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# cenacle

A Peer Reviewed Annual Journal of English

## Editors

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## About Cenacle

Cenacle is a unique collaborative literary venture, which came into being in 2009. It is unique in many ways. It is a collaborative literary venture of three English departments of three different colleges: namely PWS Arts & Commerce College, Rajkumar Kewalramni Kanya Mahavidyalaya & Santaji Mahavidyalaya, all affiliated to RTM Nagpur University. It was formed with an aim to promote teaching and learning of English through different activities.

The word 'Cenacle' has its origin in Latin as *cenaculum* from *cena*. Latin *cenaculum* was used in the Vulgate for the "upper room" where the Last Supper was eaten. The earliest Cenacle was formed in 1824, as a literary coterie, which we adopted as a name for the group interested in academics and also the name for our journal. Since the inception, Cenacle has undertaken many activities.

In Sept 2010, a National Conference on Mediation: Literature & Films was organized under this banner at Rajwada Palace, Nagpur. About 215 delegates participated from all over the country and in large numbers from Maharashtra, MP, Chattisgarh and Rajasthan. Mr Sachin Kherdekar, renowned Marathi and Hindi film actor and director was the key speaker. Noted litterateur Dr Jasbir Jain, writer and critic conducted a technical session. A souvenir was also released during the conference. In Oct 2010, a Symposium was organized to commemorate the 150th Birth Anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore at RKKM auditorium. Dr Amrit Sen from Vishwabharti Shantineketan had been invited as the main speaker. He spoke on Travel literature and Tagore. The symposium was well attended by students and teachers.

In Dec 2010 Cenacle had organized a one day Teachers Training Workshop on Evaluation Techniques and Skills at RKKM. Dr Martin Wedell from London University conducted the workshop. Nearly 57 teachers participated in it. In Jan 2012, Cenacle had jointly

organized an International Conference with ELTAI and VMIT at Sharadchandra Arts & Comm College Butibori. It was a 2 day conference, with many participants from Sri Lanka, UK and Nepal. A lecture on Poetry and Soft Skills was also organized in March 2015. The speakers were Dr Binod Mishra from IIT Patna and Dr C.L Khatri from T.P.S. College Patna.

Research and related activities have also been in our focus. In Feb 2010, a lecture was organized at Santaji Mahavidyalaya on E-Journal for teachers and students. Dr Mangala Hirwade, of Library Science Dept of RTM Nagpur University was the chief speaker. An 8 day workshop on Research Methodology and Research techniques was also organized in March 2015 at Santaji Mahavidyalaya for teachers and research scholars. This eight day workshop was conducted as per UGC norms. It was a self funded activity in which certificates and study material was also given to 58 participants.

### **About the Journal**

Cenacle is a peer reviewed annual journal of English, which is being published since 2011. It was started with an objective to provide a platform for teachers to share their ideas and encourage research skills. The first issue was a general issue with 20 papers on varied topics. The second issue published in 2012, had as its focus area: "Gender Issues and Female Consciousness in 21<sup>st</sup> century Women Writers." This issue had 17 papers, 5 book reviews and 8 poems. The third issue published in 2013 focused on Diaspora and Diasporic writings. The whole concept of Diaspora writing, dislocation and multiculturalism was evaluated in the well researched 15 papers. It also had 2 book reviews and 5 poems. The 2014 issue focused on Revisiting Partition through literature and films. This issue had 13 papers, 3 book reviews and 10 poems. And now the present volume is the 5<sup>th</sup> issue of the journal.

It is very encouraging to find articles from Cenacle being quoted in many anthologies and other kinds of research. Our contributors are also from all over India and Saudi Arabia. All our contributors and readers are invited to give their feedback on our email <cenaclegp@gmail.com>.

## ***Editorial***

A modern critical understanding of the border pedagogy implies a much more global understanding of the social realities in the modern world. This shift carries urgency because the vision of postmodern multicultural democracy needs to be recreated, where issues of languages, power blocks, and democracy all merge together in a culturally diverse democratic world. Culture per se is not what our ancestors experienced, nor does it reflect the immediate realities of our daily life. It has been compacted by global socio-political and economic issues, travel and communication. It is rather ironical that technology has shrunk our world but at the same time made the borderlands grow in size and number and issues like re-bordering, de bordering has changed the global perspective of the world.

Border pedagogy focuses on the reconceptualization of multiculturalism. Culture is no longer viewed as static, one dimensional construct but having multiple layers within the context of history, power and ideology (Estrada & MacLaren p31). Similarly multiculturalism no more is analyzing stereotypes but reflects on various sources of discrimination. A critique of social conditions in which all of us exist, which Schafer rightly evaluates is that with the understanding of ourselves as historized subjects comes the reconceptualization of "The Other". The measure of Anglo Saxons or representatives of Eurocentric power has relegated minorities to the 'other' status (Schafer 1993). To understand current social arrangements of identity and belonging (as defined by borders), we should not limit our attention to the exclusiveness of the present. It is important to understand the historical time as a longue duree view.

The last decade has witnessed an impressive development of theory of borders as a critical discourse. Contemporary 'border thinking' has concerned itself with the question of the reconstitution of borders as a parallel to process of globalization, deterritorialism and denationalization of the bond between nation (-state) and society. Delanty and Rumford (2005) speak of postnational and post-territorial era. Hobermas debates on 'postnational constellation' (2001), while Robin (2006) suggests the use of the term transcultural instead of multicultural. Yuval Davis (1997) uses the term "transversal world". There are varieties of takes on this issue. It is a shared topic across various schools of thought and no longer a strong and determinate link between just territory and borders. Territory has lost power of being an exclusive agent in defining identity and borders.

Borders have become plural and pluralized. They are movable and can be removed, managed and even remote controlled. New agents of control are economics of mobility which handle the monitor mobility of jobseekers, potential asylum seekers or illegal immigrants. New agents of control show a shift of power which is not only with the state but all contribute in making borders acquire transnational dimensions.

Nation and Nationhood can be defined as the unique product of modernity. The cultural homogeneity of the society becomes the governing political ideal. In Europe, Mokre (2006) argues traditionally, collective identities have been understood as cultural identities. Culture theorist Walter Mingols feels that border thinking results from the combination of the two interrelated discourses. One has been described by Foucault as "subjugated knowledge" and another described by Darcy Riberio as "subaltern knowledge". Border thinking emerges at the meeting place of "subjugated knowledge"-which are disqualified as illegitimate or law ranking while subaltern knowledge -is the local knowledge that stems from the margins of global modernity.

Foucault's critique of biopower - has three components antipostivist politics namely (a critique of the instrumentalisation of

life by the modern state and global corporate power), the vitalist affirmation of life(the critique of post-civilized modernity as an illusion of individual freedom while techniques for the diminishing of life's experience are institutionalised) and the finality of our life's experience (the critique of the vestige of immorality that remain masked under a biopolitics of the Management of human life in modern technocracies.)

Building on these antipostivist philosophical currents Michael A Weinstein addressess the colony of power by introducing a critique of biopower that is framed in terms of border thinking. His book *The Polarity Of Mexican Thought* (1976) is often regarded as the philosophy of Americans where the border theory originated. Weinstein discussed various related topics of Border Savages, Zozobra, nomadism and power. Through many of his writings he has provided philosophical trajectory of rethinking of borders in post-civilised culture.

In this issue various connotations and facets of borders, border theories and border crossings have been evaluated through articles and poems. The theme paper by Dr Nimsakar presents a literary over view, which will help beginners to place the concept of borders in a proper perspective. Dr Kanal evaluates the writings of Nadine Gordimer, focusing on issues of immigration and relocation. Dr Sarkar applies the border theories to issues of Indian partition focusing on a website and borders as a resource. While Dr Shamil applies the border theory to Afro-Caribbean immigrant women writers who have undertaken journeys to reconnect their homeland. Dr Tickoo examines the transcultural location of space in Imtiaz Dharkar's poems. She examines the poet's cartography of space, within a woman's body. Dr Agrawal and Dr Smita jointly study the problems of expatriate women in the novels of Ruth P Jhabvala.

In this issue we have two articles which view borders in a very different context, adding a new perspective to the issue. One article is by Dr Banerjee who analysis gated communities and spaces around them, which are changing the phenomena of urban housing. Mrs G Ramesh evaluates English as a global language and a tool for cross



cultural communication, which are breaking many traditional borders. Dr Mishra evaluates the shifting of borders in the light of colonization and influence of Buddhism in Afghanistan as seen in the novels of Khalid Hosseini. Dr Dabir examines transcultural nuances in the short stories of Chitra Devkaruni. Dr Wanjari also evaluates the crossing of borders through the study of Khuswant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*.

The present issue also has a small collection of poems and two book reviews. The collection of articles revolves around the focus issue of Borders, Border Theories and Border Crossings, opening up new facets, which we hope the readers will find informative and academically enriching.

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**Border Theory: Nature and Scope**

P. D. Nimsarkar

**Abstract**

Border theory is a contemporary approach that has emerged in the 1990s as an interdisciplinary field of enquiry used in different disciplines. All the traditional definitions of borderland, border and border-crossing have been interrogated and redefined under the influence of Post-structuralism and Ethnographic studies. It celebrates the change and transformation that materialize when two opposite cultures come together on the territorial space offered at the borderland. This change is a unique result giving new identity, hybrid and interbred. It studies both physical and symbolic spaces in pragmatic and critical ways against the spirit of globalization, thereby dismantling all the established notions such as empire, caste and race division, patriarchy and male dominance, feminist authority, caste system, body as a site of race identity and postcolonial dichotomy of superior civilization and native backwardness. In literary narratives such as diasporic writing it unearths the painful experience of the subjects and but appreciates the new identity that is reality. The territorial space between Mexico and America is taken as an exemplary site and negating the location, the issues related to the social and cultural spaces as are delineated in literature including the Black and the Dalit writings. In this paper an attempt has been made to signal the key features of the border study in a short discussion.

**Keywords:** Borderland, Territoriality, Border as Institution Hybrdization, Black literature, Dalit literature.

Border is traditionally defined as a line of fixation separating nation states from each other. It is used to indicate state and territory with the fixation of physical border under the mechanism of social, economic and political process. It is an artificial, manmade, social construct than natural or an outcome of natural law bestowed on human beings or territorial authority. It is a category of difference that create socio-spatial distinction between places, individuals and groups (Kolossoff and Scott, 2013:3). Border/ border lines has physical and mental existence; the physical shape of the border can be demarked by using fencing, wiring, stone walls or stone poles, flags, etc. The mental existence resides in human mind when it is not indicated by physical markers. They gives countries and their citizens the limits they live within. They territorialize the thinking, the world vision, and provide the parameters the subjects desire to live safely within. Borders are, in the contemporary world, better described by both their contrast and contradictions, their permissiveness and restrictions, their control and disorder, their peace and violence, their justice and injustices and so on, but more than that, contemporary borders are characterized by the dynamism that contributes enormously to the production of all kinds of knowledge (Orozco-Mendoza, 2008:1-2). In anthropology it is “a line demarcated in space” and “a boundary generally means the socio-spatially constructed differences between cultures/categories” (van Houtum, 2005:672). In Sociology a boundary indicates differences between social categories, groups and classes.

Earlier the term, ‘border’ had a limited meaning as just stated referring to the formal state marking lines and ethno-cultural areas but today it studies borders “at diverse socio-political and geographical scales, ranging from the local and the municipal, to the global, regional and supra-state level”( Kolossoff and Scott, 2013:1). It has widen its scope and today covers the disciplines such as political science, sociology, anthropology, history, international law, and humanities and recently the areas such as arts, literature, media studies, philosophy and ethics are added to it making it more interdisciplinary. In recent times the interdisciplinary border studies has rendered the exclusive fixation with geographical, physical and

tangible borders obsolete; equally important are the areas such as cultural, social, economic and religious borders that even though often invisible have major impacts on the way in which human society is structured. The notion of border demarcates geographical, physical and clearly observed lines. But important are the cultural, social, economic, racial and religious borders that disturb and unsettle the human relationships. These borders are not observable but have exerted great influence on “the way in which human society is structured, organized and classified. It is argued that the development of the concept of border or frontiers owes to the spread of colonial hierarchy established since sixteenth century since Christopher Columbus journey to America and European colonies established in that region.

The border theory has emerged against the concept of globalization most dominant during 1980s and 1990s with the notion of borderless world. 9/11 attack on the US eclipsed the enlarging concept of globalization the US wanted to expand and introduced the concept of reclosing of borders. The journey of border theory takes from the traditional political geography studying borders as “concrete and empirical” (Prescott, 1965, 1987.) Later the perspective led to the function of model and generalization and the functional roles of borders (Minghi, 1963). These thinking gave rise to behavioural approached considering the psychological and perceptual meaning (Rumley and Minghi, 1991). It came under the influence of post-structuralism and ethnographic studies in 1990s and developed into the interdisciplinary field cutting across many other disciplines. Borders are taken as institutions as against lines in the sand or on the map. Border institutions “govern the extent of inclusion and exclusion, the degree of permeability, the laws governing trans-boundary movement-exit from one side of the border and entry into the other side”(Newman, 2011:14).

The concepts of border are going through “a profound change in meaning” (Balibar, 2004). Their political dimensions have given large scope for analysis of their political faces since they are “not only geographic but also political and subjective (e.g. cultural) and

epistemic and contrary to frontiers the very concept of 'border' implies the essence of people, language, religion and knowledge on both sides linked through relations established by the coloniality of power....Borders in this sense are not outcome of a natural or divine historical process in human history, but were created in the very constitution of the modern world (Mignolo and Tlostance, 2006:208).

Gloria Anzaldua, in her 'Borderlands'/'La Frontiers' (1987), developed the notion of border theory. Other scholars contributed, with their works, to expand its scope such as Alfred Arteaga's 'Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural studies' (1997), Mary Louise Pratt's 'Imperial Eyes: Studies of Travel Writitng and Transculturation' (1992), Henry Giroux's 'Border Crossing' (1992), Paul Jay's 'Contingency Blues' (1997), Elazer Barkan and Marie Denise's 'Borders, Exile and Diasporas' (1998) and 'Border Texts: Cultural Reading for Contemporary Writers' (1999), etc. These writers and writing focus on the US national and cultural spaces and their connections and interactions with literature and culture of the continent. These studies changes the politics of location of literature and culture by signaling margins and permeable border regions out of which cultures in the American have emerged.

In the development of the Borderland /Border theory Gloria Anzaldua has provided fertile ground in her landmark thesis *Borderland/Frontier* (1987) which provides varied information for different studies. In Anzaldua's opinion, "The theoretical articulation of border concept started with the imposition of artificial boundary between Mexico and the United states in 1848. In fact the borderlands are physically present whenever two or more cultures edge each other where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch"(1987, Preface.). Her concept of geographical borderland is located in the Southwest but it has profound ideological and epistemological dimensions yielding space for studies in feminism, queer theory, post colonialism, critical race theory, etc. She says, "the actual physical borderlands that I'm dealing with in this book is the Texas-U.S. southwest/ Mexican border. The psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands and the

spiritual borderlands are not particular to the southwest" (1987, Preface). Her thesis is based on the space between Mexico and the US that provides zone for emergence of the unique community and culture that has emerged due to the their co-existence. It is the site 'where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country-a border culture"(1987:3). This border space is a new culture, the hybrid identity that has come into being after border crossing, mestizaje. The citizens of this territorial space are of sexual and textual hybridization that have developed in a new cultural identity and its habitants are 'the prohibited and forbidden'; they are 'the perverse', 'the queer', 'the mongrel', 'the half breed' and 'the half dead' (1987:3). The Anglo-American treats Mexican-American as inferior and culturally backward. They are subjected to violence, cruel treatment and their body/ colour is the site of torture. Their body is equated with their race which is the basic feature of Chicano/a theory/ mestizaje theory. The mythical land of Mexican civilization is represented by their body: "For immigrants and natives alike, land is the factories where we work, the water our children drink, and the housing projects where we live. For women, lesbians and gay men, land is that physical mass called our bodies" (Moraga1993:173). The concept of body as race is continued by Alfred Arteaga in his study of Chicano where he treats subjectivity as Chicano, "the site of cultural interaction"(1997:9). Chicano/a body is a racially hybrid, a mixture, half Indian and half European, a mestizo and it has developed into mestizo consciousness, a subjective ambiguity (1997:11). The body, the land and the text are equated with production and reproduction, therefore directly related to sexual intercourse and interbreeding. It is relationship between Spanish rulers and native women, 'the colonial sex' (1997:27). This metaphoric relationship in body and culture is expressed in the mestizo theory and poetic: The mestizo body is made through sexual intercourse, specifically through the biologic interplay of different sexes, through heterosexual reproduction. The Chicano subject comes about through the interplay of different social 'texts', analogously, through heterosexual reproduction (Nayar,2010).

The notion of border, frontier, borderland and boundaries are simple as well as complicated. “The term borderland is ambiguous enough to encompass both boundaries and frontiers”(Paul Kutsche quoted in Stoddard, Nostrand et al 1983:16). The notion of boundaries is associated with the concept of nation-state in modern Europe, pertaining to the political and administrative sovereignties juxtaposed along an arbitrary but formally demarked line”. Frontier indicates a region of influence of the dominant state adjoining another nation-state. Therefore the “boundaries are precise while the width of frontiers is indefinite” (Kutsche cited in Stoddard, Nostrand, et al 1983:16).

Discourses and differentiations of border/ boundaries in different theories in social and environmental psychology offer distinct views where “individuals and groups are thought to identify with and to be identified by their environment” (Lossifova, [Http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/i.cities2013-01-006](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/i.cities2013-01-006)). In this identification, every individual person is taken as subject and object of the identity process. The subject goes through the process of identification and process of identity whereby identity is attained and maintained respectively. Grauman (1983) proposes the multiple identity models. In his view a person is first identified on the basis of his/her affiliation to the group such as male or female, black or white, etc and if Indian social situation is considered, high caste or low caste, etc. It includes fixed ideas about personality and action of subjects and history of society. Secondly, identification implies classification which logically means the “construction of classes” (Graumann, 1983:311). It involves the process of naming or category formation derived from individual's meetings with and involvement with other or group and the environment that creates recognition. Thirdly, the identification with other leads to a particular ‘model’ and developing similarity with them. Individual or group tries to be identified with the members of a group or features of the model, environment and forms identity. Sometimes the process may include “territorial behaviour or territoriality” (Lossifova, [Http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/i.cities2013-01-006](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/i.cities2013-01-006).)

Every group or ethnic minority, for example, maintain its identity by drawing border and boundary to project itself and project

the identity of its own leading to identity formation. Barth maintains that when the groups of different identities interact with each other they minimize differences and strengthens solidarity by developing “a congruence of codes and values” leading to a 'common culture' which is an outcome of “self ascription and ascription by other”(1969:13).

Culture, gender and scale are never fixed as is thought of by many; they are in the process of continual change. These are the problematic categories because discussions beyond these categories have not been continued. The boundaries of these categories are “inchoate and are partially formed and incomplete” (Jones, 2009:174; [phg.sagepub.com/content/33/2/174](http://phg.sagepub.com/content/33/2/174)). Jones tries to find out 'the processes that result in all types of categories' and maintains that boundaries that name tentative identity are always many and changing. These approaches indicate change towards identity creation through reducing differences between ethnic diversity in a specific geographical space.

Ethnic, linguistic and cultural boundaries are becoming vibrant, decisive and problematic on both the levels, physical and social. The border created by culture, traditional social practices, caste and racial discriminations are visible in Indian writing in different Indian languages and English also. The emergence of the dalit literature in particular owes to the caste discrimination, oppression and exploitation subjected to the marginalized\low caste such as scheduled castes and inhuman perspective towards the tribal who are taken as the native of the land, the pre-Aryan people, super shaded by the Aryan. The dalit writers assert identity by rejecting caste superiority and high caste dominance and aspire for freedom, equality and identity. Their endeavour is directed towards abolition of culture made spatial territory that differentiate and deprive them from their right by politico-religious structural organization in social set up. They demand change by means of which a just society is constructed, human beings are equal opportunities of high education are made available to all irrespective of caste and class, sexual violence against women is prohibited and severely punished and freedom of faith in religion is individualized,



Closely associated with the theory of border is the concept of migration. Traditionally migration involved border crossing between two permanent states. Alongside, its related notions such as migration and rootedness, mobility and stillness, fluidity and permanence have become obsolete. Earlier the concept of nation-state was considered as culturally homogenous which is dissolved to 'liquefied' societies. Many people migrate to other countries in search of job, higher education and other opportunities and settle down on the other territory of that country. They stay with the native people, mix with other society and culture and attempt to maintain their own culture/s and form their cultural identity. In the course of time, these migrants develop a geographical territory with cultural dislocation and maintain it which reflects the common historical experience and shared cultural codes of 'one people' or sense of 'oneness' (Hall, 1911, cited in Mongia, 1996:52). These marginalized people build up the otherness with their diasporic consciousness. Salman Rushdie writes about the experience of the expatriate people:

...exiles or emigrants are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge-which gives rise to profound uncertainties-that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible one, imaginary homeland, Indians of mind (1991:10)

Many diasporic writers portray the turbulent space they have lived on and express the shared experience of the cultural borders, boundaries and territories in their writings. Nostalgia, dislocation and expatriate experiences are alive in the consciousness of the subjects while present in the host culture but all these aspects lead to a change in opinions and approaches towards other culture in the long run. Home is in the imagination of those who have migrated and settled down in the host countries and never re-located though the aspirants visit the geographic spaces for a short while. For this reason the

immigrants possess multiple identities and belong to multiple places. Meena Alexander's remark "That's all I am, a woman cracked by multiple migrations"(1993:3) reminds Anzaldúa's statement "I am a border woman"(1987) that informs various displacements in a woman's life.

Illegal migration has posed a problem to the concept of border and security because such entries into other territory is in the disguised form giving challenge to the host culture. The migration of the followers of ISIS in other countries is taken as a threat from the terrorist outfits and utmost care and vigilance is re-enforced to avoid the violence. Its growing impact on culture of the host countries is hostile and destructive and migration narratives are bound to express it. The 26/11 attacks on Bombay killed many foreigners and Indians which was a racist and separatist motivated and planned egression on other culture.

Racism is very prominent in the discussion in the black literature, the dalit literature and the diasporic literature, in particular. The racial experience of the immigrants from the Afro-Americans and the South Asian writers is traumatic and disturbing. This experience is undergone by the immigrant people in Canada and US. The presence of the black people is not taken notice of in the British writing as is pointed out by Paul Gilroy the absence which pricks the consciousness of the other. He pushes the case of the black culture in conflict with the white culture. The 'black Atlantic' is the location for people from other countries, diaspora and transnational cultures. The hybrid spaces come into existence when African cultures come into contact with the European. Here the African subject live with 'double consciousnesses of their own culture and that of the other. And it makes European to recognize Other culture as well. Diasporic state is not just a case of displacement and interaction; they are culturally productive because the displaced individual learns from new spaces. Through the diasporic writings of the Diaspora writers the non-white culture is visible in English culture. The impact is that "Englishness was made possible as a identity through a process of differentiation and absorption of non-white cultures within rather

than at distance” (Nayar, 2010:234). Bharati Mukherjee stayed in Canada with her husband Clark Blaise but shifted to the United States after going through the painful experience of racial discrimination and hostile treatment on its basis. She is an Indian Brahmin who knows Indian secular culture but could not share the space of the Canadian culture and remained isolated with fractured identity. Like Black, the Indians in the white culture are made invisible and differentiated. She is divided as she finds shelter in the U.S. Her experience is filled in many characters in the stories in ‘Darkness’. Her turbulent experience makes her a part of visible minority. However, it is her experience that she could differentiate and stress her identity through resistance. But Mukherjee lives in the new cultural space that has emerged after combination of the white and non-white. The element of hybridity has entered her life through her marriage and participation in cultural unison which is altogether new and consolidating. Her new identity roots in the changed social and cultural structure.

In order to explore the concept of border, boundary, and borderland, its depth and significance, ‘Journal of Border studies’, ‘Association of Borderlands Studies’ (ABS) and the ‘Border Regions in Transition network’ (BRIT) have come up and many scholars have undertaken projects such as ‘EUBORDERSCAPES’, ‘Writing cultures and Tradition at Border’ (2010-2012), Border Aesthetics, etc. Attempts are being made to understand the reasons behind “everyday border-making by understanding borders as institutions, process and symbols. Borders are not given, they emerge through socio-political process of border-making or bordering that take place within society. The physical borders are fixed under the mechanism of social, economic and political pressures.

Bordering is approached in two ways: pragmatic and critical. The pragmatic realization depends on experience accrued from the exemplary practice of border creation, consolidation/ confirmation and transcendence and critical conceptualization depends on theory and condition set up for generation of border categories. One category of bordering consists of different types of borders. Bordering is a socio-spatial practice that marks out human territory and political

map-every social and regional group has an image of its own territory and boundaries (Kolossoff and Scott, 2009: 3-4).

The concept of border is addressed at the territorial and symbolic levels on the basis of values and importance assigned to them. It has been pointed out that 1) Social geographers working with topographical borders press for cultural and narrative perspective by which borders are perceived by state actors, borderland population and border crossers called migrants. 2) Within literary and cultural studies the border concept is often used for more symbolic types of borders such as between cultures, genders or classes. Symbolic borders contain a spatial dimension and spatial borders are manifested either within the real, topographical world, or within a mental map, an imaginary geography or a more intimate topology of the body such as racial discrimination (Wolfe in conversation with Kurki and Lauren, 2011)

Border theory seems to require “borderland approach to literature and culture, that is a revisionist position which sees literature and culture not as finished and self-contained projects isolated from other inferences but as constructs based on interaction and dialogue and which evolve and unfold relative to each other” (Benito and Manzanar, 2002: 3-4). The border space in literature of border narratives and changing concepts of the border as developed in other disciplines help explore the literary texts in the changed environment. In political science and history after Edward Said, many writers have explored borders and state authority in asking what it is that we are ‘walling in’ and also ‘designing to keep’ (Wolfe in conversation with Kurki and Lauren, 2011). The role of border theory in literary studies has been underlined: “The representations of borders provided in novels, short stories, poems, films, plays, videos, artworks, and museums are very often traces in the sense that they attempt to hold on to historical figures and figuration within the landscape of the border zone. So, various kinds of border narratives, with their figurative representations of the border, can function as a community of practices” (Wolfe, in conversation with Kurki and Lauren, 2011). For example, Wolfe and his associates found in some texts that “a number of different texts presented the geographical

'borders' of African exploration within a history of colonialism or ethnographic / anthropological history" and "the imaginative representation of Africa" was discussed "geographically, historically or colonially within literary texts by looking very closely at both the uses of traditional literary genres and new forms of medial representation and the framing of the people and history of Africa"(In conversation with Kurki and Lauren, 2011)

The body is one form of border presented in its physical and figurative manifestation in several texts very prominently. The 'black body' denotes 'a race' and in African American literature it is presented with great sensitivity and concerns. In 'Ice Candy Man', Bapsi Sidhwa portrays Aya and her body as the site on which the rogues attack and play with her sexuality, and she is sent to India. In 'Train to Pakistan', Noora is sexually exploited by her lover and when it comes for her to leave the territory she meets death on the train.

We have mention in the preceding discussion the racial discrimination followed on the basis of body and its colour. Religions and sects have become lines of cultural divide keeping the people divided and differentiated on the basis of values and principles visibly and invisibly adopted by the followers. The Sia –Sunny confrontation in Islam has acquired a deadly face leading to sectarian confrontations leading to perennial enmity and struggle for separate identity and dominance. The Protestant –Catholic war of wisdom is well recorded in the cultural behaviour. In India high and Low caste division and discrimination has subjected the lower caste to exploitation and oppression rejecting their voice for freedom and equality. The dalit discourses often raise their voice against casteist approach and denial of their rights. Majority-minority divide works in the similar ways. While residing in the nation the majority constructs the national identity while minority remains as outsider on the periphery of the nation. Here we observe the cultural spaces as contesting sites for the subjects and their reflection in their literature.

