

AURAL MEMENTOES: MEMORIES OF SRI LANKAN MIGRANTS IN MELBOURNE

Tharupathi Munasinghe

Abstract

Place is a process, and it is human experience and struggle that give meaning to place. (Harner 2001, p. 660)

Memory is an integral part of our character and individuality wherever we live. Sound memories provide a diverse path through which migrants can preserve cognition and reconstruct past practices, usually for present purposes. Our communal roots build the social identity, with both geographical and psychological memory offering insights into the very core of our identity.

This research focuses on the sound and music memories that Sri Lankan emigrants carry from their mother country and how they are integrated into the Australian sound environment. Ten members of five Sri Lankan families were engaged in recorded conversations regarding their memories of environmental sounds, music, and language, both from their motherland and from contemporary Melbourne.

These memories of Sri Lankan emigrants in contemporary Melbourne help to explore the connection between a person's past sound and music memories and their experiences of sound and music in their displaced location. This paper delineates the connection of place with memories and how these effects upon their lives, irrespective of where they live.

Keywords: Sound memory, Displacement, Sri Lankan migrants.

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Introduction

This research arose from the memories of Sri Lankan emigrants in contemporary Melbourne, including my own experience, both as an artist working with sound and music, and as someone who migrated to Melbourne on August 12th 2007. On my first day in Melbourne, I felt desolate, and depressed. Australian life made me very conscious of my displacement from Sri Lanka and its memories. These experiences led me to contemplate the feelings of other Sri Lankans like myself who might also want the reminders, reassurances, and comforts brought by the sounds and music of their past.

Sound memories are most relevant when we are displaced to locations that are different from our native land. When we move from one location to another, our sound memories shift from the past to the present. In exploring the connection between a person's past and present sound and music memories I have come to believe that for emigrants, the sound memories of their motherland and the distinct sounds of their new land can integrate to form new and unique sound memories.

This project originated from my own experiences of sound and music in Sri Lanka - including the sounds of a civil war - and my experience of emigration from Sri Lanka to Australia. This research draws a connection between place, memory, and displacement from a person's native environment. Furthermore, this research also explores how memories affect to present life by contemplating migrants' personal experiences from a self-reflective and auto ethnographic perspective.

Memory during Displacement

Memory, our recollection of experiences, fills our mind every day with thoughts that shape our actions.

Memory forms the fabric of human life, affecting everything from the ability to perform simple, everyday tasks to the cognition of the self. Memory...provides the very core of identity. (Abdelhady 2007, p. 39)

As Dalia Abdelhady (2007) elucidates, "memory is especially significant in shaping the social life of diasporic communities that maintain strong political ties with their homeland." In her study, Abdelhady charts the ways in which Lebanese immigrants' identities and communal attachments are expressed artistically, based on in-depth interviews with fifteen Lebanese immigrant artists. These artists are based in New York, Montreal, and Paris. This article highlights the ways cultural workers who emigrated from Lebanon maintain an attachment to and an expression of their homelands. Abdelhardy's research focused on what these artists defined as aspects of Lebanese culture. She also studied the way. These artists challenged dominant narratives of collective memory in their homeland in an attempt to disrupt traditional understandings of coherent national culture and identity. Abdelhardy's study is

interesting and especially relevant to the studies of displaced people. More studies in this field would contribute immensely to our cognition of emigrant experience.

Cultural analysts such as Kay Kaufman Shelemay (2006) consider collective reminiscence to be a significant feature of a group's identity and sense of harmony:

In recent decades, the concerns of our discipline have grown from analysing music as a sound phenomenon, to approaching sound as an integral part of a particular cultural system. We have become aware that musical knowledge is cultural knowledge. (Shelemay 1980, p. 233)

Shelemay's research explored the relationship of memory and history in musical contexts by using musical ethnography. To do so, Shelemay adapted a strategy suggested by scholars termed 'the new historicism'.

Drawing on Stephen Greenblatt and the late Joel Fineman's consideration of the isolated anecdote as a point of entry into cultural analysis, I have used a statement made at a single ethnographic moment as a point of departure for both exploring a site of memory and anchoring historical discourse. (Shelemay 2006, p. 19)

In this study, Shelemay explored the convergence of memory and history during interviews that she carried out with members of the Syrian Jewish community in Mexico City in September 1992. As a researcher, Shelemay aims to use the insights gained from her work with living music cultures to better understand their pasts (Shelemay 1980, p. 233).

