of volume of *kangany* and *maistry* migration can be gained from figures available for net migration. By the time labor migration was abolished in the late 1930s, over 5 million people had emigrated from India to the former colonies of Burma, Ceylon, and Malaya (Lal, 1983).

Although the majority of emigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries left India through a form of organized labor migration, many left India for overseas destinations as either "assisted" or "unassisted" free emigrants. Assisted migration included skilled immigrants, such as clerks, interpreters, teachers and doctors, that colonial governments would contract to facilitate the administration of their growing Indian communities. Unassisted migration included those immigrants who traveled independently, without assistance from any government, in search of fortune (Prasad, 1978). Free emigration from India was unregulated and not well documented, but it never achieved the magnitude of organized labor migration. However, it was not unorganized, but was rather "socially organized." That is, free emigrants "constituted self-regulating groups" that recruited members "on the basis of kinship, caste, and village of origin" (Jayawardena, 1968:434).

Thus, the majority of overseas Indian communities were established through a combination of indentured, *kangany* or *maistry* labor migration and free migration. Considering the structure of the caste system, and given the fact that overseas reformation can only occur at the level of the subcaste, it can now be asked: Which of these migration auspices would have enabled Indian migrants to organize themselves and reestablish subcastes overseas? Organized labor migration, such as the indentured and *maistry* systems, that emphasized the recruitment of individual workers from numerous districts within India would not be conducive to subcaste reformation. Individual representatives of numerous subcaste groups would have no socially defined obligation to one another and, because they lacked the strong ties upon which subcaste integrity is based, no reason to reform as a group overseas. However, migration that enabled individuals to travel with relatives and subcaste-mates, such as *kangany* labor and free nonlabor migration, would be conducive to the reestablishment of subcaste groups overseas. By giving migrants more control over the terms of their migration, these migration auspices would have enabled individuals from the same subcaste groups to migrate together and establish themselves overseas. This, in turn, would have encouraged the maintenance of strong ties in the receiving society and the establishment of migrant networks. Depending upon their ability to maintain and expand their networks through continued migration, the migrants could establish "extensions" of subcaste groups overseas. This association between the aus-

**TABLE 1**  
**THE EXPECTED ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE AUSPICES OF MIGRATION AND**  
**CASTE STRUCTURAL ORGANIZATION OVERSEAS**

| Migration Auspices that<br>Established the Overseas<br>Indian Community | Social Organizational Level<br>Present in Migration Stream | Migration Type | Expected Level of Caste<br>Structural Organization in<br>Receiving Society |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Indentured Labor<br>Migration                                           | A                                                          | C              | E                                                                          |
| <i>Kangany</i> Labor Migration                                          | B                                                          | D              | F                                                                          |
| <i>Maistry</i> Labor Migration                                          | A                                                          | C              | E                                                                          |
| Free Nonlabor Migration                                                 | B                                                          | D              | F                                                                          |

Notes:

A = Unrelated individuals.

B = Related individuals, family units and subcaste-mates.

C = Individual migration.

D = Chain migration and family reunification.

E = No subcaste reformation.

F = Subcaste reformation.

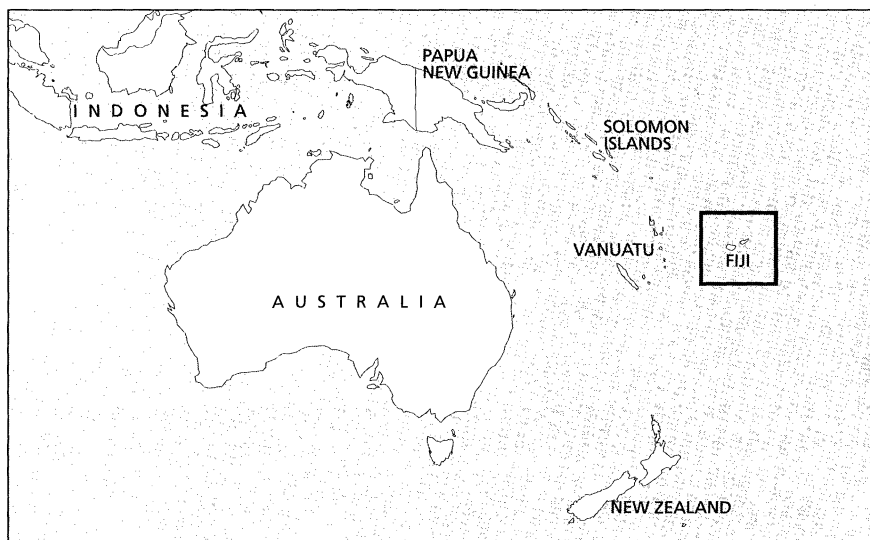
pices of migration that establishes an overseas Indian community and the level of caste structural organization found in the receiving society is summarized in Table 1.

Although this association between migration auspices and level of subcaste reformation overseas makes intuitive sense, it remains to be demonstrated. After briefly discussing the establishment history of the Indians of Fiji, I examine the effects of the migration auspices on subcaste reformation in two subcommunities – first, the “caste-free” descendants of the indentured laborers; and second, the “caste-based” descendants of the free Gujarati merchant migrants – and demonstrate in each section how the auspices of migration either prevented or enabled subcaste reformation in Fiji. To further illustrate the influence that either subcaste disintegration or reformation has had on the modern culture of overseas Indian communities, caste-related behavior found in each community is also described. This article concludes with a discussion of the association between migration auspices and level of subcaste reformation in overseas Indian communities worldwide.

