“Simultaneous Victimization and Complicity”: Intersections of the Indian Settler, Caste, and North American Settler Colonialism

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Though only my name is on the author line, this thesis is not a labor of love from only one person. In that vein, I have some people to thank.

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Introduction

Like many immigrant families, the narrative surrounding my parents, aunts, and uncles lives before I was born is that their diligent studies led to accomplishing their goal of working and living outside of India, a migration that came with wealth, comfort and a good life. Living in a majority Indian immigrant neighborhood, I grew up thinking it was normal for parents to have constantly aspired to gain entry into another country. The multitudinous ads I saw when visiting Kerala, India from agencies that help people study and work in foreign nations only further validated this belief.

Only after beginning my Native American Studies correlate I began to notice that not only had my family only moved to settler countries, but this reflects a larger pattern of immigration. The Times of India comment on this migration preference in their article that since 2000, "Australia, New Zealand, and Canada too have now turned hotspots for education among Malayalis[1]" and that this migration has become accessible to the middle class.[2] My own observations of the locations that are consistently mentioned in study and settle ads– US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand– concur the news article's assertion. A desire to understand why my family was drawn to settler countries, and their impact on Native lives and lands motivates this project.

Beyond the personal, the project addresses the need for settler colonial studies to address the positionality of South Asians. Recent endeavors to triangulate settler colonialism have produced influential scholarship from Patrick Wolfe and the field of Afropessism,

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[1] Malayalis are the ethnic group my family belongs to. They are the dominant ethnic group in Kerala, the state in India my family is from.

[2] Sanjith Sidhardhan, "Studying Abroad: No More an Elitist Dream for Malayalis," *Times of India*, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/studying-abroad-no-more-an-elitist-dream-for-malayalis/articleshow/62790431.cms.

including Jared Sexton, on the role of slaves and their descendants. Further, Iyko Day and Candace Fujikane have pioneered Asian Settler Colonial Studies with their work on East and Southeast Asian coolie labor in Hawai'i. A few special additions of journals, like the Spring 2019 edition of *Verge: Studies in Global Asias*, to which Iyko Day, Juliana Hu Pegues, Melissa Phung, Dean Itsuji Saranillio, Danika Medak-Saltzman contributed, build on Day and Fujikane previous work by examining Asian life in new sites, Alaska, or continue terminological debates. But, as often happens in Asian studies, South Asian have gone mostly unexamined. To address this gap, this project aims to bring existing literature about how racial minorities interact with settler colonialism into conversation with the experiences of Indian immigrants.

To understand how South Asians operate in settler colonial states, caste must be examined. Based in brahmanical supremacy, caste is a centuries old South Asian hierarchy that categorizes people based on their proximity to pollution, with the most pure and privileged being Brahmins. Though technically outlawed by the Indian Constitution, caste still informs all forms of political, legal, social, cultural, and economic violences in the subcontinent and its diaspora. Acknowledging that caste may not appear as an obvious influence on settler colonialism, one of the few scholars analyzing Indian communities in Canada, Nishant Upadhyay argues that "any critical understanding of Indian diasporas is incomplete without critiques of brahminism".[3] Employing an intersectional framework, Dalit American and activist, Thenmozhi Soundararajan says that

> "every issue that we might want to understand better and address—whether it is indigenous rights of the First Nations, Aboriginal populations or Native

[3] Nishant Upadhyay, "Making of 'Model' South Asians on the Tar Sands: Intersections of Race, Caste, and Indigeneity," *Journal of the Critical Ethnic Studies Association* 5, no. 1–2 (2019): 152+.

> Americans, misogyny, racism, feminism, labor rights, heteropatriarchy, immigration issues, settler or neo-colonialism, anti-blackness, Islamophobia, transphobia, environmentalism, militarism, or Hindu fundamentalism— will not be possible if caste is not dismantled"[4]

To incorporate analysis of caste within Indian immigrant communities in settler colonial states I will use Jodi A. Byrd's (Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma) theoretical model of cacophony to understand these overlapping colonial processes. Cacophony focuses on vertical interactions between the colonizer and colonized, as well the horizontal relations between oppressed communities. So, for this project, the vertical relationships between Indian immigrants, and the North American settler states and society will be understood in conjunction with horizontal interactions among dominant caste and caste oppressed Indian immigrants. Given the fact that Byrd aims to explore how "colonialism brought the world, its peoples, and their own structures of power and hegemony to indigenous lands", caste, as an oppressive structure Indian immigrants bring with them, works well within the cacophony framework.[5]

Employing Byrd's cacophony allows us to see that the effect of colonialism, racism, casteism and White supremacy are not even. Since cacophony aims to examine vertical and horizontal relationships, the framework does not fall prey to Eve Tuck (Unangax̂) and K. Wayne Yang's colonial equivocation. A settler move to innocence to ease the guilt of people who have experienced colonialism and now live on Indigenous lands, colonial equivocation purposely obscures horizontal relationships between racialized people and Indigenous peoples. Drawing from cacophony, Upadhyay argues that racialized people experience a

[4] Upadhyay, "Making of 'Model'"
[5] Upadhyay, "Making of 'Model'"

"simultaneous victimization and complicity" where they are hurt through one oppressive logic, white supremacy and are a participant in another, settler colonialism.[6]

This project aims to analyze how high-caste Indian immigrants engage with North American settler colonialism. For that end, I combine testimonials with existing literature about racialized people's interactions with settler colonialism, and how Hindu nationalists create victimization narratives. To both ground the theorization and center peoples' actual lived experiences, I use personal accounts from multiple sources: me and my mum's experience with caste in the US and Kerala, published experiences of Dalit Americans, posts from Brahman-only Canadian Facebook groups, Upadhyay's interviews with Indian immigrants in Canada. As Saidiya Hartman explains, the personal has the power "to tell a story capable of engaging and countering the violence of abstraction", a violence that Native and Subaltern peoples have experienced, often at the hands of academics[7]. Acknowledging the transnational aspects of diaspora, I also bring in Indian theorization of caste, and interviews my mum and I conducted with high-caste Indian professionals in Chennai and Bangalore about how caste impacts their life, Indian society, and immigrant experiences in North America, which I have compiled into field notes. Most of my interviewees have lived and worked in India their whole lives, but a few had spent short-stints working in the US though decided to return. I purposely targeted people without much lived experience in North America to understand perceptions of immigrating there and investigate the degree to which interviewees in Upadhyay's work were transnationally reproducing perceptions of caste, American, and Indigenous peoples.

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[6] Nishant Upadhyay, "Un/Settling Im/Migrants: Towards Decolonising Immigrant-Indigenous Relationships," in *Diasporic Choices* (BRILL, 2019), http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/vcl/detail.action?docID=6853594.

[7] Christina Elizabeth Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016): 8.

For being where my nuclear family settled and where the limited literature exists, I chose to focus on the United States and Canada. Further, the two states are underpinned by a similar liberal, multicultural form of settler colonialism, articulated through 'nation of immigrants' and melting pot narratives, that uses non-White faces to further consolidate imperial hegemony, as brother of Fujikane, Saranillio explains.[8] From my field work, the US and Canada are the most sought locations for Indian immigrants, including my parents. Though North America does not have the largest or longest history of Indian diaspora, my analysis aims to explore and unsettled the desirability of this site. From the US' 1965 immigration law reform[9] to Canada's loosening of immigration restrictions for skilled migrants from the 50s to 70s[10], both states's immigration policies from the mid 20th Century have purposely attracted highly educated professionals, a group where high caste people are overrepresented.

Using my myriad of sources, I assert that dominant caste Indian settlers deal with being "a racial target for the anxieties of settlers reacting to capitalist abstraction", as Iyko Day proposes, by leveraging the power within their high caste status. Indian settlers experience anxiety on two fronts: as a settler, and as an Asian body. To the former, Albert Memmi argues that "It is impossible for [the colonizer] not to be aware of the constant illegitimacy of his status".[11] To the latter, Day argues that as a precondition to being exploited

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[8] Dean Itsuji Saranillio, "Why Asian Settler Colonialism Matters: A Thought Piece on Critiques, Debates, and Indigenous Difference," *Settler Colonial Studies* 3, no. 3–04 (November 2013): 281, https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2013.810697.

[9] L. Ling-chi Wang, "Model Minority, High-Tech Coolies, and Foreign Spies: Asian Americans in Science and Technology, with Special Reference to the Case of Dr. Wen Ho Lee," *Amerasia Journal* 33, no. 1 (January 1, 2007): 53, https://doi.org/10.17953/amer.33.1.t086q80881t36t16.

[10] Nancy L. Green and Roger David Waldinger, eds., "Transnationalism, States' Influence, and the Political Mobilizations of the Arab Minority in Canada," in *A Century of Transnationalism: Immigrants and Their Homeland Connections*, Studies of World Migrations (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016).

[11] Adam J Barker, "The Contemporary Reality of Canadian Imperialism: Settler Colonialism and the Hybrid Colonial State," *American Indian Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (2009): 325–51, https://doi.org/10.1353/aiq.0.0054.

under settler colonial capitalism, racialized people become aliens and perpetual foreigners. I argue that dominant caste Indian settlers lessen their imposterhood by leveraging their power as racial minorities with the settler state's framework of multiculturalism to further marginalize lower caste Indian immigrants. The proximity between Whiteness and Brahmanism is explored to find that "Hindu India serves as a primary conduit for transnational whiteness".[12]

Chapter 1 "The Indian Settler: Theorizing Terminology for Indians on Indian Land" explores existing terminology and theorization about how people of color exist on Native land. I argue that the term Indian settlers should be used to center immigrants' relationship with the settler state, and prevent immigrants from casting themselves as only victims of the state's racism, a move termed Hindu fragility. First I analyze the term 'Black settler' to understand the weight of the label 'settler'. Then how migrants and immigrants are theorized, specifically what makes them distinct from settlers, is explored. Next, the theoretical framework of creating a triangular relationship between Natives, settlers, and a third category is looked at.

Chapter 2 "'A World Problem': Hindu Settler Fragility" explores how diasporic Hindu nationalism is influenced by Indian immigrants' status as a settler. I argue that Hindu settler fragility is caused by settler anxiety over failure to achieve an economic status equal to white settlers, and manifests as the weaponization of political language, and caste innocence, the latter of which cause victimization discourse. First I explore how brahminical entitlement and the perpetual foreign stereotype motivate settler anxiety. Then, how that anxiety is alleviated through ignoring caste, a move termed caste innocence, to homogenize the Indian

[12] Nishant Upadhyay, "Making of 'Model' South Asians on the Tar Sands: Intersections of Race, Caste, and Indigeneity," *Journal of the Critical Ethnic Studies Association* 5, no. 1–2 (2019): 162.

community is explored. This unification sets up the possibility for victimization discourse that is at the heart to Hindu settler fragility.