Shelemay's (1980) study was designed to demonstrate that "ethnomusicological study can exceed corroboration of established historical conjecture and provide the basis for new and alternative explanations" of cultural groups. Later, Shelemay (2006) explored the interactive connection of memory and history. In this study, Shelemay elucidates that memory is the first primary single intellectual ability that influences one's private and real-life practice and simultaneously, memory is a communal experience, formed by collective cognition. Collective memory is a shared experience that may take several forms of expression such as speech, music, dance and other communicative media that can emerge from a common expectation that the moment or event is memorable.

Sri Lankans in Australia

According to data collected by the Immigration Museum in Melbourne, Sri Lankans have been settling in Victoria since the nineteenth century. They were first counted in the 1,871 census, with 58 Sri Lankans recorded. Analogous to Sri Lankan settlers elsewhere in Australia, these individuals were likely to have immigrated as labourers or gold prospectors.

The Sri Lankan community in Victoria remained small well into the twentieth century, with 130 Sri Lankans recorded in 1933 only those of European descent were welcomed.

The Victorian Sri Lankan community began to increase after World War II. Sri Lanka gained independence from England in 1948, and many more Sri Lankan Burghers began to immigrate

to English-speaking countries such as Australia. By 1966, the predominately Burgher Sri Lankan community in Victoria had risen to 3,126. The end of the White Australia Policy in 1973 saw augmenting numbers of Sinhalese and Tamil settlers in Victoria. By 1976, 9,061 Victorians were of Sri Lankan birth.

From 1,948 to dilatory 1960, most Sri Lankan-born migrants to Australia were British subjects and many of them were of British, Dutch, and Portuguese descent. These British subjects began immigrating when Sri Lanka (earlier Ceylon) became independent as many suffered a significant loss in social, political, and economic influence in Sri Lanka.

Methodology

This paper is part of a research project that conducted for my Master of Sound Design research degree for the Faculty of Performing Arts, University of Melbourne. This project began in 2010 after having gained ethical approval from the University of Melbourne. This research was conducted from a self-reflective auto ethnographic perspective. Auto ethnography is an approach to research and writing that,

Seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience to understand cultural experience. (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2010)

Ethnography is the most proper approach to this project as the project originated from my own experiences of sound and music in Sri Lanka, including the sounds of the civil war and my experience of emigration from Sri Lanka to Australia. It is an approach that lends itself to the qualitative method because it is driven by the participants' own accord of their experiences. To address the objectives and the research project, I developed the framework illustrated below,

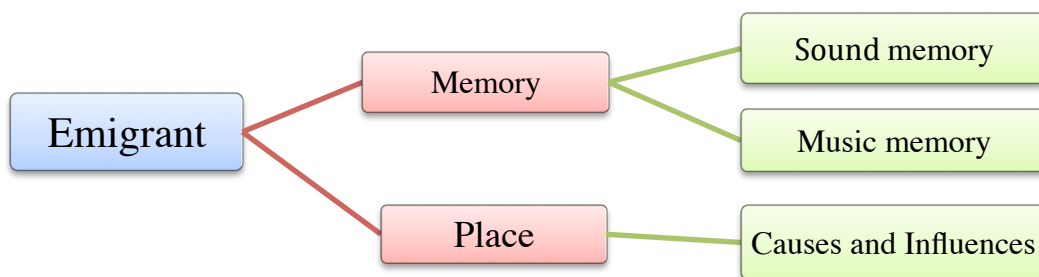


Figure 1 - Framework for exploring memories of emigrant

This framework was created to explore the sound and music memories of first and second-generation Sri Lankan emigrants living in Melbourne, and to set up a framework for comparing the emigrants' memories in terms of place, sound and music. The framework forms a guide for developing Sounds from the Past, initially containing dialogues, and later the two variables: sound effects and music.

The first step in using this method of data collection was to gain information about the sound and musical memories of ten Sri Lankan migrants from five families who are now residing in Melbourne. The ensuing shape of the project depended on this initial information. The group of participants consisted of seven-first generation Sri Lankan migrants and three-second generation Sri Lankan migrants, with ages ranging from twenty to sixty years. These participants were chosen primarily of willingness participating and convenience. I know all these families. In addition, they are largely involved with the Melbourne Sri Lankan community to continue their taste of art and Sri Lankan cultural values within the Melbourne society.