### *THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INDIAN COMMUNITY OF FIJI*

In exchange for protection of their political and economic interests, the High Chiefs of Fiji signed the Deed of Cession in 1874 making Fiji a possession of the British Crown (*see* Figure 1). To pay for the cost of administration, the newly-established government persuaded the Colonial Sugar Refining Company of Australia to start the Fiji sugar industry in 1881. In an effort to protect the native Fijian society from the indiscriminate influence of modern commerce and industry, the British government placed restrictions on Fijian

**Figure 1.**                    **Location of Fiji**

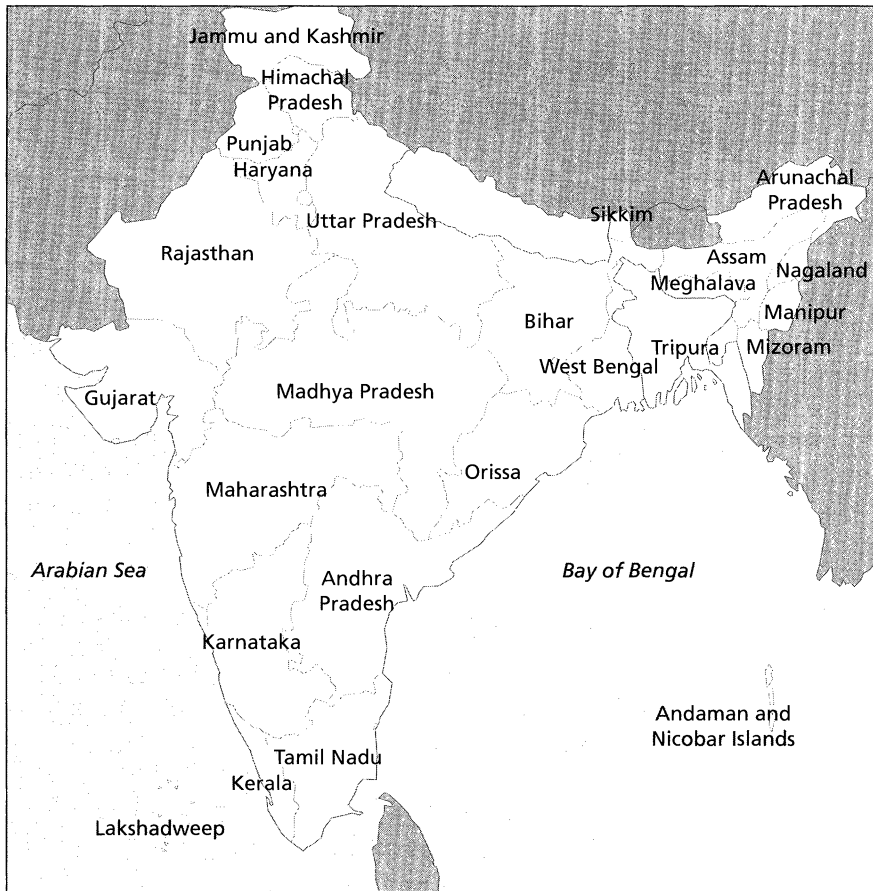


migration from the villages to work on European-owned sugar cane plantations. These restrictions caused a shortage of laborers in the rapidly growing sugar industry. Through an arrangement with the government of India, Indian laborers were brought to Fiji under indentured contracts. They called themselves *girmitiya*, referring to the *girmit*, or agreement, that bound the laborers to service. After five years of work on a plantation, the laborers could pay their way back to India or work another five years and receive return passage with a guarantee of repatriation (Gillion, 1962; Lal, 1992).

Indian immigration to Fiji began in 1879 with the arrival of the first 479 indentured laborers. They joined a population that, by 1911, included a number of different ethnic communities, including native Fijians, Europeans, part-Europeans, Chinese, and various Pacific islanders. Until the turn of the century, the overwhelming majority of indentured laborers originated from north India. After 1903, indentured recruitment began in Madras, marking the beginning of south Indian migration to Fiji. By 1916, when the importation of indentured labor ceased, 60,639 men, women, and children had arrived in the islands. Approximately 40 percent of the laborers returned to India, the remaining 60 percent choosing to stay in Fiji (Lal, 1992). After 1900, the indentured migrants were joined by free, fare-paying immigrants from the states of Punjab and Gujarat (Gillion, 1962). These varied sources laid the foundations for a diverse and socially complex community of Indians in Fiji.

The Indians of Fiji divide themselves into five distinct subcommunities which are loosely based on immigration history, geographic area of origin in India, and religion. Three of these subcommunities – the north Indian, south Indian and Muslim communities – were established by the indentured labor migration that occurred between 1879 and 1916. The majority of the north Indian migrants came from eastern Uttar Pradesh and western and central Bihar (*see* Figure 2). The majority of the Muslim migrants also came from north India (Lal, 1983). While the origins of south Indian migrants to Fiji are not well documented, the majority are descendants of Telegu, Tamil, and Malayalam speakers from the states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala (Chauhan, 1988; Gillion, 1962). The remaining subcommunities

**Figure 2.** India, Showing Indian States



were established by free migration to Fiji that occurred after 1900. This includes the Punjabi and Gujarati communities. The majority of the Punjabi migrants came from the northern state of Punjab. While they were fare-paying migrants, most Punjabis were young men in search of high wages, brought to Fiji by independent shipping companies (Gillion, 1962). The majority of the migrants from Punjab were Sikh. While there has traditionally been heavy intermarriage with the north Indian community, the Punjabis are still considered a distinct community. The Gujarati migrants came as artisans and traders from the state of Gujarat (Prasad, 1978; Gillion, 1962). While migration was initially predominated by males, migration chains were eventually established, allowing the Gujaratis to sponsor relatives and bring wives from India. This enabled the Gujarati community to continue their specific cultural traditions that separate them from the rest of the Indian sub-communities in Fiji.