1. The Indian Settler: Terminology for Indians on Indian Land

Endeavors to triangulate settler colonialism have run into a methodological and practical issue: what terms should be used to describe racialized people on Indigenous land that both accounts for historical nuances of colonial forces, and explain their real impact on Indigenous lands and peoples? For its ability to shape, facilitate, or obscure our thoughts, language not only matters but should be a first step before further work can be done. Foundational scholar of settler colonialism, Lorenzo Veracini encouraged the development of "new language and imagination" as existing words reflect settler colonial forms and logics, and are thus unsuitable for scholarly work that endeavors to contribute to decolonization[13]. So, before analyzing how people of color negotiate their interactions with settler colonialism and their colonial history, new terminology must first be theorized or created where none exists. Answering that call, this chapter aims to theorize what high-caste Indian immigrants in North America should be called. I argue that the term 'Indian settler' should be used for the purpose of centering immigrants' relationship with the settler state, and confront Hindu fragility. For having never considered their complicity in settler colonialism and having weaponized American religious freedom laws to prevent discussions about caste discrimination, 'Indian settler' is forceful enough to evoke conversation.

Beyond academia, theorizing terminology to describe high-caste Indian settlement acknowledges the fact that these immigrants live on stolen Native land, which is never discussed in our community. In our millionth conversation about my project, my confused but well-meaning high-caste immigrant mother acknowledges that her perplexity stems from the fact that if not for my academic interests she would never seriously think about Native

[13] Tiya Miles, "Beyond a Boundary: Black Lives and the Settler-Native Divide," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (July 2019): 422.

Americans. My mother's experience reflects the vast majority of high-caste South Asians immigrating to North America; with their focus on economic survival, only one question on the citizenship test about American Indians, and general aversion to identity politics and the humanities in general, first-generation South Asian immigrants can and have avoided thinking about Indigenous peoples despite living on their land. This endeavor to theorize terminology creates the opportunity to consider their relationality to settler colonialism for the first time.

Central in these discussions is the tension between the colonial forces that brought racialized people to North America and the ways the same people contribute to ongoing settler colonialism. Does the willingness to migrate, or length of residence have any bearing on complicity to settler colonialism? That question reflects the actions of the racialized immigrant, the inverse line of questioning can be used to solve the same question where one starts with the definition of who is a settler and then see the degree to which racialized people qualify. For more complexity, questions can be tailored to the subject in question. What creates the boundary between settler and immigrant? Can one transition from immigrant to settler? Further, the impact of the term on Native peoples should be considered. Should the chosen term center on the relationship between the settler state and South Asians, or the impact South Asian immigration has on Native peoples and lands?

This chapter grapples with these questions through the evaluation and analysis of existing terminology and methodology. First, the intricacies of Black life will be examined to understand the complicity implied by the use of 'settler'. Though Blacks Studies scholars and Afropessimists firmly disagree with the use of 'settler' to describe Black life on Native land, I argue that for all the reasons settler is inappropriate for Black life the term is appropriate for

Indian experience. Then, racialized migrants and immigrants will be addressed to understand their differences from settlers and Black people, and their relationship to settler capitalism. Next, the approach of creating a new term to be used in relation to settlers and natives will be explored.

Slaves and their Descendants

Trying to grapple with the intricacies of Black life on Native land, the past two decades of scholarship from Black Studies have proposed new vocabularies to reject the idea of a Black settler and embraced parsing through nuanced Black experiences. Though the ultimate aim of this project is to investigate Indian immigrants, beginning our discussions with Black Studies honors the field's contribution to this subject. In this section, I explore scholarship that outlines why the term 'Black settler' is an inaccurate description of the Black experience because of the implication of full complicity in the settler project. For the same reasons 'settler' is an inappropriate description of Black life, I argue the term is relevant to Indian immigrant life.

Often used uncritically, the term 'black settlers' carried an uncomplicated assumption that African Americans are equally complicit in and benefitted by settler colonialism as European Americans. The lives of the Bonga family complicates this assumption. Living in Leech Lake, Minnesota, and being of African, French, and Ojibwe descent, the Bonga family used their relationship with fur traders, Indian agents, and Episcopalian missionaries to defend Ojibwe land.[14] If identity, "is something people do, not what they are" as Scott Richard Lyons (Mississippi Ojibwe of Leech Lake and the Mdewakanton Dakota of Lower Sioux) argues about Native identity but I believe can be extended, the Bonga family shows

[14] Miles, "Beyond", 420-421.

through their actions that they are not Black settlers.[15] The Bonga family illuminates the ways that Black survival was also sought through kinship alliances with Native peoples.[16] A failure to create mutually supportive relationships would truly risk becoming 'settlers' and complicity.[17] Undeniably, Black communities did benefit from the dispossession of native land and their search for land did serve American expansionist policies.[18] But, this desperate quest for survival should not be enough to be classified as a settler, and is further evidence against the concept of a 'Black settler'.[19] This motivation of survival, as opposed to power and material gain, is what Miles argues prevents Black people from being settlers and equally complicit in settler colonialism.

Further, 'Black settler' obscures the ways the architects of settler colonialism forcibly brought Black people to Native land. Patrick Wolfe negates the relevance of choice by defining settler as "a structural relationship rather than an effect of will" or racialization.[20] Wolfe aimed to illustrate his point through the example of descendants of white convicts who forcibly migrated to Australia remaining settlers despite the lack of agency of the previous generation.[21] Iyko Day undercuts this example by pointing out that those convicts did not pass down their criminality to their children in the same way race is passed down generationally.[22] Jared Sexton continues Day's line of thought by stating that "no amount of tortured logic could permit the analogy to be drawn between a former slave population and

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[15] Scott Richard Lyons, *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent*, Indigenous Americas (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 40.
[16] Miles, "Beyond", 419.
[17] Zainab Amadahy and Bonita Lawrence, "Indigenous Peoples and Black People in Canada: Settlers or Allies?," in *Breaching the Colonial Contract*, ed. Arlo Kempf (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2009), 119, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-9944-1_7.
[18] Miles, "Beyond", 422.
[19] Miles, "Beyond", 419.
[20] Iyko Day, *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 106.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.

an immigrant population, no matter how low-flung the latter group" because descendants of slaves "suffer the status of being neither the native nor the foreign, neither the colonizer nor the colonized".[23] Here, Sexton, and Afro-pessimism as a framework, theorize Blackness outside of the native-settler binary that the term 'Black settler' so strongly adheres to. But, this rejection of Black settlers draws a conceptual line between descendants of slaves and immigrants that leave the latter remaining in an ambiguous position that I aim to clarify.

To the complexities of not-quite settler life, Black Studies contributes a strong critique to the usage of 'settler' that addresses the baggage and assumptions inherent in the word. This critique results in a complete rejection that Black people, and perhaps all racialized people, are inherently settlers. Instead, scholarly consensus is that Black people are to be understood as a third category, neither settler nor native, or a part of indigeneity due to creolization.

Migrants and Immigrants

In the not-quite settler debate, the question of how, and even whether, to contrast migrants and immigrants with settlers are raised. In this section, I explore scholarship that reveals the possibility of settlers being more than an identity, but also a structural position to the settler state and Native peoples, condition of having sovereignty, or knowledge. For acknowledging the sovereignty settlers bring with them and to center their obligation to Native people, I find Fujikane's 'Asian settlers' most salient for the purposes of this project.

Veracini differentiates settlers from migrants by who claims sovereignty and ownership of land. Migrants "move to *another* country and lead diaspora lives", while

[23] Ibid.

settlers "move … to *their* country".[24] This distinction between "another" and "their" country speaks to the level of ownership the new arrivals feel entitled to claim. Veracini describes this entitlement as a result of settlers bringing sovereignty with them while migrants do not. This settler assertion of sovereignty is defined as a simultaneous, and thus contradictory, claim to civility and indigeneity. Settlers construct themselves as both civilized unlike Natives, and belonging to native land due to 'long' held ties in contrast to new immigrants.[25] Veracini positions this settler sovereignty as inaccessible to immigrants, but does acquiesce that though migrants arrive destitute of the capacity to access sovereignty, they can acquire some through assimilation into the host society.[26] Similar to Day's critique of Wolfe's over-compassing definition of immigration, I question the overly broad scope of immigrants Veracini discusses as arriving with no sovereign capabilities. Veracini seems to gloss over the other identities– like class, caste, race, ethnicity, or ability– immigrants bring with them that could allow them to access settler sovereignty. By transnationally bringing their caste, with its social and material capital, high-caste immigrants bring with them a degree of sovereignty. As I will detail in the next chapter using Nishant Upadhyay's work, these immigrants certainly position themselves as more civilized and hardworking than Natives, a move Veracini defines as an aspect of settler sovereignty.

Jodi Byrd continues this differentiation between settler and migrant with 'arrivants', a term borrowed from African Caribbean poet Kamau Bathwte, to "signify those people forced into the Americas through the violence of European and Anglo-American colonialism and

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[24] Iyko Day, "Being or Nothingness: Indigeneity, Antiblackness, and Settler Colonial Critique," *Critical Ethnic Studies* 1, no. 2 (2015): 105, https://doi.org/10.5749/jcritethnstud.1.2.0102.
[25] Lorenzo Veracini, "Natives Settlers Migrants," *Politica & SocietÃ*, no. 2 (2012): 190, https://doi.org/10.4476/37053.
[26] Veracini, "Natives", 189.

imperialism around the globe".[27] Through this definition, Byrd signals that 'arrivants' differ from settlers due to the coercive violence of colonialism, which echoes critiques of 'Black settlers'. As no arguments could be made that migration of high-caste immigrants is the product of contemporary targeted colonial violence, 'arrivants' is not well suited for the aims of this project.

Moving from the abstract concept of the migrant, to the lived experience of Asian immigrants in Hawai'i, in the introduction to *Asian Settler Colonialism*, Candace Fujikane employs the term 'Asian settler' defined as "all Asians … including those who do not have political power" because being a settler is a structural distinction unchanged by amounts of power.[28] Echoing Wolfe's definition of settler as "a structural relationship rather than an effect of will", Fujikane explains that the structural nature of being a settler is about having a colonial relationship with Indigenous peoples, not whether Asians were the initial colonizers, their relationship with white settlers, or their political capacity to colonize.[29] From the first Asian laborers to Harold Rice, whose Supreme Court case forced the Office of Hawaiian Affairs to allow non-Natives to run for election, the term 'Asian settler' means to illustrate the ways that all Asians, especially those who do not perceive themselves as having a political role, support U.S. colonization of Hawaiians. This acknowledgment of colonization does not dishonor the historic efforts of Asian laborers but honors their history by criticizing the systems that exploited them. For the same reasons that Sexton rejects 'Black settler',

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[27] Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*, xix (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).
[28] Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Y. Okamura, eds., *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai'i*, 6, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008).
[29] Fujikane and Okamura, *Asian Settler Colonialism*, 7.

Fujikane embraces the term ‘settler’ to weaponize its political connotations to prevent Asian peoples from distancing themselves from their personal contribution to colonization.

By employing ‘settler’, Fujikane appears to continue the native-settler binary that collapses important racial differences. The binary framework of settler colonialism, where everyone is either Native or settler, leaves the position of non-native racialized people unexamined. Maintaining this binary is often positioned as the obstacle in the way of triangulating settler colonialism. Further, this classification of Asians as settlers implicates descendants of slaves. Though the book entirely focuses on Asian settlers, Fujikane quickly gestures to other non-white people by including Eiko Kosasa’s argument that all non-native people “including myself, are settlers regardless of our racial heritage”.[30] Like Byrd’s encompassing definition of ‘arrivant’, Sexton would vehemently disagree with this definition for equating descends of slaves and immigrants. Beyond Sexton’s disagreements, by defining white, Asian, and Black people all as settlers, the important racial distinctions and contexts for voluntary and forced migrations are obscure. Within the Hawaiian context, Filipino and Japanese laborers and current treatments are drastically different, but this difference is easy to ignore if they both are in the same category of ‘Asian settler’.