The details of these ten participants are listed as follows:

1. **Samanalee** (age: 47 years): First generation Sri Lankan. Arrived in Australia in 1983. Employed as a mathematics teacher in Australia.
2. **Nimali** (age: 18 years): Samanalee's daughter. Second generation Sri Lankan. Arrived in Australia in 1983. Employed as a pharmacist in Melbourne since 2005.
3. **Amal** (age: 21 years): (Samanalee's son). Second generation Sri Lankan. Arrived in Australia in 1983. Employed as an IT specialist in Melbourne since 2009.
4. **Nimal** (age: 58 years): (Samanalee's husband). First generation Sri Lankan who arrived in Australia in 1983. Employed as an engineer for the Department of Defence in Melbourne since 1989.
5. **Bandula** (age: 56 years): First generation Sri Lankan. Arrived in Australia in 1977. Retired IT specialist.
6. **Chandra** (age: 52 years): (Bandula's spouse). First generation Sri Lankan. Arrived in Australia in 1977. Retired teacher.
7. **Sanath** (age: 59 years): First generation Sri Lankan. Arrived in Australia in 1987. Retired Banker.
8. **Piyal** (age: 26 years): (Sanath's son). Second generation Sri Lankan. Arrived in Australia in 1987. He is popular as a singer in the Sri Lankan community in Melbourne.
9. **Rodney** (age: 57 years): First generation Sri Lankan who arrived in Australia in 1982. Retired public service officer in Sri Lanka and presently engaged as a publisher in Melbourne.
10. **Vidya** (age: 34 years): First generation Sri Lankan who arrived in Australia in 1982 and a music teacher (Tamil).

The participant no. one and seven answered in Sinhalese and other participants answered in English.

As a first step, data collection was to gain information about the sound and musical memories of ten Sri Lankan migrants from five families who are now residing in Melbourne. The ensuing shape of the project depended on this initial information.

The group of participants consisted of seven-first generation Sri Lankan migrants and three-second generation Sri Lankan migrants, with ages ranging from twenty to sixty years. These participants were chosen primarily of willingness participating and convenience. The semi-structured open-ended questionnaire developed to explore the participants' past sound and music memories and how the absence of such familiar sounds affects them.

Key areas explored in the questionnaire:

- The sound environment of participants' in related to their hometowns.
- The sound and music memories embedded in mind, as a child, teenager, and as an adult in Sri Lanka and Melbourne.
- The sound environment in urban residential areas compared with the Sri Lanka and Melbourne.

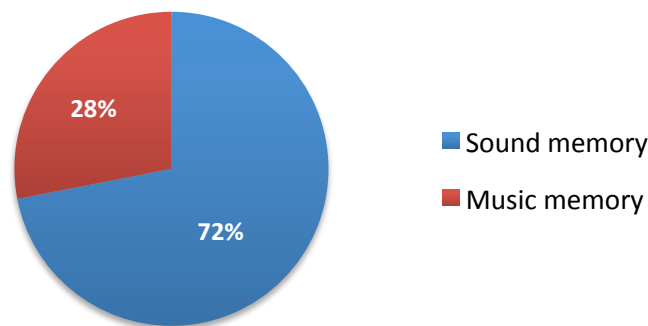


Figure 2: Comparison of participants' sound and music memory

Figure 2 explores the participant's memory in relation to the sound and music memory. The similarities between the data from the questionnaires – the 'motherland memories' – bestowed me sufficient information and background so that they became the major source of this project. Across their interviews, memory and displacement became as the main factor throughout their migration process to the Australia.

The interviews usually took 45 minutes and were audiotaped. The similarities between the data from the questionnaires – the 'motherland memories' – bestowed me sufficient

information and background so that they became the major source of *Sounds from the Past* audio production.

The participants originated from diverse places in Sri Lanka as follows:

1. Jaffna (Northern part of Sri Lanka)
2. Kandy (Central part of Sri Lanka)
3. Matara (Southern part of Sri Lanka)

The participants interviewed in this research project stated their Sri Lankan sound experience and the different accord that they perceived when they migrated to Melbourne. Based on figure 3, I thematically classified Sri Lankan migrants' experiences under the following headings:

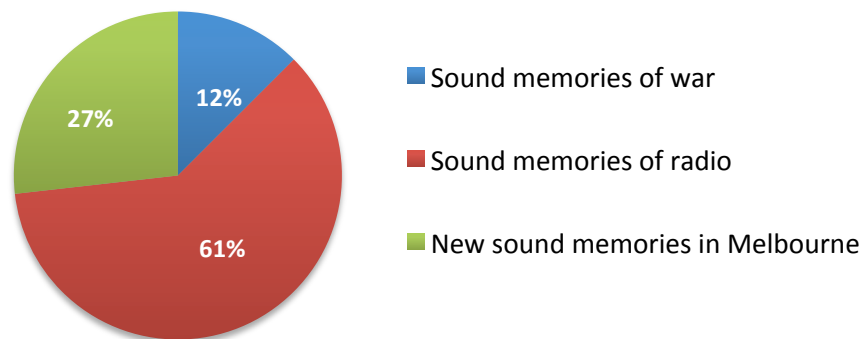


Figure 3: Migrants sound experience comparison

- Sound memories of war in Sri Lanka
- Sound memories of radio Sri Lanka
- New sound memories in a new land