### *INDENTURED LABOR MIGRATION TO FIJI AND THE DISINTEGRATION OF CASTE: THE DESCENDANTS OF THE GIRMITIYAS*

Between 1879 and 1916, when the system of indentured labor was finally abolished, a total of 60,537 laborers left India for Fiji, 45,833 embarking from Calcutta and 15,132 from Madras. Over 90 percent of all the north Indian immigrants came from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and the Central Provinces, a region now approximately located in the state of Madhya Pradesh. While the majority of the north Indian laborers migrated from the eastern districts of Uttar Pradesh, over 25 different districts of origin were represented, with no one district providing an overwhelming majority (Lal, 1983). The districts of origin for the south Indian migrants are not well documented (Lal, 1983). However, Gillion (1962:51) lists at least nine districts of registration located in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Over 260 social groups were represented, which reflected the caste, subcaste, religious and tribal groups present in the regions of outmigration. The majority of the north Indian emigrants were Hindus with caste status, with the full cross-section of castes, from Brahmin to chammaar, represented (Lal, 1983). The caste representation of the south Indian emigrants was more limited, with an emphasis on the agricultural castes (Jayawardena, 1971; Gillion, 1962). Most of the laborers were male, between the ages of 18 and 30, and single. Only about one-fourth of the total number of emigrants were female and, of the adult women, over 60 percent were single, the remaining emigrating as married women or single mothers with children. However, few emigrants came in families (Lal, 1983).

The indentured labor system recruited from numerous districts within India, focusing on young, single laborers. However, the structure of each level of the caste system within India, including the caste and subcaste levels, is based on the integrity and interdependence of the participating, local groups. Thus, it was the recruitment process itself and not, as is usually argued, the ritually polluting conditions of the voyage to Fiji or life on the plantation, that prevented the reformation of caste. I argue that this prevention occurred in three ways.

First, the recruitment process emphasized individual, and not family, recruitment. No cohesive groups, such as whole subcaste or clan sections, emigrated during the indenture period but only individual members of these groups. Thus, the integrity and the internal organization of both the subcaste and caste groups were eliminated. Second, recruitment occurred within a wide range of geographic locations, and because caste systems within India are regionally based, most of the individual emigrants were not from the same caste system. Even if the emigrants migrated from the same district of origin, there was no guarantee they were members of the same caste system; further, even if they were from the same caste system, they were not necessarily from the same caste or subcaste group.

Finally, because the majority of the indentured laborers emigrated without, or perhaps with only a few, members of their own caste systems, the social and economic obligations an individual previously held towards members of the participating caste and subcaste groups were eliminated. Without the integrity of social units, behavior based on caste group criteria became inapplicable. A single emigrant would have regarded the other emigrants as strangers, outside his caste and subcaste groups. Because the other indentured laborers were now "individuals" rather than "members" of a particular group within the local caste system, the emigrant could no longer use caste-defined behavior to guide interaction. Conversely, as individuals, the laborers would have had no defined obligation to one another and therefore no reason to reform into subcaste groups in Fiji.

By recruiting individuals from numerous geographic regions and social groups, the process of indentured labor migration severely altered the structure of the caste system and removed the basis for the reestablishment of both caste and subcaste groups overseas. This eliminated the structural basis for much of what is considered caste-related behavior and thus prevented its reformation and continuation in Fiji. This not only included behavior that required the interaction of caste groups – such as ritual stratification, commensal hierarchy, and economic exchange – but also behavior based on subcaste integrity, including the organization of *panchayat* councils, occupational monopolization, and marital endogamy. This is not to say that caste-based

prejudices did not affect interpersonal relations during indenture; the majority of the individual migrants were members of caste systems within India and brought with them caste-related ideologies that undoubtedly influenced their behavior and that of their descendants. However, there were no group bases for those prejudices, so no uniform behavior could be reestablished or enforced and, ultimately, any remaining practices were reduced to individual or family customs.

*The Shift from Group to Individual Attributes: Caste Ideology in the Modern Indo-Fijian Culture*

Considering the effects of the migration process, it is not surprising that the literature of the history and culture of the Fiji Indians fails to find that caste was ever a significant influence on indenture or postindenture social organization (Jayawardena, 1971; Mayer, 1961; Schwartz, 1967a; Gillion, 1962; Brown, 1978, 1981). The indentured labor recruitment and migration process laid the foundations for the development of a caste-free culture by establishing and maintaining migration streams that favored individuals and prevented the emigration of integral social units. Without this structural basis, what remains of caste ideology within the modern Indo-Fijian culture is no longer associated with groups but with attributes of individuals. This is especially true with the concept of purity and pollution. According to Jayawardena (1971:101–105), ritual purity and impurity are no longer seen as permanent, hereditary states associated with groups of people. Rather, they are temporary states associated with acts, events, and objects that become polluting only at the venue of religious rites and ceremonies. While only members of families that claim Brahmin ancestry can be priests, ritual purity is no longer associated solely with Brahmins as a class. Although only a Brahmin priest can officiate “life crises” religious rites and ceremonies, such as weddings and funerals, they do not maintain a monopoly over all aspects of Hindu religious practice in Fiji. Non-Brahmin religious leaders (*pujari*) manage temples and officiate at religious ceremonies held at temples and private homes. This clearly demonstrates how ritual purity is no longer an attribute of specific groups but of individuals. Anyone can be polluted and anyone can be cleansed, regardless of hereditary caste status.

