

Oceans away: Sri Lankan migration, distance, material practice & hybrid identities

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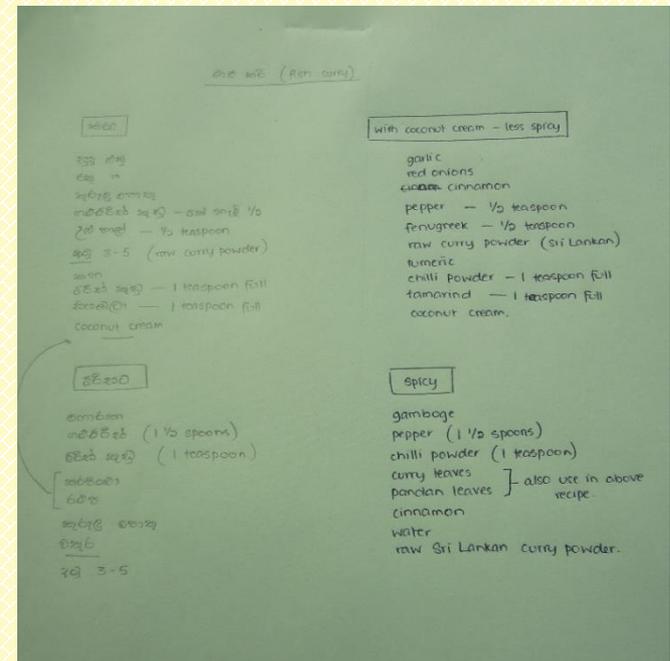
How do migrants:

- (i) Negotiate distance between the *here* and *there?* *and*
- (ii) Establish a sense of belonging in their new homes, while still maintaining links to their country of origin?

Overall, I argue that there is a need for psychology to acknowledge the complexity of migration and settlement processes, and how such processes come hand in hand with notions of culture, identity and sense of belonging.

RESEARCH APPROACH

- Ethnography
- Narrative
- Social Practice Theory
- Indigenous research perspectives
- Participatory research methods (e.g. *Go-alongs*)

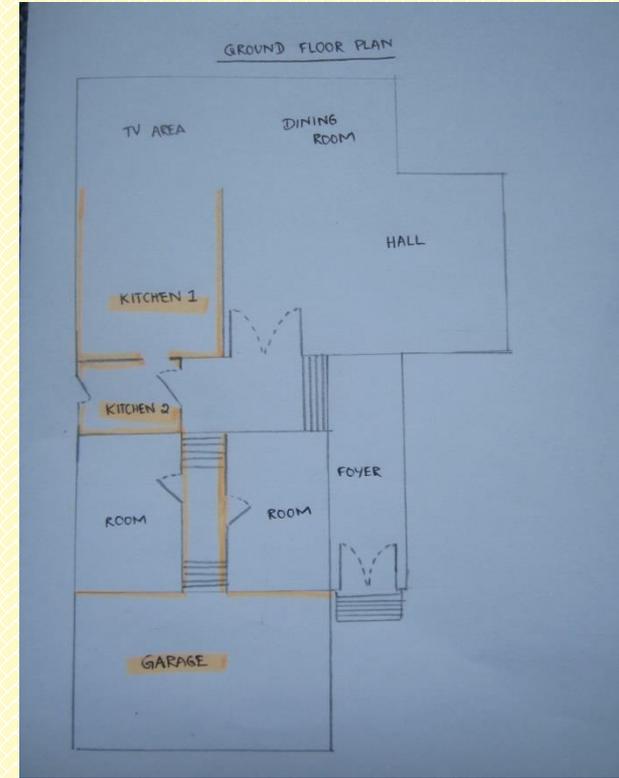


MIGRATION AND DISTANCE

- Migration enforces distance between the *here* and *there*.
 - Distance as not only geographical, but also social, relational and imagined.
 - Migrants strive to create a sense of continuity between the *here* and *there* through the active creation of transnational landscapes/spaces of belonging.
 - Such landscapes are textured by various interactions, practices & objects.
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TRANSNATIONAL SPACES OF BELONGING

- Transnational spaces of belonging can take various forms, such as the domestic space of a migrant's home.
- A migrant's home space can provide rootedness, and indicate a sense of permanence in NZ.
- The construction of belonging in the domestic space is not passive; migrants actively make their houses their homes.
- Eg. a participant household built their home with 2 kitchen spaces.



- Kitchen 1 – more 'kiwi' styled, open plan, with breakfast bar – indicative of their lives in NZ
- Kitchen 2 (Sri Lankan kitchen) – ventilated, enclosed and separate from the hall, or where guests are – indicative of the enactment of SL traditions, memories *in* NZ.

TRANSNATIONAL SPACES OF BELONGING

- Food as an important part of culture and who we are.
Important in,
 - **maintaining cultural/religious traditions** (eg. food to celebrate religious events/occasions)
 - **Establishing a sense of normality in a new environment** (eg. cooking 'food from home' when feeling homesick)
 - Helping to **create relationships** with people of the same culture as well as other migrants groups.
 - Also important to facilitating **contact zones** – to facilitate relationships with people from the host nation.



Transnational spaces are not bounded and located in, or confined to a single place. Rather, such spaces transcend the boundaries of nation states, and can connect different geographical, cultural & social contexts.

INTERCONNECTED SPATIALITIES

- Colonial 'footprint' or common thread, shared between previously colonised nations such as SL and NZ – eg. cricket.
- The significance of cricket in postcolonial nations has changed over the years – from an indication of class and elitism, to a way of contesting European domination and assumptions of superiority and power imbalances, to being a signifier of nationalism and unity.
- Today, cricket has the power to articulate the complexities of national and/or social identities and belonging.



For SL migrants, cricket is instrumental in,

- Forging symbolic links back to the country of origin.
- A symbol of national pride,
- National identity – patriotic sentiment
- Extends to migrants' identities as New Zealanders.

- Therefore, cricketing loyalties as a way of expressing attachment to new homes in NZ
- Represents permanency of settlement in NZ
- As well as constructions of hybrid identities

Migrant identities do not simply revolve around either the replication of existing cultures within new settings, or the adoption of new ones. Rather, migrant identities are dynamic, syncretic, hybrid and responsive to various situational contexts.

- Cricket (II)



CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

Migrants are more than just numbers or people slotted into various stages of acculturation. They are people showcasing agency and creativity.

- Need to acknowledge the agency of migrants as active participants in the migration process.
- A focus beyond the rigid, static and linear models of acculturation.
- This provides a greater possibility for meaningful engagements