"Double Passage": Marriage and Migration in Punjabi American Women's Narratives

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There is a salient absence of women in the history of Punjabi diaspora. Within the study of Punjabi migration to North America, there is extensive scholarship about the male migrants who arrived at the turn of the twentieth century. This is the first study to chart the distinctive history and worldview of Punjabi American women from their perspective. It is based on oral history and archival research with the first generation of Punjabi women who settled in California in the 1950s and 1960s. Women's narratives highlight the striking parallels in their recollections of their spatial and emotional passages as young brides to their in-laws' villages in Punjab and to their transnational journeys as married women to the United States. A gendered geography of the Punjabi diaspora highlights the importance of understanding locality in addition to macro analyses of transnational border crossings and cultural practices.

Father why did your eyes well up with tears?
Father, daughters are always someone else's.
I am going to leave my father's home
I am going to leave my mother's home.
Where I used to play with my friends hide and seek.
Father, daughters are always someone else's.

-- Composed by Harbans Kaur Panu, c 1990, Yuba City, CA[1]

Fifty years after leaving her family home in a village in north India as a young bride, Harbans Kaur Panu sang this autobiographical song at her retirement party in Yuba City, CA. For Harbans, there was a compelling emotional logic connecting her wedding to her retirement. Her sadness at leaving behind her friends triggered a well-spring of emotions about her departure from her family as a young bride. In the course of my fieldwork with the first generation of South Asian women who arrived in California at midcentury, I became fascinated by how women's memories of their first passage as young brides formed an archetypal event against which future relocations, rites of passage, and emotional losses were understood. In particular, women's second passage from Punjab, India to rural California was informed by and remembered through the lens of the first. The principal difference was that the women had been groomed for their bridal journey while their secondary relocation was largely unexpected.

This study examines the double passages of the first generation of South Asian women who settled in the United States beginning in the 1950s, namely, the layering of memories of their local and transnational journeys.[2] I use the concept of a passage to convey the act of moving through or past one place and/or stage of life to another. In contrast to the dominant paradigms in diaspora and immigration studies that emphasize traversing national borders, the idea of a passage enables a broader examination of the processes of mobility across both geographical and temporal planes. Women's narratives reveal the striking parallels in their memories of their spatial and emotional passages as young brides to neighboring villages in Punjab and later as married women to California. This analytical framing brings locality into the foreground, the inner life of the home into public view. The focus on locality, I contend, is critical to understanding the interior lives of Punjabi women, women whose lives were largely confined within the walls of their home courtyards in action and in worldview. It is important to note that nearly all of the women in this study exercised no say in the decisions to undergo either journey.

There is a salient absence of women in the historiography of South Asians in the United States. This is the first study that focuses on the first generation of South Asian American women, and it addresses basic questions about women's lives neglected by scholars. After Punjabi men left for distant shores beginning in the late nineteenth century, what happened to the women and children who were left behind in Punjab for years, even decades? How did women's migration experiences differ from men's? What role did women play in the formation of South Asian American communities and institutions in the post-war era, and the reunification of families? This analysis of women's narratives explores the entanglements of space and emotion, and it poses this core question: how were women's transnational relocations from Punjab to California informed by their earlier journeys as young brides to their in-laws' households in nearby villages in Punjab?

A Gendered Geography of the South Asian Diaspora

The concept of a diaspora, or the dispersal of a people from a homeland, has become the dominant framework in the study of global South Asians. Leading theorists prioritize the nation-state and transnational practices as the dominant forces shaping the lives of overseas South Asians.[3] Feminist scholars assert that focusing on the space of the national and transnational involves 'the implicit gendering of diaspora as male through attention to movement and rupture associated with men.'[4] Feminist inquiry has brought a critical lens to the smaller scales of analysis, particularly of the home and the ways that public and private life have been defined in gendered terms historically. Bhattacharjee's formative work posits the importance of the home in the formulation of national (Indian) culture among wealthy South Asians who settled in the US after 1965.[5] In the imaginaries of recent South Asian Americans, she argues, the home is envisioned as an inviolable cultural domain free of Western influence, a space that is associated with women's crucial role in reproducing Indian culture

abroad. Linta Varghese calls on scholars to excavate 'the multiple meanings and scales of home that are nested in the national' and to attend to the ways that women and men are positioned differently vis-a-vis the home and the nation.[6]

This study also draws on emerging scholarship that theorizes the social production of space and emotion in South Asia.[7] Rather than viewing them as *a priori* categories, I consider how space and emotion are shaped by lived practices that are continually performed and transformed within changing historical and cultural contexts. The women's lives in this study were largely confined within the borders of the home. The extended family formed the primary power structure that governed their lives. I foreground the experiences of diasporic rural women from the perspective of the home. This vantage point offers a fresh angle to understanding mobility by paying attention to the affective experiences of South Asian Punjabi women during their multiple relocations from home.

In the course of my fieldwork, I created an affective archive by recording the narratives of the first generation of South Asian American women.[8] An analysis of women's narratives enables a reframing of the history of South Asian Americans by showing that:

1. women's migration experiences differed profoundly from men's,
2. power dynamics within the home played as great or greater a role as the nation-state in governing women's lives, and
3. there was a mirroring in women's reflections about both passages in terms of their traumatic emotional ruptures and dislocations from home, as well as their emotional resilience.

Women expressed their primary emotions as they moved through these passages - fear, sorrow, loss, longing, loneliness, as well as excitement and hope. Once in Yuba City, Punjabi women found solace in each other's company. Female friendships offered succor and emotional resilience as women adjusted to their new lives in California.

History of South Asians in the United States

The first significant number of Indians settled in the West Coast of North America beginning in the 1890s. The majority were men from relatively affluent farming families who left the Punjab region in northern British India seeking adventure and economic opportunity abroad. Most came from villages in Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur, two demographically congested districts in Punjab that experienced land shortages and debt after British annexation in 1849. Half had served in the British Army and police forces. While stationed in Shanghai and Hong Hong, they boarded ships bound for Vancouver and San Francisco after hearing stories about fortunes to be made in North America.[9]

The first generation of Indian men played an important part in the development of the West, building railroads, laboring in the lumber mills of the northwest, and eventually settling in California's Central Valley to farm land reminiscent of the fertile alluvial fields of Punjab. Punjabi migrant farmers were

highly knowledgeable about irrigation, and contributed labor and expertise to the growth of fruit and rice farming in the Sacramento Valley, vegetable farming near Stockton, and cotton and lettuce farming in the Imperial Valley near the border with Mexico.