The border theory is being examined from postcolonial point of view. The post colonial writings aspire for liberation of the subject

from the colonial conquerors, dominance and cultural superiority. The border theory is taken as "a set of process aimed to guide the inner self of a colonized person in its struggle to achieve decolonization and liberation" (Orozco-Mendoza, 2008:3). The colonial authority represented by European civilization and order treats colonized people as barbarous, primitive, sexy, lazy, inhuman, devilish, backward and not to be treated as equals. A person can become a member of the high European civilization who is white, married, literate, heterosexual and owner of wealth. The people who are homosexual, prisoners, mental patients, political dissidents, black Indians, mestizos, gypsies, Jews, ethnic minorities, immigrants and Auslandern are left outside the space of civilization (Castro-Gomez and Johnson, 2000:513).The colonized people through freedom aspire for change from oppression, violence and discrimination. This spirit is continued in the period of globalization justifying "oppression and exploitation as well as the eradication of the difference"(Mignolo and Tlostanova, 2006:206). Besides the cultural dominance, sexual exploitation of native women is the designed project of the colonial conquerors. "Feminist readings have foregrounded both the racial as well as the colonial contexts and problems of both European and native women in the colonial contexts. Other have addressed the sexuality theme by analyzing the homoerotic, sexually ambivalent relations, role playing and power struggle within colonial contexts" (Nayar,2010:172). Anzaldua's concept of borderland is a landmark and thought provoking commentary on the subject which articulates the plurality of self in many ways

Another prominent area of border theory is the feminist approach which studies the space created artificially in the patriarchal society. It questions the male dominance and authority attached to male arrogance and exercise of power, discrimination and female subjugation. The space provided to woman as having border line image and cultural authority to decide her place in the family is interrogated. Woman liberation is the key element that the theory offers to the feminists and resistance is the force generated in their voice.

In this short discussion the origin and development of the border theory has been attempted and the possible areas of its application pointed out. Its importance is growing in the cultural studies and literature because borders occur as symbolic markers in these disciplines and their aesthetic/poetic analysis reveals the mind of the subjects experiencing the social and cultural spaces with actions and reactions. The present discussion is based on the literature available rather than making it an original version for the benefit of the students and researchers in this area.

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## Dislocation and Relocation in Nadine Gordimer's *The Pickup*

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### Abstract

Nadine Gordimer has always been acclaimed for her anti-Apartheid stance, and, through her writings, became the voice of the oppressed non-white, as well as, the moral conscience of her country. But when the racist ideology of Apartheid was done away with, she started focusing on problems of race and class, and the connection between the private and the political. Thus she continues to analyze what the radical form of institutionalized 'othering' does to people and their cultures. *The Pickup* (2001) takes, as its point of departure, the 'New South Africa.' But instead of a local or national theme, it involves global issues, by introducing the theme of crossing borders, and its aftermath. Gordimer's theme of 'self and other' (both the cultural one and the individual one) foregrounds the interracial love story between Julie and Abdu/Ibrahim, thus widening the theme from racial opposition between black and white, to the cultural one between the East and the West. The novel provides an insight into the lives of two characters living at the literal as well as metaphorical borders of modern society.

**Keywords:** Post-Apartheid; the 'Other;' Disparity; Interracial; intercultural; Immigrant; Dislocation; Relocation; Exile; Desert; The Suburbs.

*The Pickup* is a novel that has its place in what Nadine



Gordimer has called, a post-apartheid “literature of transition, taking as its subject-matter the issues of displacement, economic exile and migration.” (qtd. in Kossew 1) Having been cut off from the rest of the world and particularly, from the rest of Africa for so long under apartheid, the new South Africa opened its borders to a wide range of peoples, many of them settling as ‘illegal immigrants’ in the big cities like Johannesburg. This has given rise to reactions of xenophobia and resentment among local people, despite the fact that, as Gordimer has pointed out, “apart from South African Africans themselves... we are all immigrants here.” (qtd. in Kossew 1) Thus the issue of displacement is both, an age-old, as well as a recent one, that lies at the heart of a S. African sense of belonging.

Gordimer’s early interest in racial and economic inequality, in S. Africa, was shaped in part by her parents, who were both Jewish immigrants: her father, a watchmaker from Lithuania near the Latvian border, and her mother from London. Her father’s experiences as a Jewish refugee in Czarist Russia, helped form Gordimer's political identity, but he was neither an activist nor particularly sympathetic towards the experiences of black people under apartheid. Conversely, Gordimer saw activism by her mother, whose concern about the poverty and discrimination faced by black people in S. Africa, had a deep impact on her own writing.<sup>1</sup> Gordimer never spared any effort campaigning against racism in South Africa. Through her writings she is the voice of the oppressed non-white, and can be regarded as the moral conscience of her country.

In her novels, Gordimer made it one of her aims to analyze what the radical form of institutionalized “othering” did to people and their cultures. Nearly all of her novels and most of her short stories deal with that topic. But when the racist ideology of Apartheid was done away with, she continued to deal with problems of race and class, bureaucratic arbitrariness and the connection between the private and the political. *The Pickup* (2001) takes, as its point of departure, the ‘New South Africa.’ But it lifts these problems from a local or national issue to a global level, by changing the story’s setting from liberal post-apartheid Johannesburg to a conspicuously unnamed Arab country in

the second and longer part of the novel. Gordimer's theme of self and other (on both a cultural and an individual level) uses the interracial love story between Julie and Abdu, to widen the theme from the racial opposition of black and white to the cultural one between East and West.<sup>2</sup>

*The Pickup* has been written in a South African universe in which much had changed – not least in terms of the local and the global. South Africa had been through the sufferings of Apartheid – but this is not the Promised Land: HIV/Aids, unemployment, continuing social and economic disparities, crime, were all part of the post-Apartheid landscape. Yet there seemed to be a way forward, and in a wider context, South Africa had rejoined the global community, open to some of its opportunities and subject to its unevenness – the paradoxes and perils of the globalized system.

In this novel, Nadine Gordimer again explores the theme of interracial, intercultural relationship, such as those at the centre of *The Lying Days* (1953) and *A Sport of Nature* (1987). Here the context is not Apartheid, rather it is the plight of the immigrant, especially the illegal immigrant, who encounters a well-to-do young woman, a white South African, with Irish and Scottish ancestry, living on her own in a kind of bohemian independence, with a wealthy and well-connected father, who comes to represent ‘The Other.’ For Gordimer the complexities of ‘The Other’ have always been at the centre of her interest, since she grew up in post-colonial South Africa and lived through the various stages of its Apartheid regime.<sup>3</sup> Through this novel, which is rich with meaning and motifs, she explores the notion of dislocation and relocation; of exile and belonging; of race, culture, and identity. The book also examines the divide between East and West, rich and poor, the freedom of movement versus immigration. Gordimer skillfully handles these universal issues underlying the theme of borders, in an understated way.

The novel is initially set in South Africa, but it is not really clear who is picking up whom. It provides a deeply insightful view into the lives of two characters living at the borders of modern society. Julie



is a white woman from a privileged background, in contemporary Johannesburg. She has already distanced herself from her bourgeois background, living in a formerly black part of town. She drives an old second-hand car, works for a rock-and-roll agency and spends her leisure time with a multi-racial and liberal circle of friends which they refer to as 'Table' at the L.A. /EL AY Cafe.

The story begins with her car breaking down, which brings her into contact with Abdu, (the false name taken by Ibrahim Ibn Musa), the mechanic at her garage who fixes her car. She starts a love affair with him, but the relationship seems destined to be short-lived, because Abdu, who is from an unnamed Middle Eastern country, is an illegal immigrant (with a degree in Economics). But Julie, a PR professional, could not care less about the stigma attached to this new relationship, because she is determined to carve her own way in life, free from her overbearing father's money, his expectations from her, and his much younger second wife. But Abdu acquires an admiration for the jet set world of Julie's father. In spite of reluctantly using her father's connections, Julie is unable to legalize Abdu/Ibrahim and hence cannot avert his deportation. She decides to marry him and move to his home country, a country which he himself dislikes.

The bulk of the book is therefore set in an unspecified Islamic country, where poverty is the natural order and the family is the unifying factor, holding society together. Julie, an only child herself, enjoys the new experience of living in a carefree extended family, adapting rather well in the Arab ethos. She experiences a profound journey of self-discovery and awareness. She embraces Ibrahim's life in every conceivable way, while Ibrahim himself cannot do so. He immediately, begins to apply for immigration into any of the Western states – Australia, New Zealand, America – while Julie, quickly finds her place in the new surroundings, becoming a part of his family. She is drawn to the desert, developing a mystical affinity to it. When Ibrahim avails himself of an opportunity to travel to the U.S.A to build a life in the land where Julie's mother lives, it does not surprise us that she refuses to go with him. In this juxtaposition Gordimer examines the intricate relations between those having the right to choose the place

they wish to live in, and those who do not. Through the character of Julie, Gordimer explores the experiences of women moving across national frontiers and cultural, ethnic, and religious divides in Africa. She also tackles the thorny issue of inter-racial relationships. Even more in its complexity, is the internal nature of the relationship between the novel's two main characters. That Julie will shun her privileges to follow Ibrahim to what, by Gordimer's account, is an impoverished Arab country, may appear a bit far-fetched. But *The Pickup* sidesteps the expediency of simplicity to deal frontally with issues of love, race, and class struggle.

Since Nadine Gordimer is already a well-known, established writer, within the scope of Commonwealth post-colonial Literatures, it is of particular interest that she provides a further twist in this novel, as South Africa, a former colony itself, is here contrasted to another post-colonial culture, which in turn, is invaded by the neo-imperialism of Western capitalist states. This leads to the presence of structural parallels and binary oppositions. The story takes place in two radically different settings, involving two radically different people, while each of them seems to be a sort of split personality or alter-ego of the other. This, rather unlikely plot is made real by Gordimer's stylistic skills and her sensitive description of social and psychological detail.

The inter-cultural love story of Julie and Abdu/Ibrahim, foregrounds the differences among the characters belonging to the two cultures depicted here, wherein each character gains clarity and a defining shape through his/her confrontation with the 'Others.' Although the sexual encounter between a white woman and a black man is still the culturally most provocative, the novel skillfully avoids any mention of the racial aspect in the love relationship or its immediate social surroundings. Skin-colour no longer seems to be an important distinctive feature in the liberal anti-bourgeois post-apartheid climate at the ambiguously named L.A. / El-AY Cafe. At the most, racial diversity is relished by the whites as a display of post-modern *savoir-vivre*. Blackness does play a role in the novel. It features, for example, in the successful ex-lawyer Hamilton Motsamai, (who has earlier played a significant role in *The House Gun*

[1998]), with his “black voice”(74) and his tribal beard (76); as well as in the address “Bra” at “The table.” But blackness is no longer indicative of ‘otherness.’ The lawyer, who formerly fought for the rights of the blacks, has, meanwhile, moved into finance, where he is as successful as his white colleagues. His idiosyncratic grunt and his tribal beard are little more than fashionable relics from an almost forgotten past. The address “Bra” at The El AY Cafe is used indiscriminately for every man at “The Table,” irrespective of his colour(23).

For Abdu, the question of blackness does not overtly apply, as he is of “Arab”, not of African descent, “not one of them,” (87) as somebody at “The Table” puts it. He, thus, bypasses the traditional South-African race –dichotomy altogether which, in any case, has lost its original strong presence. The question of Julie's whiteness in the unnamed Arab country, on the other hand, is not even mentioned in the second part of the novel, nor does it seem to be a distinguishing feature in the Arab society described.

Rather than the racial differences, it is the different social background of both Julie and Abdu that is more prominent. As mentioned earlier, Julie is the well-to-do daughter of a white bourgeois family, living in ‘The Suburbs’ (8), who tries to emphasize her independence and identity by moving into a flat in a formerly black district of Johannesburg. She earns her own money in the rock’n roll business and driving an old second-hand car. When she has to use her father’s Rover while her own car is in repair, she is filled with shame and embarrassment. This kind of radical resistance to bourgeois norms is now the norm in her liberal, hybrid, pseudo-Bohemian social world of “The Table.” Julie’s friends, “young, haphazard and selectively tolerant,”(5) are a mixed-race bunch who frequents the El-AY Cafe in “a thoroughfare, the bazaar of all that the city had not been allowed to be by the laws and traditions of her parents’ generation”(5). They represent the post-Apartheid intelligentsia. In a few lines, Gordimer expertly conveys the style and the atmosphere of the place and the values of those who come to “sit over a single coffee”(5) and talk. It is a meeting place for dissenters, free thinkers, drifters, poor

immigrants, prostitutes, poets, “aging Hippies and Leftist Jews”(5). Julie's friends, black and white, are a brotherhood: “elective siblings” (23) who totally accept each other and ask no awkward questions; their creed: “whatever you do, love, whatever happens, hits you mate, bra, that’s all right with me.”(23) It is here that Julie feels at home, not at her wealthy father’s place, with its moral vacuity and its materialism. But Abdu, on the other hand, has no problems with the capitalist fetishes. Thus Julie is astonished at his admiration for her father’s car and for his successful business partners and their jet set world. For both protagonists the respective other represents their ideal self, and hence, their desire for one another is, in their case, the desire of the ‘other.’

In Johannesburg, Julie is the one with contacts, money, and power, no matter how strenuously she may try to evade them. When she decides to accompany Ibrahim to his impoverished homeland, it is she who has to adapt and learn how to be a migrant in an Islamic Arab society. What is significant about this experience, is, that, it empowers Julie because she finds a ‘place’ for herself that she has never experienced in her own place in Johannesburg, where she led an emotionally sterile and unproductive existence. In Ibrahim’s desert village, she discovers aspects of herself as teacher, as ‘sister’, and as a member of Ibrahim’s extended family, all new experiences, so different from her cold, middle-class family from “The Suburbs.” The desert that adjoins the village becomes a place of spiritual growth for Julie: the deprivation of her material privileges, she is accustomed to, is replaced by a spiritual element within her that is far more fulfilling.

This theme of describing the kinds of power shifts that occur when people become displaced from their comfort zones has already been minutely explored in *July's People* (1981). The characters have to adapt to new ways of thinking and being. Much of this adaptation occurs through language – what initially seems to be a barrier to communication, can become a measure for productive cross-cultural exchange. In spite of both, Ibrahim and her father, warning her against living in a place where women are treated like slaves, Julie is adamant

on expanding her limited horizons and experiencing an unknown culture. Ibrahim is unable to understand how or why Julie, who has so many choices about where to live, would choose the very place from which he is trying to escape. One is always aware that Julie still has the power to choose to leave whenever she wants to, while Abdu/Ibrahim does not. The idea of the world as a global village is still an extremely one-sided one: only those from privileged countries are really free to 'pick up' other cultures and to drop them too, whenever they wish to do so – "the freedom of the world was hers." (115)

The novel displays a certain amount of fetishistic Orientalism that has Julie see Abdu/Ibrahim as an Oriental prince, while her Johannesburg friends prosaically consider him as a mere 'grease monkey,' – a mechanic working at the local garage. Their mutual 'picking-up' raises a number of questions: is he simply using her as a ticket to stay in South Africa? Is she using him as an exotic 'other' to create some excitement in her somewhat mundane existence?

There is no full articulation of the manner in which this mutual exploitation leads to the more profound loving relationship which, we are expected to believe, has evolved, during the course of the novel. This leads to a sense of fragility and impermanence in the relationship. But the frequent shifts in perspective and the awareness within the narration of these wide-ranging attitudes, skillfully skirts these shortcomings in the story. This is especially evident in Julie's final decision to refuse to immigrate with Ibrahim to America, which, she feels, has been influenced by the desert itself. Ibrahim's reaction to this decision foresees that of the reader – "for him ... her decision was a typical piece of sheltered middle-class Western romanticism. Like picking up a grease monkey." (262) But, simultaneously, he recognizes within her the same spirit that moves him to try to escape from the place he belongs. She is attempting to escape her inherited privilege, both, in South Africa, to which she belongs, and in America, where her mother lives the privileged California lifestyle. On the other hand, he is trying to escape the opposite of privilege, the poverty, the hopelessness, the sense of entrapment.

Julie chooses the solidarity of his family's women, those, whom Ibrahim suspects, she has taught, not just the English language, but also communicated "her rich girl's Cafe ideas of female independence" (256). Julie is able to form an unspoken alliance with Ibrahim's strong and level-headed mother, who understands that Julie is the one who will "bring him home at last." (259)

Julie's somewhat romanticized response to the desert as 'eternity,' (172) as a space with "no measure of space ... no demarcation from land to air" (172), is contrasted with Ibrahim's description of the village as "this dusty hell of my place" (173). Julie's access to the financial help extended her by her uncle, which shields her and Ibrahim's family from the desperate poverty around them, raises the question of whether she would really have been so keen to stay and commune with the desert if she had had to live authentically without the benefits of her privileges. The novel's ending is, thus, ambiguous, with unanswered questions, and with Julie facing a perverse kind of freedom. Through Julie, Gordimer illustrates how privilege is not something that can easily be renounced. The latitude it allows to those born to it, persists even where their circumstances change. While Abdu struggled as a 'grease monkey' in South Africa, terrified of being discovered as an illegal immigrant, Julie is able to enjoy endless contemplation of the desert in her new home. It is their unequal ability to experience freedom that remains the gulf between the two lovers.

The divide between Julie and Abdu hints at an unnerving gap – not just between cultures, but between individuals as well – that is not easily bridged. Despite their intimacy, Julie and Abdu/Ibrahim remain strangers to each other, each on a personal, parallel journey. Instead of trying to grasp the truth about each other, they are ultimately unable to see beyond themselves: "he is not looking at her when his regard is on her," and she is simply "looking for herself reflected in those eyes" (129).

Like its predecessor, *The House Gun*, from which the black attorney, Hamilton Motsamai, makes an appearance again in this novel, this novel has a spareness of prose and an intimate sense of

character. There is a sense of an understanding and a tolerance of her characters that escapes her previously relentless irony, while acknowledging the tenuousness of all decisions and choices. The way in which Julie and Abdu cope with the move to his poverty-stricken, dusty country and with the many necessary cultural adjustments is realistically imagined by Gordimer. The differences in attitude to family, friendship and connections; the questions of independence, values and responsibilities; the problems of being a stranger in an unfamiliar culture and of bringing a stranger into your own family, all are explored from both Julie's and Ibrahim's sides – not analytically or didactically, but imaginatively. Skillfully the reader is drawn into the scene and begins to sense the tensions and fascinations which govern the characters' lives.

If we consider the serious function of writing a novel is to help readers to understand society, then this novel fully succeeds in doing so. After a lot of political struggle, rather than being the Undefined Other of the West, South Africa, as portrayed in this novel, at least looks more like a workshop for a future multicultural society. Julie Sommers seems to be an ideal representative of that liberal post-colonial pluralism.

However, as the story develops, it appears that even in such a society, self-definition and identity depends on a significant Other. This Other, for the liberal anti-bourgeois Julie Summers, seems to be located in the Arabic-Islamic culture. Initially, her foray into realm of the other is a mere thrilling adventure. But the Other that she picks up and eventually enters, increasingly invades her mind, finally enabling her – in an almost mythical encounter with the desert – to face what she takes to be the truth.

The desert seems to her to be the ultimate sublime, the end of time and space, and maybe death. In approaching this realm, she finally seems to find meaning in her life, which aptly manifests itself in a dream – a dream in green. Although Julie initially does not understand this vision, it suddenly gains meaning when she finally gets a chance to take a drive into the desert. Fascinated by the sight of a rice plantation in the

middle of the desert, she decides to cultivate the land, following her dream. In this Utopian image of rice in the desert, the opposing symbols of water and sand – like the ones of life and death, time and eternity – Julie possibly fulfills her quest for her 'true' identity.

When Abdu finally obtains his permit for the U.S.A., Julie's decision to stay back, the question of whether either of them really finds his/her 'true' identity in the respective realm of the Other remains ultimately open. Abdu's prospects in the U.S. seem anything but promising and Julie's dream of a rice plantation in the desert is based on a camouflage enterprise for an arms-smuggling business. This Utopia of Gordimer seems to have an ironic twist.

Since *The Pickup* is one of Gordimer's 'mature' or rather mellow works, this ironic twist acknowledges the tenuousness of all decisions and choices. It is fitting then, that the novel ends ambiguously with the questions unanswered, in keeping with the quality of muteness of the symbolic desert.

#### Notes

1. This theme is to be found in Gordimer's novels *Occasion for Loving* (London: Cape, 1963) *The Late Bourgeois World* (London: Gollancz, 1966) and *My Son's Story* (London: Bloomsbury, 1990)
2. This theme of *The Pickup* like that of other fiction written post 2001, has become more topical since the September 11 attacks; and all the events involving the West, have put the relation between Western Christian and Eastern Arabic-Islamic cultures on the agenda of political debates and TV talk shows all over the world.
3. Since *Apartheid* was Gordimer's theme throughout her writing career – nearly all of her published novels and most of her short stories deal with this racist ideology. However limited and indirect the influence of literature on political practice may be, she has doubtless played her part in that process.

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## The Border as Resource: Revisiting the Partition

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### Abstract

Although Border Studies began as a field of research in social geography with a limited focus on the Mexico-U.S border, its theories, critiques and poetics can be fruitfully applied to a wider geography of borders. The India-Pakistan and India-Bangladesh borders are particularly problematic, haunted as these are by the trauma of the Partition and also by more recent territorial issues of terrorism, unauthorised infiltration and political one-upmanship.

In this short paper I wish to focus on the work-in-progress being done by the participatory website, *1947 Partition Archive*, through the lens of border studies. I wish to explore how this website, and other similar hyperlinked and contributory websites on the internet, is contributing to the growing discourse of borders and identities, how it is a resource for engaging with Partition trauma and reclaiming the lost voices of the Partition, and also how it is reconstructing the border as a divide that can also be a join by collecting and archiving cross-border dialogue on the lived tragedy of the Partition.

**Keywords:** Border, dialogue, Internet, Partition, resource, trauma

### 1. Introduction: Expanding Border Studies

Border Studies began life as an interdisciplinary field of study that critically researched political and popular border and identity discourses along the Mexico-U.S border. Although initially concerned with specific geographies, the relevance of theorising borders as



discursive and dynamic spaces soon spread to other geo-cultural locations, expanding the scope and intent of border studies. The seeds of expansion are incipient in the seminal border text, Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* when she claims in the Preface:

The actual physical borderland that I'm dealing with in this book is the Texas-U.S Southwest/Mexican border. The psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands and the spiritual borderlands are not particular to the Southwest. In fact, the Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy. (Para 1)

The question that arises here is, since Indians and Pakistanis or Bangladeshis are not culturally, racially or even economically too disparate, being theoretically part of what is known as South Asians, then how is it possible to fruitfully incorporate the Partition and its aftermath into the realm of border studies?

Michaelsen and Johnson theorize,

The idea of the "border" or "borderlands" has also been expanded to include nearly every psychic or geographic space about which one can thematize problems of boundary or limit....the intellectual entry point of the "border" is one of the grand themes of recent, politically liberal-to-left work across the humanities and social sciences. (1997: 1-2).

The Partition created physical borders through acts of state violence, which incited more violence that scarred and created psychic borders of the mind. The Partition is also inextricably and literally linked with the reality of border-crossings, and the trauma engendered by such forced displacement. Recent works on border studies consider the Palestinian and Indian partitions to have been the two most "famous" and controversial border creations since the World war II: "India's partition created a novel border, separating India from two

entities, West and East Pakistan. The new lines did not restore old Mughal jurisdictions...[but are examples] that illustrate fresh cuts" (Wilson & Hastings 30). Statistical reports indicate that two million people died and sixteen million were displaced in the Partition (Daiya).The novelty and significance of the Partition is not only because of the arbitrariness of the border, but also because of the magnitude of its impact.

In this short paper, I argue the case for expanding the arena of border studies by including, not just the historical event of Partition, but the study of how South Asians from across subcontinental and diasporic borders are negotiating and reconciling to this "fresh cut", its triage, and its scars. Although Partition discourse can be also studied through the lenses of Trauma Criticism and Diaspora Studies, it is a historical fact that the trauma was inflicted and the diasporasegregated through the physical and psychological acts of forcibly being made to cross a border. I propose to do this by focusing on the archival work being done by the diasporically located, participatory website, *1947 Partition Archive*.

In her Preface, Hicks states that, "Border writers give the reader the opportunity to practice multidimensional perception and nonsynchronous memory" (xxiii). She further explains that border literature should enable us to see "not just from one side of a border, but from the other side as well. In Roland Barthes's terms, this would mean a perception in- formed by two different sets of referential codes" (xxiii). The team of voluntary participants whose united efforts are making the *1947 Partition Archive* project possible position themselves as "concerned citizens committed to preserving this chapter of our collective history" coming from "diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, nationalities, and professions" (1947, "Our Team", para 1). Hence, the website engages with multiple perspectives of the Partition experience, and indeed, of multiple Partitions, as it includes narratives from both the Punjab and the Bengal borders. The recorded perspectives are of survivors located at various intersections of gender, class, caste, religion, nationality and ethnicity, which fits in with the requirement of multidimensionality that is a perquisite of



border writing. The virtual, online, hyperlinked mode of narration is by definition asynchronous, and the re-visioning of memory through oral narration guided by a loosely structured interview questionnaire disrupts the officialised linearity of time: the Partition is not an event in time past—to use a much quoted phrase by T.S. Eliot—but it is enmeshed in time present, and its “preservation” will impact time future. It is this ability to fracture homogeneity and to imbricate spatial and temporal categories that makes the border discourse emerging at *1947 Partition Archive* to be an enabling and healing agent.

## 2. The Border as Zone of Articulation/s

In its mission statement, the *1947 Partition Archive* website states that it is a

people-powered non-profit organization dedicated to documenting, preserving and sharing eye witness accounts from all ethnic, religious and economic communities affected by the Partition of British India in 1947. We provide a platform for anyone anywhere in the world to collect, archive and display oral histories that document not only Partition, but pre-Partition life and culture as well as post-Partition migrations and life changes. (1947, “Mission”, para 1).

This statement further makes clear the affinity of this website to border writing. As discussed in the previous section, border writing often allows for “multidimensional perception and nonsynchronous memory” (Hicks, xxiii). Such an inclusive mission enables and encourages the collection of and access to a diversity of stories that span histories, geographies and perspectives. The emphases on being “people-powered” and on enabling “all” communities mark its democratic origin and intent: it is a website of the people, for the people and by the people. The mission statement signifies the construction of a counter-discourse emanating from the people that resists and contests the official state discourse of the Partition and border creation. The Partition is re-viewed, not just as a cataclysmic moment in history, but as part of a process, with both Pre-and a Post-

stages. The narratives approach the event rhizomatically, as it were, before or between or after, from either side of the border/s, and this disrupts the synchronicity of officially recorded time-keeping.

Recent Partition scholars have been attempting to recover the lost voices of the Partition: the private stories of the common people, especially women, which were marginalised and even erased in the official discourse, which was often male and public (Butalia; Menon & Bhasin). By including diverse stories, from men and women, young and old, Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi, from various ethnicities, the *1947 Partition Archive* is further expanding the ambit, scope and depth of Partition stories. In a way, it is also redressing the gender balance of this collective narration of trauma, struggle and survival.

The *1947 Partition Archive* has a unique Story Map, which is inscribed with the hyperlinks of more than a thousand “oral history interviews that have been archived so far”, and is also marked with arrows indicating the place of origin from which the subject migrated to the new place of residence (1947, “Story Map”, para 1). In diasporic terms, the map shows both the roots and the routes of the subjects. The stories originate in memories of both of these: the root or the homeland, and the migration route or the journey. The stories are a heteroglossia of the lived experiences of the Partition, of lives literally bifurcated into ‘Before’ and ‘After’ segments by the border.

Many stories come from South Asians now living in the United States, though most are from those still living in India, Pakistan or Bangladesh, which was part of Pakistan until 1971. The accounts, once they start pouring out, are one to four hours long. They are told in Urdu and Punjabi, Hindi, Bengali and English. (Sengupta, para 6).