To these claims, Fujikane would contend that ‘Asian settler’ and continuing the settler-native binary serves the goal of centering Native people and the obligation settlers have to them. In her introduction, Fujikane clearly states that the book calls for a “methodological and epistemological shift from predominant accounts of Hawai‘i as a democratic, ‘multicultural’ or ‘multiracial’ state” to a “white- and Asian-dominated U.S. settler colony”.[31] This shift in perception allows for the secondary goal of centering settler’s

[30] Fujikane and Okamura, *Asian Settler Colonialism*, 9.
[31] Fujikane and Okamura, *Asian Settler Colonialism*, 3-4.

"obligations to the indigenous peoples of Hawai'i ".[32] Fujikane argues that by putting to rest the question of whether Asians are settlers, the conversation can progress to being about their relationship with Hawaiians.[33] Similarly, extensively discussing settlers' relationship with each other prevents the foregrounding of Indigenous peoples and evades questions of settler obligations.[34] Further, the different experiences with racism and the history of migrations between Asian settlers are acknowledged. This exploration of settler relations concludes with the fact that even less well-off Asian groups in Hawai'i are settlers in relation to Hawaiians, which Dean Itsuji Saranillio further analyzes in his chapter about Filipino settlers.[35] Though 'Asian settler' adheres to the settler-native binary that has been accused of ignoring racialized people, by explicitly addressing Asians Fujikane avoids this pitfall. Though I agree that terminology discussions can evade settler obligations, when mindful of such issues I believe the naming process can be a fruitful space to explore specific settler communities that have gone unexamined rather than overly broad groups, like Veracini's attempt at discussing all migrants.

When applied to the Indian immigrant experience, I agree with Fujikane that 'Asian settler' works well in centering Asian complicity and shifting current perceptions of North America as a multicultural haven. The categorization of 'settler' prevents Asians from shifting blame, and getting lost in guilt while also enabling conversations that center on the need for Asians to challenge settler logic in their own community. Though Fujikane is theorizing from Hawai'i, I believe 'Asian settlers' can be used in different locales, especially in other states that constructs itself as multicultural. Like Hawai'i, Canadian and American

[32] Fujikane and Okamura, *Asian Settler Colonialism*, 7.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Fujikane and Okamura, *Asian Settler Colonialism*, 9.
[35] Ibid.

cultural pluralism seeks to subsume Native people in the body politic through assimilation. Haunani-Kay Trask's argument that identifying immigrants as settlers prevents the settler state fantasy of a heterogeneous populus and post-coloniality can also be applied to Canada. Further, while not having a demographic majority like in Hawai'i, high-caste Indians' in North America have political representation and economic power, both of which are dominant features of the 'Asian settler' identity.[36] Though Day asserts that the "settler status of racialized migrants to Indigenous lands outside Hawai'i, remains undetermined", high-caste Indians' position in North America is analogous enough to Asian Americans in Hawai'i that the comparison should be explored.[37]

Day conceptualizes the 'alien' as an unsovereign subordinate status that is a precondition for their exploitation along multiple economic axes that are required in settler colonies.[38] Similar to Fujikane but disagreeing with Byrd, the degree to which migration is coerced, or complicity to the settler state is secondary to the alien's relationship to settler colonial modes of production.[39] As the term settler collapses racial differences, Day critiques focusing on voluntarism for lumping in undocumented, guest-workers, or other migrant populations within the category of immigrant that they conceptually do not belong in.[40]

Day's triangulation extends to examining the heterogeneity of race by comparing the shared alien status of African Americans and Asian Americans. Day categorizes African slaves and Asian migrants as 'alien' but this shared status is not meant to equivocate but clarify both of their relationships to the states' land, ensure the African slave is not related to the position of an afterthought, and highlight how race is an organizing principle of settler

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[36] Day, *Alien Capital*, 22.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Day, *Alien Capital*, 24.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Day, *Alien Capital*, 21.

colonialism.[41] The African alien illuminates the forced migration, unfree labor, and property aspects of alienness, and the Asian alien provisionality, excludability, and deportability.[42] As an example, the importation of Asian labor into the US is premised on the decline of the plantation-based slave economy of the 1830s.[43] Industrializing economies that required flexible, not unfree, labor prevented Asians from becoming hereditarily enslaved, but still highly dependent on settler capitalists.[44] Despite their lack of African plantation-based slavery, Asian laborers were similarly exploited and excluded for their alien status rather than proximity to Blackness by replacing African labor.[45] This parallel between these two settler states shows how alienness is a precondition of settler industrial capitalism and how race is an expression of settler power to racialize.

Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang conceptualize settlers as people who "supplant Indigenous laws and epistemologies" to "become the law".[46] To their race, settlers can be "diverse, not just of white European descent, and include people of color, even from other colonial contexts" because the settler state encourages "dispossessed people" to settle Indigenous land.[47] Unlike Byrd, Tuck and Yang do not discuss settlers' willingness to migrate, but also do not center the settlers' relationship to the settler state in an effort to emphasize settler obligation to Indigenous peoples, like Fujikane. With their reference to "becoming the law"[48] Tuck and Yang's definition of settler echoes Veracini's definition centered on sovereignty. Their sovereignty is seen in their relationship to the land. Settlers

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[41] Day, *Alien Capital*, 24.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Day, *Alien Capital*, 31
[44] Ibid.
[45] Day, *Alien Capital*, 32.
[46] Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity,Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 6-7.
[47] Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization", 7.
[48] Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization",6.

see themselves as "holding dominion over the earth" and by clearing its wild excess the earth becomes a new homestead.[49] For being "more deserving" and "human" [50], the settler is both superior and natural, a contradictory status that Veracini also discusses.

Settlers are contrasted with immigrants who are "beholden to the Indigenous laws and epistemologies of the lands they migrate to".[51] While a just goal, this definition is more aspirational than explanatory, especially when briefly mentioned with no example or footnotes[52]. My experience and field notes shows how very few immigrants know anything about Indigenous peoples beyond stereotypes, nonetheless whose Nations land they live on and their epistemologies, with the exception of the odd migrant, like Dr. Kang on *Reservation Dogs*, who find themselves on a reservation. Despite my qualms with this definition, by centering the identity of the immigrant on Native epistemologies, Tuck and Yang seem to suggest that knowledge, not sovereignty, prevents the shift from immigrant to settler. For proposing a new metric through which an immigrant can become a settler, this conceptualization of settlers is useful for our purposes. Further, Tuck and Yang say that people of color will never be full white settlers, with legal supremacy. This tension between a desire to have the privileges of a white settler, but an inability to access them explains preoccupations with glass ceilings, model minority myths, and perpetual foreign status, all of which will be further explored in the next chapter. The most Asian people invested in the settler state can hope for is to become a "subordinate settler".[53]

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[49] Idem.
[50] Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization",8.
[51] Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization", 6-7.
[52] Tuck and Yang cites Adam J Barker, "The Contemporary Reality of Canadian Imperialism: Settler Colonialism and the Hybrid Colonial State," 2009 for further explanation. But, Barker seems to disagree with Tuck and Yang because he does not find a difference between immigrants and settlers. Follows in Albert Memmi's footsteps, Barker does "not distinguish between Settlers born in Settler states and immigrants who intentionally come to occupy Indigenous territories"
[53] Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization", 18.

Triangular Relationality

Another approach to expanding the scope of actors within settler colonialism entails mapping out the triangular relations between Natives, settlers, and a third category. For creating a false alliance between Asians and Native by opting the former out of the settler-Native dialectic, I advance that theorizing a third category to understand high-caste Indian immigrants is not the right approach. That is not to say that triangular relationality is not relevant to this project, Byrd's framework of cacophony that analyzes contradictory horizontal actions of colonized people allows for the simultaneous theorization of Indian settler as racialized minorities but also perpetrators of Brahmanical supremacy that will be investigated further in Chapter 2.

Tuck and Yang conceptualize their settler and native alongside the slave, to reflect the dual aims of settler colonialism to erase Indigenous peoples, and capture and contain slaves. In the context of settler colonialism, slaves' bodies are turned into property, extracted as excess labor, and personhood is imprisoned.[54] French slave owners viewing the Haitian revolution as the abolishment of their property, not the institution of slavery for the founding of a new state, shows the success of slaves' transformation to property.[55] The labor of slaves must be free because settler wealth is in land, with which the settler will not depart.[56] Even the abolition of slavery resulted in the expansion of settler land ownership and the settler state. Emancipated slaves and prisoners are included in the settler state and given Native land as reparation for the ending of plantation slavery.[57] In sum, the chattel slave is a structural position– of being removed from their land and transformed into property– not an identity.

[54] Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization", 6.
[55] Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization", 26.
[56] Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization",6.
[57] Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization", 29.

Similar to Day, Tuck and Yang conceptualize the boundaries between these categories as porous and not mutually constitutive. The three identities can be independent worldviews, and behaviors. Through the example of Aleut peoples being interned, like Japanese people, after the bombing of Dutch Harbor while White people were unaffected, Tuck and Yang exemplify how Indigenous peoples shuffle between being perceived as "Native, enslavable Other, and Orientalized Other" to show "how settler colonialism constructs and collapses its triad of categories".[58] Given the Aleut peoples were interred for the same wartime rationale as Japanese people, the connection between Nativesness and orientalized Other is clear. What remains unclear from this example is the boundary between Nativeness and the ability to be enslaved. Chickasaw leaders engaging in slavery and histories of Indigenous peoples in Canada being used as chattel slaves from their footnotes seem more clear examples than internment.

Intending to investigate how non-White migration intersects with settler colonialism and other aspects of White supremacy, Day conceptualizes the 'alien' alongside the native and settler. Though neither are fixed identities, settler and alien are distinguished by territorial entitlement.[59] Though aliens are not always a part of settler migration, such as African slaves, they can become complicit with the settler colonial regime and inherit a sense of sovereign territorial right, like Asian settlers in Hawai'i.[60] By acknowledging a transition from alien to settler through access to sovereignty, Day appropriately expanded Veracini's definition of settlers bringing sovereignty to their new country while migrants do not. Day conceives of the boundary between settler and alien, Veracini's migrant, as more porous to account for the aliens' interactions once in the settler state. The accounting for an alien to

[58] Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization", 18.
[59] Day, *Alien Capital*, 23-24.
[60] Day, *Alien Capital*, 24.

transform into a settler is well suited for our purposes to determine the degree to which high-caste Indian immigrants bring sovereignty with them.