Indian migrants encountered a hostile racial landscape in North America in the early twentieth century. The Asiatic Exclusion League, formed in opposition to Chinese and Japanese immigrants, turned its ire against Indian migrants whom they viewed as another inferior race that would compete for jobs and work for lower wages. Despite the small number of Indian migrants in the United States, the popular press raised the alarm about the 'tide of turbans.'[10] In 1910, a widely publicized immigration report concluded that Indians were 'the most undesirable of all Asiatics and the peoples of the Pacific states were unanimous in their desire for exclusion.'[11] This racial antipathy led to a wave of legislation that barred immigration from India and Asia more broadly in 1917 and 1924, and denied Indians US citizenship in 1923 along with the right to own land.[12] There were race riots targeting Indian migrants in Vancouver, Canada (1907), Bellingham, WA (1907), Marysville, CA (1908) and numerous towns in the North American West. The Indian American population declined from roughly 7,000 in 1910 to 2,405 by 1940 due to exclusionary US immigration policies and the passing of the early settlers.[13]

Punjabi male migrants faced formidable challenges in establishing families. Many had already married in Punjab before traveling abroad. Initially, the men planned to return to their families in India with their savings. However, many eventually decided to settle abroad but most were unable to bring their wives after the 1917 Asian Barred Zone Act. In fact, Indian migrants had the lowest proportion of women among all Asian migrant groups in the US - there were just 100 Indian women for 1,572 men in 1930.[14] Hundreds of men decided to return to India or were deported.

Nayan Shah uncovers the transient solidarities and intimate ties of male Indian migrants with men of diverse racial backgrounds in the West Coast of North America in the early 1900s.[15] Among the Punjabi migrants who decided to settle in the US, many married women of diverse backgrounds, especially from Mexico. Unable to bring their wives or to marry women of European ancestry due to racist laws, many early Indian male migrants married women of diverse backgrounds, especially from Mexico. Karen Leonard documents the culturally hybrid Punjabi-Mexican American families that were the norm for Punjabi Americans from the 1910s until the 1950s.[16] The passage of the watershed 1965 Immigration Act transformed the United States and the South Asian American community, dramatically increasing immigration from Asia and Latin America due to the elimination of racial preference in US immigration policy and the emphasis on well-educated professionals and the principle of family reunification. The post-1965 South Asian immigrants were selected for success; today they are the wealthiest and most educated group in the United States.[17]

Rattan Kaur was the first Punjabi woman to arrive in the United States. She came with her husband, Bakhshish Singh Dhillon, a British Army veteran who

had entered the country earlier in 1897. Their daughter, Kartar Kaur Dhillon, who was born in California in 1915, was probably the first Punjabi woman born in the US. The Dhillon family played an active role in India's freedom struggle as founding members of the *Gadar* (revolutionary) party in Astoria, Oregon, in April 1913.[18]

This article focuses on a neglected era in South Asian American history at midcentury. In addition to the two periods that have received scholarly attention in the early 1900s and the post-1965 era, this study explores the critical role that women played at midcentury right after immigration, citizenship and basic civil rights were reinstated for South Asian Americans on a limited basis, and as South Asian American families and communities took shape.

Reclaiming Women's Voices: Methods & Ethics

My own journey to studying diasporic Punjabi women began with my dissertation about the history of marriage networks among itinerant traders from western India to the US via Africa and England. In additional to archival research in India and Chicago, I gathered extensive oral histories of women in the diasporic Gujarati business (*patidar*) caste to gain insights into how their families and businesses changed across the post-Independence era and vast geographical areas.[19] The current study emerged from four years of archival and oral history research documenting the history of California's Punjabi community in the Sacramento Valley over the last 120 years. Through the course of my research, I again noted the salient absence of women in the public record and as historical actors in the community's collective memory. Building on my dissertation research, I embarked on gathering intensive oral history research with a diverse array of women in California's Punjabi farming community.

The process of documenting women's history in Yuba City's Punjabi community required collaboration and patience. In the fall 2016, I formed a working group with three daughters of the first cohort of Punjabi women who settled in Yuba City in the 1950s and early 1960s.[20] We spent one year planning the selection of women to be interviewed. The women whom I worked with played an essential role in coaxing elderly women to participate in sharing intimate aspects of their lives in filmed interviews. The filmed interviews were interwoven into 'Jutti Kasoori' ('Walking into the Unknown'), the first documentary about the history of women in California's Punjabi community, and the UC Davis Pioneering Punjabis Digital Archive.[21] At first the elderly women were reluctant to speak about their lives publicly. When the women on the planning committee approached the elderly women, they were met with this response: 'Why would anyone want to hear what I have to say? My life isn't important.' Every woman's participation involved multiple conversations from daughters in the community who had known them their entire lives in order to gain their trust and confidence. In addition, I generally met with each interviewee in advance to explain the importance of women's history and to establish a rapport. I also gave every participant the opportunity to view the interviews to make a final decision about whether portions or all of the interview

would be made public. Out of respect for these women's desire to be acknowledged and heard publicly, I have included their actual birth names in this publication with their written consent. Every woman interviewed was given the right to make the final decision about whether to publicly release part, all or none of their interview as per the consent form. The interviews were conducted in Punjabi women's homes in Punjabi and English. The private setting was critical to help women feel comfortable in sharing their intimate experiences and emotions in a safe space.

In the Punjabi American community, it is still unusual for elderly women to speak publicly, especially about their personal lives. During the interviews, it felt as if women were being asked questions about their lives for the first time. There was a palpable energy in the room in which women expressed their intense desire to share their opinions, emotions, and experiences. As a result of following a slow process in which the women gradually adjusted to the idea of their speaking publicly on camera, the support and encouragement of other women, gaining familiarity with me over time, and conducting the interview in homes all combined to make the women feel surprisingly comfortable speaking with me about their lives on camera. The women's voices were raw, unsentimental.

In addition to women's initial reluctance to speak publicly, there were conspicuous, pervasive silences about certain topics, such as the violence and trauma of the 1947 partition. However, in the company of trusted female friends, some women openly shared their harrowing partition memories on camera; others remained guarded. Subjects that could reflect negatively on their family's *izzat* (honor, reputation) were rarely broached, such as divorce, domestic abuse, and persistent poverty. But certain topics were brought to light for the first time publicly in this project, namely, the importance of women's work. It is still rare for an elderly woman from a respectable family to publicly acknowledge working outside the home. It took courage for some women to publicly acknowledge the staggering amount of work they contributed to their family's farming businesses, as well as their work and professional ambitions outside the home. The timing of the project was critical. By the time the interviews took place in December 2017, this first generation of South Asian women in Yuba City had reached an age when they felt comfortable discussing their lives more openly without fear of 'lok galan karange' ('people will talk'). Sadly, within a year of the interviews several of the women had already passed and many more would not have been able to participate due to health conditions.