Sound memories of War in Sri Lanka

The Sri Lankan civil war began on the twenty-third of July 1983. The total destruction of civilian infrastructure that resulted in the unpleasant fight to the end between the Sri Lankan military forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) with an estimated civilian population of around 300, 000 imprisoned in between is an ineffable human catastrophe. This war created the unpleasant situation to whole country until the war finished in 2009. Velamati (2009) explains the situation that created by civil war as follows,

With the end of armed struggle in Sri Lanka, there will be now more pressure and anxiety among the thousands of Sri Lankan Tamil expatriates, especially living in the West. As most of them are refugees or asylum seekers, Western countries might intensity their repatriation

attempts and can compel them to return home. Sri Lankan Tamil refugees, who formed the largest part of the expatriate population after 1983 Sri Lanka riots, have established themselves comfortably, particularly in Canada, Western Europe and Australia. (Velamathi 2009, p. 271)

As Velamathi explains the situation that Tamil Sri Lankans faced a huge problem solved in 2009 and within the war situation huge number of Tamils migrated as refugees and asylum seekers to Canada, Western Europe, and Australia. With displacement and isolating to the new society that they were migrated was created anxiety and more pressure within the integrating problem to new land.

When I interviewed *Vidya Balasubramaniam*, her depressed memories regarding the war reminded me of my own war memories as an eight-year-old boy. On the twenty-third of July 1983, we lived in Maradana, Colombo, Sri Lanka; an extremely amass of Sinhalese political devotees attacked the Tamil people in Colombo, in advert to killing Sinhalese soldiers in Jaffna by LTTE. I can well remember the sound of the attackers. This dreadful situation happened everywhere, island-wide, on that day. Until I migrated to Australia on twelfth of August 2007, bomb attacks and suicide bomb blasts were part of our daily lives. The war continued in Jaffna and eastern areas of Sri Lanka until May 2009.

I first met *Vidya* at her home where she conducts music classes near Dandenong. She is a prominent music teacher in the Tamil community in Melbourne. She was born in Jaffna, Sri Lanka. Her mother is also a music teacher, and she grew up with a musical background, migrating to Melbourne at the age of eighteen.

She recalled her own sound and musical memories from her hometown.

Vidya: It is being a small township in Jaffna. You do not hear much of a car, truck, buses and all that... Mostly what you will hear is birds, wind, and our people talking. At the most, you will hear is bicycle bells. Other than that, occasionally when someone passes away they have a procession with a special drum designed for that purpose. When they have a festival in the temple, normally they will play 'Thavil'ⁱ and 'Nadaswaram'ⁱⁱ. Normally the houses are not too close, but sometimes we will hear a mother singing a lullaby.ⁱⁱⁱ

This assertion indicates the serene sound environment in Jaffna and how much she was appended to the sound environment. Once the war began, her entire day-today life was transformed into one of clutter and distress.

Vidya: I was a teenager in Jaffna with all the war going on there was not much music from the temple. Gunshots and bombing are all that I heard. Actually, we can identify the normal plane as well as the bomber plane sound.^{iv}

In 1990, when she migrated to Melbourne, Vidya continued her secondary school education at the University of Melbourne. However, she could not eliminate her memories of her life in Jaffna, particularly her schooling and the beach near her school.

Vidya: I studied in a school, which was next to the beach in Point Pedro, Jaffna, Sri Lanka. I hear the waves every day; see the sea and all that. Therefore, when I moved to here when I was in the University of Melbourne, on the way back from University, I just take the train, just to hear the waves in Brighton beach.^v

Analogously, Angela Impey (2008), Ilana Feldman, (2006) and Daya Somasundaram (2010) are three authors with much to say about the connection of place with a person's memory.

Impey's study focuses on the experiences of the Zulu, Swazi and Tembe-Thonga communities who forcibly removed from the Ndumo Game Reserve between 1,940 and 1970. It particularly focuses on the narratives of women who, following dispossession of their ancestral lands, assumed primary responsibility for their families in their capacity as farmers, water conservators, and collectors of edible and medicinal plants, while the men sought wage labour elsewhere. It examined narratives associated with those for whom land had been an essential part of survival; whose working with the land had linked them functionally, affectively, and sensually with the place, and for whom, loss of land had been experienced as overwhelmingly threatening.