Byrd includes arrivants in a tripartite model– with Indigenous peoples, and settlers– to discuss the degree to which all three have functioned within and resisted North American colonization.[61] According to the three-part model, slaves and their descendants, and migrants would be theorized as one, a grouping that Sexton would highly disagree with. Byrd questions the easy-to-accept accusations of diasporic migrants as participating in and benefiting from Native displacement, and the subsequent positioning of Indigenousness as the lowest Other.[62] These interrogations stem from acknowledgments that people of color could not always "consent to or refuse such positions or consequences of history".[63] All are asked to acknowledge their position and then reconceptualize space to make visible what imperialism seeks to obscure, like the territories of Native nations.[64]

Byrd theorizes that these three groups interacting in a cacophony of "contradictorily hegemonic and horizontal struggles offers an alternative way of formulating and addressing the dynamics that continue to affect peoples as they move and are made to move within empire".[65] The liberal multiculturalism of settler colonialism created a cacophony of moral claims by finally including those previously excluded that deflect from transformative activism and coerce complicity with the settler state.[66] Reading vertically foregrounds European arrival and places histories of oppression in a zero-sum game[67]. Rather than trying to hierarchize imperial struggles, an endeavor that does not bring liberation and could

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[61] Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*, xix.
[62] Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*, xxxix.
[63] Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*, xxxix.
[64] Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*, xxx.
[65] Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*, 53.
[66] Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*, xvii.
[67] Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*, xxiv.

actually lead to harm in the form of Tuck and Yang's colonial equivocation, the goal of cacophony draws from Southeastern indigenous philosophy of finding balance and interconnectedness.[68] From a horizontal perspective, the complicity of colonialism and possibilities for anti-colonial action emerge.[69] While not definitively saying people of color are not settlers, Byrd wants to create a pause to consider whether calling people of color 'settlers' is a vertical reading of overlapping colonial histories that privileges European arrival.

In contrast to Tuck and Yang, and Byrd, Trask disagreed with the approach of creating a third category that is implied to be allied with Natives to understand Asians position within settler colonialism. In her 1994 article, Fujikane attempts to create a third category, 'local' Asian, who do not identify with Asian states nor the American settler state but an unstable 'Local Nation' built on anxieties over an illegitimate claim to Hawai'i.[70] Trask critiques the idea of a 'local' Asian and 'Local Nation' for how the terms deny settlers benefit from oppressed Hawaiians and create a false alliance between Asians and Natives.[71] Given their political power, both Trask and Fujikane eventually came to disagree with the notion of Asians being excluded from the settler–Indigenous dialectic.[72]

Asian people on Indigenous lands being relegated to a third position is reflective of their ambiguity in theorizes of racialization in North America. As Colleen Lye notes, Asians are certainly "racial" and "racialized", but somehow "lacking the certainty of a racial formation".[73] This uncertainty is embodied by focuses on Asian American racial

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[68] Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*, xxvll-xxvlll.
[69] Byrd, The Transit of Empire, xxxv
[70] Fujikane and Okamura, *Asian Settler Colonialism*, 28.
[71] Fujikane and Okamura, *Asian Settler Colonialism*, 29.
[72] Day, *Alien Capital*, 21.
[73] Day, *Alien Capital*, 22.

conceptualization beginning from a desire to move beyond the racial binary of White and Black.[74] Here Asian Americans more easily provoke the creation of a third category to investigate racial binaries than a genuine examination of their positionality.[75] This racial ambiguity combined with settler colonial binaries leaves racialized people unexamined inevitably leading to the creation of a third category.

Indian Settler

The above terminological exploration of the relationship between people of color and settler colonialism is intended to set the stage to discuss the position of high-caste Indian immigrants. From the literature, Day's alien, Fujikane's Asian settler, and Tuck and Yang's subordinate settler seem most salient. For preventing victimization narratives, and centering the relationship between high-caste Indian immigrants and Native people, I propose a more specific version of Fujikane's term: Indian settler.

Though the third category may obscure a relationship to the settler state and imply alliance with Native peoples, Day's alien allows for multiracial and intra-asian solidarity, which is lacking in Indian communities, and illuminates how multicultural capitalism invites immigrants to be commodified. By comparing the history of African Americans and Asian Americans' shared alien status, class solidarity can bridge perceived cultural differences between the communities. Though decolonization requires more than multiracial coalition politics, the rampant anti-Black racism within Indian communities must be addressed and challenged to even begin unsettling settler colonialism. Further, Jodi Melamed explains how capitalism uses multiculturalism to portray neoliberalism as a key to freedom and opportunity

[74]Ibid.
[75] Ibid

open to diverse sets of people.[76] By replacing race and class with the celebration of cultural difference, non-white people are not just allowed but encouraged to engage in entrepreneurism to renew the Canadian economy and give it an edge on the global market.[77] Through entering the professional class, Asian immigrants obtain a visible sense of citizenship, while also furthering anti-Asian animosity regarding the high levels of Asian professionals.[78] Though useful in exposing relationships to capitalism, alien is not nearly as provoking as settlers. The project's aim is to highlight the relationship between high-caste Indian immigrants and the settler state in a way that makes sense to non-academics. I agree with Wolfe and Fujikane that the term 'settler' is best at exposing how Indians are structurals opposed to Indigenous Peoples by the state and their own imaginings.

For not being forcibly brought to Native land through imperialist violence and a desire to economically benefit from settler colonialism, I argue that settler is appropriate to describe high-caste Indian immigrants. Being the top of the social and economic hierarchy in India today there is not much of an argument to be made about contemporary repercussions of British colonialism. Doubtless, the strongest motivator to settle in North America is the opportunity for a high paying job and to take advantage of liberal democratic freedom. Advertisements from foreign job placement agencies make clear that economics is the main motivator. My field experience also reveals less economic motivations: desire for perceived luxury goods, opportunity to avoid familial responsibilities. All these motivations have one aspect in common: benefiting from the wealth and privilege of North American countries that was gained through settler colonialism. But only using 'settler' erases the impact race has on

[76] Day, *Alien Capital*, 167.
[77] Day, *Alien Capital*, 168.
[78] Day, *Alien Capital*, 170.

the Indian immigrants' experience, as is true for all non-black people of color on Indigenous land.

Further, the loaded term will prevent Hindu victimization politics. Hindu nationalism often manifests as the myth that Hindus are victims not perpetrators of discrimination, a phenomenon termed Hindu fragility.[79] Not without the potential of backlash, the term Indian settler prevents perceptions of victimhood by answering questions of complicity and preventing shifting of the blame due to their new arrival or country of origin's history of colonialism. The relationship between Hindu fragility and Indian settlers is further explored in the next chapter.

Similarly, 'Indian settler' also allow for the rejection of high-tech coolie and the victimizing and pro-capitalist discourse it inspires. From my field notes, there is a perception of Indian IT professionals being high-tech coolies because they are paid well, but experience workplace abuse and punishing hours. My mum explained that in the Indian context, coolie is the title of people who are paid to carry luggage on and off the train. In Asian American Studies, Chinese coolie labor is a prominent object to theorize about transnational migration and Asian identity. Like their historical predecessors, current high-tech coolies work at the whim of their bosses under the time crunch of having to finish work by the beginning of the American work day. The term high-tech coolies was born to protest the mistreatment of Dr. Wen Ho Lee of the Los Alamos National Laboratory, in a speech linking Chinese immigrant labor in the 1850s to contemporary Chinese immigrant scientists for both having sizable economic contributions and hostile workplace conditions[80]. Though I empathize with their

[79] Feminist Critical Hindu Studies Collective, "Hindu Fragility and the Politics of Mimicry in North America," November 2, 2022, https://tif.ssrc.org/2022/11/02/hindu-fragility-and-the-politics-of-mimicry-in-north-america/.
[80] L. Ling-chi Wang, "Model Minority, High-Tech Coolies, and Foreign Spies: Asian Americans in Science and Technology, with Special Reference to the Case of Dr. Wen Ho Lee," *Amerasia Journal* 33, no. 1 (January 1, 2007): 49–62, https://doi.org/10.17953/amer.33.1.t086q80881t36t16.

workplace conditions, popular usage of high tech coolie reinforces capitalist logics rather than open space to be critical of the effect of Western capital in India or question exploitative immigration and company policy. The tragedy of the high-tech coolie is that productive workers at high paying jobs in Western multinational companies do not receive the increase in power they are assumed to experience, a logic based in capitalistic exploitation. Instead the prestigious job is not enough to prevent, or even creates conditions to increase, the workers' exploitation. This tension between expectations and lived reality opens space for anti-capitalist discussion, like how Day uses the term to show how neoliberal Canadian immigration laws economically bifurcated Asian labor based on perceived importance of their skillset.[81] But in non-academic usage, high-tech coolie is used to create victimization discourse similar to Hindu fragility, due to overlap in populations, and further invocations into capitalism.

Figure 1

Though deeply rooted in the literature, the term Indian settlers also draws from the language used in advertisements (Figure 1) targeting people who wish to study or work in North America that inspired this project. Alongside images of often White students, ads promise to offer the pathway to not just study and work, but "settle". Intended to mean the status of having permanent residency, the use of 'settle'

[81] Day, *Alien Capital*, 155-156.

shows how settler colonialism exists in India beyond Kashmiri land disputes. The desire itself to not just temporarily work or study but fully invest in the settler state through a permanent immigration status shows how the logics of settler colonialism are transnational reproduced in India.

2. "A World Problem": Hindu Settler Fragility

The summer of 2022 saw story after story about Google canceling a scheduled talk about caste discrimination after accusations of racism from high caste Indian employees, an event highly relevant to the topic of this project. When chatter spread that Thenmozhi Soundararajan, America's most prominent caste equity activist, was slated to talk about how "caste oppression is a problem — and that it probably exists under [Google's] roof, too" Hindu employees complained that "they felt 'targeted' on the basis of religion".[82] Soundararajan believes the complaints got the talk canceled, though Google's statements claimed that the talk was canceled for creating "division and rancor" rather than "bringing our community together and raising awareness" which was the intention. A perfect example of how Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts can subverted to uphold hierarchy, Soundararajan rightfully sees the cancellation of her talk as a situation where "people who have multiple protected classes weaponiz[ing] language of equity to avoid confronting the systems that have given them privilege."[83] Noticeably, Google CEO Sundar Pichai, a dominant caste

Figure 2

[82] Sakshi Venkatraman, "Big Tech's Big Problem Is Also Its 'Best-Kept Secret': Caste Discrimination," *NBCNews*, June 23, 2022, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/big-techs-big-problem-also-best-kept-secret-caste-discrimination-rcna33692.
[83] Venkatraman, "Big Tech's Big Problem"

Indian American, has been silent about caste discrimination despite previous statements about anti-Black racism[84].