The heart of this study are the life histories of 12 Punjabi-American women who settled in rural farming communities in California's Central Valley between 1951 and 1965, primarily in Yuba City. The women were born between the late 1920s and early 1940s. The majority of women were born into relatively affluent landowning Sikh families in the dominant farming (*Jat)* caste. The geographical spread of female migrants follows the overall pattern in which Punjabi migrants originated from villages in the Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur districts. Almost all of the women experienced extreme trauma during India's partition in 1947. Marriage was arranged by the extended families, and the women generally were

not consulted about the marriage or the decision to emigrate to the US after marriage. This generation of women began to arrive in California after World War II shortly after Punjabis were finally able to enter the US legally, regained eligibility for US citizenship and the right to own land, and started their ascent in peach farming**.**

Image 1: South Asian Punjabi Circle of Friends, Tierra Buena Gurdwara, Yuba City, CA, 2008. Women featured in the photograph (left to right): 1st row: Rajinder K. Takhar, Gain K. Mann, Harbhajan K. Purewal, Swarn K. Johl, Darshan K. Johl, Shindo Dherni, Hardev K. Mann. 2nd row: Gurmit K. Samra, Harbhajan K. Takher, Naranjan K. Basrai, Gurmit K. Takhar, Swarno K. Johl. Photo by Dr Manohar Singh Grewal.

Table 1: Punjabi American Women Interviewees Who Arrived in CA, 1951-1965

Name	Birth Year	Age at Marriage	Marriage Year	Education (Years/Degree)	Age at Partition	Natal Village/ City	Natal District/ Country	US Arrival Year
Surjit Kaur Bhatti	1930	17	1947	5	17	Veerpind	Jalandhar, India	1965
Kushlia Devi Hunji	1918	18	1936	Associates Degree	29	Nakwal	Hoshiarpur, India	1952
Manjit Kaur Janda	1947	16	1963	High School (10)	>1	Nainobarpigey	Hoshiarpur, India	1963

Verinder Kaur Kajla	1935	15/44	1950/1979	7	12	Morro	Jalandhar, India	1951
Harpal Kaur Dulai	1936	20	1956	High School (10)	11	Bding	Jalandhar, India	1963
Bakshish Kaur Mann	1933	16	1949	0	14	Bange	Jalandhar, India	1960
Harbans Kaur Panu	1941	20	1961	5	6	Rudiwalla	Tarn Taran, India	1961
Preetam Purewal	1929	22	1950	0	18	Badala	Jalandhar, India	1962
Savitri Randhawa	1928	33	1961	Master's Degree	19	Kot Umrana	Sargodha, Pakistan	1961
Veena Kaur Kajla	1940	19	1961	College Degree (India)	7	Delhi	Delhi, India	1961
Gurmit Takhar	1932	18	1950	5	15	Badala	Jalandhar, India	1959
Harbhajan Takher	1928	15	1943	5	19	Sumrami	Jalandhar, India	1956

The Courtyard: Growing Up as a Girl in Punjab

The women in this study were born in villages in the decades before India's partition. Their lives and imaginations were largely confined within the walls of the home courtyard (*vehrra*). From birth, a girl from a Punjabi village in north India is prepared for the journey she will take as a young bride from her parents' home to her in-laws' house in a nearby village. Her mother teaches her how to do the housework and how to behave so that she will survive in her in-laws home by fulfilling her new roles as wife, daughter-in-law, and mother. A daughter is told by her family that she is '*paraya dhan*' (someone else's wealth), a guest in her home who will belong to her husband's family one day. She must learn to adjust to her in-laws' family's lifestyle and expectations. Many women gradually fit into their new roles and gain love and respect as they grow older as mothers, especially if they give birth to sons.

Women's life experiences in this study reflect their specific historical circumstances growing up in rural Punjab in the thirties and forties. Saraswati Raju's *Gendered Geographie*s (2011) explores the complex relationship between gender relations and space in South Asia, contending that power relations between men and women both reflect and are maintained by *local* social relations, institutions and practices. As a result, family structures and marriage practices vary widely by region, caste/class, and time period. It is productive to analyze the marriage practices and rituals of elite landholding families in Punjabi villages in the 1930s and 1940s in the tumultuous years

leading up to partition. Marriage practices, Raju contends, play a critical role in the consolidation of land and power among dominant groups in the north Indian plains, including Punjab. Patrilocal village exogamy, a practice in which daughters marry into families from the same caste in nearby villages, is the normative marriage practice among dominant groups in order to achieve lateral expansion through affinal alliances. Women's roles and actions are the most restricted within north Indian families, including in Punjab. Additionally, it is within these dominant groups in north India that the status of women is most devalued. Women are treated as property that will be given to another family after marriage, and through the process of these marriage transactions, women assume secondary importance to the reputation and status of the *khandaan* (patriarchal family lineage or clan). Patriarchal restrictions intensify amidst military conquest and unrest. In conditions of imminent fighting, 'the kin nucleus of the "female surrounded by father, brother, husband, and sons"' would rally around the women in protection.[22]

Although it is beyond the scope of this article to examine India's partition in 1947 at length, it is important to understand that the women in this study grew up amidst unprecedented violence. Punjab was the epicenter of the horrific communal violence surrounding India's partition in which over one million Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus were murdered.[23] During the interviews, the women conveyed a sense of danger and violence lurking beyond the walls of their home courtyards. Just as the girls reached puberty, even this safe space was threatened. This was a time when the safety of daughters, so central to a family's honor in Punjabi society, was constantly imperiled by the deteriorating relationship between Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus. Although the deep friendships and mutual reliance of villagers from different faiths could prevent violence, eventually the escalating cycle of violence and retribution erupted on a mass scale just as these women reached puberty. The majority of the women in this study came from the *Doaba* region, and therefore did not become refugees after partition. Yet all of the women experienced tremendous fear, and often witnessed violence, during partition. Several women recalled sleeping on the roofs of their homes ready to hurl stones to repel intruders. Most families of all faiths believed that an honorable death by murder or suicide for their female relatives was preferable to rape or religious conversion. To varying degrees, all of the women in this study are partition survivors who lived through one of the most terrifying eras in modern history.

The contours of these women's childhoods are illustrated by Harbhajan Kaur Takher's life history. She was born into a wealthy Sikh *Jat* family in Samran, Jalandhar district, Punjab in 1928. Harbhajan's birth was celebrated by her family at a time when the birth of a girl was generally regarded as a financial burden rather than a cause for celebration by the family and village. Her family named her 'Harbhajan' (god's prayer) signifying the family's wish to protect her well-being right after losing two daughters in infancy.