More specifically, Impey discusses how women expelled from their homelands in South Africa kept themselves content playing old familiar tunes on 'Jews harps' (sic) as they were moved to other areas. Older women remembered these instruments and the songs they played as they walked. Further, she examines the capacity of music to operate as both a historical text and an oral testimony because music often reflects on and portrays significant events within a culture or a group. In doing so, Impey shares the research findings of an African historian, Megan Vaughn who conducted to research on the politics and practices of history and memory in Malawi. Megan focused on the experiences and coping strategies of women during the 1,949 famines as encoded in their agricultural and food preparation songs. Her research highlights the significance of song lyrics as a vital form of oral testimony, and calls particular attention to the value of a body of songs as evidence of social processes over time. Further, this study proved to be invaluable in the interpretation of Jews Harp and mouth bow songs in Maputaland. The body of a song was found to involve a narrative about the changing experiences of women according to four distinct historical periods. The songs were inherited from mothers and grandmothers. These songs were typically simple and included greetings.

Impey's research also examines 'how the sound and music making capacity of songs provide historical data' in three different ways:

- I. The first examines ways in which sound, as manifested in Jews harp and mouth bow songs, functions as an activating modality, evoking a combination of kinetic, sonic and spatial memories that work together to reconstruct individual and collective histories.

2. The second focuses on historical information conveyed in song lyrics and in the analysis of a body of songs.
3. Finally, sound as a form of agency, suggesting that the act of remembering or disclosure through music making, may contribute to the empowerment or 're-voicing' of people whose histories have been silenced by discriminatory political processes.

Diana Allan (2005) is also a researcher who has conducted her research about the Palestinians in the refugee camps in Gaza. She elucidates in her research about the year 1948 as follows,

This traumatic period of Palestinian history has since come to be known as al-Nakba, literally 'the catastrophe'. In a recent article, Palestinian historian Elias Sanbar writes, 'the contemporary history of Palestinians turns on a key date: 1948. That year, a country and its people disappeared from both maps and dictionaries'. (Allan 2005, p. 47)

These refugees, similar to other refugees in Gaza, were shattered by the loss of their homes. As Feldman (year) points out,

Each of these practices of connecting with home both reveals and shapes people's understanding of their relation with these lost places. (Feldman 2006, p. 10)

Feldman's research (2006) examines the Palestinian refugees in Gaza after their displacement in 1948 because of the War. Since 1948, most Palestinians could not access the places they deliberate home. Memoirs wrote in the years since their displacement filled with lament and often reflect the authors' anxiety about their relationship with these lost places. In the years following, what Palestinians call the *Nakba* (catastrophe), memories of the past and continued forms of betrothal were both significant in shaping people's transformed relationships with their homes. Feldman's concern was for the people who were they displaced from their homes, not their children, and grandchildren. Her conclusion indicates how the loss of their homes destroyed everything for Palestinians. It took away their sense of identity because they were forced to move to a place, which was not their home. It was as if they had lost everything and had to start life over as different people.

In comparison to Feldman, Somasundaram (2010) discusses how a civilian population of around 300,000 people was isolated from their homes at the end of the war in Sri Lanka. He concludes that the severity of family and community upheaval had adverse effects on resettlement, rehabilitation, and development programs.

The research of Impey, Feldman and Daya Somasundaram illustrates how forced displacement culturally cripples the people of any ethnicity. Somasundaram (2010) published a poem by an internally displaced student in the Vanni District in Sri Lanka, which corroborates with the *Vidya's* memories of the war.

Living we were - on Vanni soil Living we were

Educating ourselves, we were - Joyfully - Educating ourselves we were

Running around we were - with friends
Running around we were - Came the airplanes - on us
Throwing bombs - Died relations - our relations' fell
Race destroyed - Tamil Race disappeared
Life destroyed - our life scattered Suffering saw -
We sadness imposed - Caged by war - we were
Trapped in suffering - Enough the sorrow
We escaped to survive. (Somasundaram 2010, p. 1)

Sound memories of Radio in Sri Lanka

Sri Lankan emigrants' sound memories are the focus of these interviews, and they vary from musical sounds to everyday sounds of the town and the country. The core source of media for the first generation Sri Lankan participants was Radio Ceylon.^{vi}

Gary Ferrington (1993) studied the creation of multi-sensory images for the listener's mind, and explained that:

Audio is a participatory medium, which actively engages the listener in the ongoing processing of aural information... The symbolic language of audio is purely auditory. It includes the spoken word, music, noise, and silence. (Ferrington 1993, p. 1)