What happened at Google is not unique. Two towns over from where I was raised, billboards (Figure 2) in Teaneck, New Jersey allege bigotry against Hindu Americans after the local government identified Hindu American organizations as Hindu nationalists.[85] To bolster support, the group connects this local incident to how Hinduism was described in school textbooks in California, and four states banning the Nazi-appropriated Hindu symbol, the swastika[86]. Hindu nationalists in the US consistently bring up these two incidents to establish themselves as victims on a national scale. September 2022 also saw accusations of Canada being unsafe for Hindus following an advisory from the Indian government after an increase in hate crimes (Figure 3).[87] Sunita Viswanath, who founded Hindus for Human Rights in wake of Prime Minister and Hindu nationalist Narendra Modi's re-election in 2019, sees these actions as

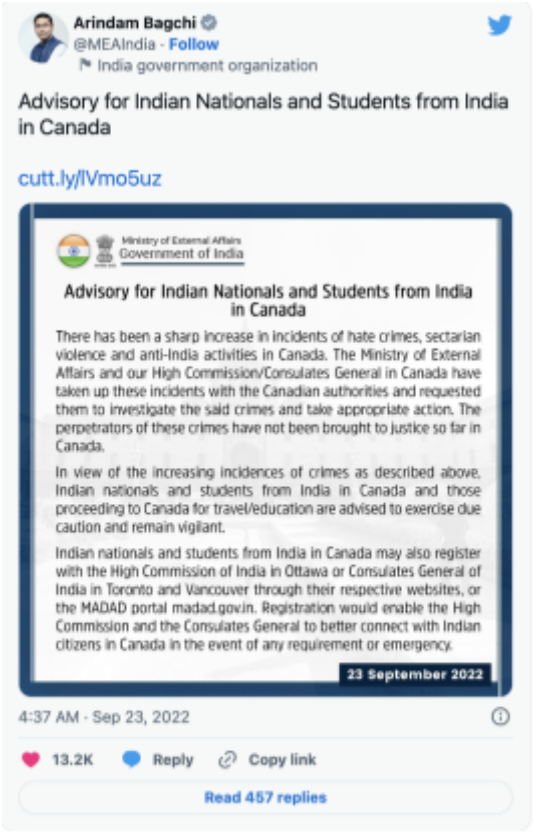

Figure 3

[84] Idem.
[85] "Hindu Americans Call for Disbandment of Teaneck Democratic Municipal Committee," *Insider NJ*, October 3, 2022, https://www.insidernj.com/press-release/hindu-americans-call-for-disbandment-of-teaneck-democratic-municipal-committee/.
[86] "Stop Democrats Bigotry against Hindu Americans," https://www.stopdemocratsbigotryagainsthindus.com/.
[87] Abhishek Kumar Singh, "Canada Is Officially Unsafe for Indians in General and Hindus in Particular,", https://tfipost.com/2022/09/canada-is-officially-unsafe-for-indians-in-general-and-hindus-in-particular/.

part of a "pattern of behaviour of a lobbyist for the Modi government".[88]

These examples are a small snapshot of the well documented phenomenon of Hindu fragility, defined as self-victimization of high-caste Hindu by weaponizing both progressive politics and their personal potential for experiencing racism to portray any criticism of Hinduism or India as violence, as defined by the Feminist Critical Hindu Studies Collective (FCHS Collective) which consists of Shreena Gandhi, Sailaja Krishnamurti, Harshita Mruthinti Kamath, and Shana Sippy.[89] Intended to emphasize how North American Hindu supremacist logics mimics White supremacy culture, Hindu fragility intentionally evokes the victimization discourses of 'White fragility'.[90]

Despite its recent academic and media attention, analysis of Hindu fragility frames Hindu nationalism as a foreign virus arriving to the U.S. and thus unentangled from domestic racial conditions, a take that ignores its entanglements with settler colonialism. I argue that Hindu settler fragility, to reframe FCHS Collective's idea, is caused by settler anxiety, which will be defined and explore in the section below, over failure to achieve an economic status equal to White settlers, and manifests as the weaponization of political language and caste innocence, the latter of which cause victimization discourse. The anxiety is embodied by the self-creation of a model minority and motivated by brahmanical entitlement and perpetual foreignness, resulting in further investment in the settler state, to use Eve Tuck (Unangaŷ) and K. Wayne Yang's framework of settler moves to innocence.

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[88] Rif Ayaz Parrey, "The Hindu American Foundation's Parentage Problem: An Interview with Sunita Viswanath," January 16, 2023, https://theleaflet.in/the-hindu-american-foundations-parentage-problem-an-interview-with-sunita-viswanath/.

[89] Feminist Critical Hindu Studies Collective, "Hindu Fragility and the Politics of Mimicry in North America," *The Immanent Frame*, November 2, 2022, https://tif.ssrc.org/2022/11/02/hindu-fragility-and-the-politics-of-mimicry-in-north-america/.

[90] Feminist Critical Hindu Studies Collective, "Hindu Fragility"

The aim of this chapter is to explain the specificity and operations of the Indian settler, as was established in Chapter 1. To do that, I first explore social and economic stakes that set high expectations for Indian settlers and racialized frameworks that sow doubt which produces setter anxiety. Then I explore how that anxiety is alleviated through a reassertion of power and place in the multicultural state through weaponized progressive language.

Settler Anxiety

For the numerous ways they remind that the settler colonial project is unfinished and illegitimate, Indigenous peoples prompt forms of settler anxiety through their legitimate claims to land and continued existence. Settlers who are disturbed by their own complicity in violence try to escape the weight of knowing they cause harm just by existing on Native land. These attempts to reconcile their guilt and position within the settler colonial structure is described as settler anxiety. In this section, I argue that for Indian settlers, settler anxiety is motivated by brahminical expectations of status and the perpetual foreigner dynamic. Being the top of the social hierarchy in India, Indian settlers bring an assumption of a continued elite status as they immigrate to Native land. Further, Hindu settler anxiety is expressed through adherence to model minority discourse and further investment in the settler state. To show this, I bring Nishant Upadhyay's work on how model minority discourse serves the goals of settler colonialism into conversation with Sze Wei Ang's work on how the logic of model minority traps Asian immigrants in cycles of blame. I add to Ang's idea that the cycle of blame causes a further investment in the settler state to become the only avenue to become a full settler. With the promise of being invited to be a settler, Tuck and Yang argue that people of color will invest themselves in the state through bolstering Whiteness via

continuing the ongoing oppression of Black and Indigenous peoples and demanding to be included in the body politic.[91]

High-caste immigrants' experience of hereditary social and economic capital results in assumptions of receiving similar social and economic privileges in their settler state. Indian contemporary caste structure embodies ideologies of brahminical supremacy, which manifests as hereditary occupations that favor intergenerational class reproduction. My field notes reveal that in a modernized, post-liberalized, and meritocratic India, upper-caste people argue the state is post-caste and that lower-caste people do not face barriers to move to white collar jobs. Despite this, D. Ajit, Han Donker, and Ravi Saxena analyze the caste diversity of corporate board members to find that Indian business networks remain "an 'old boys club' based on caste affiliation rather than on other considerations (like merit or experience)". [92] In a sociological survey of the extent to which cultural, social, symbolic, and economic capital contextualizes the positions of Indian business elites, Jules Naudet, Adrien Allorant, and Mathieu Ferry find that one major group are multipositional family-business owners from the trading caste who developed family network and high economic capital are an "inherited capital".[93] The ability for social networks to maintain brahminical privilege should not be underestimated; Amritorupa Sen argues that Brahmin social capital, accrued from their networks, allows for innocuous preservation of their privileges.[94] Expectations of economic gains are only further compounded by moving abroad to settler states being primarily motivated by desire for better pay and work opportunities, as shown by my field notes. In

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[91] Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity,Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 17.
[92] D Ajit, Han Donker, and Ravi Saxena, "Corporate Boards in India: Blocked by Caste?," *Economic and Political Weekly* 47, no. 32 (August 11, 2012): 39.
[93] D Ajit,et. al "Corporate Boards in India" 42.
[94] Amritorupa Sen, "The Surviving Power of Brahmin Privilege," Current Sociology, June 29, 2022, 4, https://doi.org/10.1177/00113921221105915.

conversations with high-caste professional in India, the number one reason for moving to the US and a Canada is the promise of high pay and multitudinous job opportunities; the idea is taken as fact to such a degree that my questions about why people move to North America were met with an exasperated answer of "money, obviously".

Despite their expectation, Indian immigrants are not convinced they will receive the full economic privileges equal to White settlers, which is the implicitly promised reward for investing in the settler state. Here, the privileges of being a White settler builds on Tuck and Yang's definition of an "exceptionalized position with assumed rights to invulnerability and legal supremacy" to add the economic privileges of high-paying employment[95]. This fear is in part motivated by the perpetual foreigner stereotype, a perception of Asian and Asian Americans as always being foreign nationals despite official migration status or citizenship. Exploring how racial barriers in the workplace are ignored to show how Indian settlers deal with their settler anxiety. In Upandhyay's interviews with dominant caste, highly educated, skilled Indian immigrants who are naturalized Canadian citizens or are permanent residents working in Alberta's tar sands, racial glass ceilings are silently present. The interviewees were all middle to upper-middle level employees, who represent the large presence of white-collar Indian work, but the Tar Sands also employ Indians in low level work in the oil and service industries, often as temporary foreign workers.[96] So, the placement of Indian workers adheres to the company's racial glass ceiling, where non-White professionals are rarely or never allowed into the upper echelons. Further, Indian workers were drawn to the tar sands due to systemic racial barriers to meaningful employment in urban centers

[95] Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor,", 18.
[96] Nishant Upadhyay, "Making of 'Model' South Asians on the Tar Sands: Intersections of Race, Caste, and Indigeneity," *Journal of the Critical Ethnic Studies Association* 5, no. 1–2 (2019): 158.

following the 2008 financial crisis.[97] These barriers, which could entail nonrecognition of non-Canadian education and work experience, language barriers, or limited sociocultural employment networks, all of which are directly related to the race of these immigrants. The educational and employment experience of White settlers are not discounted in the way that Indian settlers are. Despite its effect on their lives, interviewees did not decry or blame racial barriers for their material conditions. Instead Indian workers cling to positive perceptions as a sign of acceptance, a move that attempts to emphasize their acceptance as a settler, an image that the forever foreign stereotype prevents.

The silent racial barriers seen in the Tar Sands create a place-specific model minority, who is blamed for their failure to become a White settler–a process that in actuality caused systemic racism. The model begins by interviewees constructing a deracialized meritocracy where they benefit from being better workers than other groups. Proudly echoing the perceptions of corporate management, the Indian workers imagined themselves as "more hardworking and responsible employees than others".[98] The vaguely defined 'others' are in part Indigenous peoples who "for some reason [interviewees] don't see" which alludes to the fact that few Indigenous peoples are employed at the Tar Sands. Moreover, interviewees are rearticulating terra nullius to erase Native peoples from the workforce and town.[99] This strong work ethic is used by respondents to argue that "if racism exists, then it is benefiting us," using meritocratic logic that the best workers will be paid the most.[100] Here, Indian workers imagine themselves as good workers to exclude Indigenous peoples and maintain the possibility of their economic success.

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[97] Idem.
[98] Upadhyay, "Making of 'Model'", 159.
[99] Upadhyay, "Making of 'Model'", 158-9.
[100] Upadhyay, "Making of 'Model'", 159.