Harbhajan grew up in a home that included a large courtyard (*vehrra*) in the middle of the home compound. The courtyard was the space of freedom and play in her brief childhood. 'All of the girls, and the smaller boys, would come

to our courtyard [to play].'[24] Beyond the safety of her home, she felt secure in her neighborhood with her relatives living in a cluster nearby: 'our neighborhood was like one big family.' Respectable families in rural Punjab followed the custom of village exogamy in which marriages were arranged with families of similar caste and socio-economic backgrounds in neighboring villages. It was taboo to marry someone within the natal village as boys and girls were viewed as brothers and sisters. Harbhajan was only allowed to complete four years of school. Even though she wanted to continue with her education, she explained: 'I just never had the time. I was already engaged when I was five years old.'[25] Typically girls from respectable families could continue their education in girls' schools up until they would be required to attend a school in another village. Families were not willing to take the risk of letting their daughters go beyond their surveillance. Most girls' education ended after four or five years due to the limited education for girls in rural Punjab. As Charan Kang explained: 'Girls weren't allowed to go out much. We never went outside. They also wouldn't educate girls. They kept us busy with housework."[26]

Families sought to protect the family's honor by securing a marriage alliance for their daughters with boys from similar class/caste backgrounds in nearby villages. The family's status was closely tied to strategic marriage alliances and the purity of the women in the family within the bloodline. Therefore, most women were engaged as girls and wed as teenagers to avoid the calamity of a daughter losing her purity outside of marriage. With the escalating communal tensions and violence in the 1930s and 1940s, there was heightened surveillance of girls' behavior, especially after puberty. Unlike boys, girls were instructed by elders to play at home, not outside. Another woman, Surjit Bhatti, asked with genuine incredulity, laughing: 'How could boys be treated the same as girls?' Her friend, Bakshish Mann, explained: 'Brothers could go anywhere while daughters couldn't.'[27] According to Harbans Panu, Sikh girls from respectable families even wore *burqas* (clothing covering the entire body) 'to prevent Muslims from kidnapping them.'[28]

Mothers were preoccupied with the imperatives of teaching their daughters how to fulfill their roles as young wives and daughters-in-law. Harbhajan Takher's mother was concerned with teaching her daughter the housework that she would need to master as a bride. 'My mom would make sure we did all the work. She wanted us to know how to do everything.'[29] Mothers equipped their daughters with the survival skills they would need in their in-laws houses, teaching them the importance of adapting to their in-laws' lifestyle and mastering housework in a 'stranger's' house - cooking, sewing, cleaning, raising children.

One of the most poignant themes in women's interviews was their regret at being denied the opportunity to further their education. The necessity of maintaining the family's honor meant that women were married by their late teens; consequently, the majority of the women in this cohort received a few years of education if any. According to Charan Kang, an 85-year old woman in Yuba City:

I dreamed of getting an education often. I still do now.

> *When my kids tell me how to do something, I think to myself, 'Had I been educated, I would have been able to do this.' This thought stays in my heart, 'Who knows where God would have taken me [if I had been educated.]*[30]

Savitri Randhawa's life experiences differed significantly from the other women interviewed, especially in her educational and professional attainment. According to Savitri, 'my parents treated the girls equally with the boys. We never felt that we were treated in any way less than the boys.' She offered this explanation for the roots of gender discrimination in north India: 'People thought it was important to have a boy in the family because girls were not highly educated, and girls didn't have the right to property. That is why people thought that it was important to have a boy.'[31] After completing her college education in Lahore, she traveled to the United States in 1961 as an unmarried woman to pursue higher education. She married Narinder Singh Randhawa (an agricultural scientist at UC Davis) and obtained her master's degree in California before returning to India where she obtained a professorship in education.

The First Passage: A Bride's Journey To a 'Foreign Home'

Marriage was anticipated by girls, and their families, with anxiety, fear, dread, and sadness, mixed with excitement and hope. For young women whose lives were largely contained in their villages, even in the inner courtyards of their homes, relocating to a stranger's home in another village felt like migrating to a foreign land. Girls and their families referred to their in-laws home in the terms described by Bakshish Mann: 'My family would say, "You're going to a foreign home, you should know how to do all the work." "Is it easy living with a stranger?"' Surjit Bhatti laughed nervously: 'I couldn't sleep for three to four days [before the wedding]. It was very hard. My mom and I both couldn't sleep for three to four days.' Laughing again, she added: 'It was like this with everyone.'[32]

Many women expressed a feeling of self-alienation during their wedding ceremonies. For Manjit Kaur Janda, who married at the age of fifteen to a boy who lived in California, her wedding day felt like an out-of-body experience:

> *I was too young to appreciate my wedding day…it seemed as if I was playing a role in a play, as if someone kept giving me directions and I was just following along… I couldn't understand what was happening to me.*[33]

One of the most important wedding rituals is called *doli*. This ritual is named after the traditional carriage that was used to transport a bride from her family home to her in-laws' house without being publicly visible. This is a highly emotional ritual in which the bride says goodbye to her parents and other family before leaving for her new life. Traditionally, sad songs are performed by

women in the family before the bride's departure. Today Punjabi brides usually depart in a car, but the ritual in which a bride says farewell to her family is still performed. When elderly women spoke of the doli, they shared vivid memories of the moment of departure from their families that signaled the end of their childhoods.

After marriage, women described the difficulty in adjusting to the new lifestyles at their in-laws house. This was a typical description of their transitions to their lives as wives: 'You have to go to the new house. You don't know what you are going to say or do. You cook the food and do the laundry from the first day.'[34] Women felt nervous about doing or saying the wrong thing in front of their in-laws. Surveillance, household chores, and loneliness were the predominant themes in women's recollections of their early years after marriage.

But the most traumatic aspects of entering married life involved leaving their families and the emotional barrenness they often encountered in their in-laws households in the beginning. Decades later, Harbans Panu composed an autobiographical song about the lingering emotional trauma she experienced as she left her family's home as a young bride. 'A daughter is always someone else's' is the song she composed to comfort herself in her later life as she never fully recovered from this early trauma. Harbans Takher describes the painful emotional transition to married life in beautifully stark, honest terms spoken in a calm, detached manner:

> *There were feelings of sadness. Nothing felt good then. You don't feel at ease because there is no love at first. You have to start all over again to build the love. I made myself feel better by telling myself, 'Where else could I go?' I had to stay there [laughs]*[35]

Eventually the ties of affection grew between Harbhajan and her new family members, but it was challenging in the beginning. It was during this time that her faith in God (*Waheguru*) deepened; Waheguru was her main source of strength sustaining her in the early days of her marriage. Women experienced a form of socio-cultural adjustment, even shock, in adapting to their new lives in a 'foreign' home, family, and village. Even though they had only moved short distances to nearby villages, most women never fully came to emotional terms with the loss of their childhoods and the love and familiarity of their family homes.

Second Passage: Adjusting To Life in Yuba City, Ca

Women's recollections of their passages to California bear striking similarities with their memories of their migration from their family home to their in-laws' in Punjab after marriage. The emotional memories collapsed the disparity in geographical distances traversed in the two relocations. When recalling their journeys to California and early years in Yuba City, women emphasized their lack of input in the decisions to migrate, the need to adjust their appearance and

behavior to fit into a broader social structure, and the hard work they performed after both migrations. The underlying emotions were also the same, namely, initial feelings of loneliness and isolation. In Yuba City, these women eventually found help and comfort in each other's company, and by their active involvement in the Punjabi community and in the workplace.