Whereas a print project will be necessarily limited by space constraints, the *1947 Partition Archive* has the advantage of almost unlimited archival space. This allows the project to be an evolving and expanding memorialization of border-crossings. The project archives a wide plurality of stories, and the story map format ensures that none of the stories are marginalized or forgotten. There are numerous

stories by women, like Vimla Malhotra, who journeyed from Bannu in Pakistan to Ambala in India, and who currently resides in Mumbai, India. On the obverse, there are stories by men like Wajid Ali Khan, who migrated from Maharashtra, India, to Sindh, Pakistan, and thereafter again to California, United States. Interestingly, there are also articulations by those subjects who have been hitherto invisibilized in Partition discourse: for instance, Jewish residents who neither belonged to the category of Hindus being forced to move to India, nor to the category of Muslims being pushed to West or East Pakistan. The story of Isaac Yehezkiel, born in Pune, India, who was asked to choose a country, and who moved from Mumbai to ZichronYaacov, Israel, reveals the hollowness of this forced choice, and also articulates the experiences of silenced minorities.

The stories construct multiple subjectivities, and have multiple affects: trauma, misery, loss, pain, hope, courage, humanity:

A Zoroastrian woman from Karachi recalls how her grandmother hid her Hindu maid from family members who wanted to convert her against her will. A Hindu man from a village near Lahore recalls surviving the train journey to India only because a Muslim man, a stranger, hid him in his first-class compartment; other Hindus on that same train were killed or wounded. A Muslim man from what is now Indian Punjab describes watching a mob stab his mother as she tried to protect her older son. (Sengupta, para 8).

By uncovering and recording these stories, the project is validating individual experience and individual memory, without any intervention of “judgment or analysis or...corroboration” (Sengupta, para 11). This marks a clear departure from, and resistance to, the official discourse of the Partition by the state/s. Historically, this top-down construct has been the dominant received discourse of the Partition, while the voices of the individual victims were erased or suppressed. As Sengupta remarks, “Some of those interviewed have never told their stories before, not even to their families” (Para 8). In fact, it was the regret of never documenting her own grandmother's

narrativisation of the border-crossing trauma that impelled Guneeta Singh Bhalla to start *1947 Partition Archive*. The project operates through an organized structure: interested participants can apply to be oral history apprentices, story scholars or citizen historians, each function requiring a different level of commitment and expertise, and the selected participants and given the required training, guidance and remuneration by the project sponsors (*1947*, “Application”). By adopting structured processes and methodologies to collect the stories of the Partition survivors, the project is effectively and strategically constructing an alternate people-powered history and discourse of the border.

Unlike the state-controlled version of the Partition, which is geared towards naming and blaming enemies that escalate otherness and incite violence, the stories mapped in *1947 Partition Archive* reveal the commonality of the suffering and the trauma across borders. The project recovers and privileges the oral over the written, the citizen historian over the state history. These differences between macro and micro histories and the schisms between the top-down and bottom-up approaches to events are thematic concerns explored in border studies.

### 3. Dividing and Joining

Another recurring theme in border studies is the dichotomy of the border space as both divide and join. In the “Story Map” of *1947 Partition Archive*, the visual semiotics of the arrows traversing the borders indicate this contradiction: the borders are both rigid and fluid, impermeable and porous, significant and irrelevant.

The construction and imposition of the border in 1947 undeniably divided the subcontinent along religious and political lines. The shared sufferings notwithstanding, the public perception of the ‘other’ nation has always been as that of an enemy. It is also undeniable that this perception has been manipulated and magnified by the dominant state apparatuses. The counter-discourse that is being recently constructed, by individual initiatives like Butalia

(1998), Menon and Bhasin (2000) and others seek a re-signification of the term 'border' to indicate 'join' rather than 'divide'. It is very significant that the *1947 Partition Archive* is headquartered in Berkeley, California, and has participants from various geographical locations like the United States, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The robust and active interest from cross-border and diasporic participants assigns a new meaning to the Partition: an event has hitherto splintered nations will henceforth join and unite people across multiple borders, both geographical and generational. The project itself defines its team as coming from "diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, nationalities, and professions", committed to retrieving and documenting a "collective" history (1947, "Our Team", para 1). As Sengupta says, "Many stories come from South Asians now living in the United States": this indicates how borders can dissolve in the melting pot of the global diasporas (Para 5).

The other, and more obvious, act of linking is performed through the deliberate act of collecting stories, and this is usually a joining across generations. Sengupta comments on the "urgency" of the project (Para 5). Even as it hurries to link young researchers, story-scholars, oral history apprentices and citizen historians with old survivors of the Partition, many of whom are septuagenarians and octogenarians, there are many untold stories that are slipping away forever. Some of this slippage is unavoidable, but the project is aiming to archive as many stories as possible by forging links and joins: asking people to volunteer, asking people to share stories or to share details of those who have stories to tell (1947, "Know Someone"). The "Share" icon on this page is a visual metaphor of the joining function of borders.

#### 4. The Future: Healing and Hoping

Just as border studies aim to re-signify border to mean 'join' rather than just 'divide', the focus of the studies shift from 'hurt' to 'heal'. "The borderlands...are the privileged locus of hope for a better world" (Michaelsen & Johnson 3).

*1947 Partition Archive*, like other border-crossings, may be

embedded in histories, but it is inspired by this promise of amelioration and improved understanding. Introducing their committed team of "concerned citizens" from both sides of the border in the subcontinent, as well as the diaspora, the website writes: "It is our view that a strong foundation in history will pave the way for a more enlightened future for the South Asian subcontinent and hence the world" (1947, "Our Team", para 1).

In her seminal border text, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Gloria Anzaldúa refers to the cycle of nature, to "growth, death, decay, birth" as strategies of "survival and growth" passed down generations (91). As readers, we, too, can hope that the stories of the Partition, passed down through the 1947 Partition Archive and other creative and participatory border discourses, by giving space and dignity to individual experiences, will heal old wounds and build new bridges.

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## Border Crossings, Reflections on the African-Caribbean Diaspora: (Im)migrant Women Writers

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### Abstract

This article briefly introduces borders of the African Caribbean diaspora, with key focus on the journeys immigrant women writers have undertaken across borders to reconnect with their island/homeland. Like other Third World immigrants, Caribbean immigrant writers, are sometimes reproached for their "authenticity" and their ability to represent the world they have left behind. They play a substantial part in the examination of issues raised by the (African Caribbean) diaspora, and the crossing and recrossing of social, cultural, geographical, psychological, and linguistic borders that occupy center stage in their discourses. The article provides a few cases to set the Caribbean border crossings in the context of certain circumstances out of which the literature is born.

**Keywords:** Border crossings, African Caribbean women writers, migration, home.

The border for us is an elastic metaphor that we can reposition in order to talk about many issues.

Guillermo Gómez-Peña

The Caribbean today is a mixture of various races and cultures which includes people and traditions from Europe, Africa, India and Asia. Geographically, the region is an archipelago, a stretch of islands between the north-eastern coast of South America and the North Atlantic Ocean. The boundaries of the small Caribbean islands earlier

had no land mass or military power. Issues of migration, displacement, dislocation and the politics of language have produced an experiential borderland for people in the Caribbean. Borderlands, according to Chicana novelist Gloria Anzaldúa are present whenever different races occupy the same geographical space, whenever two or more cultures edge each other. In the opening pages of her book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, she refers border as “una herida abierta” [an open wound] (3). The shifting locations and multiple identities negotiated on the borders is a new element for Gloria. Likewise, the shifting geopolitical and cultural landscape of the Caribbean provided a temporal and psychological borderland, a historical terrain where a number of intersecting discourses were examined, challenged and addressed. As a spatial entity, the Caribbean constituted a world in itself, operating on an ambiguous position within a racialized hierarchy.

Many theorists and cultural scholars believe that the Caribbean is not so much a geographical location but a cultural construction based on a series of mixtures, languages, and communities of people. The populace of the Caribbean has not moved into states, but states have created space for people to move, mix, expand and create a galore of borderlands. Wider than borders, borderlands encompass and display a uniformity of language, culture, ancestry and tradition. The key focus of the paper concentrates on a brief survey of the journeys immigrant women writers have undertaken across borders to reconnect with their island/homeland. Generally, we assume the word ‘border’ as something that divides or separates two regions or places. They are perceived as geographical dividers or dividing lines, but this paper implies more than separation. Borders can be addressed as a place where people sort out differences. Whether individual or collective, racial or ethnic, class or gender, identities are constructed by borders. Borders can be real and imaginary, physical and psychological, cultural and social and even spiritual. Since, borders are not static but ever evolving and changing, they are subject to continuous play.

The Caribbean borders were made and remade over centuries

that followed slavery, maroonage, and independence. While much research has tended to focus on Caribbean labour, labour demand, migration, forced enslavement, imperial power control and socio cultural separation, only partial scholarly research on borders of the Caribbean has been generated. The basic story about Caribbean border crossings has been one of marginalization, struggle against oppression, painful histories, and racial and cultural distancing. Human mobility across multiple generations in the Caribbean has rendered a viable space for exploring scholarly attention on the Caribbean historical experience. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the British Caribbean and French Caribbean lost its foothold in the western and eastern part. And as slavery came to a close, considerable shifts were generated in migratory streams operating beyond the borders of the formal empire. Due to population movements, both labour and capital were functionally mobile seeking huge profits in new ways (with investors). As most of the labour was provided by border-crossing migrants who made either voluntary or involuntary migrations, it already led to economic dynamism in the old borders. This prompted significant population movement both across and within borders.

The hallmark of sugar and coffee productions, banana cultivations, cacao, and various species of rubber included a combination of indigenous population clusters, Afro-mestizos, and Afro-Caribbeans all across the borders of the Caribbean mainland and islands. Due to large-scale exportation, the borders of the Caribbean experienced major shifts in the Caribbean world. Linked to U.S. capital and markets, the ports of the Caribbean expanded and included border-crossing new profit zones and became nodes of new migratory circuits. Workers recruited for railroad or canal projects, banana or coffee plantations were separated from surrounding societies by perceived race, language, and cultural markers. Hence, migrations created new borders, where establishments were not concretized but improvised. Drastic and vital shifts took place between new comers and locals where their languages, cultures, traditions and populace overlapped re-creating a larger Caribbean



geo-social space. It's hard to speculate and specify border shifts or crossings all over the Caribbean landscape, just as it is impossible to map out the locations of the Caribbean-born populations residing outside and inside their islands of origin. The intense migratory circuits created blurring of the boundaries on all sides due to the impossibility of tracking Caribbeans and their descendants whether they are from Barbados or Jamaica, or Puerto Rico, or the Virgin Islands, who shared both colonial status and citizenship. Numbers vary and seems tough to capture either the locally born or second, third, or fourth generation immigrants born abroad. Scholarly research on population shifts and generational statistics were many, and those who travelled the borderlands remains debatable in historiography.

While certain borders smoothly absorbed into the larger collective, there were others that were harder to disseminate (numbers) thereby, creating blurred boundaries. Population shifts altered Caribbean borderlands as well as the neighbouring states due to their shared imperial past. The neighbouring migrants outnumbered all other arrivals and became a major presence alongside the West Indians. In fact, to account for a sum total of migratory flows including internal migrations is a difficult task. Both forced and voluntary migrations, recorded and invisible cases, displaced and dispersed, indigenous and mixed migratory circuits provide blurring of the boundaries. With due focus on employer-driven transfers, the subject of study on migrations over focuses on men while women have been missed out. Women crossed borders in significant numbers just like men. Either as domestic servants or as workers on the indigo, sugar, or banana plantations, or in the needle trades, woman's place has been neglected.

Recent work on Caribbean border crossings has offered unprecedented attention to transnational cultural production, travels, reconnections and social creations. Current research work on the borders of the Caribbean has set new paradigms for rethinking either the Caribbean as whole or particular spaces within it. Studies in Caribbean history and culture have produced enormous discussions and debates about (re)connections across the African diaspora.

Constant migrations within and outside the borders have provided new insights into the making and remaking of collective identities. One major component of this scholarship comprises of new studies of Caribbean migrants as performers and authors that gained notice from the early twentieth century and since then has created vibrant pre and post-colonial discourses. Caribbean migrants' made visible presence in inaugurating the Harlem Renaissance ranging from Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association to the black socialists and communists and writers like C.L.R. James to Aimé Césaire to Frantz Fanon, and Stokely Carmichael to Colin Powell, receiving great attention. Apart from being politically engaged, the issues of West Indian settlers across the globe have created a stir. Today, we have a range of topics written by West Indians living in the U.S., Canada, U.K, and inside the Caribbean. Historians and anthropologists excavated the historical roots of the societal divides focusing on the constructions of race, ethnicity, and nationality. Extensive research by scholars about the deep histories of the past focused on the shifting collective identities over centuries. The literature born out of these complexities of collective identity and a multitude of case studies on the reconstructions and re-locations offers valuable insights into the making of the Caribbean diaspora.

Caribbean literature comprises of nation-states – islands and mainland, scattered thoroughly around the nation. Critical examinations in Caribbean literary studies have arguably undergone the most comprehensive theorizations on Caribbean culture, Caribbean identity, shifting consciousness and political activism. Critics such as Edouard Glissant, Paul Gilroy, Silvio Torres-Saillant, and others have opened new approaches to 'black Atlantic' and Caribbean studies. Words such as center, periphery, borders/borderlands have challenged relevant developments in literary studies. Borders are shifting locales and are subject to reformulations, interrogations and transgressions. Borders reflect the social and cultural hierarchies and collectives within societies. As such, the history of the African diaspora and its reconstruction within a black framework embraces the whole area of the U.S, Latin America



and the extended Caribbean. In fact, the Caribbean diaspora underwent radical shifts and left a viable black heritage and culture all along the island borders. Caribbean literature as a whole reflects a sophisticated variety of experiences. Through the process of migration, Caribbean culture has spread abroad, most notably to Britain and U.S.A. Immigration, not just to the United States but also to other First World nations such as Canada and England, has had a more profound effect on Caribbean cultural production than perhaps anywhere else in the post-colonial world. As the contemporary Jamaican-American writer Michelle Cliff says in her interview with Meryl F. Schwartz, “The Caribbean doesn't exist as an entity; it exists all over the world. It started in diaspora and continues in diaspora” (597). Scattered over a wider terrain, Caribbean literature, immigrant or non-immigrant, is born out of experiences of erasure, enforced transculturation and diaspora. While most of the Caribbean writers have moved/migrated to the metropole, exceptions like V.S. Reid, Michael Anthony and Earl Lovelace have stayed at ‘home.’ Edgar Mittelholzer, Samuel Selvon, George Lamming, V.S. Naipaul, Wilson Harris and Austin Clarke, and the early ground breaking migrants like Jean Rhys, and Claude McKay, have migrated gaining significant European readership. Even today, many major Caribbean writers after the first wave of writer-migrants, have continued to cross their island boundaries and moved to the metropole. Significantly, a bulk of later generation writers have been women, such as Michelle Cliff, Paule Marshall, Dionne Brand, Lakshmi Persaud, Pauline Melville, Jamaica Kincaid, Marlene Nourbese Philip, and Olive Senior. The concept “Caribbean writer” at present has expanded to include a generation of writers who left the Caribbean in childhood or youth and became writers in their new, metropolitan places. Writers who were born abroad of Caribbean parentage and are part of the literary scene of their adopted homeland also come under this concept. They enjoy ‘dual literary citizenship’ as they are designated nowadays. Though not born in the geographical boundaries of the Caribbean, their literary spaces inhabit the psychological boundaries. James Berry and Austin Clarke are seminal examples for dual citizenship.

The geographical making of the Caribbean, its constitution, and shifting paradigms is examined in exemplary works of African Caribbean writers. British, Canadian and U.S. based writers of Caribbean origin like James Berry (Jamaican/British), Fred D'Aguiar (Guyanese/British), Dionne Brand (Trinidadian/Canadian), Austin Clarke (Barbadian/Canadian), Paule Marshall (Barbadian/American), Jamaica Kincaid (Antigua /American) and others residing outside of the Caribbean but writing about the Caribbean, have enhanced the imaginative representation of the Caribbean. Works like Merle Hodge's *Crick-Crack Monkey* (1970), Paule Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow* (1982), Michelle Cliff's *Abeng* (1984), Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John* (1985), Erna Brodber's *Myal* (1988) are all brilliant contributions of women writers exploring the imaginative Caribbean consciousness in different ways. Benedict Anderson conflates communities with nations stating “an imagined political community” where “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (6). The ‘image of communion’ and the imagined homeland links diasporan Africans with continental Africans. Though geographically separated from their original homelands, Africans all over the globe were connected over many generations by their common history of colonial subjugation. Despite their dispersal (often traumatically), the African Diaspora is the quintessential imagined community, enabling wholeness of spirit and vision. Illuminating kinship, continuity, and communal relations between black diasporic peoples and their fellow members, the imagined homeland is a universal phenomenon functioning as a powerful mechanism binding common cultural and historical heritages across borders. Anderson believes that kinship exists among those people who perceive the imaginary community.

The production of African Caribbean literature reflects a sense of Caribbean kinship, shared creole identity and historical revision resonating with the aesthetic sensibilities and cultural articulations of people of African descent. Despite the lack of translations across the region's linguistic borders, the lines delineating

racial, social, and economic differences were largely explored. African-Caribbean literature as a whole not only revises colonial tropes but also recapitulates, revokes and challenges transcultural aesthetic which bridges the gap between languages, nationalities, and ethnicities. In much of their writing, the journey motif connects with issues such as history, identity, gender, and language. Considering the basic premise, the development of Caribbean literature may be seen as a journey in itself, with the journeys of border crossings being the vital one. As George Lamming said

If you are a person of the Caribbean who wants to get some idea of who you are, and what is the meaning of the Caribbean landscape, a search for that is going to take you outside of the region, since it also has this peculiar history that the ancestral roots of all Caribbean people are outside the actual geography of the Caribbean (unpublished George Lamming's transcript of video-taped television)

Caribbean literature is born due to the painful experiences of the people of the Caribbean, thereby making significant contributions to the histories, languages, and cultures. The issue of (im)migration, and its concerns with identity and nationhood, which exercises a vital role in the writings of these African Caribbean writers has grasped the attention of many. Caribbean feminists in particular, have taken the task to examine women's history out from the archives of oblivion. Positioning Caribbean women as active agents in history-making through their economic, cultural, and political contributions during slavery, the post-emancipation period and present-day living, Caribbean feminist scholars have given them recognition over the last decade. In fact, the need to provide more accurate, interesting and complex images of the Caribbean women has been a major preoccupation for Afro-Caribbean women writers such as Paule Marshall, Jamaica Kincaid, Michelle Cliff, Rosa Guy (U.S.A), Berly Gilroy, Joan Riley (Britain), M. Nourbese Philip, Dionne Brand, Olive Senior (Canada), who have tried to resurrect women from the constructs of the past and elevate their position.

Like other Third World immigrants, African Caribbean

immigrant writers, converge on the borders and internal spaces of competing cultures, as James Clifford terms "a culturally defined place where peoples with different culturally expressed identities meet and deal with each other" (24). The formation of an African Caribbean immigrant identity for these women writers is a vital issue filtered through a historical consciousness. The question of identity for these women involves a self-definition, exploring their mixed racial and cultural heritages and inheritances. While the evocation of Caribbean geography is strong for these writers, there is a re-mapping of that landscape in cultural terms emphasizing the historical links to Africa. By linking to historical places, these women have not only explored cultural connections to Africa as well as the Caribbean, but reconfigured transnational communities, giving shape and texture to women's subjectivity across borders through multiple journeys. Their discourses illustrate their journeys back into history to retrieve and reclaim those cultural elements which have sustained African peoples throughout the diaspora. In crossing borders and boundaries, they re-examined and re-located ancestral ties to their motherland, bonding with Africans scattered over the globe, thereby forming black communities. In many ways, it is through cultural geography that acts of transfer occur, where individuals and groups construct and perform their identities by recollecting a shared past of contested norms, and practices. Articulating from different geographies, and strategies of survival against patriarchal, neocolonial structures, these African Caribbean women have enacted through oral history and through literary genres such as poetry, short stories, novels, essays, as well as films, aspects of the history of the African diaspora.

By crossing geopolitical, cultural, and psychological borders of the Caribbean islands, these immigrant writers have retained the 'return' to and re-creation of their homeland by establishing a notable and distinct feature of Caribbean identity. This echoes largely in the works of Paule Marshall. She speaks of Barbados constantly because of the powerful reflections on home by her mother and the Caribbean women, who congregated in her kitchen. Marshall conveys through her writings the interconnectedness with both her "homes" (the

United States and the Caribbean), advocating on the preservation and celebration of the African past. She rewrites the boundaries of both lands on the basis of shared cultural, social, and economic relationships and common cultural roots in Africa. Michelle Cliff who grew up in Jamaica, later moved to the United States, and was educated in New York and London, uses transnational experience to survey postcolonial diasporas. Cliff examines U.S. history as inextricably entangled with that of Africa and the Caribbean exploring issues of immigration, gender, colonialism and of course Caribbean heritage. And for her, migration issues are central in defining identity. Landscape, family, historical events, places, relationships, all become features in her exploration of identity. But, for Jamaica Kincaid, who was born and raised in the Caribbean (Antigua), a different kind of engagement with the homeland and Caribbean cultural community exists. Her fiction traces the legacies of domination in both the United States and the Caribbean exploring the history of imperialism. Embracing both her heritages, she focuses on women's experiences and the conflicted mother-daughter relationships. From childhood to the coming of age in her novels, which may be explained partially by the trope of 'home,' she explores her home island, for, in addressing home, one is placing oneself in the position of child and navigating the Caribbean or African homeland. Both Jamaica Kincaid and Michelle Cliff were born in the Caribbean and then migrated to the United States. But Paule Marshall and Audre Lorde were born of Caribbean parents in New York and came to awareness of their identities within the Caribbean households which their parents created, through subsequent migrations and through their own political awareness of the meaning of personal geography and the politics of location.

Carole Boyce Davies in *Black Women, Writing, and Identity: Migrations of the Subject*, articulates identities and 'migratory subjectivities' that emerge from black diasporic women's experiences stating "it is the convergence of multiple places and cultures that re-negotiates the terms of Black women's experience that in turn negotiates and re-negotiates their identities" (3). Place, culture and landscape are often explored as important motifs in Caribbean

literature. The cultural boundary is the space that allows for re-collecting and re-formulating connections enabling displaced African people to establish differential identity, resist dominance, affirm group solidarity and re-locate 'home.' The promise of home, connections with homeland crosses fixed geographical and historical entities and includes the merging of "racial" and social boundaries. The global systems that crisscross geographical and cultural boundaries provide new connections, opportunities, and new possibilities. As Edward Said has suggested that as readers we may begin to cross boundaries:

...in defiance of classic canonic enclosures [as] ... changed models and types jostle the older ones. ... I suppose what I am getting at is how we might expand the horizons against which the questions of how and what to read and write are both posed and answered.... Instead of the partial analysis offered by the various schools of national or systematically theoretical approaches, I propose finally the contrapuntal lines of a global analysis, in which texts and worldly institutions are seen working together ... and in which the literature of one commonwealth is involved in the literature of others (15-16).

Though the involvement of one commonwealth into the literature of others is a promise, Said considers it as a delicate enterprise. The ambiguous relationships these writers have with various "home" spaces (their triangular relationship – the Caribbean, Africa, and their host land (U.S, Canada, or Britain)) is part of their psychic and cultural conditioning, but their evolving search for a spiritual and cultural home takes them back to the West Indies, and through the Middle Passage to Africa.

For instance, writer Paule Marshall like other immigrant writers crisscrosses the mainland and island spheres creating spaces and worlds between Africa and America, the First world and Third world, the past and the future. Her works are studies on the interface of cultural boundaries. Born and raised in Brooklyn, Paule Marshall, the daughter of Barbadian immigrants, largely addresses characters

who feel intimately linked to and move freely between two worlds. Her novels focus on the relationship between Africa and a larger America that embraces the Caribbean, the United States, and Brazil, characterized by a diversity of colours and cultures. Analysis of Marshall's entire oeuvre, illustrates that she was one of the first to select and reshape elements of both her "immigrant" and "American" histories in order to document, interpret, and inscribe for others like herself, and particularly for the increasing numbers of second-generation Caribbean American women in the United States. The landscapes in her novels are not merely background settings but mark an assertion on the local meanings of local space and place as seen in her second novel *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*. Marshall's *Chosen Place* involves wider global discourses of cultural production, and intense expressive forms of cultural affirmation transgressing boundaries and sustaining the African Caribbean diaspora. Located on a small fictitious island, the novel navigates within the operative global economies of development. The novel reflects on the history of colonialism and slavery in the West Indies, and makes vivid references to those transported Africans whose bodies lay on the floor of the Atlantic due to their failure in crossing. The outraged voices of nearly nine million souls of the Middle Passage echo all over the borders of the U.S and the Caribbean.

Hence, a preoccupation with history pervades Caribbean Literature as a whole. The thread of history is the connector and a site for the confluence of African cultures. Addressing the Caribbean writers, Roberto Márquez says "History, unreconciled and pressing, is their natural element; memory is their métier, the premium mobile of their reevaluative posture, the source of all prophecy" (295). Hence, the works of the African Caribbean writers feature women protagonists who remember history and past situated on the interface of cultural boundaries. In addition, the re-constituting of identity has provoked a re-assessment of a range of creative traditions, especially the folk indigenous. Though located outside the Caribbean, these writers and intellectuals traversed the boundaries, made re-connections with the dominant modes of representation, transmitted

and transformed them. Folklore was recognized as the contested site of memory leading to the propagation of culture, folk customs and traditions and as a 'source' of their being. The folk matrix constitutes a viable link to the African heritage establishing an African continuum that marks the African Caribbean communities' cultural identity.

Folkloric tricksters have been a widely recognized topic. Trickster characters by African American, African Caribbean writers and intellectuals are portrayed as symbols for the survival and transmission of native cultures. As Ilmonen says "these mythical figures [who] dwell at the borders ...are metaphors of cultural transformations, and mark the cross-roads of various epistemological boundaries" (85). Like Paule Marshall, Michelle Cliff rewrites the Caribbean past, culture and the history of colonization and resistance. These novelists have used the trickster figure as a bridge by mapping a space where different kinds of boundaries like racial, sexual, cultural and linguistic converge and collide together. They have employed the trickster figure in their texts to question and to challenge patriarchal traditions and norms. Paule Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow*, and Michelle Cliff's *Abeng* are the best examples creating new sites of resistance. According to William J. Hynes, tricksters are "notorious border breakers" and "fundamentally ambiguous" figures, in "continual transit though all realms marginal and luminal" (33-35). They question or criticize communal traditions, thereby enabling for the re-construction, re-collection and remembrance of those traditions. The most common trickster figure in the Caribbean is Anansi the spider. Cliff has used it to re-affirm the Jamaican culture, while in Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow*, the storyteller Lebert Joseph is an incarnation of "Legba- trickster, guardian of the crossroads where all ways meet." He "contains many linkages: Africa and the Diaspora; the carnate and the spirit worlds; the present generation, the ancestors, and the yet unborn" (Collier: 312). He propels the protagonist Avey Johnson to participate in the Nation Dance on the Carriacou Island. The ritual enables Avey to reconnect to African traditions including storytelling, folk customs, and beliefs. Reflecting on modes of African survivals passed through generations,



Marshall gives expression to the theme of cultural continuity. In Marshall's text, the trickster acts as the symbol for the transmission of an African legacy to subsequent generations, which is thus itself part of her own transmission of the same legacy. "Tricksters appear on the borders of conventional, convenient, oppressive, or accustomed structures. (Hynes 33-35). Michelle Cliff draws basically from the tradition of Anansi stories. Stories about a spider-god, Anansi or Ananse, as told in Ghana by the Ashanti people were not written down but recounted from generation to generation. The spider tales spread all around West Africa and were gradually retold by African descendants born abroad. Novels like Maxine Hong Kingston's *Tripmaster Monkey*, Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*, and Audre Lorde's *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*, have trickster characters that have rendered vitality, continuity, and survival of African cultures. These authors have used the trickster as a device in deconstructing the borders set forth by the dominant discourse.