Despite their confidence in their workmanship and meritocracy, the image of a model minority that interviewees construct of themselves are fraught with anxiety over the impossibility of fully becoming a White settler. The myth of the model minority, being premised on people improving their material conditions without state intervention or acknowledgement of systemic racism, is used in the service of the settler state. The motivation for Asians to buy into the model minority is the promise that the privileges of White settlers will also be theirs, at the expense of failure to do so will be put squarely on their shoulders. How this discourse results in self-blame is demonstrated in Ang's analysis of Chang-rae Lee's novel, *A Gesture Life*, where the protagonist, Hata, upholds the model minority at the cost of only having himself to blame for feelings of alienation. Vaguely, Hata admits to feeling "somewhat uneasy in certain situations", which leaves vast space for readers to fill in with instances of xenophobia of varied levels of violence.[101] Hata immediately follows that the feeling "was not anyone's fault but my own" .[102] It is unimaginable to Hata to blame racist institutions or people instead of himself. As a solution, Hata resolves to "do what is necessary in being complimentary" thereby trapping himself in cycles of trying to be a better and better model minority; a game that ends with the settler states' victory not Hata.[103] The cycle of becoming a minority accepted by White settlers that Hata and immigrants in Tar Sands are trapped in represents one way to reconcile their settler anxiety. Ironically, the settler anxiety of Indian settlers mirrors the dissonance lower caste people feel from the tension between being told that caste does not matter in modern Indian and their experiences of caste discrimination.

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[101] Sze Wei Ang, "The Politics of Victimization and the Model Minority," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 11, no. 3 (2012): 133, https://doi.org/10.1353/ncr.2012.0011.
[102] Idem.
[103] Idem.

Model minority discourse is present in the language around celebrating the first nation-wide Hindu Heritage Month in Canada in Brahmin-only Facebook groups. Wanting to see what Indians settlers were saying themselves, I joined Samast Brahmin Society (Samaj) of Canada, one of dozens of Brahmin-only Facebook groups. Soon I discovered posts (Figure 4) to celebrate public victories of being accepted by the Canadian state and seemingly achieving the status of a White settler, which should be read as immigrant investment in Canadian settler colonialism. The article upholds deracialized meritocracy and model minority discourse by asserting that the Hindu Heritage Month was fairly earned. Acknowledgements of the civic and peaceful Hindu character through their Heritage Month are described as "a long overdue appreciation", not an effort "to please a particular community" or "give handouts". The former comment about pleasing a particular community attempts to portray this celebration as being motivated by apolitical forces. Once again trying to prove the legitimacy of the Heritage month, the comment about the celebration not being a "handout" plays directly into the model minority myth. Intended to create a binary between ghetto Black communities and upwardly mobile Asian communities, scholars like Keith Osajima have explored how "model minority" discourse is intended to disavow claims of systemic anti-Black racism within America.[104] Not only anti-Black, model

Figure 4

[104] Upadhyay, "Making of a 'Model'".

minority discourse is used in service of settler colonialism, as Upadhyay traces. Drawing on Thomas Biolsi's argument that Indigenous peoples are constructed as an anti-model minority, Upadhyay claims that for people of color who seek to settle and become model citizens Native peoples represent a limit, a model of what not to do[105]. As relying on social assistance programs is a habit stereotypically associated with Black and Indigenous communities, the rejection of using social safety nets shows how the Indian community uses other POC community's behavior as a limit on their own behavior. This rejection of handouts is meant to prove that Hindus would not be a drain on state resources and thus good citizens. All these accolades make the article's rhetorical question "why should a Hindu be proud to be a Hindu?" redundant.

Through their claims for inclusion and civic entitlement, high-caste Indian immigrants show how their settler anxiety is alleviated by further investment in the Canadian settler state. Tuck and Yang discuss how some racialized settlers negotiate the tension of never becoming a White settler by focusing on "the attainment of equal legal and cultural entitlements" which "is actually an investment in settler colonialism.".[106] I argue that immigrants' desire to achieve equal status as a White settler through their symbolic and civic acceptance is an example of the legal and cultural entitlements that Tuck and Yang name.

By promoting achievements in line with Canadian democratic values, posts on the Samast Facebook group demonstrates how high-caste Hindu Canadians utilize cultural citizenship to become accepted. From an online newspaper specifically for the Indian diaspora in Vancouver, a news article (Figure 4) affirms pride in being Hindu, and presents a united and homogeneous Indian diaspora. Hindu contributions and accomplishments are

[105] Upadhyay, "Making of a 'Model'",157.
[106] Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor,", 18.

presented as evidence for why the diaspora should be proud in itself. From "ancient sages" developing foundational branches of math, yoga and meditation, to modern successes such as "CEOs of Hindu origin" like Google CEO Sundar Pichai, Hindus are presented as making meaningful intellectual and business contributions to society.[107] The most meaningful contribution is Hindus' 5,000 year old history of "universal acceptance, tolerance, universal brotherhood" as they "have never attacked, conquered or colonized any kingdom or other country in the world".[108] Overlooking the glaring historical inaccuracies of Hindu kingdoms attacking each other, this presentation of the peaceful Hindu embodies how "social harmony or unity can be mistaken for justice" within homogenizing or multicultural discourse.[109] Further, a critical reading of these efforts reveals the tension between promoting Hindu non-colonial history and the desire to gain acceptance into Canadian society, a state founded on violent settler colonialism.

Analyzing the civic engagement of Indian and Vietnamese immigrants in Texas, Caroline Brettell and Deborah Reed-Danahay argue that immigrants enact a cultural production of the citizen to claim recognition and political rights.[110] The cultural production hinges on asserting that their right to have a different identity from the body politic, but that dissimilarity is not grounds to compromise their right to participate in the settler state's democratic processes.[111] At the end of the article posted in Samast, the above mentioned achievements and principles are ultimately proof that Hindus are "First Class world

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[107] All Things Indian Vancouver, "November Is Hindu Heritage Month in Canada," November 3, 2022, https://ativancouver.ca/blog/november-is-hindu-heritage-month-in-canada/?fbclid=IwAR1VeTzuLLgYYkoPuf6FNE7B0LPB4lBp1DPKttbmtvdlWl7fz88amnC3xsg.
[108] All Things Indian Vancouver, "November Is Hindu Heritage"
[109] Sze Wei Ang, "The Politics of Victimization and the Model Minority," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 11, no. 3 (2012): 126, https://doi.org/10.1353/ncr.2012.0011.
[110] Caroline Brettell and Deborah Reed-Danahay, "Introduction," in Civic Engagements: The Citizenship Practices of Indian and Vietnamese Immigrants (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 8.
[111] Brettell and Reed-Danahay, "Introduction", 3.

citizens".[112] Promoting images of the democratic Hindu is inextricably linked with Hindutva desire to "foster global political alliances between a 'secular' America and a 'good, democratic, Hindu' India who share common enemies" on the international stage.[113] This civic accomplishment is underscored by promotional posts (Figure 5) about flag raising ceremonies in honor of Hindu Heritage Month[114]. The image shows not the Indian national flag but a saffron colored, double pennant flag with an Om, a symbol of Hinduism. This is the Saffron Flag, a symbol of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), an right-wing Indian Hindu nationalist political party associated with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the party of Indian PM Modi. Commonly known as, 'Bhagwa Dhwaj', the flag is revered by RSS founders for its history of "motivat[ing] Hindus to fight back and protect the nation.".[115] The presence of Hindu nationalism points to how transnational issues often become a conduit for immigrants to engage with political institutions in their new country, as Sangay K. Mishra argues[116]. By combining a symbol of their religious

Figure 5

[112] All Things Indian Vancouver, "November Is Hindu Heritage"
[113] Feminist Critical Hindu Studies Collective, "Hindu Fragility,"
[114] Samast Brahmin Society (Samaj) of Canada, Facebook, November 11, 2022, https://www.facebook.com/groups/2091663467716675/search/?q=hindu%20heritage%20month
[115] Arun Anad, "Why the Saffron Flag Is Revered as 'Guru' & Worshipped by RSS Swayamsevaks," *The Print*, July 19, 2021.
[116] Sangay K. Mishra, "Transnationalism and Political Participation," in *Desis Divided* (University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 155, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctt19rmc89.

diversity, the Saffron Flag, with a classic democratic event, flag raising, Indian settlers assert both their acceptance by Canada and their personal investment in the state.

Hindu Settler Fragility

Since 2019, universities in the U.S. and Canada, including Carleton University and the latest addition from California State University, have added caste as protected class in their non-discrimination policy. In opposition, Hindu American Foundation (HAF) have argued that efforts to make caste a protected category "target the Hindu religion" and "uniquely target South Asians, Indians, and Hindus for ethno-religious profiling, monitoring, and policing".[117] This section analyzes this exact phenomenon of Indian settlers using their status as a racial minority to engage in Hindu settler fragility.

For its similar victimization discourse, FCHS Collective created the term Hindu fragility, which mimics White supremacy culture in North America, like White fragility and model minority.[118] Extending the idea, I want to focus on how Hindu settler fragility understands "how caste-privileged Hindus leverage ideas about their collective precarity and vulnerability" such as the weaponization of progressive language.[119] Further, I want to make space to analyze how caste innocence contributes to Hindu settler fragility, analysis motivated by field work in India where all the subjects I interacted with engaged with some degree of caste innocence. To do this, I use Tuck and Yang's settler moves to innocence framework to analyze how the possibilities of complicity are erased through caste innocence, thereby creating the possibility of self-victimization which is inherent in Hinduphobia. Then,

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[117] Rohit Chopra and Ajantha Subramanian, "Caste Discrimination Exists in the U.S., Too—But a Movement to Outlaw It Is Growing," *Time*, February 11, 2022, https://time.com/6146141/caste-discrimination-us-opposition-grows/.
[118] Feminist Critical Hindu Studies Collective, "Hindu Fragility"
[119] Feminist Critical Hindu Studies Collective, "Hindu Fragility"

I look at how progressive politics are weaponized to leverage their collective religious vulnerability to reassert their place in the multicultural state.

In FCHS Collective's original theorization, victimization is a direct manifestation of Hindu fragility, which I do not disagree with. But that articulation does not leave space to explore contemporary caste innocence as a step to creating the conditions for victimization discourse, despite caste innocence being an important part of this conversation. Not intended to be a nitpick, my motivation to connect caste innocence to Hindu settler fragility is a reflection of field work in India where all the subjects I interacted with engaged in some degree of caste innocence. I want to extend Tuck and Yang's concept of settler moves to innocence by adding caste innocence into theorization of how the idea manifests in Indian settler diaspora. Intended to ease settler guilt without giving up land, power, or privilege, settler moves to innocence are a set of evasions. Similarly, caste innocence conceals caste privilege of Indian settlers to allow for self-victimization. The investment framework discussed above is explored within the move to innocence called colonial equivocation, defined as the homogenizing of colonial and settler colonial oppression to obscure racialized peoples' relationship to the settler state.[120] Similarly, caste innocence shrouds high caste peoples' relationship with continuing Brahminic supremacy by using evidence of low-caste people becoming economically successful to pretend society no longer puts weight in the identity of caste, akin to how the Obama presidency ushered in a perception of America being post-racial[121]. One interviewee used the example of one lower caste family from a rural community achieving material success to argue that money both erases and replaces caste. In this section, I argue that a facet of Hindu settler fragility is the disavowing of casteism

[120] Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor,", 17.
[121] Daniel Schorrr, "A New, 'Post-Racial' Political Era in America," All Things Considered, https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=18489466.

through caste innocence, when high-caste individuals claim that caste does not exist in modernity or does not get transnationally reproduced in diaspora.