During their journeys from Punjab to California, women recalled feeling profoundly disoriented, afraid, and distressed as they traveled over 7,000 miles by air. Verinder Kajla and Surinder Tumber, both young married women, flew together from Punjab to Yuba City in 1951. The women barely knew each other, but were bonded by their disorienting journey to the United States to join their husbands. As Verinder recalls, 'the journey was terrible… it took so long I thought we would never get here. We stayed on the plane the whole time. We didn't eat nothing. We didn't drink nothing. Nothing [would] stay down.'[36] Most of the women interviewed didn't know where the plane stopped in multiple countries in transit on their four-day journey from India to California. Having barely ventured beyond her village or her in-laws' village, Harbans Panu felt terrified traveling all of the way to America:

> *'When I left Delhi, I was so scared because I don't know English. Then I was saying [to myself], 'I don't know where I'm going.'... I had my mom's milk for five years. [Laughing] I really missed my mom. The entire journey I spent crying. I developed a fever when I got here…I got so sick. On the second day, I went to the hospital.'*[37]

Once in Yuba City, she became so ill that a Punjabi woman whom she had just met took her to the hospital. Harbans needed her help because she didn't know how to speak English. She stayed at the hospital for three days. Her new friend helped her through the illness and then took her shopping to buy American clothes.

The majority of women from the villages had no say in the decision to relocate to the United States. They arrived as young wives to join their husbands who had already settled into farming in Yuba City. As Surjit Bhatti explained, 'The husband is the one who made the decision [to come to the US].'[38] The women in this study had spent between one and 12 years apart from their husbands. Most had heard the sad stories of women who had been left behind for decades in Punjabi villages at a time when it was nearly impossible to bring a bride to the US due to the ban on Asian immigration. Bhani Rai, for instance, spent 62 years apart from her husband, Chanchal, a leader in Yuba City's Punjabi community. She raised two sons in a Punjabi village, at times resorting to selling milk to survive. She joined her husband in Yuba City at the very end of her long life in 1989. Even then they did not live together. He continued to live as a bachelor in a separate residence.

Image 2: Bhani and Chanchal Rai reunited after 62 years, Yuba City, 1989. Courtesy of the Rai family.

When the first generation of South Asian women arrived in California in the early fifties, the Punjabis formed a small, tight-knit community. The South Asian community was just beginning to recover from decades of political, legal and social discrimination. Between 1923 and 1946, South Asian immigrants could not obtain US citizenship, including the right to own land. In 1946, citizenship and immigration was reinstated for South Asian immigrants on a limited basis. Immediately there was a flurry of activity in which Punjabi immigrants bought land. It was in the post-World War II period that Yuba City became the vibrant center of the Punjabi community in the US due to the community's success in peach farming. Growing peaches allowed Punjabi farming families to earn a profit very quickly with a small amount of capital and the labor of family members.

After hearing about opportunities in America, Punjabi women were often shocked when they saw the living conditions of Punjabi men in Yuba City. When Sant Kaur Grewal saw her new home at Swarn Singh's labor camp, she wept. The family had moved into a space that was once a so-called Hindu camp in which Punjabi male bachelors had worked for decades for a white farmer who owned the property. The 'bachelors' (even though about half were married with wives left behind in Punjab), lived communally in bunk houses in which one man cooked for everyone; the men ate together at a large communal table. The labor camps were segregated by race. Punjabis lived in so-called 'Hindu campus' because the local referred to Punjabi migrants as 'Hindus' even though the majority were followers of the Sikh faith.[39] Oak trees were known by local whites as 'Hindu trees' due to the common practice of Punjabi men sleeping beneath them at night.

The first Punjabi women arrived in these male quarters in the camps, although they lived in separate buildings designated for single families. Domesticating these dilapidated male spaces would require tremendous female

labor. As soon as the family was financially solvent, the families moved into their own homes. The situation was only tolerable because it was understood to be temporary**.**

Image 3: Sant Kaur Grewal with family in the "Hindu camp," Yuba City, 1963. Courtesy of Dr Manohar Grewal.

Punjabi women's memories of their early days in California were saturated with feelings of loneliness, homesickness and depression. When the 17-year old bride, Nand Kaur, saw her new home in the US in 1923, she cried a great deal. 'When we reached our home, which was situated on a small apple orchard, it seemed like a very lonely place.' She desperately missed the company of other women, saying, 'I told my husband "time no pass for me.'''[40] Women often spent the days alone at home while their husbands worked long hours in the fields. In her mid-eighties, Gurmit Kaur Takhar, vividly recalls how she felt in the early days in the US: 'I used to sweep and sit down on the floor, and think… "I have to stay here." I cried.'"[41] She would pray that money would fall from heaven so that she could return to Punjab to see her family.

In the 1950s, California's Punjabi community was hybrid as well. The Punjabi women who married into Punjabi-Mexican families often felt intensely lonely. Their husbands had generally lost knowledge of the Punjabi language and culture. When Manjit Kaur Janda arrived in Yuba City, she joined a family in which the father-in-law had married a Mexican-American wife. Manjit's husband could not speak Punjabi. In fact, the only family member Manjit could communicate with was her father-in-law. 'Life was very lonely', Manjit exclaimed. 'There was no communication back then [with family in India]. In my head I used to think, 'I will never be able to go back. Now I am here and I am stuck.'" It took years for her to bridge the cultural chasm with her new family: 'Their food, their behavior and their lifestyle were very different from a

Punjabi lifestyle…it was a hard life.' 'Like two kids from two different worlds' is how Manjit described her early relationship with her husband.[42]

Nearly all of the women described the early years in the United States as extremely difficult; for most, it was the hardest time of their entire lives. It took over a year to overcome the loneliness and shock of arrival. Even Veena Singh, who was excited about coming to America, found the transition to be challenging: 'When you get married and go to the marital home. That's when you realize, "This is it. You can't go back anymore. You have to stay here."'[43] Note that Veena conflates the feeling of no return with her experience of adjusting to marriage and her arrival in the US. The second passage to the States is emotionally entangled with the memory of the painful separation and transition to married life. Despite the emotional hardships, the women would paint a rosy picture to their parents back home so that they would not worry. 'I never used to write anything negative to my parents' Veena Singh explained. 'I would always talk about how everything was good in America.'[44]

Women sometimes encountered another painful situation when they arrived in Yuba City; some of the newly-arrived brides from India learned that their husbands were continuing their romantic relationships with other women. The 16-year old bride, Verinder Kajla, became pregnant soon after arriving in Yuba City. She discovered her husband's infidelity when a fellow Punjabi woman casually remarked about their husbands: 'There they go to see their old girlfriends.' 'She would make me *so depressed*,' Verinder sighed.[45]

Soon after arriving in California, Verinder's husband, Kartar Singh, took her shopping in Sacramento to buy her first American clothes. More than twenty years older, her husband had lived in Yuba City since 1924. He also took his wife and her friend to the barber shop for their first haircuts. Verinder described how she and her friend sobbed as the barber cut their hair into shoulder-length bobs that were fashionable in 1950s America. For Sikhs, letting their hair grow naturally out of respect for the divine is a vital part of their identity. Verinder describes her haircut as a violation of her body and spirit, especially since her mother's final wish was that her daughter never cut her hair. Her mother passed when Verinder was just seven years old.[46] Given the hostility of local whites to Punjabis, her husband saw the adoption of American dress as a vital survival strategy.