Apart from gender issues, folklore and mute aspects of sexuality, the affirmation of homosexual identity and freedom in their discourses has crossed the borders to include the lesbian experience just as male writers represent the gay. The politics of language, diasporic identities, oral tradition of storytelling, coming to terms with history are critical key structures in post-colonial Caribbean discourse that has expanded the contours of Caribbean identities. Critical writing from the respective contexts is calling for attention as more and more are taking interest in embarking on research in African Caribbean Women's literatures which is emerging as a vibrant site for exploring new routes to roots. The paper is an attempt to sketch the Caribbean border crossings in the context of certain circumstances out of which the literature is born. From the beginning the Caribbean nation is laden with an intense history of exploitation and marginalization either through chattel slavery in the eighteenth century, labour force in the nineteenth century, and the recent visa-based control in the twenty-first century. Border crossings have widened the international reach by adding to the wealth of world literatures written in English. Awareness of broader border patterns is

a call to young scholars offering deeply engaged issues about the migrants' perceptions of 'home,' 'homeland,' or 'island' navigated by crossing the waters of the Caribbean. As borders are subject to continuous interrogations, their place in this global world has led to the evolution of new kinds of connections explored by scholars in various disciplines.

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## A Study of Dharkar's Verse as an example of Feminist Cartography

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### Abstract

Imtiaz Dharkar's trans-cultural locations that traverse Lahore, Glasgow and Britain are reflected in her verse which record a sense of place refracted through a nuanced sense of space. 'Place' in the analysis refers to specific material locations while 'space' connotes a more dynamic web of relations. Her cartography of spaces begins with the body in which the purdah both hides as well as accentuates a sense of physical shame in the body as it makes one carry, "between the thighs a sense of sin". The sense of past is not just personal but a poignant presence of memory and displacement evoking an imaginary space in racial memory where women were ciphers called on to be emblematic of purity and silence. There is no sense of a nurturing imaginary homeland, or a relationship with a space called 'home' but instead a deep sense of being a foreigner everywhere. Her early poetry in the collection *Purdah* record her ambivalences about her Muslim background through a distinctively postcolonial and gendered lens where home is a nuanced space embodying both escapism and refuge, ethnicity and cosmopolitanism. The colour of the skin "keeps sliding/off my face" depending on the perspective. Her later poetry in *Postcards from God* tests ethical issues of citizenship that encompass psychological, gendered, national and ethical planes and emanate from an angst against the world of borders, maps and nation states often coming from a searing social anger at the mindless violence of the Mumbai riots post the demolition of the Babri masjid. In these

poems Mumbai/Bombay with its shanties, its domestic women workers, its poverty and pretentiousness is a recurring presence. Her oeuvre is a testament to her concerns with a gendered Muslim identity in an international space anchored in the position of a voyeuristic feminist imagination.

**Keywords:** Postcolonial, Multicultural, Muslim, feminism, place, space, purdah, nation, state, violence, mapping.

Dharker's poetry poses a challenge to readers habituated to the historically familiar postcolonial co-ordinates of nation and gender. At the core of her work is the cartography of a space that constantly escapes borders opening up new narratives and ways of plotting identity. Her biographical trans-cultural locations that are an intrinsic part of her poetic world are located in a sense of movement; of traversing places. The main geographical co-ordinates in her poetry are Glasgow where she grew up, Lahore (her place of birth), Mumbai where she lived most of her adult life and then an increasingly globalised world through her relocation in Britain. These locations are refracted through an extremely individualised, feminist and nuanced sense of space. 'Place' in the analysis that follows will refer to specific material locations while 'space' connotes a more dynamic web of relations. My paper will attempt to plot her work from the emancipatory and transgressive spaces women inhabit by showing how Dharker occupies a perspective which both occupies the body of feminine experience while also discursively calibrating it.

i) The Body

“carefully carrying carefully what we do not own:  
Between the thighs, a sense of sin”

Dharker, *Purdah* 1,14

The most powerful and original aspect of Dharker's cartography of spaces begins with its location in the physical female body. To cloak this disturbing body Dharker depicts, in her earlier poetry, a socially sanctioned fear of the feminine through the Muslim injunction of 'purdah'; a practice that cloaks conflicting cultural, social

and political values. *Purdah* records her ambivalences about her Muslim background focusing on the power relationships that stigmatise the gendered Muslim body in Britain. These early poems opens up an area where Dharker plays on the female body emphasising that women do not painlessly slip into their accultured roles but that the internalisation of patriarchal and religious identities is always psychically stressful and the body keeps breaking out from the shackles of the disciplining purdah that it is supposed to be camouflaged within. In these early poems the female body is depicted as a site, a place, a virtual battleground which must constantly be policed

. 'Purdah II' is a backward glance at history that dramatises the religious patriarchal sanction for the domination of women showing how the concept of a Muslim female identity is used to subjugate womens bodies. 'Place and time coalesce in 'Purdah II' and 'Grace' to record a litany of losses paid by women to the currency of religion. "A coin of comfort in the mosque/ clatters down the years of loss.' (18) Here, the Muslim women in a foreign land are the reproducers of the marginal nation within another national space. Gender hierarchies are deeply anchored to patriarchal codes to sustain the community. These poems show how the Muslim women within Britain work under different sets of self referential genealogy which do not recognize the contemporary setting but transmit its cultural commands through a hegemonic imperative.

“They have all been sold and bought,  
the women that I knew,  
unwilling virgins that had been taught  
especially in this strangers land, to bind  
their brightness tightly round,  
whatever they might wear,  
in the purdah of the mind.” (18 *Purdah*)

These girls brought up in Britain are not, however, a homogenous category. The poem is a nuanced collective of female voices caught between different spaces – the ethics of a sexually permissive school environment and a strict and conservative home

environment, rendering them a stranger to both, with the additional burden of the consciousness of sin. These early poems are peopled with the testimonies of different voices: of Saleema with “the swan neck/ and tragic eyes” (20) who as a young girl, in a spirit of experimenting with the forbidden, has sex with a mad old artist only to marvel, “at her own strange wickedness” but is later punished by being forced into an arranged marriage and sent “back home/ as good girls do”. Ultimately at home nowhere after an inevitable divorce and remarriage, she becomes a chastised and vitiated personality, “her neck is bowed as if she wears a hood” (20). Naseem is the case study of another tragic figure of a girl who ran away and brought dishonour to her family. The names and individual narratives finally are irrelevant for:

“Whatever we did,  
the trail was the same:  
the tear-stained mother, the gossip aunts  
looking for shoots to smother  
inside all our cracks.” (20)

The space dialectic in these earlier poems refracts the notion of a qualitative space divorced from lived experience as women's lives are contextually meaningful. Dharker's critique of socialisation through religion is nuanced for even a denial of the Muslim community doesn't help as there is no escape from patriarchy.

“And there you are with your English boy  
Who was going to set you free,  
Trying to smile and he accepted,  
always on your knees.  
There you are, I can see you all now....  
in and out of purdah, tied or bound.  
Shaking your box to hear  
how freedom rattles...  
one coin, one sound.” (21)

Place and space are constantly played against each other in these early poems set in England. There are numerous references to mosques, maulvis and community prayers where the place - the mosque denies

women space as the female transgressors against the socially sanctioned codes are socially marooned and are relegated to a space that becomes a non-place. The poem “Grace” is a good example of this dialectic between place and space. It is structured on a series of exclusions that religion allows and Dharker contrasts the masjid as a physical place against the masjid as an ideological space for women. In the latter sense it does not exist a space of comfort or refuge but is more a space of female yearning, a sanctuary “where you are sure to find/ some kind of peace... “a space where fear is filtered out”(22). In the poem the woman is denied entrance into the masjid by the maulvi due to her monthly periods which have the subversive potential, in his eyes of being able to defile men- “She trails the month behind her/ we are defiled.” (22) a misogynist fear based on a denial of biology and the physicality of reproduction which “created man from clots of blood” (ibid). Ultimately the spatial dialectics of religion empties the sanctuary from its spatial meaning and makes it an arid place. From the perspective of the female gender the masjid becomes a contradiction of spatial dialectics based on the poetics of exclusion- of the denial of place due to the politics of gender.

Dharker's attitude to Purdah is equally ambivalent for it is a veil that both protects and calls attention to itself becoming, simultaneously, a protection and a stigma. The safety net that purdah affords generates a circumscribed space within the body.

“Purdah is a kind of safety  
the body finds a place to hide”

ii) The tropes of home, citizenship, belonging seen through a feminist lens.

“Your mind pulls into its station.  
Your past climbs in,  
Puts down its luggage  
And looks you in the eyes.” (PG 33)

The constant arcs of movement towards home and the idea of the homeland that her poetry documents, challenges the primacy of male residency. The safety net that purdah affords not a place as much

as a circumscribed space. Ethnic consciousness makes the concept of 'home' in a foreign country a strange occult zone which the above quoted poem, 'Going Home' brilliantly encapsulates. The 'new landscapes' glimpsed from the train need to be shut out; the tracks warn you not to stray into the fields glimpsed outside, "your mind pulls into its station" while in the platform behind you leave the women, squatting on, "patient haunches....raking the years for a hope of home" while the hills "beyond your tidy groove" are sketched "wanton to the sky".

The internal landscape in the poem is as alien as the concept of a westernised sexual freedom. There is a deep sense of sexual transgression in these early poems, a sense of doors closing both outside and in the head which make even the mind a strange space: "I have caged myself inside a stranger's head". (36)

Her poems written after *Purdah* published under the collection titled *Postcards from God*, are qualitatively different. There is a movement away from the individual body to a more general angst against the world of borders, maps and nation states. The narratives of the poems test ethical issues of citizenship and belonging on the psychological, sexual, national and ethical planes. If the central figure in the first collection *Purdah* is the pubescent Muslim girl, in her next three collections of poetry Dharker canvas has as its central figure a postcolonial migrant. The spatial trajectory of these poems expand to include recent colonial history with its concomitant issues of movement, citizenship and belonging.

The poem 'Minority' (*Postcards from God* 157) is a deliberation on alienation, on the feeling of being foreign in every place on the globe. It takes into its ambit the feelings of migration and immigration extending alienation to include whole communities and their food habits.

"I was born a foreigner.  
I carried on from there  
to become a foreigner everywhere" (157)

a common enough observation in a migrant century including the sense of alienation, of the 'foreign-ness' migrant communities experience. They are described as rhizomes of potatoes "six-foot tubers sprouting roots, their fingers and faces pushing up new shoots of maize and sugar-cane" alien crops in an alien land. The food metaphor in this poem becomes synonymous with foreign-ness, "food cooked in milk of coconut.... the unexpected aftertaste/ of cardamom or neem." (157)

Dharker expands this perception of alienation to include the grand narrative of history. In these poems she seems to argue that history itself is the greatest fictional narrative that needs to be erased and though its having occurred is indisputable, it is still inexcusable:

"And of course the whole  
of history is still there.  
Just the fact that it has  
already happened doesn't mean  
it has gone elsewhere.  
It is sitting hunched  
on people's backs, wedged in corners  
and in cracks,  
and has to be accounted for." ('Making Lists' 115)

In 'Passage' she describes a contrapuntal movement between being imprisoned and being set free by the forces of history for as she says:

"Your history is a trapdoor/ that you must struggle through" (63) but escape is as easy as a Keatsian flight of imagination- not through a nightingale but a parakeet whose flash of green is an instant passport, "to make the mind bleed/ into another country,/a past that you agreed/to leave behind." (64). The passport required is of memory and metaphors, rooted in a sense of racial past. Doorways become thresholds keeping boundaries of countries separate from one other:

"Wherever I have lived,  
walking out of the front door

every morning  
means crossing over  
to a foreign country”(SD 26)

This continuous play of identity becomes almost an addiction rather than a bane and there is a postmodern exhilaration in the continual chameleon adaptability...” high on the rush/of daily displacement.” (26)

Her tongue in cheek poem, “They'll say, ‘She must be from another country’ ” traverses a reversal of perception circumscribed by boundary consciousness. For those who live bound in a secure sense of nationality people who are migrants are without a country while for the migrants “from where we are/ It doesn't look like a country,/ It's more like the cracks/ That grow between borders/ Behind their backs.” (*Speak of the Devil* 39)

In her next collection, *The Terrorist at my Table*, Imtiaz's poetry changes inflection to speak from the behind another border, not just the feminine purdah but from the consciousness of a specifically Muslim identity which feels compromised in a world post 9/11 which is suspicious of Muslims. The sketches that accompany a trilogy of poems titled, “These are the Times we live in ”(45), use a mixture of newsprint and drawings (46,48). This series of 3 poems with the same title capture the helplessness of a Muslim whose name itself becomes an excuse for the world to tighten its guards and sharpen its antenna with no consciousness of its unfairness:

“You hand over your passport. He  
Looks at your face and starts  
Reading you backwards from the last page.”(*Speak of the Devil* 45)

The zeugma in line 2 ('starts') is neatly worked into the poem, the two meanings of 'starts' occupying an indeterminacy that is at the essence of the protagonist of the poem who has to decide a stance between taking offence and letting the passport officer carry on his work and choosing not to take umbrage.

In the third poem in the series, a new kind of spatial surveillance through technology leads to a deletion of suspicious identities using the image of an eraser “as big as a house” (49) which begins to delete, with the names of houses and streets even one's inner identities, “your stories and your histories,/ your lullabies. They rubbed/ out your truth, and they “left in your lies” (49).

In ‘Aixa at the window’ voyeurism becomes a trope in which centuries effortlessly collapse. The fortress window is, “more a slit of concentration” (*Terrorist at my Table* 72) but the vantage to this view where “Inside is Paradise” is from another time. “I am watching, from another century./ tenses changing on the opposite hill.” (72) and the “sounds float back...the singing from a future century” (ibid). Places like Granada, Alhambra, Andalus in this collection of poems seem to be using Islamic history but actually subvert the attempt of radical Islamic fundamentalists like Osama bin Laden who had used Andalus as a rallying cry to recover an Islamic medieval past. However in contrast to the temporality of this use of history by fanatics Dharker uses time with a dizzy spatial vitality - her metaphors playing havoc with temporality. Granada, Alhambra, Andalus become a palimpsest eliding one over another where, “the real journey slides in and out/ of imagined ones,/ the idea of a place,/ the waking dreams” making the point “to cherish the ephemeral” (79).

Self reflexivity, a major subterranean strand in Imtiaz's verse, is also linked to autobiography- to the peripatetic nature of her existence. In ‘Inspiration’ she takes issue with an interesting use of place in the context of a multicultural writer arguing that a poet like her does not need solitude and silence to write but instead spaces of transit that are borderlands.

“Give me railway stations...  
people with their surfaces pulled away  
...Movement gives me words...  
give me a tea stall on a busy street,  
halves of conversations,  
stories walking by....('Inspiration'106)



In these later poems the city of Mumbai/Bombay with its shanties, its women, its poverty and its pretentiousness is a ubiquitous presence. A poem titled with both its names of which she asks, "Which other city hands out/ two different calling cards" (137 TT). In a brilliant use of spatial imagery the poem 'Sari' fuses the cityscape with an individual description of a woman washing her clothes: "the street stretches its back. ... The city rolls its hip,/ picks up its plastic bucket,/ walks away." (*Terrorist at my Table* 109)

ii) Self reflexivity

Self reflexivity, always a major subterranean strand in Imtiaz's verse, is inked with an autobiographical consciousness of occupying a luminal place beyond borders, to the peripatetic nature of the migrant writers experience of spaces. In 'Inspiration' she takes issue with an interesting use of place in the context of a multicultural writer arguing that a poet like her does not need solitude and silence to write but instead spaces of transit that are borderlands.

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Nation and Narration is perhaps the best theoretical exposition of this ambivalent space that Dharker, along with other migrant writers, occupies. According to Bhabha:

"It is the international dimension both within the margins of the nation-space and in the boundaries in-between nations and peoples that the authorities of this book have sought to represent their essays. The representative emblem of this book might be the chiasmatic 'figure' of cultural difference whereby the anti-nationalist, ambivalent nation-space becomes the crossroads to a new transnational culture." (Bhabha 1990, 4)

Her feminist take on diaspora uses contexts of globalisation and postcolonialism but refracted through a uniquely individuated feminism. As an artist using the medium of words the physicality of the act of writing itself is a way of creating a place in the world. The passivity of the page of paper allows infiltration more easily than physical migration and writing becomes a subversion echoing the chiasmo of black and white ethnic tensions.

"And so I scratch, scratch  
through the night, at this  
growing scab of black on white" (157)

Imtiaz's oeuvre is a testament to her concerns with identity, especially female 'identity' but the context is relentlessly social. In 'Honour Killing' (I Speak for the Devil) the speaker slowly divests herself of her country, her veil, her feminine skills, her body – her skin, face, flesh, her womb- to somehow "squeeze past/ the easy cage of bone" so that she can be "making, crafting,/plotting/ at my new geography." (13) However, as another poem 'Here' shows, geography becomes an attribute of vantage whether its from the first world or the third world.

"Whether I stand on this side  
of the borderline, or that,,  
the colour keeps sliding  
off my face." (16)

From her first volume of verse, ‘Purdah’ her location in an expatriate Muslim immigrant space slowly moves to encompass several continents and cities in Asia and Europe. Her later poems make travel and movement also a space.

“But every plane or train I catch  
just brings me back  
into this waiting space.  
Glasgow, Baroda, Sialkot, Rome.  
The names are roads of possibilities  
that turn into lanes  
with the undertow of home.”(20)

The performative dance of identities to be donned becomes almost a part of her life to which

“I’m addicted now,  
High on the rush  
Of daily displacement,” (26)

In her imagination of her death, her dead body too should escape from religious or national closure. The poem, ‘Not a Muslim burial’ visualises a body reduced to ashes and scattered preferably in a place the body has never previously visited or even,

“Or better still  
leave them on a train,  
travelling  
between.”(37)

Dharker’s contextualisation of space deliberately call for a realignment and interplay of history and geography as distinct from the coordinates of traditional historic consciousness rooted in place and privilege. Her evocation of lands like Alhambra in her later verse is a deliberate attempt to move her verse to the geographical peripheries and at a cultural distance from the normative centers of society but spaces even in these poems are nested within each other. They are peopled by migrants who don’t fit into the approved affiliations of country and appropriate

behaviour (‘She must be from another country’) and become denizens of a trans-global fault line which is “like the cracks/ that grow between borders” (39) giving an opportunity through spatial dialectics to create a vantage for subversion and commentary.

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## **The Predicament of Expatriate women in India in the novels of Ruth Praver Jhabvala**

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Smita

### **Abstract**

Ruth PraverJhabvala's satirical novels, mostly set in India, reflect the flip-flop experiences of a multiple diaspora she had to pass through, while migrating from Germany to England to India to America. Being sensitive and creative, she could, authentically and artistically, delineate the feminine soul and psyche of expatriate European women in India, entangled in the web of cross-cultural interaction. In her novels, Ruth Jhabvala concentrates on the East-West malaise, love affairs between Indians and Europeans, European women's adventures and fight for survival, their aspirations and frustrations as well as their partly-successful-integration with an alien cultural domain. However, armed with an ironic vision, she seems to be projecting in her novels her pro-imperialistic image, thus incurring the title of an 'outsider'.

**Keywords:** Expatriate, Migration, Alienation, Disillusionment, Cultural-assimilation, Pseudo-Spiritualism, Oriental-sexuality, Disintegration.

The death of Ruth PraverJhabvala in New York recently has once again sparked my interest in her treasure of satirical novels set in India, centred on the petty snobberies, social mores, fake idealism, self-delusion, joint-family affairs of post-colonial patriarchal Indian society, to which she later added the befuddled or rather bitter experiences of 'seekers-westerners who migrated to India in search of spiritual enlightenment'. Besides this, the feminine sensibility comes out at its best in the novels of Ruth Jhabvala, gifted with a fertile imagination.

Ruth PraverJhabvala, a German-born British and American Booker Prize-winning novelist, short-story writer and two-time Academy Award-winning screen writer, was a 'rootless intellectual' as Salman Rushdie once described her and an 'initiated outsider' who tried to compensate for her rootlessness by absorbing the world of aliens as her own, and every time at this stage her "chameleon or cuckoo quality" came to her rescue- a strategy for survival in an alien environment while migrating from Germany to England to India to America. An acute sense of being an outsider or alien has been a poignantly sentimental experience in her personal life, and it has considerably shaped her creative works.

Eight out of her thirteen novels were set in India, expressing her own feelings, observation of cultural assimilation and socio-cultural predicament of women both Indians and the expatriate Europeans. Her creativity, as a feminine writer, is the result of her expatriate sensibility modified, enriched and also enraged by her Indian family life and twenty five years' stay in this country and then her flight to America for a greater exposure to her genius there. In her novels, she has, realistically and artistically, portrayed the predicament of feminine sensibilities of Indian, European and American women along with her (writer's) creative vision widening from time to time.

In the first phase of her literary career, being married to an Indian and having access to deep socio-cultural rhythms of Indian society and life, she, in the manner of Jane Austen, tries to write from an insider's perspective about joint-family life, individual aspirations and social immobility, the clashes between the old and the new and the dilemma of the women in the light of modernity. In the writings of this phase, she has sympathetically portrayed the picture of the middle class Indian women of traditional household caught in the fetters of chauvinist society.

In the second phase of her writing career which encompasses her three novels, *A Backward Place* (1965), *A New Dominion* (1972) and *Heat And Dust* (1975), her warm enthusiasm and fascination for

India fades away and now she focuses on the socio-cultural clashes the westerners face who live in or visit India for one purpose or the other. She consistently interrogates the way India and frequently India's more dubious guru figures act on western psyche, particularly women. The unanswered question she repeatedly raises in this phase of her writing is, whether or not, it is desirable for expatriate women, who come here to seek spiritual peace, to live in India. It was her European upbringing that helped her explore and articulate the feminine sensibility and psyche of expatriate women in India crossing over to an illusionary country, India. Her focus in the novels of this second phase is on the malaise of East-West encounter, partly the reflection of her own tensions she had: "My work is only one individual European's attempt to compound the puzzling process of living in India." (*Contemporary Novelist*, 270) In fact, it is in the field of interaction between two cultures that her personal experience of living in India has been transmuted in the art of fiction. She is mainly concerned with the problems of expatriate women, their alienation from and/or integration with an alien cultural domain. In this phase, a shift from rose-tinted image of India to a darker and more scaring vision of India is seen which may be the result of her own disenchantment and disillusionment she felt with India. Though, she writes:

I won't call it disillusionment. It was more the process of becoming myself again. Becoming European again. I still wrote about India, but now seen from a European point of view. I was no longer immersed in sensuous delights but had to struggle against all the things people do have to struggle against in India: the tide of poverty, disease and squalor rising all around, the heat.....the frayed nerves; the strange, alien often inexplicable, often maddening Indian character. (Jhabvala, Testament, 1)

Paul Sharrad has also observed this change in her attitude:

In the latter phase, the negative treatment of India is highlighted and this prejudices Jhabvala's readership in two ways: she is castigated for producing colonist patterns of presentation and also for touting a biased expatriate European view of a limited section of Indian society. (Sharrad, 37)

She describes the inexplicable nature of Indian spiritualism which is also the crux of her complaint about 'India':

Here perhaps less than anywhere else is it possible to believe that this world, this life, is all there for us, and the temptation to write it off substitute something more satisfying becomes overwhelming. This brings up the question whether religion is such a potent source in India because life is so terrible, or so it the other way round – is life so terrible because, with the eyes of the spirit turned elsewhere, there is no incentive to improve its quality. (Jhabvala, *Myself in India*, 14-15)

These candid confessions of Ruth Praver Jhabvala, in various interviews given and an essay 'Myself in India' written by her, answer the handling of expatriate women in search for love, beauty and spirituality in varying degrees and how their search backfires and destroys these women in India.

In the novel *A Backward Place*, enchanting India is pictured through the eyes of three expatriate women: Judy, Etta and Clarissa who have arrived in India on their quest for aesthetic or spiritual bliss in this country of ancient heritage vaguely reflecting the writer's own feminine affinity with the sensibilities and experiences of European women. David Rubin's rightly observes:

In this case the central figures are three European women who represent in varying degrees the East-West malaise and love affairs between Indian and Europeans; the romantic vaguely questing Westerners; the adventure and fight for survival of bored, superficial and Indophobic drifters, mirrored by their egomaniacal, mindless and predatory Indian counterparts. (Rubin, 674)

Etta is enchanted into a marriage with an Indian but soon gets disenchanted by the Indian notion of marriage where woman's soul is submissive to the dominating one of man. She breaks her marriage and indulges in sexual adventures. She condemns:

Marriages, my dear, are made to be broken, that is one of the rules of modern civilization. Just because we happen to

have landed ourselves in this primitive society, this is no reason we should submit to their primitive morality. (Jhabvala. *A Backward Place*, 5)

Disillusioned, she, though failingly, attempts suicide on being deserted by her lovers through whom she was desperate to be financed for her return to Europe and ultimately she turns eccentric. She arrogantly pronounces life in India awkward and abominable: 'It's no use sinking down to any one's level Judy, we must always try to raise them up to ours.' (*A Backward Place*, 8).

She condemns Indian heat and dust that have destroyed her physical charm- her only asset and thus, made her sick to the depth of her psyche. Etta could not understand Judy who has immersed herself into conservative social norms of her Indian husband, Bal. As India metamorphoses all the outsiders, Etta believes that Judy has reduced herself into a primitive and miserable creature by marrying an unemployed dreamy Indian. Shahane appreciates Judy's endeavour to become Indian without surrendering her own sense of Europeaness:

Although English by birth and alien by upbringing, she adapts herself admirably into Bal's joint family and the heterogeneous household. She has inherited the Englishman's gift for adaptability and she adapts her western mores to the requirements and claims of Indian culture. (Shahane, 78)

The novel highlights Judy's heroic audacity to live in poverty and adversity with patience without any idea of escapism. She's perhaps one of the few women characters in Jhabvala's fiction who strike a note of hope and affirmation in the face of unexpected change of life. Another expatriate woman is Clarrissa who comes to spiritual India for the enlightenment of her soul and to taste the idealism of Indian life. She expresses to Etta: "I've rejected all western values. I belong here now. I really think I must have been Indian in my previous birth- in all my previous births....." (*A Backward Place*, 192)

Clarrissa with all her idealism and an aesthetic taste turns, sadly, into a fragmented identity when she faces endemic corruption, squalor and haplessness of the people in post-colonial India. She feels sick and

eccentric and, when, unable to return to England, she seeks a home in India where she could find escape from strange looks of landlords and street children at her. In spite of this, overcoming all oddities, Clarrissa has acquired some toughness of character and strength.

Thus in this novel, these three western women present the enigma of the writer herself and the three acceptable or unacceptable solutions to the problems faced by the expatriate women in India: 'India logs all in its embrace and treats the lovers like Etta, ideal wives like Judy, and aesthetic seekers like Clarrissa alike as life-long prisoners here.' (Shepherd, 100)

In the next two novels, Ruth Jhabvala makes an acid attack on the hypocrisy and disgusting idealism or pseudo-spiritualism prevalent in Independent India. *A New Dominion* (1972) portrays the western women and their attempt to tackle with India where the traditional concept of spiritualism is fast diluted. The central theme of the novel is a clash between the forces of Hinduism, personified in a false Godman and an enigmatic holy woman, and the forces of Christianity and modern rationality represented by three western girls on a spiritual quest. It is a tale of three western women, Raymond, Lee and Margrat who, being tired of western materialism and boredom, come to India in a search of self-development and spiritual rejuvenation at a Swamiji's Ashram but ironically fall into the pit of self-delusion and unpleasant experience that put their personalities to unexpected and severe traumatic tests.