Further, he delineates how a purely auditory performance can build a boundless field for the listener's imagination. As Ferrington demonstrates, an audience can only contemplate one picture at a time, yet an audience can hear dozens of distinct sounds simultaneously and still separate, process, and understand the information. The medium of audio exceeds ordinary factual and visual processes. It creates a link between sound stimuli and a listener's interpretative ability, and is vital in informing our emotions and imagination. In this context, mental imagery can be defined as a sensory process generated from a sound stimulus without the affirmative stimulus being present which embodies the coding, processing, and evocation of an experience in the memory of the listener (Babin and Burns 1998, Macinnis and Price 1987, Richardson 1969). Therefore, the auditory processing of any message calls for the listener to use a host of sensory and perceptual skills to extract significant information from the sound (Kraus and Banai 2007).

In this study, radio was the main form of media used for entertainment by most of the first generation of Sri Lankan emigrants whose sound memories are the focuses of these interviews. These sound memories vary from musical sounds to everyday sounds of the town and the country.

Sanath: Radio was the only media that was available [for] us to have access to music until we arrived in Melbourne.^{vii}

Samanalee: *After school, at home in the evenings, listening to the radio was my favourite.^{viii}*

Nimal: *We used to hear movie music from Radio Ceylon, Pirith^{ix} chanting did Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation daily broadcast the first item.*

Bandula: *In Sri Lanka we usually wake up to the sound of 'Pirith' chanting broadcasted by Radio Ceylon. I remember missing that sound for quite a long period, after coming here.^x*

Interestingly, the core source of media for all first generation Sri Lankan participants was Radio Ceylon (National Radio Station). When these Sri Lankans migrate to Melbourne, they are exposed to a new world in many respects, including music. Samanalee elucidates that her familiarity with western music expanded because of her profession.

Samanalee: *Two months after we moved to Melbourne, someone told us about the Sinhalese Program on the 3ZZZ radio. I remember listening to this program for the first time and having tears and goose bumps when they played the National Anthem of Sri Lanka. Then I realized how much I had missed all that.*

She also explains how her involvement with community music enhanced her life in Melbourne.

Samanalee: *Music had been a big part of my life from day one, singing, listening and writing lyrics and all the things associated with music were a big part of my life. When I was going through the very difficult periods of my life music helped me to stay alive. I think if I didn't have this opportunity to live in this musical environment, my life would have been somewhat empty.*

Bandula migrated to Melbourne in 1977. He is a founder member of the 3ZZZ Sinhalese community radio and is active in community events.

Bandula: *I brought cassettes of famous Sri Lankan vocalists, such as Amaradeva, Victor etc. In the meantime, I heard songs of western music over the radio. 'Don't cry for [me] Argentina' is one such song I remember so well. It opened my eyes and I thought, Oh, God! What a beautiful song! On the same day, I went to a few stores in search of that song. I bought a 45RPM record. I enjoyed this by listening to it repeatedly.*

He welcomes his introduction to western music in Melbourne, enjoying its effect on his children's education by allowing them to listen to both eastern and western music styles as they grew up. 3

Bandula: *One example is a beautiful type of singing called 'Acapella', which uses only the voice. Our children joined these singing troupes. I can remember once the school kids got together and performed 'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat' by Andrew Lloyd Webber. I felt that the musicality of it was out of this world.*

Most participants attributable that Sri Lanka's urban sounds are louder and more imposing, while Melbourne is quieter. One participant said that in Melbourne, people only press their

car horns in an emergency, while in Sri Lanka they toot their horns continually. The Sri Lankan cars are usually much older than Melbourne cars, with poorly tuned engines often in need of repair. The participants stated that the trucks were numerous and loud, and conjured images of congestion and chaos. Another variance that was noted was barking dogs. In Sri Lanka – particularly in Colombo – dogs seemed to bark always. Therefore, the sounds in Sri Lanka were diverse and brought a different image to the minds of the emigrated respondents as they recalled their motherland.