Ancestral caste membership, if remembered, provides individuals with little except perhaps pride in their heritage. In this sense, the concept of hierarchy has not completely died out, but has become a type of blurred social status. Brahmin and chamaar have become “ideal” high and low castes, a social continuum on which individuals would rather find themselves highly ranked.

This can be seen by the rumored attempts of some individuals, even in more recent times, to adopt names for themselves or their children that imply high ancestral caste status. However, this probably has less to do with the status of an individual's ancestral caste than with how high and low caste people are generally perceived. According to information obtained during fieldwork, Brahmins are seen as the epitome of good: they are honest, friendly, respectable and trustworthy; they are well-mannered in both personal habit and speech; they are clean and well-groomed; they are religious and maintain a vegetarian and teetotaling lifestyle; they are smart and educated; they are hardworking and work in high-status positions. Chamaars are seen as just the opposite: they are rude and poorly behaved; they are foul-mouthed, talk loudly, and speak improper Hindi; they are dirty and sloppy and have poor grooming and bathing habits; they are dumb and uneducated; they maintain religiously unclean personal habits, such as drinking alcohol, smoking tobacco, and eating beef; they are lazy, cannot hold steady employment, and are willing to do low status, dirty work.

Because of the continued predominance of Hinduism among the Indian community and the subsequent maintenance of their traditional occupation, only Brahmins are loosely defined as a social group. However, this is only because of their common religious prerogatives as priests and not because of any internal caste-based organization. Brahmin families, especially those whose members are well-known pundits, maintain high status and visibility within their settlement areas. On the other hand, there is no way to distinguish a chamaar family from any other family. While certain behavior, and even names, are associated with the members of priestly families, a chamaar heritage has not maintained any social function and does not determine any type of unique behavior. People within a settlement do not know for certain which of their neighbors, if any, are chamaar. The only way to know is to ask, an inquiry seen as rude, not because of the potential embarrassment associated with low caste membership but because of the question's status-seeking implications. Because chamaar behavior is no longer associated with an identifiable social group, it has been reduced to a stereotyped status that can be attributed to anyone; the word itself is used as an insult, meaning a person of low character and poor behavior.

Thus, ancestral caste membership has been reduced to nothing more than that of "status booster." Anyone can profess to be of high caste status, but because it is generally believed that many of the indentured laborers adopted higher castes after arriving in Fiji, all present-day claims are questionable. However, if a man maintains a good reputation within the community and possesses the qualities generally attributed to members of high castes, the

claims he makes for himself and, by extension, for his family are more readily believed by the community at large. Conversely, if he is successful, his achievements may partially be attributed to his heritage, whether or not he is or has ever publicly claimed to be from a high caste. Because caste and other aspects of an individual's status, including religious and subcommunity membership, are attributes of paternal descent, a woman's status is hereditarily irrelevant and subsequently less important. However, after marriage, a woman may publicly adopt various aspects of her husband's status, including caste, religious and subcommunity membership, especially if they are viewed as somehow superior to her own.

### *The Establishment of Noncaste Relationships and Social Groups in Fiji*

While the Indo-Fijian historical and cultural literature fails to find that caste was ever a significant influence on indenture or postindenture social organization (Jayawardena, 1971; Mayer, 1961; Schwartz, 1967a; Gillion, 1962; Brown, 1978, 1981), it does emphasize the importance of noncaste social relationships that were established by the indentured laborers in Fiji. During the indenture period, social relationships that formed among laborers on the plantations were based on common experience, residential propinquity, and association at work (Jayawardena, 1971). For example, many indentured laborers developed ties with other immigrants during the voyage to Fiji that matured into permanent fictive kin relationships known as *jahazi bhai* (boat brother). Also, new arrivals on the sugar cane plantations would find predecessors from their same villages or subdistricts in India and become *gaon bhai* (village brother). *Jahazi* and *gaon bhai* were lifelong social ties made between unrelated laborers that frequently cut across caste and religious lines (Jayawardena, 1971; Mayer, 1961). They were important in the lives of the laborers who remained in Fiji because they represented the reconstruction of family kin groups and provided the laborers with some economic and social security. For example, after the completion of their indenture contracts, *jahazi* or *gaon bhai* would often invest jointly in a sugar-cane lease, a plot of land, or a small store. They would also establish joint households (Brown, 1978), with the recognition of brotherhood so strong as to make the marriage of their children tantamount to incest (Jayawardena, 1971).