Caste innocence produces a reality where caste is not transnationally reproduced in the Indian diaspora. From my field work, high-caste Indians imagine diaspora as united in reaction to the presence of other races, which results in the erasing of caste. In my discussion with an IT professional who has experience working in the US, he argues that in America caste is erased because Indians stop focusing on their caste difference to unite against the threat of another group, implied to be White Americans. Further, he imagines that because White Americans do not know about caste or engage in caste supremacy, all Indians are treated the same, which also erases caste. Interestingly, he ignores the possibility of high-caste Indians continuing caste discrimination in settler states, which is the most common way caste exists in the diaspora according to anonymous complaints from Google and Cisco employees.

Caste innocence also presents as imagining the Indian diaspora as homogeneous to hide their hegemony. The interchangeable usage of Hindu and Indian present attempts to homogenize the diaspora despite its diversity of identities, especially in terms of religion and caste. Nowhere in articles about Canada's Hindu Heritage Month are there any explanations why Hindu was used instead of Indian or South Asian. In a weird harking back to 18th Century immigration forms where anyone from South Asia was classified as Hindu, the article uses Hindu and Indian as synonyms despite the former being a religion and the latter being a nationality. The article itself addresses both "the Indian Diaspora" and those "proud to be Hindus", two groups that overlap but are not synonymous.[122] Agreeing, Upadhyay argues that "homogeneous constructs[ions]of South Asianness in North America are used to

[122] All Things Indian Vancouver, "November Is Hindu Heritage"

mask dominant-caste Hindu Indian hegemony".[123] By claiming that the whole Indian, and by extension a possible stand in for all of South Asia, diaspora should be happy about Hindu Heritage Month, criticisms from lower caste or non-Hindus in the community are undermined before they are even made. The disavowal of potential Dalit criticism shows diversity in the diaspora is perceived as attempts "to fracture and destabilize the perceived homogeneity" by the dominant caste .[124] This desperate claim to a meritocratic Canada and homogenized Indian diaspora is used to prevent claims of brahminical supremacy.

In reality, caste silently becomes a part of diaspora culture to uphold caste supremacy. Dalit American, Thenmozhi Soundararajan describes how caste is silently present in questions of "where is your family from" and cultural norms like clothing, dances, music, and especially eating habits.[125] Second generation Indians can flash their caste through their actions for street cred and to validate the Indian part of their identity. Soundararajan's commentary on the silence of caste in diaspora reflects my experience. In middle school I asked my Indian American friends[126] what their caste was and everyone said that their parents refuse to say so they do not bring caste with them to the US. Even if their parents genuinely mean that[127], my parents could easily figure out their caste from their last names and dietary restrictions. For ensuring high-caste people remain nominally casteless, "caste innocence [is]

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[123] Upadhyay, "Making of a 'Model'",161
[124] Idem.
[125] Thenmozhi Soundararajan, "Black Indians," *Outlook*, February 5, 2022, https://www.outlookindia.com/magazine/story/the-black-indians/281938.
[126] I asked other people because as a child my mum stated that our family gave up their family upon their conversation in Catholicism centuries ago so knowledge of our caste history is lost to history. For this project, I have once again asked my parents about caste within our community and this time they discussed hierarchies between sects of Christianity being based on recency of conversation and the known fact that recent converts are low caste people. Shobhana theorizes how Syrian Chritstians, of which my family is a member, place themselves at the top of Christian Caste Hierarchy by emphasizing their Brahmin origins.
[127] My mum did not believe my friend's parents genuinely did not want to transnational reproduce caste. Instead, she thought that the parents knew that they could not explicitly talk about their caste with others and so disavowed caste to ensure that silence.

a form of caste supremacy".[128] The forefather of modern Dalit activism, B. R. Ambedkar foresaw transnational reproduction in his supposition that "if Hindus migrate to other regions on earth, Indian caste would become a world problem."

An example of Tuck and Yang's colonial equivocation, caste innocence falsely presents high-caste Indian immigrants as equal victims to Indigenous peoples to escape settler guilt. A "homogenizing of various experiences of oppression as colonization", colonial equivocation declares that all minorities are colonized victims to imply that none are settlers.[129] The logical leap is premised on the belief that if one is a victim of colonialism in one way, you can not be a perpetrator in a different way. Logics of 'always oppressed, never the oppressor' underpins both caste innocence and pushes to recognize Hinduphobia. Shaista Patel makes this connection clear by saying that "just like white settlers operate on an innocence when it comes to colonial and racial violence, caste Indians cannot bear to talk about caste and our complicity in casteist violence and maintain an innocence" .[130] Here Patel explains that caste innocence allows casteist violence and privilege to be ignored. I take this further, to say that if high-caste Indian immigrants ignore their caste privilege, they can position themselves as a racialized minority in White majority settler states, in other words a victim. This perfectly sets the stage for Hinduphobia to be accepted by the multicultural state.

Indian settlers use accusations of Hinduphobia to reassert their status as a victimized minority. An embodiment of Hindu Settler fragility, most accusations of Hinduphobia are a reaction to the discussion of caste or presence of anti-caste activism meant to silence. Indian settlers argue that discussions of caste make "minoritized Hindu students feel vulnerable and

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[128] FCHS Collective, "Feminist Critical Hindu Studies in Formation," *Religion Compass* 15, no. 5 (May 2021), https://doi.org/10.1111/rec3.12392.
[129] Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor,", 17.
[130] Patel, "Complicating the Tale"

ashamed".[131] By emphasizing the minority position of Hindus, Hinduphobia seeks to use the protection progressive politics grants minorities to continue brahminical supremacy. The parallels to White fragility makes clear how accusations of Hinduphobia are a manifestation of Hindu Settler fragility. This is not to say that Hindus in North America do not experience religious discrimination. But, being targets of racist violence does not absolve Indian settlers from engaging in caste oppression.

Further, Hindu organizations in Canada have begun the campaign for Hinduphobia to be included in the Human Rights Code. Of the current 17 different personal attributes protected by the Human Rights Code and the 'Glossary of Terms' that defines discriminatory terms, Hinduphobia is not mentioned. Ragini Sharma, author of a report submitted to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, argues that since Hinduphobia has not been specifically recognized "the problem of Hinduphobia is not being recognized or addressed".[132] Sharma attempts to craft an underdog story where wide-spread denial in Hinduphobia needs to first be addressed by recognition of the problem. To the protection offered by the already recognized terms anti-Asian hate, Sharma rejects it because "Hinduism is not a geographic identity, but a religious identity". Continuing the divide between South and East Asians, Sharma argues that anti-Asian hate is not applicable because Canadians do not identify "Hindus as Asians" and that media about anti-Asian hate only mentions "Chinese Canadians as the targets". Weaponizing progressive language, as 2020 article on a Hindutva propaganda article recommends, Sharma couches acknowledgements of Hinduphobia in Canada's efforts to overcome racist history. Playing up how explicitly anti-Hindu Canadian history is, Sharma

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[131] Feminist Critical Hindu Studies Collective, "Hindu Fragility"
[132] Dr. Ragini Sharma, "Recognizing Hinduphobia - A Canadian Perspective," May 21, 2022, https://hibiscus-falcon-xywf.squarespace.com/blog/recognizing-hinduphobia-a-canadian-perspective-part2

details racist immigration laws to conclude that Canadian history is seeped "colonial-era racist and anti-Hindu ideology".

Efforts to establish Hinduphobia as a protected class is another method to engage in caste innocence. One reason complains about caste discrimination at Google were allegedly not taken seriously is because "religion [is] a protected category," make the situation legally complex[133]. That combined with valid fears that "HR wouldn't even understand what caste is", led to many Dalits deciding against making formal complaints[134]. If Dalits are discouraged from voicing complaints under existing freedom of religion Constitutional protections, official recognition of Hinduphobia would only exacerbate the issue. A version of this has reportedly happened when workers who spoke about casteism were "reported to Human Resources as 'Hinduphobic'"[135].

Legitimizing Hinduphobia is part of a larger tactic to weaponize the language of progressive politics. A 2020 article on a Hindutva propaganda website recommends they take advantage of American reckoning with its racist history through centering the voices of people of color by "learn[ing] 'woke'".[136] The article notes that Hindus have a large potential for power because they were "victims of colonization", "persecuted by Abrahamic faiths", "come from an indigenous culture" and are "people of color".[137] All this cultural cache means that "in the game of woke, we Hindus actually hold all possible cards".[138]

The Facebook group Samast follows this playbook by weaponizing Canadian discourses of multiculturalism In an interview with the group's administrator Jagruti Bhatt

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[133] Venkatraman, "Big Tech's Big Problem"
[134] Idem.
[135] Idem.
[136] Abhishek Banerjee, "Hindu RW Needs to Learn to Speak 'Woke' in Order to Win Globally," *OpIndia*, September 17, 2020, https://www.opindia.com/2020/09/hindu-rw-needs-to-learn-to-speak-woke-in-order-to-win-globally/.
[137] Banerjee, "Hindu RW"
[138] Banerjee, "Hindu RW"

explains the criteria for joining; as the name suggests, the group "only accepts members of the Brahmin caste" but later added that "all castes are allowed at the events organized by the group".[139] Ignoring the illogical supposition that lower caste people would know event details despite not being invited via the Facebook group, the addendum is a bad faith gesture to Canadian liberalism and multiculturalism. Meaning, the comments about an open invitation give the appearance that all in the Indian diaspora are welcomed by the group.

Samast's description continues to juggle justifying the group's existence without sounding prejudiced by explaining that its "goal is to unite all Brahmins under one roof while they can serve in all other Brahmin organizations.".[140] By innocently explaining that the group is simply meant to bring similar people together, a description that echoes rationale for immigrant enclaves: people in foreign, unknown lands want to be surrounded by the familiar. These shallow attempts to be perceived as fair are shattered by Bhatt's refraining to comment on accusations of casteism within the group. Along with interpersonal incidents of violence, the group could never claim parity as the underlying purpose of the group is to recreate the private high caste networks that exist in India to facilitate employment and matrimony to ensure their purity and power. When read against the grain, Bhatt's own poetry (Figure 6) clearly advocates for continued brahminical supremacy. More

Figure 6

[139] Shlok ·, "How Prejudice Rooted in an Ancient Social System Has Migrated from India to Canada," May 16, 2022, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/caste-india-canada-students-1.6450484.
[140] Talati, "How Prejudice Rooted"

than typical tiger parental urging to adhere to elders' decisions, Bhatt's poem urges members to "perform together in the same way" for the sake of a "clean society and social system". The language of "performing together" is a clear illusion to the brahmanical justification of the caste system as a non-hierarchical division of labor, as exists in many societies, that benefits everyone, which my field work also confirms is a way to justify the caste system.[141] But, that attempt to naturalize caste is proven fictitious by the contradictory preoccupation with purity. Notions of cleanliness underpin the caste system, all the way from its etymological origin as the Portuguese word *casta* meaning purity of blood.[142] The existence of this active Facebook group shows how caste and casteism is alive and thriving in Canada despite the multicultural fictional premise of an inclusive community.