New sound memories in a new land

Amal Ekanayake is a second generation Sri Lankan who was born in Peradeniya, Kandy, and migrated with his parents to Melbourne when he was three and a half years old. He delineated the sound discrepancies between Melbourne and Sri Lanka as:

Amal: The biggest difference is that in Melbourne people do not use their horn except for an emergency. Sri Lankan people think the horn is there to be pressed all the time... Melbourne is very quiet compared to Colombo. It is less stressful.^{xi}

However, when comparing Sri Lanka's countryside to the countryside of Melbourne, his descriptions of the two locations changed:

Amal: when you go to the countryside of Sri Lanka, occasionally you hear a car or a lorry passes by. Other than that, it is peaceful. The air is very fresh, not polluted and very quiet, only the sound of the river and the wind-like things heard. Here [in Melbourne] even in the countryside there is still the noise of cars and trains.^{xii}

Chandra Vithanage lived in the Sri Lankan countryside before migrating to Melbourne. In the Sri Lankan countryside, she heard the sounds of many animals such as cats, dogs, and cows as well as other sounds from the nearby environment. When she migrated to Melbourne, she lost this sound environment, but she did recreate the practice of listening to the sounds of nature.

Chandra: Actually, we thought of moving to a house of our own to be in a serene environment away from the hurly burly surrounding. It is very interesting here. Birds singing in the morning, if you are in the garden you can see birds grooming around even during the afternoon. It gives immense pleasure when you are in the garden feeling plants and trees. We tried to recreate the environment in which we were living back at home. Sometimes I used to have fun with my husband suggesting that we should have a cow in the garden so that we can hear the sound of the beast.^{xiii}

Sanath Perera, from the Western province of Sri Lanka, migrated to Melbourne with his family in 1987. The sound environment he experienced in his hometown was as follows:

Sanath: We heard the sound of the vehicles on and off as our house [was] situated about a quarter kilometre from the main road. There was a range of mountains right around our

house... I can remember that there was a man blind in one eye living near our house. He used to play the flute in the evening in the rice paddy every day. He played beautiful music.^{xiv}

Sanath grew up in a village area in Sri Lanka, later moving to the city for his work. He explained how he noticed the sound environment changed as he moved from his village to Colombo, and later to Melbourne,

***Sanath:** Later I shifted to Colombo for my work at the National Savings Bank. I felt the difference of the urban and rural environment there, such as the 'tak, tak' noise coming from high heels of the shoes of people walking by... I experienced a huge difference, it started from the very moment I arrived at the Melbourne airport, even the noise of the vehicles that were passing by. The picture of the trees that embedded in my mind all along disappeared as I entered into a huge industrial or commercial environment.^{xv}*

Rodney Jayasinghe migrated from Colombo to Melbourne after his retirement from the Civil Service in Sri Lanka. He compared the traffic conditions in Colombo with Melbourne:

***Rodney:** Traffic sounds in Colombo are very chaotic and archaic. Sri Lankan motorists constantly...like to toot the horn for the slightest thing. In Melbourne, [the] horn tooted was if the other driver annoys you. However, it is quite different in Sri Lanka...Nevertheless, in Melbourne there are no traffic sounds heard through the closed windows of the car. The only sound we hear is from the radio, which we put on.^{xvi}*

The organization of rhythm into recognizable groupings is a widespread motivic device. Samanalee, Bandula and Vidya were selected to partake in the current study as they originated from different parts of Sri Lanka and these areas have their own distinctive sound and music traditions, each with their own drumming customs and experiences. Their experiences in Sri Lankan drumming are of great importance, as indicated in the following transcripts.

***Samanalee:** I was about twelve years of age when my father took me to the university open-air theatre. I never ever heard such drumming, dancing and the singing. It was just all a different world.^{xvii}*

Samanalee's connection with drumming came through her experience as a theatre spectator, while Bandula and Vidya experienced drumming through Hindu and Buddhist ardent experiences.

***Bandula:** I [was] spellbound by the singing of these performers to the tune of the low country drum. I love those rhythms... I went to the Hindu temple during their music festival season and got into a habit of listening to the Karnataka [Carnatic] music even beyond midnight, especially [Tamil] instruments like 'Mirudangam', 'Ghadam' and 'Nadaswaram' although I had no idea [about] Karnataka music.^{xviii}*

Correspondingly, Vidya elucidates her sound experience to the north part of Sri Lanka from where she originated.

Vidya: When someone passes away, they have a procession with a drum designed for that purpose. When they have special celebrations, you wake up with the devotional music. It's not exactly classical, but semi-classical music, like a pipe instrument, which they are playing in the temple. It was called 'Nadaswaram'. So you will hear that as well as the 'Thavil'. It is a barrel shaped skinned drum. So you will hear that in the mornings and the evenings..^{xix}

When the interviewees migrated to Melbourne, they were exposed to a new world in many different respects, including music.

Samanalee explains that her familiarity with western music expanded because of her profession.