Image 4: Verinder Kaur with husband, Kartar Singh in Punjab (left), c 1950. Courtesy of Verinder Kaur Kajla.

Image 5: Verinder Kaur Kajla and her husband after her first haircut in Yuba City (right), 1952. Courtesy of Verinder Kaur Kajla.

Before the 1970s, most Punjabis felt that it was essential for Punjabi women to wear American clothes in order to avoid overt hostility in public. 'White people were *very prejudiced*,' Harbans remembered.

> *Whenever [white people] saw us, they would say, 'You Hindus'and they would curse at us… In those times, nobody would step out of their houses in Indian dresses, not even older ladies…We used to be scared of them [white people] at that time. That's why the ladies stepped out of their homes in dresses.*[47]

In most cases, it was Punjabi women who had arrived in California earlier who helped women alter their appearance to avoid hostility by white Americans in public spaces. As the first Sikh woman to settle in Yuba City, Nand Kaur explained to newcomers that '*gore'* [white people] don't like us because of the way we dress.[48] The alienation from their cultural and religious identity in the fifties and sixties was pronounced. According to Harbhajan Takher, 'We learned not to like our clothes anymore.'[49]

As recently as the 1940s, there was racial violence between the Punjabi and white communities in the Yuba City area. Adopting mainstream American clothes was one strategy for diffusing tensions that could erupt into inter-community violence.

Forging Lifelines: Female Friendships

Punjabi women formed lifelong friendships and helped each other adjust to their American lives. The Puna Singh and Nand Kaur family was the first Punjabi family in Yuba City when they arrived in 1924. Nand Kaur was the first Sikh female settler. She endured decades of loneliness before becoming a leader in the community among men and women both in the Punjabi community and in the broader American society. She was a respected public speaker at the Republic Day celebrations and other community events. Nand Kaur and her husband also donated land intending to open the first Gurdwara in Yuba City on Walton Avenue (for complex reasons the Gurdwara was built on Tierra Buena Road instead).[50] When a female Indian dignitary visited the Stockton Gurdwara in 1949, the majority of the remaining South Asian community in California was present. As the most respected woman in her community, Nand Kaur enjoyed the honor of placing the garland on their special guest. Women in the community affectionately called Nand Kaur 'mom'. Until she passed in the 1990s, Nand Kaur held court at her home where friends and family would frequently gather to seek her advice. Her greatest pleasure in life, she said, was attending Gurdwara services where she would pray and enjoy socializing with other Punjabi women.[51]

When newcomers arrived, Punjabi women would host tea parties to welcome them into the community. Women drove newcomers to buy groceries, took them to the hospital in labor if their husbands were unavailable, helped them to buy American clothes, taught them how to cook, and babysat their children. As Harbans Panu explained, the community of women was like a large family:

> *The amount of love I received when I got here, I don't think I even received that much love from my family. Some ladies were like a mom and loved me like a daughter… They were my friends. They were my parents. They were everything to me.*

Image 6: Tea party, Yuba City, CA, 1967. (Left to right) Front row: Sant Kaur Grewal and Gita Kaur Grewal. Back row: Unknown, Swarn Kaur Johl, Harbhajan Takher, Gurmit Kaur Takhar, and Swarn Kaur. Courtesy of Dr Manohar Singh Grewal.

Female friendships transcended cultural and religious boundaries. The first Pakistani woman to settle in Yuba City, Kaneez Dean, kept intimate friendships with Punjabi women from the Sikh faith. Kushlia Devi, a Hindu woman, married Hardial Singh Hunji of the Sikh faith. As the Punjabi Mexican American woman, Mary Singh Rai, explained, her identity was multi-valent and fluid:

> *When I'm with Americans, I think of myself as an American. When I'm with Mexicans, I like them to talk to me as Mexicans. The Punjabis, those are mostly my friends. I like to be included with them.*[52]

Since her husband, Lal Singh Rai, was a Punjabi Sikh American, many of her good friends were Punjabi. For Verinder Kajla, Mary Singh Rai was her best friend as well as a surrogate mother. She repeatedly told me that when she reached heaven, she hoped to be reunited with Mary Rai who had passed away years earlier. In the final moments before Verinder passed in 2018, she was heard repeatedly calling out to her departed friend, Mary: 'I'm coming.'

A unique aspect of this generation of Punjabi-American women is that they felt compelled to conform to American dress in public during the fifties and sixties and it was only decades later when large numbers of Punjabis arrived and attitudes about racial norms changed that they felt comfortable with wearing Punjabi clothes and celebrating Punjabi and Sikh holidays in public. Beginning in the early 1970s, the Punjabi-American community grew tremendously in size

and diversity after the passage of the 1965 Immigration Act that gave preference to highly educated immigrants and family reunification. Due to their presence in the US since the 1890s, Punjabi-Americans sponsored relatives to come to the United States to work on their farms and family businesses. With the large Punjabi community in Yuba City, and the gradual improvement in race relations, elderly women finally felt comfortable wearing Punjabi clothes in public.

The elderly Punjabi women also enjoyed a degree of agency in public beginning in the 1970s. Women were actively involved in establishing the first Gurdwara in Yuba City, and played a critical role in performing *seva* (service) there. Pritam Kaur Heir was one of the few women who served on the Yuba City Gurdwara on Tierra Buena Road, and Mohinderji Kaur Thiara served as President of the Gurdwara on Bogue Road. A highly intelligent, devout Sikh, Swarn Kaur Grewal exercised an important yet subtle influence in deepening knowledge about the Sikh faith in her family and in the community. Swarn Kaur was also a natural leader who held prayer groups (mainly for women) in which she recited the *bani* (Sikh verses) and explained its core teachings.

Women also played a vital role in Yuba City's Sikh parade (*nagar kirtan*). On Sunday, November 9, 1980, Yuba City held the first nagar kirtan that attracted up to 9,000 Sikhs from as far away as Canada, India, and England. Today the event attracts nearly 100,000 people. The significance of nagar kirtan for Yuba City's Sikh community was profound. The nagar kirtan was the inaugural event that marked the community's coming of age in publicly asserting its faith and cultural identity. Moreover, the community was consecrating a sacred space along the parade route radiating out from the Gurdwara. The nagar kirtan was the source of joy for Harbhajan Takher because 'we were walking with our Maharaja' [the Eternal Guru or God].[53] The best-known photos of the Sikh parade highlight the essential role that Sikh men played as the *panj piare* (five blessed ones) walking alongside the float carrying the Eternal Guru (Sikh scriptures). But five women also proudly served as blessed ones. Harbhajan Takher was honored to serve as one of the female blessed ones in the parade for 13 years.