For producing particular understandings of authenticity and tolerance, multiculturalism has created these dynamics where Hindu nationalist can logically reject criticisms from out-group scholars by presenting themselves as the true guru of Hinduism. Canadian multiculturalism has been critiqued for creating views of authentic non-dominant cultures as internally homogenous.[143] Multicultural policy that only focuses on tolerance of cultural differences without interrogating this politics of authenticity ensures that socially dominant classes within non-dominant culture become its de facto representative.[144] This can be seen in the 2020 article's re-dos of an argument between a dominant caste Hindu and Audrey Truschke, a researcher of Indian history and US-based Hindu far-right. At a talk, a male Hindu audience member asked why Truschke is "poking her nose into India's history

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[141] M. S. S. Pandian, "One Step Outside Modernity: Caste, Identity Politics and Public Sphere," *Economic and Political Weekly* 37, no. 18 (May 4, 2002): 1735–41.
[142] Shaista Patel, "Complicating the Tale of 'Two Indians': Mapping 'South Asian' Complicity in White Settler Colonialism Along the Axis of Caste and Anti-Blackness," *Theory & Event* 19, no. 4 (2016), https://muse.jhu.edu/article/633278.
[143] Balmurli Natrajan, "Snapshot 'Practicing Hindus', Hindutva and Multiculturalism," in *Public Hinduisms*, ed. John Zavos et al. (SAGE Publications India, 2012).
[144] Idem

when America itself is built on the genocide of Native Americans", to which she asserts her credital as a professional historian and suggest the critique was born out of misogyny.[145] The article that models how to act in this debate for Hindu nationalists to 'win', suggests that if the Hindu audience member had argued that due to Truschke's "*privilege*" as a White American, she would be a bad "*ally*" and "*cultural imperialist*" to ignore a "*person of color's*" opinion on their own history they would have won the argument.[146] The redid argument contains the same sentiment as the original, but the weaponization of progressive language allows for Indian settlers to access power and creates the illusion that they are the true victims.

[145] Banerjee, "Hindu RW"
[146] Banerjee, "Hindu RW". Italicisation purposely in the original to highlight woke words the audience needs to soon learn.

Conclusion

I would like to end as I started– with a personal story. My parents spend a lot of time reminding me how lucky we are to live with all the comforts that America provides, a typical immigrant valorization of the American Dream. But, I have always wondered why this gratitude to America results in unquestionable loyalty and nationalism. That same emotion could also motivate attempts to help Native peoples whose land we are on or other communities achieve a similar level of comfort.

This project has been an exploration of how high-caste first-generation immigrants, like my parents, become complicit and further settler colonialism in their journey to create a better life for their families. I argue that at the heart of being an Indian settler is a tension between simultaneously being a victim of violence, as a racial minority, and an actor of violence, as a settler and a Brahmin. One way Indian settlers relieve this anxiety is through Hindu settler fragility–the purposeful creation of self-victimization narratives to disavow caste violence and further invest in the settler state through symbolic representation. This theorization draws on existing literature from North America and India about settler colonialism, caste, and diasporic nationalism, as well as personal stories, through interviews I conducted in Chennai and Bangalore and published accounts of Dalit American activists.

Limited by space, I have not been able to explore all the nuances within the question of who is the Indian settler. In my field work, interviewees hint to there being regional differences in understandings and impacts of caste in India, which aligns with larger perceptions of North India being more traditional and South India being more progressive. While my interviews were all conducted in South India, which is where my and my mum's experiential knowledge comes from, Upadhyay's interviews were with presumably North

Indian immigrants as their facilitator was a friend from New Delhi. This regional difference speaks to the way that all the diversity within the Indian diaspora affects perceptions of caste. To destabilize the monolithic construction of the Indian diaspora, further research into how caste is impacted by other factors like non-Hindu religions, gender, geographic area such as rural or urban, along with region must be investigated.

Finally, I want to end with a discussion of the politics of research and ethnographies, decolonial methodology, and processes to make research accessible to a popular audience. For producing knowledge that legitimated the "dissolv[ing of] native societies and erect[ing] a new colonial society on the expropriated land base", as Patrick Wolfe argues, all research methods are implicated in the settler project.[147] There exists an inherent "historical sovereignty… of European thought", as Michel Foucault terms, within Western research and its processes.[148] Examples of this historical sovereignty include the colonial apparatus of language, both English and academic, and of voice are also still invoked, as shown in Gayatri Spivak's discussion of the politics of turning ethnographic observations into universal theoretical analytical categories.[149] All this makes Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (Māori) observation that "research is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary" unsurprising.[150]

Qualitative methodologies, like ethnography, developed in critical fields engaged in postmodernist challenges to research as truth-making attempt to reconceptualize the oppressive construction of research. Though these attempts only lessens, not erases, harm,

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[147]K. L. Braun et al., "Research on Indigenous Elders: From Positivistic to Decolonizing Methodologies," The Gerontologist 54, no. 1 (February 1, 2014): 118, https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnt067.
[148] Gaile S. Cannella and Yvonna S. Lincoln, "Epilogue: Claiming a Critical Public Social Science—Reconceptualizing and Redeploying Research," *Qualitative Inquiry* 10, no. 2 (April 2004): 303 https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800404263418.
[149] Idem
[150] Braun, "Research on Indigenous Elders", 118.

Gaile S. Cannella and Yvonna S. Lincoln call for a continuation of ongoing processes to rethink the ontological and epistemological purpose of research, from the framing of research questions that inspire projects to how data is disseminated to a public audience.[151] It is the latter step of translating academics to a popular audience that I want to take up.

Being inspired by personal accounts of my own, family members, and activists, this project is enriched by an attempt to translate my ideas to the non-academic audience that inspired and aided the project. This translation effort is motivated by a hopeful belief that Indian settlers can behave in ways other than described in Chapter Two if they are made aware of caste discrimination and settler colonialism. Though often not encouraged in academic circles and tenure committees, there has been a recent resurgence of public social sciences and a contemplation of the disciplines' relationship to the public.[152] Recent public ethnography falls into the trend of either popularization, using popular mediums and expressions to make knowledge accessible to large audiences, or politicization, posing questions and contemplating potential impacts of policies to the public.[153]

I aim to popularize and politicize my project by creating a WhatsApp post calling Indian Americans to learn about the movement to ban caste discrimination in the US and Instagram posts questioning the automatic support of representation in corporate spaces. The popularization of public ethnography is achieved through the use of social media. Though the audience in popular ethnography is commonly an expansive group of anyone interested in the subject matter, Didier Fassin critiques this broad definition for causing social scientists to "overestimating their role in the public sphere as moral heroes.".[154] Agreeing with Fassin's

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[151] Cannella and Lincoln, "Epilogue",
[152] Didier Fassin, "Why Ethnography Matters: On Anthropology and Its Publics," *Cultural Anthropology* 28, no. 4 (November 2013): 625, https://doi.org/10.1111/cuan.12030.
[153] Idem
[154]Fassin, "Why Ethnography Matters", 627

comments, I target both older, often first-generation immigrants, and younger, often second-generation immigrants through the two different social media platforms.

WhatsApp is the one of the most popular telecommunication apps for Indians and Indian diaspora to stay in touch and share news. Of all the countries, India has the most number of WhatsApp users, 390 million in 2020 which is about 280 million more than the second place, and second highest rate of growth.[155] Based on my experience on the app, people use the platform to advertise community events or share relevant news, mostly through the forwarding feature that allows one to easily share information from one group to other, often large, groups. Though tragic, the rampant misinformation and offline violence inspired by that disinformation speaks to the power the app has in India.[156] In line with these norms, I decided to create a news post sharing Seattle's historic decision to explicitly ban caste discrimination due to community organizing. Rather than the persuasive approach I take with the Instagram posts, I thought the approach of sharing information would be better received by an older generation that perhaps has not questioned social norms before.

Figure 7

[155] Samidha Jain, "Indians Most Active on WhatsApp with 390.1 Million Monthly Active Users in 2020," *Forbes India*, August 27, 2021, https://www.forbesindia.com/article/news-by-numbers/indians-most-active-on-whatsapp-with-3901-million-monthly-active-users-in-2020/70059/1.

[156] Elyse Samuels, "How Misinformation on WhatsApp Led to a Mob Killing in India," February 21, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/02/21/how-misinformation-whatsapp-led-deathly-mob-lynching-india/.

Along with theorizing how to bring the knowledge in this project to the public, I wanted to actually create this social media content. For the WhatsApp post (Figure 7), I bring the latest news about the fight in the US to explicitly ban caste discrimination to show that high-caste immigrants have a place in this fight. Ever since I began this project, my mum has started explicitly talking about caste discrimination, in a shift from her previous caste innocence. This new focus has manifested as forwarding news stories about colleges banning caste discrimination and retelling conversations seeped in caste prejudice she overheard waiting in line at the South Asian grocery store. Based on this change in my mum, I decided to make the focus of the WhatsApp post on raising awareness of caste discrimination. Not wanting to focus on stories of Dalit suffering, I chose the story of Seattle's decision for both its historical victory in a state with many tech companies that employ Indians and Indian Americans, and the positive role high-caste Indians played. As my post mentions, Seattle City Council member, Kshama Sawant was raised in an upper-caste Hindu Brahmin household in India and was also the one to propose the anti-discrimination ordinance.[157] To apolitical Indian immigrants not aligned with Hindu nationalism, this information can model both big and little steps they can take to end caste discrimination.

To target younger Indian and Indian American, I also made posts for Instagram posts (Figure 8) that utilize the aesthetics of activist content and prevalent discussions of representation to encourage Asian settlers to question their desires to belong to their settler state. Online activism has proliferated on Instagram, especially after the summer of 2020, thanks in part to the carousel function that allows users to include up to 10 images in a single

[157] Deepa Bharath, "Seattle City Council Considers Historic Law barring Caste Discrimination," *PBS News Hour*, February 20, 2023, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/seattle-city-council-considers-historic-law-barring-caste-discrimination.

post.[158] Those familiar with justice oriented social media content are aware of both its educational format that ends with a call to action, and content that unsettles American myths and racial stereotypes.

Figure 8

The Instagram posts are a translation of my second chapter about Hindu settler fragility, specifically discussing motivations for Indian immigrants to invest in the settler state. As I explained further in the chapter, this investment often manifests as celebrating or advocating for symbolic inclusions into the state or corporate space. This theory will be translated into questions about what acceptance by the settler state looks like and whether we should seek out that validation. I believe these questions about representation lay the

[158] Terry Nguyen, "How Social Justice Slideshows Took Over Instagram," *Vox*, August 12, 2020, https://www.vox.com/the-goods/21359098/social-justice-slideshows-instagram-activism.

groundwork for conversations that unsettle Hindu victimization narratives that are too nuanced for a social media post. Taking advantage of this language, I begin my posts with the familiar questioning of Asian American representation through Google CEO Sundar Pichai's failure to address caste discrimination, an example that opened Chapter 2. Then I push the representation discourse past questions of tokenization to question immigrant desires to belong to their settler state. I want to bring up the idea that pleading for state recognition is not always the best strategy. Speaking to the contemporary Aboriginal rights movement in Canada, Glen Sean Coulthard (Yellowknives Dene) argues that recognition politics "reproduce the very configurations of colonialist, racist, patriarchal state power that Indigenous peoples' demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend", an assertion that Coulthard acknowledges also applies to other marginalized groups in elsewhere locations.[159] The series of posts end with advice on how to be a more aware Asian settler, through acknowledging our settler status and learning our specific history.

[159] Glen Sean Coulthard, "Introduction: Subjects of Empire," in Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014),3.

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