Samanalee: My very first schools in Australia were the Westbourne and Williamstown Grammar School in Hoppers Crossing. They did stage productions of classics like 'The Fiddler on the roof', 'Bye Bye Birdie', 'Oliver Twist' and 'Annie' and I was amazed at the standard and the quality of these productions. These performances opened up a new world to me.^{xx}

Conclusion

In this paper discussed the sound memories of migrants who were displaced from their native country to another location. Specifically, focused on the degree whereto their pre-existing sound memories affect their experiences in their new location, and how they integrate the two.

Memories of the local radio station presented as a unique form of memory for the first generation Sri Lankan migrants. Five out of seven participants preferred to stay in a countryside environment. Two participants have memories of the urban environment. The only one participant had the experience with the war, and she is the only Tamil participant in this interview. Seven participants preferred to listen to Sri Lankan music and only four preferred to listen to western music. Three participants have the common memory with living near the sea. Six participants preferred to live in a quiet environment. Two participants have their memories of the urban traffic sounds in Sri Lankan and Melbourne. Four participants preferred Sri Lankan drum sounds while the others did not comment about drums.

Further, all second-generation participants were born in Sri Lanka and they grew up in Australia. The second-generation participants are Sinhalese and below the age of 30. They did not have any memories of the war in Sri Lanka. An only one participant preferred to reside in the countryside while the other two preferred to reside in an urban environment. Compared to the first generation participants, only one in second-generation participant preferred listening to the radio. All second-generation participants enjoyed listening to both Sri Lankan and western music styles. The only one male participant preferred quietness. There was no one with the ocean analogous memories. All three participants had shared memories of the urban traffic. Only one liked listening to drums. This research emphasized the importance of collective memory as a process of retelling the past and keeping it alive to maintain solidarity

among a dispersed population and their attachment to an ancestral homeland. These memories create a passage from our past life experiences to the present. This is particularly the case within migration or displacement where the sound and music aspects of these memories are a significant factor in helping these individuals cope with their new environment.

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ⁱ 'Tavil' is a barrel shaped drum from South India. It is used in temple, folk and Carnatic music, often accompanying the nadaswaram. The thavil and the nadaswaram are essential ingredients of traditional festivals and ceremonies in South India and Sri Lanka.

ⁱⁱ 'Nadaswaram' is one of the most popular classical musical instruments in the South Indian culture and the world's loudest non-brass acoustic instrument. It is a wind instrument similar to the North Indian shehnai but larger, with a hardwood body and a large flaring bell made of wood or metal.

ⁱⁱⁱ Conversation with Mrs Vidya Balasubramaniam in Melbourne, November 07, 2011.

^{iv} Conversation with Mrs Vidya Balasubramaniam in Melbourne, November 07, 2011.

^v Conversation with Mrs Vidya Balasubramaniam in Melbourne, November 07, 2011.

^{vi} The Sri Lankan Broadcasting Corporation dates back to 16th December 1925. When its pre-cursor, 'Colombo Radio', was launched, using a Medium Wave radio transmitter of one kilowatt of output power from Welikada, Colombo. This new medium of mass communication became progressively widespread in the years that followed, and quickly evolved into a medium of national character, which

led to the 'Radio Service' being organized as a separate department of the government of Ceylon (as the country was then called). This service became known by the call sign 'Radio Ceylon' in 1949.

^{vii} Conversation with Subject No. 05, Melbourne, November 03, 2011.

^{viii} Conversation with Subject No. 01, Melbourne, November 03, 2011.

^{ix} 'Pirith' protects one from all directions', is the traditional explanation. Pirith is the Sinhala word for Paritta in the Pali language ('Pali' is a Middle Indo-Aryan language of the Indian subcontinent), which means protection. The recitation or chanting the Pirith is an essential start to a Buddhist's day.

^x Conversation with Subject No. 01, Melbourne, November 02, 2011.

^{xi} Conversation with Subject No. 03, Melbourne, November 04, 2011.

^{xii} Conversation with Subject No. 03, Melbourne, November 04, 2011.

^{xiii} Conversation with Subject No. 06, Melbourne, November 03, 2011.

^{xiv} Conversation with Subject No. 07, Melbourne, November 04, 2011.

^{xv} Conversation with Subject No.07, Melbourne, November 04, 2011.

^{xvi} Conversation with Subject No.09, Melbourne, November 06, 2011.

^{xvii} Conversation with Subject No. 01, Melbourne, November 02, 2011.

^{xviii} Conversation with Subject No. 05, Melbourne, November 03, 2011.

^{xix} Conversation with Subject No. 10, Melbourne, November 07, 2011.

^{xx} Conversation with Subject No. 01, Melbourne, November 02, 2011.