After the indenture period, when the former indentured laborers left the plantations and established themselves as independent farmers, subcommunity membership – based on religion, linguistic group, and geographic area of origin in India – grew in importance. This divided the indentured laborers and their descendants into the north, south and Muslim subcommunities that exist in Fiji today. While Indians with the same ancestral caste status feel

no affinity toward one another and do not perceive themselves as members of a group, Indians with the same subcommunity membership do. Traditionally great emphasis has been placed on social and marital endogamy. For example, after indenture, people of the same sociolinguistic group tended to form separate clusters of homesteads (Mayer, 1961). Even today, Indian settlements are known for being predominantly north Indian, south Indian, Muslim, or Punjabi. There is also some indication that, even until the late 1960s, subcommunity exogamous marriages were rare (Schwartz, 1967a). Mayer (1961:144–151) commented on the almost total lack of intermarriage between Hindus and Muslims and between north and south Indians. According to information obtained during fieldwork, social and especially marital endogamy is still preferred. Cultural practices, including religion and behavioral preferences, are different enough to encourage social endogamy. For example, while both the north and south Indian subcommunities are predominantly Hindu, there are distinct differences in the gods and deities they worship and their religious rites, enough to encourage the celebration of different ceremonies and the establishment of separate temples. Also, while subcommunity exogamous marriages are becoming increasingly common, the majority of marriages are still subcommunity endogamous, especially if they are arranged. Clearly, when compared to ancestral caste status, subcommunity membership has greater relevance in the everyday life of the descendants of the indentured laborers.

### *CHAIN MIGRATION AND THE REFORMATION OF CASTE GROUPS: THE GUJARATIS OF FIJI*

Approximately 75 percent of the indentured laborers originated from the northern and central regions of India, with the remaining 25 percent from the south. Western India was never a large supplier of indentured labor to the colonies and only provided 120 laborers to Fiji (Lal, 1983). After 1900, free emigration from what is now the western Indian state of Gujarat began, steadily increasing until immigration restrictions were enacted by the Fiji government starting in the 1930s (Prasad, 1978; Gillion, 1977; Mayer, 1963). Free migration to Fiji, because it was unregulated and unsupervised, was not well documented. However, census data indicates that by 1935 there were 2,500 Gujaratis in Fiji, which represented approximately 3 percent of the total Indian population. By 1945, the Gujarati immigrants had established themselves as a visible Indian subcommunity, noted for their success in trade and commerce (Prasad, 1978).

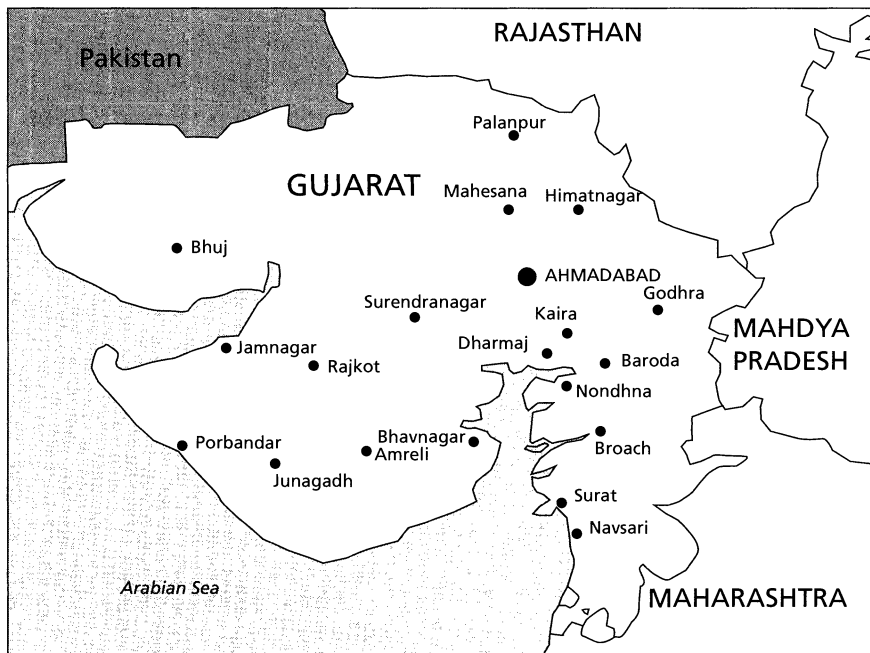
Unlike the indentured laborers, the Gujarati immigrants represented a limited number of social groups that originated from specific towns and districts within a single state in India.<sup>2</sup> In an analysis of passport applications to Fiji for the years 1916 to 1920 and 1928 to 1938, Prasad (1978) found approximately twenty caste groups represented by the potential emigrants, reflecting most of the castes of a typical Gujarati village. However, not all of the applicants undertook the voyage to Fiji. Before 1920, only two caste groups, the Sonis (gold and silversmiths) and the Khattris (weavers), had established themselves as separate communities. During the peak immigration period of the late 1920s and early 1930s, additional caste-based communities were established, including the Kanbis, Patidars, Kolis, and Kachhias (agricultural groups), Navs (barbers), Dhobis (washermen), and Mochis (bootmakers). The immigrants from the remaining caste groups were either too few or lacked the organizational strength and unity to form separate communities in Fiji (Prasad, 1978).

The overwhelming majority of Gujarati immigrants came from the Surat Division of British India and the Navsari Division of Baroda State, both of which were located in the Surat district of the southern, mainland portion of the State of Gujarat (Figure 3). This included the Khattris, a number of the agricultural groups, including the Kanbis, Kolis and Kachhias, and the artisan groups, including the Navs, Dhobis and Mochis. The majority of the Patidars came from the village of Dharmaj and the southern divisions of the Kaira district, the village of Nondhna in the northern division of the Broach district, and the western division of the Baroda district, all of which are located in central Gujarat. The majority of the Sonis came from the towns of Bhavnagar, Junagadh, Porbandar, and Jamnagar, which are located in the coastal districts of Jamnagar, Junagadh, and Bhavnagar in peninsular Gujarat. However, a smaller branch of Sonars, known as Bania Sonis, originated in the same area of south Gujarat as the majority of the other caste groups (Prasad, 1978).