The attraction towards Indian philosophy and religion drives them into the mysteries of land, unknown to them. Margrat says - People just don't come anymore to India to do good, those days are over. What they come for now is- well. To do good to themselves, to learn to take from India. (Jhabvala. *A New Dominion*, 26)

They place their full faith in this Godman to get rid of the materialistic abyss of the western life and to achieve salvation and spiritual succour. They fall in the deceiving trap of a vindictive Swamiji who dupe innocent women and girls to satisfy his fleshy lust through his mechanism of Ashram. These girls are, voluntarily, in spell of



Swamiji, the spiritual Guide, as he creates an illusion of divinity by singing Rama-Gopala! Hare-Krishna! S. Krishna Swamy aptly says:

They placed their faith in the Swamiji, thinking he will bring succour to their tormented souls and transform them into new unified beings at peace with themselves and the world. Instead we have a sordid picture of selfish manipulation, social abuse, midnight orgies and callousness verging on cruelty. The Swamiji treats them as his possessions.....

They look at Swamiji as a symbol of India's spirituality and seek complete identification with him. Hari Prasanna observes: "They get confused between physical union and spiritual communion, therefore, they submit to the lust of Swamiji."

After sexual harassment by Swamiji, Lee escapes under the protective umbrella of rationalistic westerners like Raymond and Mrs. Charlotte but the spell of Swamiji was so strong that she returns to his Ashram to meet her puzzling plight. Even in her relationship with her lover Gopi, who is a representative of oriental sexuality, she gets nothing except physical exploitation. Gopi compels her to surrender to his sexuality, thinking: "Everyone knew that western girls were brought up on sex, lived on sex. She must have slept with many many men over and over again. This thought suddenly excited and infuriated him." (*A New Dominion*, 53-54) Margrat catches deadly diseases but, under the spell of Swamiji's mysterious wisdom and spirituality, refuses Raymond's advice and offer of hospitalization and treatment and dies a miserable death. Lourie Sucher rightly says:

That is the outcome of the Ashram story in the novel; the danger that Margrat, Lee and Evie flirt with is finally Death. It may appear to be spiritual commitment; it may appear to be sexual love; in either case, its point of utmost intensity, its logical extreme, is annihilation. (Sucher, 57)

The new guru-cult of Indian religious and spiritual guides in post-Independence era has been exposed by many Indo-Anglian and expatriate fiction writers as fraud, hypocritical and criminal but no writer has criticized it with such bitterness as Ruth Jhabvala brings to

her demarcation in *A New Dominion*. Jhabvala herself has gone through this disenchantment as confessed by her:

Whenever opportunity came to visit a Swami, I did so. I loved to think I was near someone holy, within the range of such wonderful vibrations. Of course here was the richest soil for disillusionment, and I reaped that harvest in plenty. I couldn't stand those Swamis anymore, far from embodying human perfectibility; they embodied its corruption, degradation, lies..... I hated them for being what they were and not what they pretended to be and what I wanted them to be. (Testament, 1)

Thus the novel, primarily, projects the basic irony that the search of these British girls for spiritual India drives them to a personal predicament of hellishness just opposite to their romantic expectations.

India is an incomprehensible subject for the Westerners. They confront India physically as well as, metaphysically. Physically, they come across various scenes of India like the homely affairs, dance of eunuchs, its backwardness, its heat and the dust. Metaphysically, they find in the Indian social life a sense of togetherness and emotional security, a kind of spiritual awakening. This social background and the writer's personal experience of the world are all what make Ruth Jhabvala, a European woman, the author of the novel "Heat and Dust", another novel of this phase of her writing career. It is a sordid tale of misadventures of two European especially expatriate women, Olivia and the Narrator who come to India with a gap of 50 years, one in the imperial and the other in Independent India, and suffer the tragic, obsessive anguish of a country that metamorphoses every being and everything as the narrator herself admits: "India always changes people and I have been no exception." (Jhabvala. *Heat and Dust*, 1) Lourie Sucher observes: "In *Heat and Dust* the story is told from a woman's perspective, with an emphasis on women's options, women's expectations and women solutions."

It delineates the traumatic consequences of the religious, salacious and the sentimental acceptance of India by western women.

Olivia and the Narrator both get spelled by Indian spirituality, sensuality and also sexuality in their respective times. The sensuality of India and the overpowering sexuality of the Nawab of Khatm besides Olivia's own loneliness, boredom and aspirations, attract her to overstep her limits towards Nawab. Driven by her individual desires, she even questions the authority of the British to anglicize the country. She takes the romantic view of the widow's self-sacrifice and argues on suttee issue. "It's part of their religion, isn't it? .....it is their culture and who are we to interface anyone's culture especially an ancient one like theirs." (*Heat and Dust*, 58) She could not understand that Nawab, perturbed by British restrictions on his power and income, was actually "establishing a relationship with her to satisfy himself in two ways finding an emotional solution and directing his vengeance against the British by seducing one of the white women." (Boxwallah, 288) She gets pregnant by Nawab, aborts her baby, flees to the Nawab's palace when ostracized by her even community and from there, cryptically, goes to the Himalayas to live out a solitary life there as her penance. The Nawab is a further enhancement in the series of obsessive demon-lovers of western women in Jhabvala's India of charismatic Swamiji of 'A New Dominion' whose spell of attraction leads Olivia from self-delusion to self-destruction.

The Narrator, an unnamed British woman, is the step-granddaughter of Olivia, who comes to India after 50 years to solve the enigma of Olivia's scandal. She is liberal, well-educated, sensible and refined. Indianization of a British woman, in place of Anglicization of India, is the new reality she accepts without lament. She surrenders herself to the normal process of acculturation. Accordingly, she wears Indian dresses, eats Indian foods and even tries to learn an Indian language. When she goes to sleep with her neighbours on the rooftop to beat Indian heat, she discovers:

The town has become a communal dormitory .....I have never known such a sense of communion. Lying like this under the open sky there is a feeling of being immersed in space .... How different from my often very lonely room in London with only my own walls to look at and my books to read. (*Heat and Dust*, 52)

She feels that simple form of Indian life can be a remedy to many of the western ills:

I tell him that many of us are tired of the materialism of the west, and even if we have no particular attraction towards the spiritual message of the East, we come here in the hope of finding a simpler and more natural way of life. (*Heat and Dust*, 95)

She, in spite of being advised and warned by a Christian missionary of the dangers and risks of the influence of India on European sensibility and temperament, encounters, wilfully, the same self-delusion in India. She surrenders herself to an ordinary worthless married clerk, in whose house, she is a co-tenant.

Her personal relationship with Inder Lal is not based on any sincere feeling or any long term resolution. However unlike Olivia, she decides to raise the baby by Inder and enigmatically proceeds to the mountains with the hope that future will protect such mixed products. Both Olivia's and the Narrator's escape remain mysterious and incomprehensible to the readers. Yasmine Goonaratne highlights the Narrator's self-imposed isolation:

Her impulse to increased self-isolation in order to find spiritual fulfilment combines with her tendency to idealise Olivia's vision to suggest a growing psychological imbalance.

Unlike other expatriate women characters of Jhabvala's earlier novels, these two disintegrated women, instead of flying back to Europe to survive or to succumb to the obsessive forces in India, mystically, take shelter in the mountains away from the heat, dust and squalor, an important part of the reality of India in the corpus of Jhabvala's novels.

Thus these novels depict the infatuating and illusionary love affairs between European women and India, the romantic quest of the vague and credulous self-seekers from the west, their misadventures, boredom and disintegration through so many female protagonists of western origin visiting India. Jhabvala, a sharp explorer of the deep

recesses of feminine soul and psyche, has, authentically and artistically, articulated the plight of the illusionary expatriate women facing a doom in Indian milieu in the above novels. However, these books appear more an assessment of a westerner, a prejudiced vision of Indian scene. When she depicts the spiritual seekers' frustration in India, she seems to condemn the absurd condition in India. In the above novels her mode of treatment is ironic, tinged with obvious contempt and derision, and she seems to be attitudinizing rather than being objective and dispassionate in the portrayal of expatriate women characters. We agree with I. H. Shihan that the cross-cultural interaction in these novels disintegrates, yielding place to dissonance and dichotomy in various shapes. However, the new world requires that this new cultural location be clarified from an unbiased position and break away from the Euro-centric, often pro-imperialistic, discourses. (Shihan, 120)

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## **Problem of Border and Identity in the fiction of Rohinton Mistry**

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### **Abstract**

Rohinton Mistry is one of the most prolific signatures of the Parsi consciousness in diasporic wave of English writing with Bapsi Sidhwa, Farrukh Dhondy, Firdaus Kanga, Boman Desai, Dina Mehta. As a Parsi his problem of haunting memories of historic past of crossing the border of native Persia (now Iran) is still can be perceived in his fiction, and his another displacement from India to Canada caused his sense of double displacement. This immigration to Canada gave fuel to his longing for his native sometimes India and other Persia is seemed dominant in his characters and their narrations, and this sense of loss makes his characters as a victim of identity crisis. Mistry himself tried his best to find some shelter from this pain through his stories.

**Keywords:** Rohinton Mistry, Parsi, India, Border, Double displacement, immigration, Identity crisis.

The loss of home leaves a hole that never fills.

-Rohinton Mistry

It was around 7-8<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. when the Muslim invaders forced Parsis to migrate with their religion from their homeland Persia(now Iran) just after the fall of Sassanian Empire around 650 A.D. It was the second historical case of mass border crossing after the Jews from Jerusalem. That forced migration for both communities caused a great sense of loss and this put them into a sever identity crisis

with an unending quest of belonging. Zoroastrians (Parsis) tried their best to find some safe shelter but every time they failed until in the 8<sup>th</sup> century after a long quest for shelter they came to India and landed in Diu, and were later given refuge in Sanjan(Gujrat) by the local Hindu king, Jadhav (jadi) Rana.

In both of the cases a common term is India; which provided them a safe shelter and a peaceful refuge to both of the communities Jews and Parsis without any prosecution or suppression. Later around 19<sup>th</sup> century both make Bombay as their prime shelter or second home; although Jews regained their paradise and roots in form of a Jews' Country Israel but Parsis still longing for their homeland, and this makes it very critical when they migrated to another land and they seems to be the victim of double displacement. This is not only the problem generated by crossing the border of Persia but in the present scenario the population of Parsis are diminishing rapidly, a study figured them around 140,000 in the whole world. The largest populations are in India and Iran, nearly 92,000 and 17,000 respectively, and almost 5,000 in North America. Consequently one of the oldest religion is now on the verge of extinction. Thus each of the Parsi writer has a great responsibility of preserving their culture and lives for the world, so as they all are doing.

Saros Cowasjee, Farrukh Dhondy, Firdaus Kanga, Bapsi Sidhwa, Boman Deasi and Rohinton Mistry all novelists of Parsi Heritage live abroad, but their work of writings are well described under expatriate Parsi writings. All are living as a member of minority group in western countries like America, Britain and Canada, with their sense of double displacement, they often address the problems of post-colonial era in their works. As Narendra Kumar noted:

[The Parsi Novel] is a potent index of the Zoroastrian ethos. It voices the ambivalence, the nostalgia and the dilemma of the endangered Parsee community. In Parsee novel in English, the operative sensibility is Zoroastrian [...] the tempo of Parsee life is fused into English expression just as the tempo of Jewish life has gone into the best work of Saul Bellow and Barnard Malamud (Kumar 11)

No doubt, the religion and nationality have an impact on one's personality and one's writings. But the aggregate of qualities and characteristics that distinguish one person from the other is one's individuality. They are also reflected in the works written by the individuals. As A. K. Singh observed about such writers:

Their works exhibit consciousness of their community in such a way that the community emerges as a protagonist from their works through on the surface these works deal with their human protagonists. (Singh 66)

Same idea of people make their own culture directly or indirectly is expressed by Edward Said:

Just as human beings make their own history, they also make their cultures and ethnic identities. No one can deny the persisting continuities of long traditions, sustained habitation, national language, and cultural geographies (Said 408).

Mistry is no exception to this stream of Parsi writers. Mistry despite being the diaspora finding his fictions in his native Bombay, his all stories are deeply rooted in the ethnic locale of the Parsi community, but it does not become a hurdle to locate his Indian-Parsi life in his native Bombay. Bombay has always been the epicenter and second home of Parsi culture, and Mistry took the inspiration from it and grounded his fiction with the sense of deep admiration for his community. It shows that whether he crossed the physical border of India but is unable to cross it emotionally. All his characters are struggling to answer some of his own questions regarding real identity and displacements, whether they are members of Parsi communities or young gays in the city by the sea. Mistry paints a vivid picture of the people he meets, but there is little time for him to form roots. Mistry engages with the dynamics of diasporic 'double duty'. By problematizing allegiances 'to some mythic [homeland] as a way of dealing with the contemporary crises', Mistry emphasizes the importance of cultivating an 'active and critical relationship with the cultural politics' of the past and present homelands.

No story of immigration or migration can be separated from the problem of borders and identity, being an Indian diaspora Mistry realized it perfectly, he himself migrated to Canada from India, this physical border crossing put him into another crisis of identity. He feels it is easy to change the borders but harder to console the displacement comes along with Mistry believed:

the fiction does not create facts, fiction can come from facts, it can grow out of facts by compounding, transposing, augmenting, diminishing, or altering them in anyway. (TFB 250)

Hence Mistry provides his readers the first-hand experience of immigration. He knows all the hidden aspects and horrors of crossing the physical border and try to settle in some alien land as he himself quoted: "The immigration story used to have two parts: dreams and reality" (FM 248). Moreover, Mistry realizes the power of narration and he used it aptly to narrate these dreams and realities in his fiction. He chooses the words over any other medium to express his own meditation and realizations, as he observes: "Words had power to sway, words had accomplished mighty things, they had won wars" (FM 249); and Mistry wants to win his war as well so he utilized his pen to colour his experience on the canvas of life, to make his readers aware about the truth of immigration and dreams of prosperity. He knows the hoax and this made him to say:

emigration is an enormous mistake. The biggest anyone can make in their life. The loss of home leaves a hole that never fills. (FM 254)

Mistry knows how it feels when someone has to leave his native, and nothing is more valuable than the homeland. This distance is something that cannot be attained if once it was happened; as a Parsi no one can realize it better and this made him to say: "How will I ever replace something so valuable if it breaks?" "Human being breaks, and you cannot replace them either... All you can do is enjoy the memories." (FM 186)



Rohinton Mistry tried his best not only to preserve these memories but also to make other enjoy by his narrations. He knows his role better for his on verge of extinction community that is why Mistry in one of his interviews said:

There are only 1,20,000 Parsees in the world. So it is not a threat or a delusion that they are on the verge of disappearance. What is 60,000 in a city [Bombay] of 12 million? And it is when anything disappears from this world, any a pity species, man, animal or insect. (Bhrucha 43)

Mistry shows his concerns about the position of Parsis in the context to their glorious past, their position in India and now in western context. In the present scenario, old cultural and traditional values have been decaying due to the excess of materialism and Parsis are no exception of it, they supposed to be most westernized community in India and this make them feel uncomfortable and closer to western people. Parsis have to go through this process that challenge their identity, but they find unable to cope up with the West impressions on their young minds, which are moving towards the modernization. Mistry's fiction suggested that most of the Parsi thinks that they have no future in India as Jamshed observes, "absolutely no future in this stupid place [...] bloody corruption everywhere. And you can't buy any of the things you want, don't even get to see a decent English movie. First chance I get, I'm going to abroad" (TFB 178), this is a kind of search of being at ease if they failed to migrate they want the same dream for their children, it was Kersi Boyce's father's dream to send him foreign somehow, Kersi memorizes, "and one day, you must go, too, to America. No future here [...] somehow we'll get the money to send you. I'll find a way" (TFB 112) this shows Parsis deep fascination to migrate some western countries to find some relevance to their ethnic identity.

'Squatter' 'Lend me Your Light' and 'Swimming Lessons' walk around the immigrant experiences of Indian Parsis in their dreamlands where they are recognized as an Asian in spite of their

Parsi identity and this make some awkwardness, make them feel stranger and more isolated in their dreamland. The characters of these stories feel alienated because of their voluntary exile that hurts more than historical forced exile:

A mode of experience in which a person experiences himself as an alien. He has become, one might say, estranged from himself. He does not experience himself as the centre of his world, as the creator of his own acts. . . . The alienated person is out of touch with himself as he is out of touch with any other person. He, like the others, experienced things as these are experienced; with the senses and with common sense, but at the same time without getting related to oneself and the world outside productively (From 111).

The protagonist Kersi immigrated to Canada which is considered as a famous center of Multiculturalism and land of honey and milk, but he has to face racial hatred. Although, Kersi moves to Canada voluntarily, yet he feels himself a stranger in that culture. He remembers even the minutest thing about his childhood and India. He symbolizes water as the symbol of life which provides life force to humanity as:

Water means regeneration only if it is pure and cleansing. Chaupatty was filthy, the pool was not. Failure to swim through filth must mean something other than failure of rebirth-failure of symbolic death? Does that equal success of symbolic life? Death of a symbolic failure? Death of a symbol? What is the equation? (TFB 240)

The feeling of hostility is realized by Kersi when he was taking the swimming lessons and his instructor put his life in danger:

he does not value the lives of non-white immigrants. I remembered the three teenagers. May be the swimming pool is the hangout of some racial group, bent on eliminating all non-white swimmers, to keep their waters pure and their white sisters unogled (239).

The problem of non-acceptance and racial abuse is the daily course for some immigrant, this discrimination of skin color is very dominant in some foreign countries. Same feeling of hatred and rascality observed by Sarosh, when he went to travel agent for his return ticket, he ask to Sarosh trouble at home he replied, “trouble in Toronto” (TFB 162) agent Mr. Rawaana felt sympathetic and advised him, “don’t give up, God is great, stay and try again. It’s bad for my profits but gives me a different, a spiritual kind of satisfaction when I succeed. And I succeed about half the time” (TFB 163) but even so many advices Sarosh is unable to forget “the presence of xenophobia and hostility” (TFB 156). This way Mistry narrated his own experience of being immigrant in foreign land. It is the xenophobia and hostility made Sarosh’s adjustment more difficult in an alien land. Being an immigrant at Toronto, Sarosh faced two questions “who am I?” and “where is here?” as Atwood remarks:

‘Who am I?’ is a question appropriate in countries where the environment, the ‘here’ is already well-defined, so well defined in fact that it may threaten to overwhelm the individual. In societies where everyone and everything has its place a person may have to struggle to separate himself from his social background, in order to keep from being just a function of the structure. ‘Where is here?’ is a different kind of question. It is what a man asks when he finds himself in unknown territory, and it implies several other questions where is this place in relation to other places? How do I find way around it? (Atwood 17).

After returning to his native land Sarosh finds himself “desperately searching for his old place in the pattern of life he had vacated ten years ago. . . .The old pattern was never found by Sarosh; he searched in vain. Patterns of life are selfish and unforgiving” (TFB167). Sarosh has no choice, he has to bear all the pains of his lost time as well as the past uncomfortable memories of immigration in Canada, that crossing border was no worth for him, as Nariman describes his Othello version:

When you shall these unlucky deeds relate, speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice: tell them that in Toronto once there lived a Parsi boy as best as he could. Set you down this; and say, besides, that for some it was good and for some it was bad, but for me life in the land of milk and honey was just a pain in the posterior. (TFB 168)

Kersi another immigrant of Mistry, also longing for his homeland and finds himself in the confusion and identity crisis in his dreamland. Kersi narrates his pain in some other words: I Tiresias, throbbing between two lives, humble by ambiguities and dichotomies confronting me... (TFB 192)

The situation of Kersi may be compared with Uma Parmeswaran’s mythical interpretation as she uses an apt metaphor for immigrants, Trishanku, a king that floats between heaven and earth, but is accepted by none. She makes a comment upon the position of immigrant:

In the immigrant context, one might say that minorities, especially, have to fight for both the erasure of a negative identity pre-given by the power group and the forging of a positive identity. In the process, they are often transformed into an uneasy hybrid condition of non-belonging in both homelands (Parmeswaran 35).

This feeling of displacement make their existence lonely and isolating, as observes by Nilufer Bharucha, “most Parsee are rather isolationist and living in ethnic ghettos like Firozsha Baag only exacerbates this tendency” (Bharucha 154). This sense of isolation and alienation caused the whole community a crisis of identity; they feel confused about their homeland. This put them into the crisis of feeling both ‘outsider’ and ‘insider’ which make chaos for their identity and they finds themselves hanging between two cultures and tendencies to change borders; Mistry’s fiction reflected all these dilemmas of being Parsi and being an immigrant, I would like to conclude it all with the feeling of Kersi which aptly reflects it:

“I Tiresias, blind and throbbing between two lives, the one in Bombay and the one...in Toronto” (TFB 180).

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### Abbreviations

- TFB *Tales from Firozsha Baag*
- FM *Family Matters*

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## **No Country of Citizens: Gated Communities, New Borders and Spaces of Surveillance**

Prantik Banerjee

### **Abstract**

The paper examines the emergence of gated communities that is rapidly changing the urban landscape of Indian cities. It provides a critique of the processes, visible and invisible, by which these postmodern techno spaces are mutating the borders of society and nation, and reconstructing the identity of individuals as citizens as well as resident members.

**Keywords:** Gated communities, nation-state, borders, surveillance, citizenry

Space in itself may be primordially given, but the organization and meaning of space is a product of social translation, transformation, and experience.

Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies* (1989)

Is your dream house located in 'Palm Meadows', 'Greenland', and 'Glen Valley'? Does it promise you independent power, water and waste disposal systems, security systems, maintenance systems, cutting-edge architecture, schools, shopping hub, hospitals, colleges, a man-made lake, wide roads and much else? Does it say that 'the grass is green only on this side'? Welcome to the changing world of suburbia in India. In most cities across the country, residency in gated communities is not only transforming urban landscapes but also redefining the notions of identity and community, state and citizenry, and borders and surveillance.

In this paper, I will attempt to look at the new phenomenon of

urban housing in gated communities and the emergence of community clusters that are master planned, architecturally sophisticated, vigilantly guarded (and blatantly overpriced). My paper will analyze the extraordinarily complex and dynamic socio-techno nature of gated communities to show how their spatial organization is changing our ways of habit and habitation, our modes of social and cultural interaction, and our roles as citizens of a nation-state. Using the conceptual framework of contemporary theorists of space, this critique of urbanization will specifically try to uncover and establish the hidden connections that socially produced spaces have with consumer capitalism, private ownership of property and corporate culture.

Let us first examine how gated communities of today are different from the townships and enclaves of yesterday. More than any other urban constellation, gated communities constitute its membership by a system of classification and segregation that is strictly based on class and income-levels. That is, it allows the formation of a community whose evolutionary principle rests on class distinction. Class segregation is integral to this model of habitat. It also creates niche spaces whose signifiers draw attention to an old binary, that of insider/outsider, known/unknown, familiar/strange. Whereas even elite neighbourhoods in the past would often have residents whose status and profile seldom matched with that of the majority constituency – class-one bureaucrats, judges, businessmen – gated communities cater to the interests of a group, homogeneous in class, income and lifestyle tastes. Membership is granted only to those who meet the criteria of inhabiting these special enclaves.

There is another additional rider in the fine print of the social contract that gated communities demand their clients to accept before inhabiting the space. This is an eligibility criterion of 'like-mindedness', a compatibility of ideas, tastes and manners. Members are allowed residency in the space only if they agree to follow and abide by a code of conventions that is albeit unwritten. Like the walls of gated communities that cannot be breached, the rules of the convention cannot be broken. And not unlike the punishment given to

a trespasser into the precincts, any act of transgression of the intellectual propriety of the community may invite punitive measures of varying degrees. This may range from loss of membership or social ostracism by the community. Fear of the social consequences of deviating from the norm becomes a subtle coercion for 'falling in line', for 'not overstepping the boundaries', for complying with a shared manifesto of ideas. Thus such a culture having a normative code of discipline and punish creates a landscape of fear.

Membership to these elite spaces, moreover, is determined by social sorting of people – the protocol for affiliation is an applicant's consumerist power along with a certain horizon of intellectual compatibility that is averse to the notion of 'otherness' ( a point that will be examined in more detail later in the essay). The space of gated communities is a privileged 'plot' that bestows a distinct and distinguished sense of ownership; it also establishes an 'affective system of affiliation, lineage and sociality' (Bauman, 2001). The homogenization of architecture, income, class-identity and lifestyle indexing the exclusivity of gated spaces constitutes what Lefebvre termed as the 'bureaucratic society of controlled consumption'. And the mediation of their social order is effected through a mode of surveillance and the privatization of governance that is typical of a gated community.

### **Gated Community as 'Privatopia'**

One may argue that gated communities are like privatopias. A privatopia is a public space where in a controlled environment regulated by a formidable security system, residents lead 'sanitized' lives. The campus is a space of habitation behind high-rise walls with gates, security booths, and CCTV. One cannot simply walk inside a gated community. The approaches to the community are carefully monitored and the elaborate security system is clearly meant to reinforce the difference between the insider and outsider. Besides its duplex and super duplex houses and bungalows, a privatopia also boasts of its own shopping malls, multiplex theatre, schools and hospital, even places of worship. Other features like private

transportation, electricity and water supply, sewage treatment, etc. simulate the workings of a parallel system of governance that does not require the intervention of the State. A gated community then is a self-contained complex where the unbundling of special packages of comfort, safety and security completely marginalizes the rest of the country living in chaotic and dysfunctional surroundings.

It may also be pointed out that while public gardens and community spaces that are supposed to be maintained by the State/metropolitan corporation fall into disuse, gated communities turn the private possession of property into an aesthetics of space. They are advertised and sold as niche enclaves having premium features like landscaped gardens, topiary and manicured hedges, walkways and lush green lawns, artificial lakes and skating rinks, and much more. What makes these green spaces more attractive for the prospective buyer is the added feature of security and safety that is to be found behind barricaded and patrolled gated communities. Access to the inner spaces of such communities is a multi-stage process where one has to prove one's identity, get photographed and documented. The protocols for entry and exit of people travelling to other countries are now being simulated at the thresholds of gated communities. Social profiling is an important marker for residents of gated communities establishing a class and consumerist identity through differentiation with others and identification with fellow residents.

Of course, the desirability of residing in a gated community depends on a prospective resident's fundamental assumption, and that is, the State's inability to provide the same level of comfort and security. When the State abdicates its responsibility to look after the welfare of its citizens, it provides numerous openings to corporate bodies to step into the breach and gratify the wishes of the privileged sections of society. Of course, the gratification carries a tag that only a few can afford. The up-scaling of gated spaces also involves the transfer, or more properly the takeover, by private/corporate ownership of certain civic functions that have traditionally been in the jurisdiction of the State. The administration of amenities like water,



road, sanitation as well as security by private agencies, is a manifestation of the radical ways in which the idea and practice of gated community are urbanizing our habits and habitation.

The privatization of public spaces has also brought about new ways of thinking about borders and transits. Whereas mobility of people across national and international borders are facilitated by passports, visas, immigration laws and security clearance, the gateway to gated communities is allowed on the basis of a new form of domicility. This domicility requires reinforced and impenetrable borders that demands residents to constantly produce and reproduce tangible proof of residency and membership.

Interestingly, the gateway to gated communities sets up borders of a different kind than that of the nation-state. Whereas the latter are characterized by being open, porous but immutable, gated borders are closed, shifting and mutable. Despite their surveillance by an elaborate security arrangement, borders of nation-states often witness incidents of cross-border infiltration; on the other hand, the borders of gated communities make illegal passages of 'outsider/foreigner' almost impossible. Truly, India's urban geography is undergoing a radical transformation and showing increasing signs of conflict and contestation among its diverse citizenry.

### **Splintering Urbanism**

Many of these gated communities carry the trademark of exclusivism even further. Their corporate managers pitch the saleability of space not just to an elite clientele but specifically to people belonging to the IT or business sector. Like the Statist identification of SEZs, India's public spaces are parcelled out to meet specific socio-economic requirements, whether be it of region or of people. The corporatization of public spaces has led to the phenomenon, what geographers Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin have termed 'splintering urbanism'. It refers to the ways in which infrastructure development built on advanced technologies segregate space and forces us to experience the city differently. While being cut off from the rest of the country by their surveilled borders, the

'fortressed' communities are nevertheless excellently connected to global networks and international constellations. Their high-flying residents zip in and out of the country with as much ease as they insulate themselves behind the high-rise and protected walls of gated communities. The private government of such spaces further removes them from civic participation in the macro life of the metropolis. This results in their enjoyment of an enhanced quality of life that is incredibly deluxe in contrast to a lifestyle of compromised quality experienced by the non-gated citizens amidst the chaotic, collapsing infrastructure of the rest of the city.