Image 7: Women proudly serving as the five beloved ones in the Yuba City Nagar Kirtan Parade (Harbhajan Kaur Takher appears on the right), c 1981. Courtesy of Baldev S Chima.

Women performed countless hours of *seva* (service) at the Gurdwara, cooking food for the *langar* (community meals) each week. In the early days, women would also cook all of the food for Punjabi weddings. In all these ways, women helped build the Punjabi Sikh community in Yuba City, by strengthening religious and cultural traditions through their devotion, service, and labor.

Due to the labor shortage in the early years after women arrived, the labor of women and children was critical to the initial success of Punjabi family farm operations in the 1950s. Harbhajan Takher was one of the most industrious women in the community. Her labor was essential for her family's business: 'I would irrigate about 40 acres of land. I also drove the tractor, picked plums, and hauled peaches to the station' where the harvest would be graded and weighed.[54] Although many women worked in family orchards doing what was generally considered men's work, women from respectable families would conceal their labor. In fact, some women reported running inside the house if anyone outside the family appeared at the house unannounced. It was a marker of status among respectable families for women to abstain from working outside the home. In her eighties, Harbhajan Takher showed courage in publicly acknowledging the hard labor she performed on her family farm. In her English homework, Kushlia Devi Hunji wrote: 'When I was in India only the man worked, now everybody in the family works. Everyone has to work in order to afford the more expensive things.'[55]

The majority of Punjabi women who arrived in the fifties and sixties also worked outside the family farm during summers to supplement their family incomes. They sorted peaches and plums on assembly lines at Harters, Sunsweet, Del Monte and other canneries and packing houses in the Yuba City area. Harbans Panu expressed the joy of forming friendships with women from

diverse cultural backgrounds in the Sunsweet dried fruit company in Yuba City where she worked for 26 years: 'There were people of all races, and I loved them all.'[56] A small number of women, such as Kushlia Devi Hunji, also pursued their education and independent careers in Yuba City. She grew up in poverty in a small Punjabi village and arrived in Yuba City without an education or any knowledge of English. With a fierce determination, she learned English and graduated from Yuba College in her late fifties. She successfully built an independent career as a working mother raising three daughters. She blazed a trail by becoming a successful realtor and broker in town. It is important to note that educated Punjabi women in the 1960s, such as Savitri Randhawa, felt that they needed to return to India in order to pursue their professional ambitions. Women's participation in the religious life of the community and in work profoundly changed their sense of self. In Harbhajan Takher's words: 'In India, we didn't really talk. *I started talking when I got here*.'[57]

Conclusion

The oral histories of the first cohort of Punjabi American female settlers reveal the critical role that gender played in the Punjabi diaspora. A fundamental aspect of the migration experiences of Punjabi women is that they had already migrated before coming to the US as young brides. It is true that roughly half of the Punjabi male migrants had settled elsewhere prior to their arrival in North America, especially in their tours of duty in the British Army and in the colonial police force. The migration of Punjabi men was stimulated by the political and economic dislocations in Punjab after British annexation in 1849 as well as the British colonial officials' preferential recruitment of Punjabi Sikhs into the army and security forces operating overseas after the 1857-8 Rebellion. By contrast, however, nearly all Punjabi women were prepared from birth to migrate after marriage to move to their in-laws' houses in nearby villages. As expressed in Harbans Panu's song, women inhabited a liminal space in their birth families in which they were treated as 'someone else's,' or property that would one day belong to their future husband's family. In their in-laws' families, young brides were often treated as outsiders who occupied the bottom rung of the household power structure.

This article has explored the ways that space and emotion merge together 'in the realm of nostalgic memory.'[58] Women's oral histories reveal how their emotional recollections about relocating to the United States were experienced through the lens of their archetypal migration as young brides. Despite the enormous disparity in the geographical distances traversed in the local marriage migration as part of the village exogamy pattern in Punjab and the 7,000 miles traveled from Punjab to California, women conflated both migrations in their memories. From the women's perspective, who as young girls and whose childhoods were largely confined to the home courtyard in small villages, the journey to their in-laws nearby village was perceived as very far away indeed. Women spoke of their marriage migrations as living with 'strangers' in a 'foreign land.' They felt a profound sense of disorientation again as they traveled

to the United States to join their husbands who had migrated years earlier. The distances traveled blurred as the emotional recollections of both passages converged in their emotional memory landscapes. Harbans Panu's bridal song illustrates how emotional losses were experienced throughout their lives in relation to their early departure from their homes. Thus the sadness she felt leaving her friends at retirement inspired her to sing the song she composed about her departure from home.

Women's support networks and faith helped them cope with the emotional traumas they experienced. According to Harbans' philosophy, 'pain and happiness are a part of life… It is your choice to spend your life crying or laughing.' But the pain of separation she experienced as a young bride was made easier by accepting loss as the unfolding of traditions passed down through the generations: 'father, daughters are always someone else's.'[59] Ultimately, women from this generation accepted that *dukh* (hardship, sorrow) was 'written in our fates.'[60] Within the constraints of family and a racially hostile public environment, women gradually carved out limited spheres of agency. In California, most Punjabi women of this generation expressed their faith and cultural identity in public by the 1970s, and enjoyed a degree of independence by enjoying the company of other women and working outside the home in fruit canneries. A few women even learned to drive and pursued their educational and career ambitions. The women in this study viewed both journeys as bittersweet, as the fulfillment of the duties and joys of family life. Most Punjabi women gained status and authority as mothers in their new households, especially if they gave birth to sons. In the US, women viewed the hardships they endured as worthwhile in hindsight due to the benefits for their children: 'our kids will have a better life than us.'[61]

Although it is beyond of the scope of this article to delineate the generational changes in the migration experiences of Punjabi American women, the worldviews, opportunities and challenges of younger generations of women in the community are distinct. Many young Punjabi American woman can relate to the dilemma expressed by Geena Kaur Sidhu, one of the few Sikh American woman serving in the US Navy: 'I can tell you one of the toughest struggles in my life has been being able to balance growing up in America with a Punjabi heritage and a Sikh background.' Geena Sidhu, and the other young Punjabi American women I interviewed, enjoy far greater educational and professional opportunities than their mothers and grandmothers. They wish to pursue their own professional ambitions while also maintaining their cultural and religious identity and fulfilling their family duties.

Notes

[1] Harbans Kaur Panu, "Daughters are always someone else's," c 1990. Courtesy of Harbans Kaur Panu.

[2] The issue of how to refer to migrants from the Punjab region is not simple. I use the term "Indian" when referring to Punjabi migrants before the 1947

partition tore Punjab asunder between India and the newly-formed country of Pakistan. However, I use the more inclusive term South Asian when describing migrants from the Indian subcontinent more generally as well as the field of South Asia Studies as it encompasses the many countries in the Indian subcontinent.