The establishment histories of the various Gujarati caste groups follow a similar pattern (Prasad, 1978; Gillion, 1962). Initially, a few of the more adventurous members would undertake the voyage to Fiji. After starting small

<sup>2</sup>During the period of Gujarati immigration to Fiji, the area of what is now the State of Gujarat was divided into numerous, noncontiguous, independently controlled territories. These included the States of Western India (including Nawanagar, Porbandar, Junagadh, and Bhavnagar), the British territories (including Ahmedabad, Kaira, Broach, Surat, and Panchmahals), the territories of Baroda State (including Navsari and Petland), and various other states. References to the origins of the Gujarati immigrants will be made using the modern administrative divisions of Gujarat State based on the information provided by Prasad (1978).

**Figure 3.** The State of Gujarat, Showing District Capitals and Other Cities



businesses, they would then return to India to recruit male relatives as partners or assistants. These new assistants, after a period of internship, would then use their savings to establish their own businesses and sponsor additional relatives. Other members of their caste, hearing about their success, would follow and establish similar businesses, receiving assistance from caste-mates already settled in Fiji.

Although there was some early family immigration, the initial phase of Gujarati migration was predominantly male, reflecting the desire to generate substantial savings and return to India within a short period of time. However, this took longer than expected. Because of this and other reasons – including the high cost of frequent trips to India, restrictions on single male immigration, and pressures by the Fiji government for more permanent family settlement – family immigration became more frequent after 1920. Rather than marry locally, single Gujarati men would send for their wives left behind in India or would return to India to marry within the required caste group. Caste-based social endogamy increased with the establishment of households, reflecting the need to maintain acceptable behavior as defined by their fami-

lies in India, including religious rites, dietary restrictions, and marital patterns. This was especially important if they were to achieve their goal of returning to India and being accepted by their families as caste members of good standing.

*Chain Migration and the Integrity of Social Groups: The Establishment of Gujarati Caste Extensions in Fiji*

Because the Gujarati community was established through the process of free "chain" migration, as opposed to organized labor migration, many of the caste groups were able to maintain subcaste integrity in Fiji. Unlike the indentured laborers, individual Gujarati migrants left India as members of specific groups and were able to maintain those memberships in Fiji. The success of the initial emigrants provided subsequent immigrants with the necessary contacts and the social and economic bases they needed to survive the transitional settlement period and establish themselves overseas. Conversely, established Gujarati businessmen, through the continual recruitment of relatives and caste-mates, established and enlarged groups of people within which individual members would already have defined social obligations. The establishment of households, as well as the continued prosperity of the community, intensified this process locally. It also continued internationally, as the migrants maintained contact with their families in India, remitting money, recruiting labor, and returning for visits to fulfill religious and social obligations and to search for appropriate marital partners for themselves or their children. Through this constant communication and exchange, the Gujarati subcaste groups in Fiji have established themselves as overseas extensions of their base groups in India.

Subcaste integrity provided the Gujarati community with the structural basis it needed for the continuation of caste-related behavior in Fiji. This is clearly seen by their maintenance of traditional caste occupational specializations. Many of the early immigrants worked within their traditional caste occupations or in closely related fields. For example, Navs worked in their traditional occupation as barbers; Sonis, gold and silversmiths in India, became jewelers in Fiji. While these groups did not completely monopolize these areas, in many cases they did dominate them, the level of which was determined by the subcaste's ability to organize and collectively use its resources against noncaste competitors (Prasad, 1978). The traditional occupations also served as bases for later expansion into related businesses. For example, the Khattris, who were weavers in India, initially dominated the tailoring business but later expanded into textiles and clothing. Through time, the Gujaratis have continued to adapt their commercial enterprises to the changing condi-

tions, even expanding their businesses into nontraditional areas, and have become a powerful force in the economy of Fiji.

The effects of subcaste integrity on behavior can be seen also through their rigid maintenance of marital endogamy. According to information obtained during fieldwork, the majority of marriages within the Gujarati community are still caste and subcaste endogamous. If an appropriate bride or groom is not available locally, matches will be found overseas. Traditionally, the Gujarati community has turned to India to find subcaste-appropriate mates for their children. However, it is becoming increasingly common to find matches in other countries as well, including Australia, New Zealand, England, Canada, and the United States – wherever family connections are available. If a young Gujarati woman defies the wishes of her family and marries out of caste, she will be ostracized (Amratlal, 1975). Gujarati men who marry outside of caste are more likely to be accepted by their families, but it is unlikely that the “half-caste” children will be seen as acceptable marital partners by the wider subcaste community. As in India, an individual’s standing within the subcaste is ultimately determined by his or her ability to marry within the community.

The Gujarati subcaste communities also maintain high levels of economic and social endogamy. While in the early immigration period there were a few businesses established between members of different castes or with non-Gujarati businessmen, most commercial enterprises are conducted among members of a single caste group (Prasad, 1978). Conflicts that may arise are solved through informal caste councils, with strong community pressure directed at preventing litigation and the associated public display of family affairs. Through the use of sanctions, these informal caste councils also ensure that behavioral standards, such as dietary restrictions, religious customs, and marital patterns, are defined and maintained. This perpetuates a common culture that separates its members from the wider Indo-Fijian community, dividing kin and potential kin from noncaste “strangers” and defining the participating households as sanctuaries against the outside world.