A selective restructuring of social habitation with its concomitant benefits accruing to a minority has led to the further polarization of society. Along with the rapid fragmentation of public spaces, we are witnessing a material and ideological spatialization associated with the power of capital and the social division of labour. The indissoluble links between architectural trends and expressions of corporate consumerism, formations of socio-techno collectivities, and the construction of an altered ontology of being are brought to the fore on a closer examination of our fast mutating public spaces.

### **A Cartography of Cartesian Loss**

A gated community fashions a spatial organization that creates a paradox. It re-constructs individual subjectivity on the signification of 'inclusion' and 'exclusion' in an oxymoronic way. The gated site includes a class of people whose exclusivity is determined by social markers like global mobility and consumerist capitalism. But it also brings in its wake a sort of detached and disinterested citizenry, a 'denotified' belonging of an exclusive commune to the larger community of the nation because of its increasing alienation from mainstream socio-cultural life. The ambiguity of this kind of social formation becomes apparent in other ways too. On the one hand, the attempted homogenization of social interaction that gated communities strive for, enables people of 'the same kind' to cohabit without the tension, disorder and conflict of heterogeneous social groups 'outside'. On the other hand, by promoting a certain kind of

club culture, the exclusivity of gated communities seeks to stand out not for a horizontal comradeship of national citizenry as envisaged by Benedict Anderson, but for a congregation of conformity established through an erasure of difference. Ironically, the construction of a 'gated subjectivity' then actually debunks the image of India as a liberal democracy – a space of diverse, contesting religions, class, castes and languages. In seeking to promote a living of cultural commonality among a community of people sharing similar tastes of golfing or swimming or karting, the gated community creates an island of consumer subjects that is afraid of plurality and difference.

Furthermore, I suggest that the legitimization of this kind of corporate consensual culture takes place only by limiting the individual subjectivity. Because of the interdictory nature of gated communities, one that allows access to few and prohibits others, the gated resident must at all times submit his own self to intense scrutiny and constant surveillance. This involves an abnegation of the self, an abrogation of the Cartesian 'I' to the dictates of the Panopticon eye not of the State but of the gated community.

Gated communities produce new forms of identity as subjects and as citizens. The individual subjectivity that evolves out of the homogenization process of gated cultures, is characterized by being rule-bound, institutional and official. Instead of a social field that allows for a free play of subjectivities that are intimate, emotional and randomized, the regulatory mechanism of gated community creates a bureaucratic self whose social interaction is limited to a ritual of organized behaviour. For example, even ordinary things like redoing the façade of one's home in that community may not be possible if it alters or violates residency rules. Golf may not be your handicap, but social clubbing and maintaining one's position in the community require one to spend weekends on the green. Whereas the same individual may happily get away by breaking a traffic rule or throwing litter outside the community, such an act may incur consequences detrimental to his interests.

So when open spaces are subjected to surveillance the chances

of radical behaviour are reduced. Gated communities may be said to produce what Julie Cohen says, "a subtle yet fundamental shift in the content of our character, a blunting and blurring of rough edges and sharp lines" (Cohen 2000). Spatial organization here brings forth an ontology of being whose determinants are new age consumerism and corporate culture. These determinants work their effect on the identity of gated community members by sponsoring an unquestionable autonomy of governance outside of State apparatuses and procedures. Paradoxically, this mode of governance, a part of public entrepreneurship that involves management of land, results in greater control and surveillance over the subjects who inhabit that space. Transport, sewage, road, buildings, education, entertainment – civic amenities that were the responsibility of the corporation or the state, are now privately managed and executed. The failure of the State in providing essential services and the privatization of the same services to niche communities is rapidly increasing urban India's class divide.

The imagined polarity between community as solidarity and society as fragmentation or distance is further complicated by the social organization of gated communities. The kind of social interaction that proliferates within the new spaces produces a different form of citizenry – that of 'self-less citizenry'. I use the word 'self-less' to define citizenry in a specific way; instead of denoting acts or practices in public that are motivated by free will and mature thinking, such type of citizenry is passive, controlled and acted upon by technology and capitalist drives. What is also missing along with a lack of human subjectivity is a sense of organic community, one that refines and redefines a community by a lived experience of shared space and place. Gated communities may be taken as attempts to reinscribe space as movement and fragmentation, thereby, clouding their future in uncertainties.

Moreover, it seems at first that the citizenry of gated community are solidarities formed in non-hierarchical ways not offered by nations in their roles as imagined communities. But on closer examination, one finds that the contemporary configurations of citizenry that have

originated in the postmodern spaces of gated communities are not free from their own set of inequities and conflicts. If the recent formations of new communities anchor identity through a discourse of homogeneity and uniformity, then the idea of the nation as a plural, heterogeneous and non-monolithic community goes contrary to its practice. Perhaps, given the cultural and socio-economic context, gated communities cannot sustain for a period as long as a nation represents for the majority a community identity constructed at collective level from a shared imagination of the past and a shared project for the future. However, what attracts the attention of a critical eye is the manner in which the narrative of culturally integrated community scripted by new zones of habitation problematizes the myth of the nation as well as the community as myth.

One may add that the sanitization of space and the collectivization of culture leads to a 'dehumanization' of individuals to a remarkable degree. Certain psychological studies have already revealed the debilitating manner in which surveilled spaces turn individuals into 'conformists'. One is led to conclude, that gated communities have led to the emergence of a new kind of subjectivity – a vulnerable subject in a 'defensible' space. Space is noted here as 'defensible' in the sense of being policed, watched and regulated at all times by the management of risk and the maximization of resident safety. It inducts a defense mechanism to protect and ward off threat from an 'outsider'.

### **Surveilled Subjectivity in Secure Spaces**

The highly engineered environment of gated communities has also radically altered the conventional ways of thinking about concepts of safety and security. One of the prime ways in which gated communities privilege their mode of habitation as niche and exclusive is the installation of an elaborate system of surveillance. Surveillance is the organization of space and the activities therein that constitute its habitation. It is characterized by the replication of all things that the State operates to ensure the maintenance of order, stability and discipline in society. There is this fundamental difference, however, and that is the substitution of several of the state functions by a private agency.

Guards, check posts, biometric identification, CCTVs, fire-safety drills, etc. are deployed as part of the security system to map out neighbourhood spaces and construct imaginary borders. The system insulates these zones and helps them to turn their backs on traditional street fronts and the wider urban fabric, carefully filtering those 'undesirable' users deemed not to warrant access for work, play, leisure, residence, or travel. The underlying logic of such type of security cultures and spaces, according to Torin Monahan (2010) "is that borders should be porous for capital and preferred travellers, but sealed for people who are perceived as threatening or in need". (8)

So what gated communities create is not simply bum-free spaces, keeping out beggars, vagrants, hawkers and trouble makers, but a secure residential zone operating on heightened privatized governance and control. It is as if the statutory demands that we as citizens make of the State and Corporation to protect our lives and property in the unregulated spaces of public domain are now available only in the rarefied realm of privatopias. The borders that define, limit and regulate social mobility from and within these special zones are characterized by three features:

- i) Construction of borders that are inviolable and impenetrable
- ii) Oxymoronic quality of inclusion and exclusion
- iii) Transit zones for global capitalism

These borders turn these places into what Graham and Marvin call 'global citadels' (2010). They separate and reorder the social spaces of cities into giant cellular clusters – packaged landscapes made up of customised and carefully protected corporate class, high-end habits of consumption, privileged modes of transit and exchange, and use of premium health care spaces. "Each tends to orient towards highway grids, global telecommunications connections, premium energy and water connections, whilst CCTV and security guard-protected 'public private spaces' mediate their relationships with their immediate environments" (32). Each becomes a techno-capitalist zone that solicits membership of a high-spending and upper-income clientele. The prototypical gated resident is a type of cosmopolitan

itinerant whose identity is established more by international baggage tags and global brands than by his national passport.

Furthermore, by eradicating differences and neutralizing diversity, gated enclaves lead to drastic changes in modes of habitation. While everyday life generally tends to be a mixture of play, randomness, accident that occurs in informal spaces outside our workplace, gated communities install a system of autonomy, surveillance and governance that is strict, automated and privatized. The surveillance of the borders and precincts of these formal spaces necessitate a degree of vigilance that monitors almost every aspect of the gated resident's lifestyle: dress, behaviour, habits, past time, occupation, entertainment, hobbies, even bodies (as being fit and gym-toned to match with the community's 'healthy lifestyle'). The marketing and saleability of these niche spaces involves a scaling up of luxury, health and cleanliness in order to beat competition among the promoters. These spaces, therefore, envision and create an aesthetics of landscape that is in sharp contrast to the filthy and polluted environment of most Indian cities and towns. Not surprisingly, gated communities set up a cordon sanitaire that immediately maps it separate from a city's public areas. Habitation itself becomes a brand like a commodity whose consumption is possible only by those who are affluent enough to buy it.

Here, the notion of nationality that binds people together by the physical boundaries of the nation-state and by the mythical tropes of flag and anthem is displaced by a new kind of citizenry. The neo-nationalists are those that voluntarily submit to become members of a supposedly closed system controlled by capital and consumption, systematization of thought and structuring of action. Citizens of gated communities are, of course, citizens of the same nation-state as are 'others'. But in addition to a shared sense of public and participatory nationalism with others, one that is displayed so openly in times of war, terrorism, cricket matches or even movie-watching, the former otherwise insulate themselves behind the closed and protected walls of a private community.

## Conclusion

Let me reiterate the two main contentions of my paper. First, the evolving urban spaces in our cities have a cultural logic that establishes a new instrumental cartography of power and control. The new zones of habitation, Foucault's 'carceral city' of cells, ranks, and enclosures, produce a regulatory mechanism of disciplinary technologies that controls individuals in urbanized spaces. They fragmentize society and construct communities with segregated patterns of social bonding and behaviour. Second, the new enclosures of space force us to rethink about received and essentialized ideas of nation, borders and citizenry: that borders and boundaries are not only markers of the bounded spaces of nations, cities and towns, but are also cultural and ideological. They create communities, both materially and imaginatively in a manner as to make possible different types of citizenry, one that problematizes ways of belonging simultaneously to a community, society and the nation.

Thus the paper concludes that the space of gated communities in Indian cities has become a site of social arbitration, espousing a citizenry with a private flag but of no country (and that flag may just well carry the United Colors of Benetton!) whose lifestyle preferences, cultural homogeneity and organizational autonomy challenge hortatory notions of the nation and its people.

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## Crossing Borders & Building Bridges with Business English

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### Abstract

The increasing number of speakers all over the world has given English the status of a global language. The paper looks at the reasons driving the demand for Business English, a type of English for Specific Purposes, in an increasingly globalised world and the features of Business English that have made it a lingua franca. The need for such a lingua franca in the context of international business is discussed and a few characteristics of Business English as a lingua franca are briefly described.

**Keywords:** Global language, BELF, Cross-cultural Communication, 'linguistic masala'.

### Introduction

In today's global world, it is an irrefutable fact that English has become the preferred language for communication, particularly in the competitive world of business where professionals have to be both competent and effective communicators. Professionals working in different business organisations, in the course of their work, have to establish contact with people they have never met before or know only slightly and the interaction is mostly limited to short meetings or short written exchanges. The use of English has become so widespread that it now belongs to all those who speak it. It is the language used for communication when people from different cultures and languages want to interact. This global usage of English has made interaction between different kinds of people possible, especially business professionals.



## Literature Review

In the recent years, researchers have been investigating the use of English by business professionals i.e. language when it is used by people for carrying out their job-related duties. The various studies have clearly established that English is preferred by them over their own native language and this widespread use by a cross-section of people has resulted in terming the Business English that they use as a lingua franca. The features of this register of English are the subject of research in many European countries.

In her research paper, 'Using English for International Business: A European case study' (2007), Pamela Rogerson-Revell presents the findings from her investigation on the use of English in European firms like Siemens.

Anne Kankaaranta's (2009), 'Business English Lingua Franca in Intercultural (business) Communication' discusses how people from different cultural and language backgrounds choose a third language that all of them are likely to have some competence in.

'English as a Lingua Franca: Studies and Findings' (2009) edited by Anna Mauranen and Elina Ranta, looks at the basic issues in ELF, the contexts of its use and its features in Interactive Discourse.

Business Communication: Mapping a road for the future' (2011) by Mirjaliisa Charles of Aalto University, explores the challenges that the rapidly developing business world presents to language and communication researchers and teachers.

Anne Kankaaranta and Leena Louhiala-Salminen's research paper (2013), 'What language does global business speak? - The concept and development of BELF' presents the findings of their two major research projects conducted at the Aalto University School of Business, Finland, over a period of nine years. Their research focussed on language use and practices in internationally operating organizations and the findings of their research led to the construction of the Business English as Lingua Franca concept.

'Business English as Lingua Franca (BELF)', (2013), a research paper by Yan Wu, examines the teaching as well as use of BELF in China.

'Business English as a lingua franca- A cross-cultural perspective of Teaching English for Business Purposes' (2014) by Natasa Gajst outlines how a majority of business communication in English is carried out by non-native speakers of English who come from different cultural backgrounds. The effect of the diverse cultures on the patterns of communication is also discussed.

## English as a lingua franca

An article in The Economist, 'A World Empire by Other Means: The Triumph of English', suggests that apart from the approximately 380 million people who speak English as their first language, there are at least a billion learning it and about a third of the world's population is in some sense exposed to it. By 2050, it is predicted that half the world will be more or less proficient in it. These figures are an indication of the dominant language English has come to be today because of the ever increasing number of speakers who are either learning it as a second language or as a foreign language. The language has made seamless the geographic boundaries that divide nations and has brought together people of diverse cultures and backgrounds. English it is, when there is a need to communicate across linguistic and cultural boundaries which may not coincide with the national boundaries.

At its simplest, English as lingua franca (ELF) is a way of referring to communication in English between speakers who have different first languages. ELF interaction can include native English speakers, but in most cases, it is a contact language between people who share neither a common native tongue nor a common national culture, and for whom English is an additional language. The 1953 definition given by the UNESCO for lingua franca is 'a language which is used habitually by people whose mother tongues are different in order to facilitate communication between them'.

As a result of its global usage, English is preferred as the contact language in different kinds of communication between people, especially business professionals. Extending the concept of ELF further, adding the letter, B, to form the term "BELF" -Business English as a lingua franca (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen 23), shows that English is playing a very significant role in international business.

### **English- a global language**

English is often described as a global language or an international language. What makes it global or international is not the number of its native speakers because based on the number of native speakers, it is Chinese with over a billion people speaking it or Spanish with nearly 414 million speakers that should be called as global languages. But then it is English which is referred to as a global language. What gives any language the status of a global language is, in the words of David Crystal, "... when it develops a special role in every country" (3). What is to be noted is that the emergence of English as a global language was not the result of any planned movement. Crystal adds that a language traditionally becomes an international language for one chief reason which is "the power of its people- especially their political and military power" (9). To this one may also add economic power. In the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, English spread across the globe due to British colonisation and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was the rise of USA as a strong political, economic and military power that ensured the continued use and subsequent dominance of English.

### **Business English**

With the number of English speakers increasing, there arose a need to look at the teaching/learning of the language from the point of view of its use as well as the user. This led to the development of a branch called English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in the 1970s, which catered to the language needs of the specific groups of learners, who were mostly working adults or students at the tertiary level of education. ESP courses are customised to fit the needs or

requirements of learners as per the field where they will be using their language skills. It encompasses diverse courses like Financial English, Legal English, English for Nurses, English for the Hotel Industry, English for Airport Ground Staff and English for Meetings.

Business English is one area of ESP that is very diverse in nature and is also greatly in demand. It shares a lot of common features with other ESP courses yet it is different because it aims to equip the learners with the language required to be used for carrying out his/her job related duties and at the same time provide the learners with knowledge of a specific field like Human Resources or Negotiations. Ellis and Johnson say, "Business English differs from other varieties of ESP in that it is often a mix of specific content (relating to a particular job area or industry) and general content (relating to general ability to communicate more effectively, especially in the business situations)" (3). In addition to this, there are many other definitions, each looking at the various characteristics or functions of Business English. The multi-disciplinary characteristics of Business English contribute to the diversity of its definitions. A very simple definition of Business English is English as used in the context of business, so it includes the register of business as well as the language skills required for conducting business successfully.

### **Crossing borders and building bridges**

Increases in global interactions over the past century have stimulated the demand for more streamlined and efficient communication across lingual borders. Emerging economies present new opportunities, and companies, especially the multinational corporations, often employ people from several countries. Very often, this is a deliberate move because many companies understand that they benefit from having multilingual employees on their teams. Language and culture skills that have always proved useful for customer service, business development, sales, and overall business growth, are becoming mandatory components of international business.

There are many companies that have factories in one country, warehouses in another, and back offices in still other countries. It is a well-known fact that a number of European and American manufacturing giants have their factories located in Asia and Africa. There are situations when the line manager or the factory floor manager and the floor workers are all native speakers of very different languages. So, when it is expected that all employees of a company will work together to achieve common corporate goals, language barriers could lead to hostilities within an organisation thus making the company less efficient.

Hence, in the business world, companies that seek to expand and set up operations in other countries have had to find ways to overcome language barriers in cost-effective ways. Many firms have made English their corporate language to ensure smooth communication “across lingua-cultural boundaries” (Seidlhofer 2001). An article in the Harvard Business Review, ‘Global Business Speaks English’, cites the examples of Swiss food giant Nestlé, which saw greater efficiency in purchasing and hiring operations after English was made the corporate language. Yet another example cited is of the Italian appliance maker, Merloni which in the 1990s, adopted English to further its international image, thereby gaining an edge when acquiring Russian and British companies. Another example is that of Germany’s Hoechst and France’s Rhône-Poulenc which merged in 1998 to create Aventis, the fifth largest pharmaceutical company in the world. The new firm, Aventis, chose English as its operating language over French or German because using English gave it the image of an international brand. Apart from these, there are many more examples both from India and across the world. ‘The English Empire’, an article in ‘The Economist’ lists some reasons why multinational companies want a lingua franca - adopting English makes it easier to recruit globally reputed people, reach global markets, assemble global production teams and integrate foreign acquisitions.

### **Business English as lingua franca**

It can be seen that the domain of business with its goal-oriented nature is largely responsible for the development of Business English as a lingua franca (BELF). Business English as a Lingua Franca or English as Lingua Franca for Business Purposes is widely used because of its wider application in international business communication among non-native speakers. As a lingua franca, Business English plays a very important role in easing communication and enabling smooth flow of information in an organisation.

Louhiala-Salminen while summing up the essence of BELF states that it refers to a “neutral” and “shared communication code” (cited in Gerritsen et al 181). BELF is neutral in the sense that none of the speakers can claim it as his/her mother tongue; it is shared in the sense that it is used for conducting business within the global business community whose members understand and are users of the same variety of language. Further, they are communicators in their own right, and cannot be referred to as ‘non-native speakers’ or ‘learners’.

### **The creation of a ‘linguistic masala’**

Another unique feature of BELF is that it can be described as a “linguistic masala”. Meierkord (as cited in Louhiala-Salminen) who has coined this term elaborates it and states that when participants across different linguistic and cultural backgrounds meet, the interactions that result “range somewhere between language stripped bare” and “linguistic masala”. That is to say that, on one hand, their language selections seem to reduce English to a neutral variety, not containing any culture-laden or culture-specific elements such as phrasal verbs or idioms while at the same time individual elements from various sources, like their own native language, combine in a masala-like fashion. So, the English that is spoken by these professionals is tinged with his/her own native language by way of accent, word stress, intonation, choice of words and even grammatical structures thereby adding to the already existing variety in English.

## Conclusion

When today's multicultural and multilingual workforce chooses to communicate in English, it does so because English is perceived as a neutral code- it belongs to all and no one person in particular. To the participants of the discourse, English has none of the markers that can give away their class or race background. Another reason is that in the interests of their own professional advancement, communicating in English is a pragmatic choice. So, it not only helps them to move up their career ladder but also at another level, it helps them to fit in with their co-workers and peers. Moreover, when these professionals use Business English as the lingua franca, there is no bench marking of their language with that of the native speaker because when English is used in the context of business what is seen as more important is that the speaker communicates effectively irrespective of what his/her native language is. The communication patterns of this workforce has added a new dimension to Business English transforming it from a variety used for specific purposes to a lingua franca.

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## **Shifting boundaries and violence in Bamiyan and Buddhist Afghanistan**

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines how border issues have changed the socio-cultural milieu of South Asian countries in the modern world. Cultures and religions which have coexisted since many centuries are now being disintegrated due to violence and political fanaticism. Buddhism which has been part of the collective consciousness of all the countries of Asia, seems to be now erased by forced political fanaticism. Khaled Hosseini in both his novels, *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* has traced this transformation and how it has made the socio cultural historical memory of many generations weaker.

**Keywords:** Bamiyan, Buddhism, Collective memories, Displacement, Migration, Borders.

Conflicts over borders and migration have characterised the relationships among the countries of South Asia, since quite a few centuries. The problems mainly stem from the introduction of the concept of a border by the British under the process of colonisation. The construction of borders was important not only in visualizing an exclusive control of the ruler over particular geographical region, but also in dividing people into “locals” and “migrants”. Migration and border disputes have now become a political discourse, where the people who live with border realities, whether physical or cultural are caught up in complex power play and violence in everyday life. Economic integration under the banner of globalization has seen the subcontinent caught up in contradictions of religious commonalities

and political factionalism. One could easily trace political violence from Afghanistan to Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, to name a few prominent ones. Cultures and religions have travelled across these countries. Though it is amazing to see how religion and spiritualism coexists together with violence and fanaticism, in these very countries.

Seventy percent of Sri Lankans still believe in Buddhism, though they claim to be Aryan in origin, because of migration from eastern India around 4-5<sup>th</sup> century. Buddhism travelled to the country during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE. Ancient history reflects that Afghanistan also had been open to Buddhist influences. For more than three centuries it was part of Gandhara Empire. (Bamiyan#History). Bamiyan shared the culture of the Gandharas. Harold Frank summarises:

The rise of Bamiyan is part of a bigger story, the Buddhist conquest of Central Asia, and that in turn was linked to the political and economic currents of that time. Buddhist monks here, to build a large monastic center watched over by those colossal statues of the Buddha staring out from the cliffs. But Bamiyan was never out of this world. A major trade route passed through the valley, linking Central Asia with India and bringing both wealth and turmoil. The forts and guard-towers at every strategic spot are there for a reason; and those ruins up on the plateau are the legacy of the Mongol's fury. The mutilated Buddha statues lost their faces to the zealotry of Aurangzeb's soldiers in the 18th century, and were eventually blown up by Taliban zealots in March 2001 (Harold Frank Web).

For many years Buddhist statues and sculptures were built, which remained intact for historical and cultural reasons. Even though religious affiliations of the people changed, they provided cultural heritage and places of solace for many generations, who grew around them. Parallels can be seen recent history like in 1992 Babri Masjid was demolished in Ayodhya, while in March 2001 the Bamiyan statues were dynamited. The Taliban even announced the destruction of statues of Buddha in museums, attempting to change history and



undermine human memory and collective consciousness of many generations. It is often concluded that terror creates fear and leads either to submission or resistance. Though terror never seems to replace the collective memory or values, which have been passed down. Mariana Babber quotes Farook Saleem a political commentator, in Outlook, "As our national defense strategy seems to have collapsed, our own proxies, the Taliban and the Jihadis are now waging a war on Pakistan itself." (Outlook 2008)

Time and again it has been proved right that both in Pakistan and Afghanistan, support to the militants and their fear continue to coexist between strategies of power and terror. Afghanistan passed through a coup against King Zahir in 1973, which was a takeover by his cousin Prince Daoud. His rule as President lasted for just five years, when he was assassinated by the army in 1978. The country faced the invasion by Russians, take over by Mujahideens and then by Taliban and then came the intervention by America after 9/11. "There is little to differentiate between many militant groups or even between the intentions of the two outside powers-Russia and America-except for ideology."(Nojumi 213) This paper concerns itself with the violence and challenges faced by nation states and sustenance of human value structure, in the fiction of Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Both these novels explore human relationships in times of conflict, while their homelands face civil strife and are ridden with terror. The citizens themselves have to elope from their homes becoming refugees in their homelands, are forced to cross borders.

Both the narratives reflect deep compassion, in the backdrop of violent break with past. In both the novels Bamiyan features indicate relationship with the past and peaceful memories. The past memories and relationships mould the narrative, in the background of the turmoil being faced by their countries. Hosseini's debut novel *The Kite Runner* portrays longing for Homeland and crossing of borders in many different ways, like the physical borders of national boundaries and those of culture and relationships. The novel, still on the bestseller charts, has brought a new perception of Afghanistan, its culture,

political fanaticism and border issues to the world. Hosseini's first novel soon became an international best seller, and was published in 40 countries. Hosseini a Kabul born author, an Afghani, is the son of a diplomat whose family received political asylum in the US in the 1980's. Educated in France and California, he now lives in California, where he is a Physician. Even after a gap of twenty years, his roots compelled him to write the story of Hassan and Amir, portraying his nostalgia and longing for the homeland.

In an interview, when asked about the specific aspect of the Afghan Diaspora, the character Amir represents, Hosseini replied, "Nostalgia and longing for the homeland. The preservation of culture and language: Amir marries an Afghan woman and stays an active member of the Afghan community in the East Bay; the hard-working immigrant value system; and some sense of survivor's guilt, which I think many of us, particularly in sunny California, have felt at one time or another." (Lemar-Aftaab)

The novel revolves around the theme of betrayal and redemption. The narrator, a writer returns to his homeland to rescue the son of his childhood friend Hassan, a Hazra boy. Though the novel does not narrate the history of Afghanistan, its historical perspective is very strong. The Kite Runner is a bildungsroman, which follows the life of the narrator Amir, who is a son of well to do Kabul merchant, settled in the US. A call from Rahim Khan changes the course of his life, wanting to redeem his past sins, he agrees to go back to look for Hassan's son Sohrab. The book is divided into three parts. The story evolves on two planes, one painful but the other is the cherished childhood memories of Amir, in the backdrop of Afghanistan, now in the process of upheaval (Mishra, 154).

Displacement is a major issue the protagonist Amir faces in *The Kite Runner*. He is caught in circumstances, like a refugee with no idea of future. The journey itself is a trial, which on one hand holds a personal mandate and on the other reflects the destiny of many others like Amir. Amir and his father decide to elope from their own home due to adverse circumstances their country faces. "You couldn't trust

anyone in Kabul anymore—for a fee or under threat, people told on each other, neighbor on neighbor, child on parent, brother on brother, servant on master, friend on friend.” (98) The whole of Kabul was divided into two groups, “those who eavesdropped and those who didn't.” Amir is caught between the temporariness of the present and the bleakness of the future. The fear of Russian soldiers, fear of being jailed makes the whole journey arduous and fear ridden. Hosseini beautifully waves the main strand of the narrative around war and dislocation, though the novel is a personal reminiscence of discrimination, jealousy, guilt and forgiveness.