[3] For influential theorists of modern diasporas, including the South Asian diaspora, see: Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 1996); James Clifford, "Diasporas," *Cultural Anthropology* 9:3 (1994), 302-338; and, Amitav Ghosh, "The Diaspora in Indian Culture," *Public Culture* 2:1 (1989): 73-78.

[4] See Saraswati Raju, ed., *Gendered Geographies: Space and Place in South Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2011) and Linta Varghese, "Looking Home: Gender, Work, and the Domestic in Theorizations of the South Asian Diaspora," in *The Sun Never Sets: South Asian Migrants in the age of U.S. Power*, eds., Vivek Bald, Miabi Chatterji, Sujani Reddy, and Manu Vimalassery (New York, New York University, 2013), 156-175.

[5] Anannya Bhattacharjee, "The Habit of Ex-Nomination: Nation, Woman, and the Indian Immigrant Bourgeoisie," *Public Culture* 5:1 (1992), 19-44.

[6] Varghese, 170.

[7] Razak Khan, "The Social Production of Space and Emotions in South Asia" *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 58:5 (2015), 611-633.

[8] I draw on Khan's term "affective archive" to refer to the under-utilized resource of oral history to capture the history of emotions. Khan, 628.

[9] The history of early South Asian Punjabi migrants along the West Coast of Canada and the US is well- documented. See Joan Jensen, *Passage from India: Asian Indian Immigrants in North America* (New Haven: Yale University, 1988); and, Bruce La Brack, *The Sikhs of Northern California, 1904-1975* (New York, AMS Press, 1988).

[10] Herman Scheffauer, "The Tide of Turbans," *Forum* XLIII (June 1910) 616-618. See also "Hindu Invasion," *Collier's*, XLV (March 26, 1910), 15.

[11]Gary R. Hess, "The 'Hindu' in America: Immigration and Naturalization Policies and India, 1917-1946" Pacific Historical Review 38:1 (1969), 59-79. The Asiatic Exclusion League exaggerated the size of the South Asian population in California, stating that there were 10,000 "Hindus" in California in 1910 when there were only approximately 7,000. *Proceedings of the Asiatic Exclusion League*, April, 1910, 8. The South Asians were erroneously referred to as "Hindus," despite the fact that approximately 85-90% came from the Sikh faith, and the remaining were mainly Muslim. There were very few Hindus in this period due to caste prohibitions against traveling outside India.

[12] See Ian Henry Lopez, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University, 1996).

[13] According to official records, 6,656 South Asians arrived in the United States between 1899 and 1913. See also Jensen, *Passage From India.* The size of the South Asian American community in 1940 is derived from the US Census as quoted in Sanjoy Chakravorty, et al, *The Other One Percent: Indians in America* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2017), 14.

[14] Karen Leonard, *Making Ethnic Choices: California's Punjabi-Mexican Americans* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1992), 23.
[15] Nayan Shah, *Stranger Intimacy: Race, Sexuality, and the Law in the North American West* (Berkeley, University of California, 2012).
[16] Leonard documents 378 marriages between South Asian men and women of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, primarily from Mexico, between 1913 and 1949. Leonard, 67.
[17] See Chakravorty.
[18] Fortunately the Dhillon family history is fairly well-documented. See Kartar Dhillon's autobiographical account, "The Parrot's Beak" and her interview with her brother, Bud, on the South Asian American Digital Archive, https://www.saada.org/. There is a voluminous literature about the Gadar movement, see Maia Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia* (Berkeley: University of California, 2011), and Harish Puri, *Ghadar Movement: Ideology, Organisation, and Strategy* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1993).
[19] Nicole Ranganath, "Wedding Women to Tradition: The Politics of Marriage in the Indian Diaspora, 1947-2002" (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 2003).
[20] The other three women on the planning committee were Rajinder K Tumber, Sharon Singh, and Davinder Deol.
[21] *Jutti Kasoori* (*Walking into the Unknown*), dir. Nicole Ranganath (Sikhlens, 2018). See also, Pioneering Punjabis Digital Archive, curated by Nicole Ranganath, University of California, Davis, http://pioneeringpunjabis.ucdavis.edu/
[22] Raju, 44.
[23] See Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2008) and Urvashi Butalia's important work recovering the partition experiences of women and children, Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (Durham, NC: Duke University, 2000).
[24] Harbhajan Takher interview by Nicole Ranganath and Davinder Deol, December 16, 2017, Yuba City.
[25] Takher interview.
[26] Charan Kaur Kang interview by Nicole Ranganath and Jasbir Singh Kang, December 18, 2017, Yuba City.
[27] First group interview by Nicole Ranganath and Davinder Deol, December 17, 2017, Yuba City.
[28] Harbans Kaur Panu interview by Nicole Ranganath, December 18, 2017, Yuba City.
[29] Takher Interview.
[30] Kang Interview.
[31] Savitri Randhawa interview by Nicole Ranganath, December 19, 2017, Davis.
[32] Second group interview by Nicole Ranganath and Davinder Deol, December 17, 2017, Yuba City.
[33] Second group interview.
[34] First group interview.

[35] Takher interview.
[36] Verinder Kaur Kajla interview by Nicole Ranganath, December 18, 2017, Yuba City.
[37] Panu interview.
[38] First group interview.
[39] The most extensive description of the life in the so-called Hindu campus can be found in Allan P Miller, "An Ethnographic Report on the Sikh (East) Indians of the Sacramento Valley" (Master's thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1950).
[40] "Grower remembers days as first Sikh woman in Yuba City," *Cling Peach Review* (Summer/Fall 1990), 22.
[41] First group interview.
[42] Second group interview.
[43] Second group interview.
[44] Second group interview.
[45] Kajla interview.
[46] Kajla interview.
[47] Second group interview.
[48] First group interview.
[49] First group interview.
[50] "Sikhs Celebrate Founding Day," *Independent Herald* (April 20, 1964).
[51] See the detailed sketch of the Puna Singh and Nand Kaur family in Allan P Miller, "An Ethnographic Report on the Sikh (East) Indians of the Sacramento Valley" (Master's thesis, University of California, Berkeley), 1950).
[52] Mary Singh Rai Interview, *Kamla Show,* August 5, 2012.
[53] First group interview.
[54] Takher interview.
[55] Kushlia Devi, English homework assignment about "How I relate the past to the future in my personal life," March 1, 1980. Courtesy of Prem Hunji Turner.
[56] Second group interview.
[57] Takher interview.
[58] Khan, 626.
[59] Panu bridal song.
[60] Second group interview.
[61] Second group interview.

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Digital Archives

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Interviews

First group interview by Nicole Ranganath and Davinder Deol, December 17, 2017, Yuba City.

Verinder Kaur Kajla interview by Nicole Ranganath, December 18, 2017, Yuba City.

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