Although there are Gujarati subcaste groups in Fiji that originated from the same area in India, a caste system has not been recreated in Fiji. Without a caste structural basis to guide ritual and economic exchange, there is no compelling reason for the subcastes to interact. Behavior based on the interaction of caste groups, including the ritual and commensal hierarchies, serve no purpose and have been abandoned. However, the Gujaratis are aware of the ritual status ascribed to their individual subcastes in India and can place themselves in a relative purity/pollution hierarchy (Prasad, 1978). The position of any one group on this relative hierarchy is still effected by its tradi-

tional occupation and dietary customs, but other factors, such as the general level of wealth and education of its members, also effect its status. While ritual purity has maintained its group basis and is perpetuated by the Gujarati subcastes as overseas extensions of their caste groups in India, it has lost its intergroup basis and therefore much of its functional meaning in Fiji.

### *CONCLUSION*

Clearly, the migration history of the indentured laborers was radically different from that experienced by the free Gujarati immigrants. Because the Gujarati community was established through free, nonlabor migration, it was possible to initiate and maintain family and caste-based migration chains within their migration streams. This allowed for the reestablishment of subcaste group extensions in Fiji, which enabled the Gujarati community to continue caste-related behavior and maintain a level of caste consciousness that the descendants of the indentured immigrants could not. Indentured labor migration, by preventing the reestablishment of caste groups overseas, eliminated the structural basis for caste-related behavior, reducing it to individual or family custom. This established the caste-free culture experienced today by the descendants of the indentured immigrants. The differences between the migration histories and levels of caste consciousness of the two communities are summarized in Table 2.

In her research on the Indian community of Natal, South Africa, Kuper (1960, 1967) also found the descendants of the free, nonlabor immigrants to be "caste-based" while the descendants of the indentured laborers failed to maintain caste. Kuper (1967:252) argues that there are two conditions necessary for caste structure to survive overseas. First, the immigrant Indian group must maintain a separate identity from the time they leave India, either by retaining ties with a protected caste nucleus in India or by isolating their women from intimate cross-caste contact. Second, they must hold a privileged position in the economic organization of the wider society and avoid proletarianization. The history of the Gujarati community in Fiji certainly supports Kuper's conclusions.

However, the survival of a group first depends on its establishment overseas and, in this sense, is not strictly a function of its position in the wider economy of the receiving country. A few related individuals maintaining contacts with their relatives in India do not constitute a subcaste extension. Migrational streams of a sufficient duration and magnitude must be established to enable enough members of a single subcaste group to settle overseas. Only in this way can the social obligations associated with subcaste member-

**TABLE 2**  
**DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE MIGRATION HISTORIES AND LEVEL OF CASTE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE**  
**DESCENDANTS OF THE INDENTURED LABORERS AND GUJARATI FREE MIGRANTS**

| Establishment History and Level of Caste Consciousness  | Descendants of the Indentured Laborers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Descendants of Gujarati Migrants                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Migration Auspices                                      | Indentured labor migration                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Free, nonlabor migration                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Area of Origin within India                             | Various districts within northern states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh and southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Specific towns/districts within State of Gujarat                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Number of Migrating Social Groups                       | Approximately 260 social groups were represented in migration flow (caste, subcaste, religious and tribal groups); full cross-section of castes, from Brahmin to chamaar                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Approximately 20 caste group representatives in migration flow; limited number of caste groups actually established (Sonis, Khattris, Kanbis, Patidars, Kolis, Kachhias, Navs, Dhobis, and Mochis)                                                                                                                                                   |
| Social Organizational Level Present in Migration Stream | Unrelated individuals; mostly single male migrants between the ages of 18 and 30; approximately 25% of migrants were female                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Related individuals, family units and subcaste mates                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Migration Type                                          | Individual migration                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Chain migration and family reunification                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Establishment History                                   | Individual laborers arranged with representatives in India to work on plantations in Fiji; at the end of indenture contract, laborers could return to India or remain in Fiji as independent farmers; many of those who remained married locally and started families                                                                                                                                                                   | Initial migrant "scout" established business and sponsored relatives; caste extensions established through chain migration and family reunification                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Caste Structural Reformation                            | No subcaste reformation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Subcaste reformation; no "caste-system" established                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Caste-Related Characteristics                           | Subcommunity rather than subcaste endogamy; no maintenance of traditional occupations, caste councils, commensal hierarchies, caste-based religious practices, etc.; concepts of purity and pollution reduced to attributes of individuals rather than attributes of groups; ancestral caste status has become a blurred social status, with Brahmin and chamaar as ideal high and low castes; generation and maintenance of Fiji Hindi | Caste and subcaste endogamy; maintenance of traditional caste occupations and expansion into related fields; social and economic endogamy; maintenance of caste-related religious rites and dietary restrictions; use of informal caste-councils to solve problems; strong community pressure against public litigation; maintenance of own language |

ship be recreated and maintained and group endogamy perpetuated. A privileged position within the economy of the new country can facilitate contact and exchange with India and the growth of the community, but this occurs after migration has begun, not during its initial establishment. Thus, it is the

auspices of migration – specifically the ability to establish and maintain migrational chains – that ultimately determines the level of caste-related characteristics reestablished overseas.