Hosseini's second novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) is located in the urban location of Kabul of the 1960's, which saw a transition from the phase of civil conflict and change of invaders more graphically. The story revolves around Mariam, an illegitimate child of Jalil a well to do businessman in Kabul. Mariam is forced to marry Rasheed, a widowed shoemaker in Kabul. Both remain childless after two miscarriages and Rasheed mistreats Mariam physically. In a parallel narrative Laila, a young intelligent girl who lives with her brothers and parents, near Mariam's house is orphaned, when a rocket hits their house, in the Afghani war against the Soviets. Laila has a teenaged friend Tariq, whose family was also trying to flee to Pakistan to escape the war. Laila is seriously wounded and Mariam and Rasheed nurse her back to health. Laila soon realizes that she is pregnant with Tariq's baby is eventually forced to marry Rasheed to avoid being shamed. She is in love with Tariq, but is made to believe that Tariq had died in the bombing. Initially Mariam, the first wife is hurt by this decision of her husband, but when Laila gives birth to Aziza, she begins to care for Laila against the abusive ways of Rasheed. After a few years Laila also has a son Zalmai, from her relationship with Rasheed. Years later Laila discovers that Tariq was alive and Rasheed had blatantly lied to her. She meets Tariq and plans a different life for her and her children. The violent rule of Taliban, atrocities of Rasheed and her love for Laila and her children, makes Mariam plan and kill Rasheed and then eventually turns herself in to Taliban to save Laila and her children Tariq and Laila shift to Pakistan

with the children but when they hear of US invasion in Afghanistan, their life is again overshadowed with war. When conditions improve, they shift to Kabul and build new life for their family and also contribute to the development of their homeland.

Transition and dislocation both are major issues in both the novels and *Bamiyan* features in both. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Laila, her father Babi and her childhood friend Tariq, make a trip to Bamiyan, where: ‘The two Buddhas were enormous soaring much higher than she had imagined from all the photos she had seen of them. Chiseled into a sun-bleached rock cliff, they peered down at them, as they had nearly two thousand years before.’ Laila feels she could live to be hundred but never see something so magnificent. Laila's father explains, ‘that Bamiyan had once been a thriving Buddhist centre until it had fallen under Islamic Arab rule in the ninth century. The sandstone cliffs were home to Buddhist monks who carved caves in them to use as living quarters and as sanctuary for weary travelling pilgrims...At a point there were five thousand monks living as hermits in these caves’ (132-33). Her father wanted the children to feel the rich heritage and learn firsthand about it.

Laila ponders upon how religious fanaticism and violent politics make the Taliban set out to destroy this heritage. The museums with pre-Islamic statues, paintings and frescos were broken and burnt. The universities closed and books torn. (250-251) Acts of violence, which have tried to destroy collective memory, have also affected the layered identities of settlers. The relationship with the past has many social and cultural connotations, which are direly needed to repair relationships in periods of strife. Later in the novel when Laila's father is killed, Mariam takes upon herself the responsibility of Laila, as her husband's second wife. In the background of political change and atrocities, people continue to wait for change. Hosseini in both the novels describes Bamiyan heritage as a very important backdrop to the narrative. People hope the Mujahideens will free them from communists while the Talibs of the corrupt Mujahideens and the Americans of Talibs. The idea of homeland is destroyed due to violence insecurity and hatred, which has mainly been generated by

people with vested interests. The borders of the imagined homeland are destroyed with changed and continued insurgency. The response of people who hope for the tide to change is expressed in both the novels.

In *The Kite Runner*, the present plot revolves with its relationship with the past. Bamiyan is present and is located in the margins. Just before Amir and his father elope from Kabul to America, Hassan and his father Ali, who are Hazaras, go back to Hazarajat, a village close to Bamiyan. Hazaras were the discriminated community, regarded as low class. Though the novel does not narrate the history of Afghanistan, its historical perspective is very strong. The Hazaras were originally Sunnis, who were forced to convert to Shia faith. Sadat traces the historical background in a very clear cut manner:

Before the 16th century, the Safavids ruled in western Afghanistan, the Hazara ethnic group was Sunni but as a matter of pressure and time they converted to the Shia faith. The Hazaras are speculated to have descended from the contingents ('hazar' meaning thousand or regiment) left behind by the Mongolian quests into Afghanistan... Practically all-immediate descendants of Ahmad Shah Durrani left the Hazaras in relative peace with the exception of Shah Kamran's 1847 attack on Hazarajat. Then, in the mid-1800s a distant cousin of Barakzai clan took power under Amir Dost Mohammad, born to a Qizilbash wife of Sardar Payanda, was not sympathetic to the Shias and exploited Sunni-Shia differences. Amir Dost Mohammad aligned the Sunnis and Qizilbash to the detriment of the Hazaras. This alliance served for his conquest of the Hazarajat after which Amir Dost Mohammad declared himself 'Amir-al-Mumineen' (Leader of the Faithful) attempting to compare himself to the Prophet's cousin, Caliph Ali. In recent times, the Taliban referred to their leader, Mullah Omar, similarly evoking memories of Amir Dost Mohammad's conquest. (Sadat Web)

In 1891 Amir Dost Mohammad's grandson, Amir Abdur Rahman continued the policy of offering Sunnis and tribesmen the title of 'ghazi' (infidel killer) for his conquest of Hazarajat. The result was the destruction of the Hazara tribal system, annexation of Hazara personal property and land, and the enslavement Hazaras to be sold in the Kabul bazaar. What ensued was the massive migration of Hazaras to Quetta and Mashad, currently in Pakistan and Iran, respectively. The ethnic stratification has been very delicately dealt by Hosseini. Though as a diasporic Afghan writer, he does write with a view to educate the reader. Different kinds of borders are crossed in both the novels, one the physical border of national boundaries, which protagonist and his family are forced to cross due to political violence and strife. Others are the forcefully changed borders of culture, of discrimination and of relationships.

Violence in any form affects both the sufferer and the doer and eventually it also changes both. Even though Assef is brutalized, Amir recovers a lost heritage and builds bridges for a new relationship in *The Kite Runner*, borders which have been crossed leave many scars behind. Miriam's ghastly murder of Rasheed, brings a positive change in Laila's life in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Both novels poignantly show how the common person is affected with political happenings and how it changes their course of life. Human faith makes bridges through faith, even though violence appears systematic. Political borders are important markers, but communities/groups which have suffered violence, terror and dislocation, break political borders in search of peace meeting challenges and crossing borders.

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**“Crossing Borders of Nations and Culture”:  
In focus Chitra Divakaruni’s Fictional World.**

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**Abstract**

Diaspora, Immigration and Crossing borders are all interlinked and span different periods of time. Many South Asian Women writers, who have crossed borders and felt the clash between tradition and modernity have poignantly raised these issues. Chitra Divakaruni also is one such writer who looks at this clash in her fictional world. This paper attempts to analyze three stories from Divakaruni's collection Arranged Marriage, and evaluate the deepest fears and trauma women face, when they have a cultural encounter due to their immigrant experience. The attitude and approach to life changes and the traditional values have adjust to the modern ones.

**Keywords:** Diaspora, Tranculturality, Indian identity, Globalization, New World.

The new generation of South Asian women writers is contributing in changing the landscape of contemporary literature, which reflects how globalization has helped cross national and cultural borders by those who were regarded as subalterns. These writers are taking up issues which have changed lives due to migration and then the eventual adaptation of the culture of the 'other'. The boom in diasporic women writers who have crossed the borders for varied reasons, but are showcasing their experiences through their writings are breaking many boundaries of middle class family experiences. The novelty of Indian culture and their Indian identity in the context of multiculturalism has helped them re-define their perception of the new world.

The Women writers, who deconstruct the predefined Western

notions of crossing borders, have their fictional world revolve around themes like alienation, loneliness, rootlessness, nostalgia, quest for identity etc. Their fiction portrays their experiences, their maladies in different hues. Some of these powerful immigrant women writers from the Third World are Bharti Mukherjee, Meena Alexander, Anita Desai, Bharti Kirchner, Anita Rau Badami, Chitra Divakaruni, Meera Sayal, to name only a few, who have carved a niche for themselves in the field of fiction. Their words are full of diasporic consciousness portraying social realities longing and feelings in addition to the creative talent of the writers. Robert Cohen rightly points out: “From 1960s and 1970s the classical meaning of Diaspora was description of dispersion of African, Armenians and Irish. 1980s onwards the term diaspora was deployed as expatriates, expels, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants and racial minorities. From mid 1990s diaspora stands for people who live outside their national territories.” (1977: 9)

Due to the professional interest of both the genders migration to the West has increased in the last few decades of the twentieth century. Indian origin population of middle and upper class have formed marital bonds across the borders, which has led them become citizens of the adopted countries. Chitra Divakaruni is one such novelist who has emerged as a path breaking novelist among the South Asian women writers. She was born in 1957 in Calcutta, now lives in Houston. Divakaruni's first collection of stories *Arranged Marriages*, (1995) won an American Book Award, a PEN Josephine Miles Award and a Bay Area Book Reviewers Award. Her major novels include *The Mistress of Spices* (1998) *Sister of my Heart* (1999), *The Unknown Errors of our Lives* (2001), *The Vine of Desire* (2002), *Queen of Dreams* (2004), *The Lives of Strangers* (2005), *The Palace of Illusions* (2008), *One Amazing Thing* (2010) and *Oleander Girl* (2013). Though greater parts of her novels are meant of adults, she has received worldwide recognition.

Her works reflects the hybridization, it also has the creeping of Americanization and no distinct cultural indications are seen. Mulchandani points out that. “In the works of Divakaruni, one can paint a rough picture of the South Asian diasporic experience in the

United States. This experience is common to all diasporic communities, is created by the constant oscillation between contradictory conceptions of race and culture, time and geography.” (2014:3) Her characters undergo transformation but only at a given time. She wants to forget her past and questions its being in the present context. Divakaruni's focus is on immigrant women and their freedom from relationship to become individuals. Her writings echo her statement about America being a place where one can choose to discard past history and invent a new history. Her stories are tinged with loneliness, unsuccessful relationships, which forms a part of immigrant women's life. The oscillation between contradictory conceptions of race, culture, time and geography is seen in the characters, which have a very personalized hue. The women in her texts are caught between traditional customs of South Asia from which they have emigrated and their present experiences with the more westernized culture of America. The characters develop multiple consciousnesses resulting in a self that is neither unified nor hybrid, but fragmented. Sandra Ponzanesi in her essay “In My Mother's House” states, “As far as the condition of migration and Diaspora is concerned, women are often called to preserve their nation through the restoration of traditional home in the new country. The idea of home entails preservation of traditions, heritage and continuity...” (2000, 245)

This paper attempts to study portrayal of transculturality in Chitra Divakaruni's selected stories from *Arranged Marriages* with special reference to the short stories “The Clothes”, “Meeting Mrinal” and “Affairs”. Diaspora identity is complex, as it is trapped in two ideologies. These stories portray various facets of how characters face the dilemma of breaking away from their traditional mindset and in the process cross the borders of their own cultures to adapt to the new one. Divakaruni feels that she writes to help unite people by breaking old stereotypes which have lost their meaning in the globalised world.

*Arranged Marriages* is a collection of short stories, which reflects the dilemma of the diasporic South Asian Women. The title of the collection *Arranged Marriages* suggests its focus on marital



relationships. It is a common practice amongst the South Asians that the marriages of their children are arranged by the parents. It is a collection of eleven short stories which deals with conflicts arising out of love and marriages. Most of the stories are about Indian immigrants of the United States and are narrated by female voice in the first person singular point of view, often in the present tense, which imparts to the stories a sense of intimacy. Flavours of Bengal in the backdrop prevails in many of them. These capture the experience of recent immigrants from professional classes, an educated class who have to strive hard to balance faiths in traditional and modern values.

The focal point of most of the stories in this collection is the Indian mindset in American environs and the imminent clash between the native culture and the adopted one. Being an immigrant herself Divakaruni gives first hand experiences about her life in India and US. Hence her plots revolve around the Indian beliefs and principles especially of the women caught between the Indian and Western ideas and values. This portrayal of socio cultural encounter in a very genuine manner has made Divakaruni a popular writer. In interview to The Hindustan Times she admits that she explores the complicated immigrant identities across the borders and articulates the deepest fear and trauma faced by these women. In the end they emerge as strong and self reliant women (HT Jan 31 2011).

The three stories which are being taken up for study explore the basic man woman relationship of Indian society, which is based on Patriarchy. When these patriarchal values ingrained through collective consciousness face a paradox of values, it begins to shatter. All three women characters, Sumita in “The Clothes”, Abha in “Affairs” and Mirnal in the story by her name face various clashes after their arranged marriages.

In “The Clothes”, Sumita and Somesh have an arranged marriage in India. Sumita has grown up with the aim to become an ideal wife and commits to everything as social binding upon herself. The moral signifiers which Indian girls are forced to imbibe, like acting like a good wife, which include all her relationships in her in-laws place, covering her head, playing the good bahu in front of visitors etc

takes a toll on her original personality. Divakaruni brings out the paradox when Somesh returns to US and Sumita is unable to recall his face. With the change of place also, nothing seems to change for Soumita. She lives in a world of glass where America just passes by. America symbolizes of freedom, emancipation and liberty. But the traditional *sati-savitri* outlook does not allow her to be herself. The writer also describes the paradox faced by Somesh.

Later Sumita moves from Calcutta to California, into a small apartment. She describes the delineation between an Indian home and American world outside and the contradictory feelings that emerge from disconnection between the two spheres. Sumita describes her home as a “World where everything is frozen in place”, as if she had never left India and her friends of her youth. In India for her time and space are motionless whereas in America, they are rushing by as if her world is glass world so small. Somesh is also trapped into the deeply rooted tradition in, fears to break away from the custom.

He finds himself trapped between in his love for Sumita and his devotion for his parents. There is a twist in the story when Somesh is murdered by some unknown people. It comes as a rude shock to Sumita, when her life undergoes a drastic change. She realizes that her life, for that matter her happiness, sorrows, clothes and habits were never her own. On the contrary they had been acquired for her husband and family. The story ends with Sumita standing before a mirror seeing both her traditional image and one that could have been in US. Indian traditions demand her to dress in white but the mirror shows a different reflection. Sumita feels that America which stands for freedom, liberty, and gratification beckons her.

She does not accept her fate as a widow clad in white. She sees a reflection of a new independent woman in the mirror. Sumita is able to shrug off her widows position which is imposed upon her by the family and society as a woman. She shrugs off what fate has given her and decides that she will not become a bird whose wings have been slashed off. The story reflects the South Aisan Woman's cultural assimilation and identity formation.

In the story “Affairs”, Divakaruni shows that old values are not the same and need to change with times. Relationships tied up in marriage have to change with times and the old values of sacrifice, union of souls etc cannot happen if the basic man-woman relationship also change in a very realistic manner. Meena and Asha are two characters, who think differently regarding the institution of marriage. Meena is married to Srikant, who soon realize that they are not compatible. Asha is married to Ashok, who are also fed up of the conventional roles, marriage forces upon them. Both women feel that their traditional role as a wife gives them no space to be themselves. Both friends Asha and Meena regard themselves as icons of traditional womanhood, but their stay at America changes them, making them realize the importance of their own identity. Conventions give very little scope for change.

Divakaruni poignantly shows how gender roles clash with individual goals. Marriage and its traditional parameters choke the growth of the relationship. Radical changes are taking place all around, these changes are also affecting relationships. In such circumstances marriage is no more union of souls but only a burden, where change is not possible. In the third story “Meeting Mrinal” Asha, is a traditional homemaker, while Mrinal is an unmarried working woman. Asha aspires to become like Mrinal, independent and modern. Though she has no idea what Mrinal actually feels. Asha wants to be free from the traditional roles she plays of an homemaker, wife, daughter in law. Though Mirnal feels that Asha has the best of the world. Mahesh is also sick of traditional roles and wants to break the typecast of ideal husband/son/father. He is a typical Indian male who is confused what is right and is not able to unload the conventional parameters ingrained into them. Asha and Meena aspire for things they themselves are confused about as they want to be independent like the women of their acquired homeland, but they don't seem to cover the space in between.

The landscape of contemporary literature has been influenced by the rising tide of globalization, texts are now crossing the borders of nations and cultures so are the new emerging voices, who

were once regarded as the subaltern. Living in these so called “in-between” spaces, the South Asian woman living in America develops an altered consciousness in order to relate to her South Asian Culture while at the same time adapting to her current American surroundings. The women in Divakaruni’s texts are caught between the traditional customs of South Asia from which they have emigrated and their present experiences with the more westernized culture of America. These women develop multiple consciousnesses resulting in a personality that is neither unified nor hybrid, but rather fragmented.

The women that Divakaruni depicts are capable of living in a world in which the individual exists not as a Unified One, but rather as many different selves, bound by no borders and infinite in the possibilities of creating consciousness and inventing identities. Perhaps preserving the balance between traditions and new social and financial requirements is a very tricky, but in this changing world it has become necessary. There might not be an easy solution to the new issues created because of this change, but the enormity of the clash can be reduced by rationally adopting the old and the new.

The home is the locus of tradition for South Asian diasporic families, and within this domain, traditional gender roles often endure while outside the home, there is a dramatic shift in the nature of cultural expectations. The image of the subservient Indian woman stems from Indian mythology and the manner in which Indian females are represented in it. The image of ‘Sita’ has a profound effect on the Indian psyche. Her chastity and loyalty to her husband represents the ideal for an Indian wife. When the woman emerges from the private realm of family into the public space, she constantly experiences a conflict of consciousness.

These stories reflect the diasporic South Asian woman’s cultural assimilation and identity formation. As the woman struggles to define herself as South Asian and American, she finds that her self-perception and self-identification are contingent upon the particular realm that they are occupying and a conflict of consciousness emerges when contrasting self perceptions, exist simultaneously.

The identity of the south Asian diasporic woman cannot be categorized as simply Eastern or Western, submissive or dominant, but rather it is comprised of numerous consciousnesses that encompass various conflicting characteristics. The manner in which Divakaruni's characters perceive themselves is based upon this multiplicity of selves, and the notion that one's relation to one's surrounding space determines the process and outcome of self-perception allows for paradoxical views of the self to exist, thereby deconstructing the concept of identity as unified and perception as singular. For these women, to exist is to be many; it is to embrace the paradoxes of perception that arise as life is lived astride the boundaries of many worlds.

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## 'Crossing Borders' in the *Train to Pakistan*

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#### Abstract

Border theories and issues have changed in the past few decades. This paper attempts to analyze these changes and study Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* in that context. Borders exist in different context and they affect the lives of people who live around them. Partition has been one such event, which changed lives of many, when new borders were formed. Singh presents emotional and physical change in this novel on many different levels. The novel has been regarded the first partition novel, which presented the trauma in a very realistic manner. This paper addresses the transculturality across the borders through its characters.

**Keywords:** Pedagogy, demarcation, interdisciplinary, transculturaility, multicultural identity.

The study of borders has undergone an immense change during the past few decades. Borders have acquired multi-dimensional connotations, which have gone beyond lines separating states in the international system. It is interesting to see how the study of the dynamics of the bordering process with those invisible but feasible spaces in societies, has gone beyond political demarcation and have become a pedagogy. It no more remains a prerogative of Geographers, Cartographers or Diplomats, but on the contrary borders have become concerns of literatures, anthropologists and sociologists who focus on the many facets of social and spatial studies affecting the human progress. Borders may signify the point or line of separation between distinct entities, separating one category from another, in some cases institutionalizing existing differences, while in other cases creating the difference where none existed previously. (Newman, 33)

Lots of research work and new academic study programs on Border Studies are being done in all western countries. It is more of an interdisciplinary study taken up by a vast range of scholars and teachers with backgrounds from Political Science, Sociology, Anthropology, History and Literary Studies. The field of Border Studies developed within traditional humanities disciplines and then broadened beyond them into separate programs, bringing a startling transformation in understanding of this issue.

Border culture is most vibrant in the core zone of the borderlands, or the strip of territory where the border cities are situated. Beyond this area, there is a secondary domain where border culture is strongly felt; important cities in the Texas-Mexico region include San Antonio, Houston, Monterrey, and Saltillo. . . . The impact of the border diminishes in the interior of each nation, but selected spheres of influence are readily apparent. For example, in the United States, places like Denver and Chicago have large Mexican American populations who maintain steady contact with the borderlands. An important part of that contact is carried on by migrants who constantly travel between Mexico and the interior United States. (prairie.org)

The term “borders”, as often used by scholars of this area, is often defined as a space between politically divided places with intercultural contact and hybridization where people from very different cultural and historical backgrounds improvise everything from identities to art forms, foods and political alliances. Though borders and theories around it have always existed, under many different terms, used in different periods like Immigration, Diaspora, and Migration, border studies theory become more prominent when post-colonial and cultural studies theorists began looking into the more complex connotation of ethnicity. In United States, this theory gained quick popularity because of US, Southwestern, Mexican cultural styles came into focus due to many diasporic writers. Cultural connections and sub regional variations have now become issues of research and intensive study (Anzaldua 3; Gomez Pena 43; Grant and

Ladson-Billings 34). James Bank, a multicultural theorist, refers to Border theories as “multiple acculturation”. He finds it, “the incorporation of different heritages into the identity development process” (239). He highlights the fact that conventional multiculturalism emphasizes individual cultures and its growth, while borders studies examine, intersection of cultures and its effects.

Teaching and research related to the issues of borders and study programs have highlighted its importance globally. Newman elaborates, “During the 1990s, almost all border related research focused on the perceived impacts of globalization on the opening of borders and, in some cases, their total erasure... The opening and crossing of borders was reflected in the research and publications on border related issues of the 1980s and 1990s. Although the absolutist notion of a totally borderless world was seen as being a step too far, the impact of globalization on the functions of borders could not be ignored, as they became easier to negotiate and to cross.” (Newman, 68)

In a seminal discourse Maria Roots in *Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as a New Frontier* (1996), puts forth five significant characteristics, through which various facets of border issues can be understood. The first characteristic is about bridging the border by being part of two groups. The writer gives examples from many narratives, where characters are described as existing in two cultures. The second major facet is the social contexts defined by race and ethnicity. Many characters shift their cultural identity from background to another in the foreground. The third deciding point is sitting on the border and experiencing it as a reference point. The fourth characteristic is that in the multicultural identity, an individual creates a new identity. The fifth interpretation which comes forth is that the last border crossing, one creates a ‘home’ in one camp and makes forays into the other from time to time (Roots xii-xxii).

In this background of Border Issues and theories, it is interesting to evaluate Kushwant Singh’s most popular partition novel, *Train to Pakistan* (1956), which is often cited for in-depth emotional depiction of trauma and sufferings of partition.

The individuality in Khushwant Singh's writings is on account of his anger and disenchantment with the "...long cherished human values in the wake of inhuman bestial horrors and insane savage killings on both sides during the Partition of the subcontinent between India and Pakistan in August 1947." The novelist brings to the centre stage the subsequent violence on both sides of the border manifested in ruthless mass destruction as well as the evil impact of Partition on the peace-loving Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of Mano Majra (Adkins 121).

Singh himself was multilingual and can be viewed as a writer who was intellectually independent. His mother tongue was Punjabi and his cultural language was Urdu. He loved the Urdu poets and knew the Persian script and chose to write in English. Punjabi, Urdu, English and other European literature were part of his psyche. Many of his critics have called him "the last Pakistani living on Indian soil". (Guardian.com) He goes beyond the border in depicting the harsh reality of partition.

The most significant aspect of the novel is that, although its author deals with the carnage in the Punjab in 1947 with pitiless realism, unlike other bhasa writers of the time, he is not completely taken up with just the violence, for he also redeems a sense of faith in essential humanity at the end of the novel through the figure of Jugga. Indeed, it must have very difficult to take such a stance at the time the novel was written, a difficulty that is borne out to do this. In fact, the greatness of the novel lies in this ability of Singh to rise above parochialism, and not so much for the realistic depiction of those times for which he has been universally praised. (Roy 24)

This paper is trying to focus on how Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* reveals the transculturality across the borders. The social milieu reveals that the traditional social structure of Punjab as made of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, in pre-partitioned India. Culture, language, food and customs were shared. All these contributed to the larger Punjabi identity, before the communal divisions. The sense of

belongingness to a village was another kind of identity before the borders were formed. Multiculturalism is highlighted through a sense of belonging, importance of a locality all bound in history. The Punjabi ethos and identity, before the partition goes beyond religion and community, as the Sikh trustworthiness came before anything else. "For them truth, honour, financial integrity are all placed lower down the scale of values than being true to one's salt, to one's friends and fellow villagers. For friends you could lie in court or cheat, and no one would blame you." (38)

The novelist has drawn the central character of the novel, Juggut Singh, a Sikh martyr and his sacrifice is motivated to all community. The Sikh Gurus and Muslim Mullahs are respected by both communities. Both communities are ready to secure their lives for each other. Many incidents reflect upon this fact that many things in the community were common, *sanjha* to be precise. Imam Baksh is Mullah as well as Chacha of the village. Meet Singh is a religious head of the Sikhs. There is a mutual understanding among the villagers which maintains the feeling of friendliness, peace and non-violence. Meet Singh did not have any objection on the basis of religion. Meet Singh represented the tension free life of the village when he said to the social worker, Iqbal: Everyone is welcome to his religion. Here next door is a Muslim mosque. When I pray to my Guru, uncle Imam Baksh calls to Allah (35).

The presence of cultural understanding is also reflected before the riot, around the railway station, which has a small colony of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians. They work in harmony serving various things to travelers. All activities are linked to the communities, existing in the village. Scenes of religious contact, where the *aajan* of Muslims and prayers of Sikhs seem to echo together. An autobiographical character Iqbal, an educated Muslim, symbolizes cultural integrity before the riots. The Community itself plays a major role in determining the response of the characters. It emerges as an important force, putting forward its claims as the protagonist of the novel. Partition was based on the theory of constructing nations



according to religion or community. Mano Majra has two main communities: Muslims and Sikhs, and there is a Hindu family in the village. Jugga's behaviour is determined by his community and Punjabianness. However, the village has an even stronger claim to the title of the protagonist. V. A. Shahane remarks, Mano Majra is the principal protagonist in this drama of agonizing death and pulsating life. The village is more important than the role of any single character in the novel... It is the major character in the book. (Shahane 68)

The novelist portrays the ethnic identity and harmony in Indian society being interrupted by communal conflict and ethnic violence. The entire story is woven round the communal riot between Hindus (including Sikhs) and Muslims. Singh has elaborately discussed the difference in the concepts of religion in general and particularly about Sikh, Muslim, Hindu and Christian beliefs. Basically the story is developed on the communal clash between Sikhs and Muslims in the wake of partition. Setting the plot which depicts cultural conflicts and ethnic violence as glaring examples of devastating mankind and the world, Singh probably wants to suggest eradication of such evil things at the cost of love and understanding within humanity.

Like the 'village', the 'train' also has a significance, which suggests crossing of borders. Trains in general are enduring images of partition of the subcontinent. The overloaded train full of bodies has now become part of collective imagination of the nation. Many books on partition have pictures of trains on their cover page. Many writings during the same period have train as a prominent motif, like Bhishma Sahani's, short story, 'We have arrived in Amritsar', Krishna Chander's 'Peshawar Express' and Amrit Rai's 'Kichar' (Roy35). Trains acquire significance of a reporter, a place for the refugee and motif of migration. In *Train to Pakistan* Singh uses it as a sign of social chaos, through its disruption of schedule and ultimately life of people on it.

Like most partition novels, *Train to Pakistan*, signifies the concept of a line (border) which divides nations. The narrative implies

a common opinion that the division should not have happened. Though Singh does not question the concept of border, as such in the narrative but particularly defines the agony, violence generated through it. Many partition novels like Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man*, Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, describe borders in different ways, but the loss, displacement have become a trope which recurs. Peaceful coexistence of communities since many centuries on a common landmass was disturbed by a political event and continues to do so to the present.

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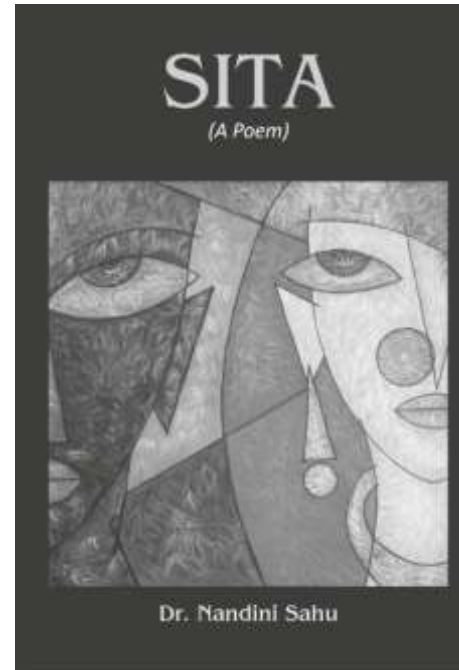
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## Book Reviews

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Knowledge Construction and identity Politics: A Review of Nandini Sahu's *Sita* (2014), The Poetry Society Of India ,Gurgaon (Haryana), India. PP–129, R S 220/-, ISBN: 978-93-83888-19-1(PB).