Only certain migration auspices have allowed this to occur. Clearly, the indenture system prevents subcaste reformation overseas. This explains why researchers investigating caste in Indian communities established by indentured migration, including those of Mauritius, Guyana, Trinidad, Surinam, and Fiji, find that it has “disintegrated” (Benedict, 1967; Smith and Jayawardena, 1967; Schwartz, 1967a,b; Niehoff, 1967; Clarke, 1967; Speckmann, 1967; Jayawardena, 1971). In a similar fashion, *maistry* labor migration, by emphasizing the recruitment of unrelated individuals, also prevented the reformation of caste in Myanmar (Mahajani, 1960; Chakravarti, 1971). Migration auspices also helps explain why the diaspora communities established in East and South Africa through free migration have been able to maintain caste (Kuper, 1960, 1967; Morris, 1967, 1968; Delf, 1963; Bharati, 1967; Mangat, 1969). Similarly, because *kangany* migration enabled individual laborers to recruit members of their families and subcastes, the Indian communities in Malaysia and Sri Lanka have also maintained caste (Yalman, 1967; Sadhu, 1969; Arasaratnam, 1970; Jain, 1970; Hollup, 1994).

However, it is not simply a free/indentured migrational dichotomy or, as Kuper’s work suggests, a “free/proletarianized” labor dichotomy. The Punjabi community of Fiji, while technically “free” immigrants, has not maintained integral subcaste groups. Although not well documented, most Punjabi immigrants were single males coming from the districts of Jullundur, Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana, Amritsar, and Ferozepore located in north and central Punjab, and Ambala and Rohtak located in north and central Haryana. Most were Jat Sikhs, while others were members of Hindu castes or Muslim groups, including Pathans. There is evidence suggesting that the majority of Punjabi immigration to Fiji was organized by individuals receiving commissions from independent shipping companies in India (Colonial Secretary’s Office, 8533/14, 6026/29, 1307/30; *see also* Gillion, 1962:131–132). By emphasizing the recruitment of individuals from a number of different districts and social groups, Punjabi immigration appears to have had the same effect as indenture immigration on subcaste reformation. Thus, it is instead a “free/organized” recruitment dichotomy, with the establishment of migrational chains representing the level of control a particular community had over its own migration.

What does caste reformation and disintegration among the Indians of Fiji and, more generally, among Indian diaspora worldwide tell us about the generation and maintenance of migrant networks? Clearly, these examples

demonstrate the far-reaching impact that the auspices of migration have on the establishment of ethnic communities in receiving societies. By determining who migrates – either individuals or integral social units – and by influencing the duration and magnitude of migration streams, the auspices of migration define a migration type that influences the predominance of either strong or weak social ties in migrant networks. The density and strength of social ties within these networks directly affects the level of social endogamy a group of immigrants is able to attain; that is, it either allows them to form into ethnic communities based on strong ties with other immigrants or, because weak ties predominate, forces them to establish the majority of their social ties with members of the receiving community, thus encouraging assimilation. In this sense, network formation, or reformation, can determine the continuity of immigrant cultural characteristics reestablished in the receiving society.

This process is clearly evident among the Indians of Fiji. Because indentured labor migration recruited individuals from many geographic areas and social groups, weak social ties dominated the migration streams. Thus, the indentured immigrants were forced to establish new ties with members of the host society – in this case, other indentured laborers – outside of previously defined social groups. This can be seen in their establishment of *jahazi* and *gaon bhai* relationships and of the north, south and Muslim subcommunities. This process laid the foundation for the “general” Indian community of Fiji. Unlike the indentured laborers, strong ties dominated the migration streams of the Gujarati immigrants. Through family and caste-based migration, the Gujarati community increased the proportion of strong ties in their networks. The gradual reestablishment of subcaste extensions allowed them to reduce the number of weak, socially-exogamous ties they maintained with members of the host society. Their continued endogamous practices make the Gujaratis an ethnic community, socially distinct from the rest of the Indians in Fiji.

Obviously, there are other factors that influence network reformation and the establishment of ethnic groups. Examples would include the migration policy of receiving states (Freeman, 1992) and the mode of incorporation of the immigrant community into the receiving society (Portes and Borocz, 1989). It could be argued also that the association between migration auspices and cultural reformation indicated by the Fiji Indian example specifically and overseas Indian communities in general is simply a historical “accident.” That is, perhaps caste reformation or disintegration was the result of factors specific to international migration during that time period. There may be some truth to that argument. For example, the migration policy of the receiving societies was determined not by the individual countries but by

British colonial hegemony, which established a degree of policy standardization. Also, the majority of the immigrants were integrated into their receiving societies as laborers.

However, this argument reduces the importance of the migration process in the establishment of ethnic communities overseas. While factors such as the migration policy of the host country or the position of the immigrants in the wider economy can influence the establishment, duration, and magnitude of migration streams, an overseas community cannot be formed without migration. In other words, migration is the determinate root cause of the emergence of an ethnic community overseas. By occurring within a specific migration context, the individual act of migrating is transformed by the auspices under which it occurs into a collective migration type that influences the strength and density of social ties present in the entire immigrant group. In this way, the auspices of migration directly affects the level of cultural reformation found in the host society. This process is not specific to a particular country or group of countries, but would hold for any historic period. For example, the differences in the migration auspices that established the Haitian and Cuban communities in the United States may partially explain some of the cultural differences, such as the presence or absence of enclave organization, found between them today (Portes, 1995b). By influencing the establishment and growth of migrant networks, this research clearly demonstrates the impact that the auspices of migration can have on the emergence of ethnic communities overseas.

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