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Rendered as a “poetic memoir ... in the first person narrative” about the trials and tribunals of a longstanding cultural outfit, Nandini Sahu's fifth collection, *Sita* ferries across on several plains the idea of knowledge construction from the epic heroine's point of view where the due is denied to Her in a largely gender construed identity being interpolated by the patriarchal society. A long poem in twenty five

cantos, it is waiting in the wings raring to go in the mould of popular epic form in the heart and mind of the poet where the main thrust is everyday reality being represented through a woman's perspective. Both classical and folk elements go to describe her abiding agony without giving her due in no uncertain terms which Sahu attempts candidly in this rather long poem to glorify womanhood thereby assessing the identity of the women construed from different contemporary perspectives. Sahu is on her mission to discover and deliver the "Sitaness" representative of every Indian woman as she knows pretty clear that the tall claims and the actual achievement in the field of women empowerment is few and far between.

She appears to be in search of an identity which has no less been problematized in the course of History that haunts Sahu time and again. In doing so, she aims at giving fresh impetus both on the epic heroine and on everyday woman in a way Ramanujan did in his famous poem "River". Moving further away from traditional Tamil eulogy on the river as a creator of the life source on the earth, Ramanujan reverts his attention on the destructive aspect of the river during flood. In the same token, Sahu is also searching for a novel identity in the contemporary mould in the mythic character's epic endurance suffering at the hands of male chauvinism with remarkable precision. Sahu's arduous task is in quest of searching an uncomplicated and a single cogent identity for women in the modern world. The complex location and formation of identity in which Sahu forms a part highlights her personal and poetic life and identity. To restore her many layered identity in which she played Many-in-one roles, Sahu raged her voice against ideological and institutional amnesia in which the epic heroine becomes her mouth-piece. She also used this unique identity to rely on an indigenous trope to fight back the colonial legacy which had alienated her from her own culture and mythology. The two-fold poetic consciousness of Sahu is similar to Edward Said's intellectual dispossession from his Palestinian background who quotes Antonio Gramsci's Prison Notebooks frequently to describe it: "The starting point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what really is, and is 'knowing thyself' as a product of the historical process to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of

traces, without leaving an inventory". So Sahu has no qualms about emphasizing her critical knowledge of the contemporary world as a process of self reflexivity to unravel the 'infinity of traces' that would serve the cause of woman well in her epic endeavour. Of all the possessions that a woman can have and the loss about which she can be blind about would be loss of identity. Hers is voyage against a world where social space has problematized her individual identity immensely and the long poem seems to be an adequate answer. She tries to recollect the spirit of Sita with an amazing fiddle.

For Nandini Sahu, Sita represents women in various forms "she is every woman, the propagated, interpolated role-model" in whom resides "the mass consciousness of the universe". By giving complete freedom to women to operate from within independent spheres in the Indian context she makes the role of women both exemplary and accountable. That is, she has lead from the front to save the race of woman from the downslide and this mission would only be fulfilled when she assumes more accountability. The role of "new woman" is cut out to realize the progressive and pragmatic world view that would serve women well in the long run. Sahu focuses her attention on the Utarakanda where Sita gives birth to Lava and Kusa who are being recognized as "Sita-Putra" devoid of father's care to assume the identity of "New woman" who can handle the pressure of child nurturing well. What is being considered as novice and insignificant is given due importance, an idea very much in keeping with the post colonial thrust of marginalized issues which aim to be free from the shackles of male hegemony from within as well as imperialism from outside. In a sense becomes Sahu's field of vision.

Sita asserts her individual identity: "I am entwined in many a women of substance". Apart from her three sisters- Urmila, Mandavi and Srutakriti – she also enjoys a hand and glove relationship with other women of reputation like Anasuya, Gargi, Maitreyi and Ahalya with Mandodari and Tara to grace her personality she seems to have completed a full circle of "female-bonding". Sita, being cast in traditional role playing in the initial cantos creates a kind of platform

from where she can launch an all-out assault on the male hegemony by grabbing the opportunity offered to her in both hands. The lust for golden deer has accounted for her captivity in the hands of the demon king Ravan but without being repentant Sahu's Sita accepts the challenge of life by becoming "the willingly-exiled women". Here Sahu employs the poetic strategy of pun, playing upon words to emphasize the freedom of New women. This stance of a dare devil woman is accentuated in the following canto when Sita lifted the giant Siva Dhanush easily. But the events that followed led to Swayambar, a hegemonic outfit for match-making that woman of Sita caliber would detest strongly. With an inquisitive mind she asks a series of probing questions to challenge her father's decision: "how could the Swayambarbe interrogated thus? The choice of husband be the women's prerogative". She is now "caught in the endless helix of the mortal adventure" and is left to lick the wounds of a female foeticide and adverse report of sex ratio. The concept of Ramarajya seems to be incomplete and halo idea in view of the ever increasing atrocities being inflicted upon women on routine basis. But she recovers from the state of apathy to assume the role being played by the innumerable women to challenge the male superiority in the face.

Sita's fallout for the golden deer is presented to show her in weak cast which has led to her down fall because the lure of gold had defied nature's logic and thus creating a guile into which she has been trapped into in style. Ravan's wisdom of a sage has been equally questioned when he does not heed to her repeated requests. He defies all logic of being better on moral plane because of his nonsense approach to Sita's pleadings. What Sahu wants to project here is the fact that both man and woman are subject to limitation and the concept of man being superior to woman is being constantly castigated by the poet. Similarly her encounters in the abode of Ravana and her attempts to protect her chastity are being highlighted in the successive cantos to prove her courage and conviction against a sea of odds. The other episodes including the utrakanda give glimpses of "new woman" where she has stood up to the storms of life with the hope that she would be elevated by

her husband, maryadapurushatam Rama. But his sentence of exile at the behest of an erratic washer man's derogatory comments over a family dispute even after giving an acid test of proving her chastity beyond doubt has what galled her to the centre of her being.

In putting Sita in the Indian cultural context, Nandini Sahu has scored two goals at one go. She has enough stuff to produce an engrossing encounter to challenge male chauvinism which is being increasingly biased by the imperialistic regime. On the second front, Sita seems to be very much in the making of the postcolonial strategy to unearth the rich store house of indigenous tropes of identity to pave the way for women through rough weather. She has tried to prove a point or two to the established order of the society that women could be on par with men in each and every front. It is high time women were well looked after, and they should be given their due as India used to do before the period of colonization. Sahu seems to be on her mission to revive and reconstruct the lost glory of Indian women who have proved their worth time and again.

Sahu's Sita is a timely reminder to the ruthless parents who do not hesitate to put their daughters in their prime to be handed down death sentence in the name of honour killing which are being projected in the daily headlines and which pose imminent threat to freedom of women in our society. Hence it can be safely presumed that Nandini Sahu's latest creative output Sita would go a long way to serve the purpose of woman empowerment powered by a sound cultural platform and an urgent contemporary appeal. What adds value to the text is it does not fight shy of representing the cause of woman.

The cover page wields a brilliant look with focused eyes of knowledge construction with looming- large lips that takes love as the only healing power over every odd thing in the whole world, the very characteristics of women of substance who can boast of independent identity construction based on indigenous metaphors. Indeed, we are reminded of the urge of Parthasarathy to "scrap bottom of our past" for representation and revival of our culturally loaded past. With the

Paper Back edition in the offing, the collection under review would definitely go a long way in solving our urgent need of cultural amnesia that has led to the contemporary apathy to look into the major concerns of Indian women. They have long been subject to open criticism and torture. So time has come to heed to their much needed calls. Doing so would be a well deserving tribute to Nandini Sahu's gallant efforts to fight for the cause of women emancipation but not at the cost of the cosy collection. Sahu wins readers applause with every fiber of her being devoted to the cause of women emancipation.



Two – Minute Silence : C. L. Khatri, Authorspress, Q-2A Hauz khas Enclave , New Delhi – 110016 , PP.81 , Rs 195/-

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Dr. C. L. Khatri is a Significant signature in Indian English Poetry. He is a well known critic and editor of cyber Literature and of several anthologies of criticism. He is a bilingual poet writing in English and Hindi. He was awarded Michael Madhusudan Academy Award for his



poetry collection Kargil in 2002. As a prolific writer he has produced twenty four books of criticism.

The present anthology is a collection of thirty four thought provoking poems in a very lucid way. His most of the poems are written on common subjects but in a special way. The author has exhibited Indianness like other Indian English poets through his imagery, dictions and comparisons. Every poem in this anthology has its own significance but the titled poem Two-Minute Silence draws my attention naturally. This poem is very appealing, interesting and edifying. The poet goes deeper to decipher the clue of life in the song of suffering.

Let's observe two- minute silence  
On the shrinking space, shrinking sun  
Stinking water of the sacred rivers  
Sleeping birds, falling leaves  
Watermelon being sliced for quarreling cousins.

In the poem Government School, the poet visualises the system of the government in a very realistic way. Actually, this is a contemporary and burning problem of the country. Indian leaders plead for bright future but the poet cries for destroying future. The contrast of fact and fiction, real and reel have presented side by side in this poem.

Two lakh teachers  
Without any features  
The minister pleads  
building blocks of future  
The poet cries Fucking Future.

The poem Mother presents the different pictures of a mother. Some mothers sell their children for their needs, Some others put tilak on the foreheads of their sons and send them in the battlefield. It is fact that a son may be anti-son but a mother can't be. Mother is a very holy and sweet name on the lips of children. Finally the poet makes a conclusion that there must have been some compulsions. Nobody loves to betray the dear ones. One stanza of this poem is very moving and eye catching :

Her sagging bones send her children  
For child labour and she lives on their loaf:  
Their sweats and her sweets  
She is also a mother.

The companion poem specially in title Homage to Maa recalls the childhood of every grown up. In this family poem, memory plays a vital part. The poet seems closer to A.K. Ramanujan. No doubt, this poem may be called 'emotion recollected in tranquillity' as M.K. Naik calls Ramanujan's poetry. Like A.K. Ramanujan's poetry, this poem has its origin in the past and is deeply rooted in memory. The last stanza provides a kind of 'objective correlative' to the whole poem. It ends as follows :

Absence shows one's real worth.  
Today I feel her more intensely  
Than ever I did. A deity in the Sanctum  
She lives in me, breathes through me.  
Who cares if I win or lose the race I am not in?

In the poem Holi, the poet depicts the real picture and pleasure of Holi. He seems in a hilarious mood and I realize drenched in the colours of Holi. The poem shows Indian fervour and culture when the poet says that 'you are welcome without invitation'. How great our Indian culture and custom is! The festival has mythological significance but the poet shares us his joy and merriment with us. He says that nothing is unholy in love, war and Holi.

The poem Election is short in length but has immense message. No one is unaware of Indian politics. The poet says that politics is a power sharing platform. We beat about the bush and the snake steals the show. The poem opens with the meaning of Election as follows:

Everything is fair in love and war  
Election is both love and war  
Love with power, war for power.

It is taken for granted that poetry has no market and still C.L. Khatri continues to publish poetry book. I find in him a dependable friend of Muse who deserves kudos. The present anthology is a bouquet of poetic flowers of various hues. Most of the poems are in free verse and are suffused with appropriate symbols, images, metaphors and similes. It has been for me a pleasant and rewarding read and it is a worth preserving book at an affordable price for every poetry lover.

## Poetry Section

### Bridge-in-Making

I am an Indian poet in English!  
How long shall I wear this elegant  
garland? Can I even put it down?

Poetry in English is like a passion for empire building.  
It's the subaltern speaking  
the words pleading to be universally, intently heard.

I guess what I write is no English.  
Still it's a negotiable alternative  
to breathing, to the art of living.

It's the aroma to keep my spirits buoyant.  
It's a reconciliation, a bridge-in-making,  
between the privileged and the marginalized.

Oh Muses! Teach me how to break down  
this boundary – poets and Indian English poets--erected  
since ages, between the periphery and the centre.

Make my poetry as delicious as  
watered-rice-brinjal-fry and  
dry-fish. To look the world in the eye.

I write in English to free my words  
lying imprisoned in the arms of the heart.  
Be it Odishan or Indian, but it's out of this earth and wind.

I am the drunkard and I am the glass  
of beer. I have committed no sin  
which you haven't ;I share your fate.

Odia is to think, feel, dream and  
be my funeral pyre. English, to me,

is my garland and my sword, my sole refuge.  
It's the voice of my longings and belongings.

Honest as the west wind and the yearly floods in  
coastal Indian villages, it's the frozen marrow in my bones.

But it gives me a name, my very own.  
It comes to me without tireless waiting.  
It torrents with the haste of the Yamuna in July rain.

Language is like raindrops shaped into a pearl.  
It's like happy-healthy sprouted beans; like red wine  
from Goa; like silken embroidery on my outfit.

Poetry kick-starts the day with the mercury boiled,  
it clears all barriers between the  
heart and the home and hearth.

The letters of the English alphabet I use, with their  
jingling anklets, flood my world with joy.  
Poetry falls down in droplets, the stars melt away.

I am Indian, Odia by birth, with  
wheatish brown skin, dark eyes. I am just a poet --  
English or no English-- my taverns filled with Muses.

Nandini Sahu

## Many Lands, Many Homes

Many lands, many homes.  
Where is home anyway?  
What remains after leaving  
each home, is a part of  
yourself, that can't be  
carried, home to home.  
Only memories grow

smaller, fainter, feebler.  
Only memories  
fly the nest,  
you want or don't.  
Still they live  
like  
a dry flower pressed between the  
pages of an old diary  
colourless  
sans the fragrance.

Many lands, many homes.  
Where is the pregnant cloud's  
refuge anyway?  
Where are the triumphant soldiers?  
However far you glide, the  
clouds will pursue  
discharge all their flood  
and saturate you,  
you want or you don't .  
Don't feel guilty.  
Bare chested  
grow into a cloud yourself,  
touch the glaciers, flaunt  
hollow syllables  
scatter silence.  
Rain, soaking the fields,  
shakes the earth, sometimes.  
New lands new homes.

Dr. Nandini Sahu  
Associate Professor of English IGNOU,  
New Delhi, India.

## Candle

I am a candle who has lived its life.  
Once a frail candle lit me.  
I lit a few candles  
And they lit some others.  
A caravan of candles came up;  
Their flames twinkling like stars  
Dispelling darkness like fireflies in the night,  
Spreading light all around.  
Who can say I will die tomorrow?  
I will exist in the flames forever.  
Storms can blow out the flames  
But not the flames within a candle.

C. L. Khatri

## Unresolved Sensations

Cloudburst rived apart  
Intervening yearsyard and space  
Bequeathing a sediment of disquiet  
Unresolved sensations of  
Man's first visit to the hill  
Desire for mega metal dream  
Trekking in the hill with mystic music of  
Birds, beasts, conical trees,  
Unpredictable rains and a Kumanu guide  
And of ravaging pristine poetry  
With asthmatic geometry  
Counting skulls in the grave

Dr. C. L. Khatri  
Associate Professor  
Dept. of English, T.P.S. College, Patna.

## Confessions Of A Border Guard, Slightly Drunk

My first ever?  
A young man, smooth-faced,  
Almost... You could say,  
A boy.

He lay spreadeagled,  
Half on our side,  
Half on theirs,  
By the barbed, bright coils  
Neatly partitioned.

His dumb goats  
Stood around  
With unblinking eyes  
(Of course we ate them all!)

My unerring aim  
Had created a third eye  
Between his staring, sightless ones.  
He'll certainly see better, ha ha,  
In the world after this.

Supantha Bhattacharyya

## At Wagah

They stride towards each other,  
Grim, purposeful men,  
Halt, cry and kick the blue sky.

On both sides of the fence,  
The air trembles with fervent cries.  
The Tricolour and the Crescent and Star  
Fly proud and high  
Against the same blue sky.

Even higher,  
Foolish birds,  
With no respect for boundaries,  
Crisscross at will.

Dr Supantha Bhattacharyya  
Associate Prof, Dept of English  
Hislop College, Nagpur



## Survival

Clutching my heart, soft and tender,  
I ramble with it here and there.  
Fearing some pain, woe and agony,  
I shudder to part it with people any.

What if one twig scratches it,  
What if one word pierces it,  
Oh, where to find some canopy,  
The shed of care and mercy.

All are shrouded and clogged,  
With winter mist and fog.  
Where has gone that melting fires?  
To thaw those frozen eyes and ears.

Oh God! shield us from storms and rains,  
Those stony, thorny looks and pains.  
One is bleeding, one is whining,  
All pass by with no one caring.

They call me dull and dead,  
For shutting tight the doors of my heart.  
They know not this is my way  
To alive my soul in the world to stay.

I sit alone among the flirtatious kind,  
Holding close my contented heart.

Nutan Agarwal

## The Inner Rain

Bright, smiling drops,  
Falling gently on floors,  
On earth, petal, grass and pond,  
Drains, dust and dirt alike.  
Frisking, resting, blurring  
Merging one by effacing.  
They know not what they are  
And what would their fate be.  
Dripping, dropping in a song.

It pours down on me,  
Enlivening my lost days,  
Simple joys and simple games.  
I hear the waves of tears,  
Another rain inside me I fear.

Those days are gone when  
It was a shower of thrill.  
Now it is no longer a bliss.  
Oh! Where are those suns  
That can draw out my inner rains.

A distant voice consoles:  
Every fall ends with a rainbow  
To fill the sky with hues.  
So is it in our lives.  
Dusk is followed by dawn.

Dr. Nutan Agarwal  
Associate Professor,  
Bundelkhand College, Jhansi, India.

## Jai Hind

O sons of the soil, accept our salute  
We wish to pay the best tribute  
Your martyrdom shall never sink into oblivion  
We will remember you with every rising sun.

You did your country proud  
But now the national colours are your shroud,  
Your corpses lie in icy silence  
May your souls rest in peace!

On a hinterland  
Threatened by frost and snow  
You suffer the mortal blow  
To defend the honour of your motherland.

O my brothers  
How different from others!  
You starved yourself while we feasted  
You braved the stings of the wind  
While we snuggled don in bed.

The severance of family ties  
For you was a painful wrench  
But nothing could quench  
The patriotic flame touching the skies.

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Your heart yearned  
For a happy union with your newly-wed  
Who with downcast eyes  
Bade a reluctant good bye.

When your tot trotted behind you  
With his little hands outstretched

Tears dampening his innocent cheeks  
Your heartache and sorrow reached the peak.

But you swam the Atlantic of emotions  
And put your best foot forward  
To smile in a place  
Whizzing with bullets and falling artillery shells.

O my countrymen!  
Let us answer the question-  
Have we built a nation  
That the jawans could die for?

Our contribution and money  
May iron out  
The wrinkles of their families'  
Woes and sorrow no doubt

But to honour  
Every drop of their blood  
We need to wake up from the stupor  
And make a more substantial contribution:  
Fling off the veil  
Of dishonesty, corruption and selfishness  
And let there be uprightness  
Up hill and down dale.

Dr. Ranjana Sharan  
Asst. Prof (English)  
S. B. City College Nagpur.

## We, the Border- Crossers!

When English Class is in full swing  
My cellphone rings.....!  
Screen lights up,  
Showing 'Home!'

A call from 'Home!'  
I Must answer!  
Some emergency might be there,  
On that end!

I hurriedly sum up  
The ever inspiring Robert Frost,  
"But I have promises to keep  
And miles to go before I sleep  
And miles to go before I sleep"  
..... in single breath.  
With a sheepish grin on my face,  
I whisper "Excuse me!"  
My Students also magnanimously,  
Allow me to talk!

With eyes expressing gratitude,  
I gingerly pick up the phone.  
The border between work and family blurs,  
Ensuring my smooth transition,  
Across the two ever- conflicting zones.

My daughter scolds me,  
From that end,  
For the tasteless dish,  
I cooked up in haste!

I mumble an apology,  
To my daughter .....,  
Then – to my students.....,  
Quickly crossing the border yet again!

Manoeuvring swiftly  
My mental disturbance,  
I try to cross the cultural border  
Between the East and the West  
And try my best  
To do justice to 'Frost'  
Albeit in haste.....!  
Is it not 'permeability'?

And while going home,  
I plan to buy ice cream  
For my daughter,  
In 'compensation' to that  
tasteless dish  
Which she had to digest  
Against her wish!

Indeed! Caught between the two worlds,  
We are daily 'border –crossers',  
Balancing dexterously on the tight-rope,  
And clutching tight the heart, with perennial hope!

Holding upright our fragile frames,  
We cautiously move forward with steady steps,  
Taking care not to fall,  
And trying our best,  
To satisfy all.

Poorva Bhonde

## An Old Cry

We are old,  
We are withered,  
Like dried leaves,  
We lie on the roads.

We are useless,  
We are homeless;  
Like a dethroned king,  
We are powerless.

We spent our lives,  
In building the nest;  
But today we are thrown out,  
With nowhere to rest.

Why do we build nests?  
Why do we raise children?  
When with spread wings they fly,  
Leaving us alone to die-  
A slow death, in the 'Home for Old'.

Dr. Poorva Bhonde  
Dept. of English  
Sharadchandra Arts & Commerce College,  
Butibori

## Nostalgic Moments

I plunged into deep thought  
to the surface, some nostalgic moments were brought

Those were filled with mischief and fun  
Oh! how I longed my life to be re-winded and re-spun

My brothers, younger, only by a year or two  
I dominated, exhibited my knowledge and forced them to subdue

They manoeuvred the kite with tremendous skill  
played cricket, drove bikes and life was a thrill

On Raksha Bandhan and Bhai duj they pledged to take my care  
I thank the Almighty for having blessed me with gems so rare

Brothers are pillars of strength  
to keep you happy they can go to any length

When loneliness, depression strike-in  
these nostalgic moments make me happy within.

Manjushree Sardeshpande

## Woman

She has life, but it's not hers  
She has eyes, tongue and limbs  
but they aren't hers.  
A child is a child, girl or a boy  
Right from her childhood  
there's rationing on her joy.

Pleasure, confidence and freedom,  
She borrows from her kin seldom.  
She begs for mercy, peace and love,  
Rarely do her cries reach God above.  
Men's whims and fancies she has to bear  
She also has a heart, but who does care.

Religion, culture are sufficient for her to be chained  
It's never an alien, but her  
near and dear ones who've often pained.  
Literacy, Nutrition deprive  
Dowry burns her alive  
Economic Independence would make her smile  
And prove all her toils worthwhile.

Dr. Manjushree Sardeshpande  
Asst. Professor, R. S. Mundle Dharampeth  
Arts & Commerce College, Nagpur

## Sita (A Poem) Canto XXIV

I am *Prakriti*; born of and fading into Mother Nature.  
I am *Shakti*, phenomenal destroyer of Ravana.  
I am grace; I stand for mercy, bounty and redemption.

I am the ultimate woman; the glorious mother of Lava-Kusha.  
I am Nature; I have inestimable moods and assortments.  
I am power; I have innumerable appearances on earth.

I am splendor; I transcend the crimson womanly.  
I am pure bliss; I float as foam on the sea of frenzy.  
I am innocence; born naked from the furrow.

I am a teardrop; I stand for the mourning -mortality.  
I am a bird; grasped and fluttered to withdrawn regions.  
I am a memory; sweltering and reverberating time and again.

I am birth; my girlhood is joyous with simmering intimations.  
I am growth; I burn in the flame of the fire-ordeal.  
I am death; I overpower Ravana, I eclipse evil.

I am immaculate; I have the attitude for the tide of sovereignty.  
I am mighty; my power lies in ultimate motherhood.  
I am divine; my love and grace redeems the universe.

I am humane; I suffer like any mortal average.  
I am benevolence; let them admire my compassionate pedigree.  
I am malevolence; I care no birth, bondage and death.

Dr Nandini Sahu



(Excerpt from Dr Nandini Sahu's Poem *Sita* Canto24 and part of The Preface)

There are a little more than three hundred versions of the Ramayana written over the centuries since Valmiki first wrote it. My poem *Sita* is, in no way, a retelling of *The Ramayana*. It is, rather, penned as a poetic memoir of the heroine of the epic, Sita, told in the first person narrative. *Sita (A Poem)* is seminal to my thoughts on life that find expression in the creative impulse of literature. It has always been with me, sometimes haunting and at others, fuelling the mind in all thought and action. In that sense, it could perhaps be one of my most ambitious, endearing ecofeministic poems. One long poem, it's presented in 25 sections/cantos.

## Candle

I am a candle who has lived its life.  
Once a frail candle lit me.  
I lit a few candles  
And they lit some others.  
A caravan of candles came up;  
Their flames twinkling like stars  
Dispelling darkness like fireflies in the night,  
Spreading light all around.  
Who can say I will die tomorrow?  
I will exist in the flames forever.  
Storms can blow out the flames  
But not the flames within a candle.

C. L. Khatri

## Poetry Section

### Bridge-in-Making

I am an Indian poet in English!  
How long shall I wear this elegant  
garland? Can I even put it down?  
  
Poetry in English is like a passion for empire building.  
It's the subaltern speaking  
the words pleading to be universally, intently heard.  
  
I guess what I write is no English.  
Still it's a negotiable alternative  
to breathing, to the art of living.  
  
It's the aroma to keep my spirits buoyant.  
It's a reconciliation, a bridge-in-making,  
between the privileged and the marginalized.  
  
Oh Muses! Teach me how to break down  
this boundary – poets and Indian English poets--erected  
since ages, between the periphery and the centre.  
  
Make my poetry as delicious as  
watered-rice-brinjal-fry and  
dry-fish. To look the world in the eye.  
  
I write in English to free my words  
lying imprisoned in the arms of the heart.  
Be it Odishan or Indian, but it's out of this earth and wind.  
  
I am the drunkard and I am the glass  
of beer. I have committed no sin  
which you haven't ;I share your fate.  
  
Odia is to think, feel, dream and  
be my funeral pyre. English, to me,

is my garland and my sword, my sole refuge.  
It's the voice of my longings and belongings.

Honest as the west wind and the yearly floods in  
coastal Indian villages, it's the frozen marrow in my bones.

But it gives me a name, my very own.  
It comes to me without tireless waiting.  
It torrents with the haste of the Yamuna in July rain.

Language is like raindrops shaped into a pearl.  
It's like happy-healthy sprouted beans; like red wine  
from Goa; like silken embroidery on my outfit.

Poetry kick-starts the day with the mercury boiled,  
it clears all barriers between the  
heart and the home and hearth.

The letters of the English alphabet I use, with their  
jingling anklets, flood my world with joy.  
Poetry falls down in droplets, the stars melt away.

I am Indian, Odia by birth, with  
wheatish brown skin, dark eyes. I am just a poet --  
English or no English-- my taverns filled with Muses.

Nandini Sahu

## Many Lands, Many Homes

Many lands, many homes.  
Where is home anyway?  
What remains after leaving  
each home, is a part of  
yourself, that can't be  
carried, home to home.  
Only memories grow

smaller, fainter, feebler.  
Only memories  
fly the nest,  
you want or don't.  
Still they live  
like  
a dry flower pressed between the  
pages of an old diary  
colourless  
sans the fragrance.

Many lands, many homes.  
Where is the pregnant cloud's  
refuge anyway?  
Where are the triumphant soldiers?  
However far you glide, the  
clouds will pursue  
discharge all their flood  
and saturate you,  
you want or you don't .  
Don't feel guilty.  
Bare chested  
grow into a cloud yourself,  
touch the glaciers, flaunt  
hollow syllables  
scatter silence.  
Rain, soaking the fields,  
shakes the earth, sometimes.  
New lands new homes.

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