



## INDIAN DIASPORA WRITERS– A STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

*It is a globally accepted fact that Diaspora writers set a trend since the Independence. Diaspora literature irrespective of language, style, literary form and technique attract the readers crossing the borders. It may be stream of consciousness or magic realism or immigrancy or alienation or adaptability of a new land and culture. But nostalgia is alike for all Diaspora writers. Notably the works of Indian Diaspora cover all parts of the world. It is an Interesting Paradox that a great deal of Indian writing in English is produced not in India but in widely distributed geographical areas of indenture (Girmit). This paper focuses on a handful of Diaspora writers and their writings which are notable to the readers.*

**Key words:** *Diaspora writers, Literature, Writings, Nostalgia*

### INTRODUCTION

Writers of Indian Diaspora are at the centre stage since last decade because of their capturing works. Indian Diaspora occupies second largest place in the world. The population of Diaspora is approximately 25 million, who settled whole notable regions of the world. Indian immigrants in the overseas are for various reasons like free trade, better standards of life and earning. Diasporic or immigrant writing occupies a great place of significance between cultures and countries. Writings Diaspora benefits many ways and a powerful web connects the entire globe. The foremost characteristic features of diaspora writings involve the quest for identity, nostalgia, familial and marital relationships apart from re-rooting, uprooting, multi-cultural milieu etc.

**Bharati Mukherjee** is an Indo American writer and professor at the University of California, Berkeley. She wrote numerous works that cover both fiction and non-fiction. Mukherjee has gone to the extent of contemplating herself as an American writer and not a migrant writer. Her works include novels, short story collections, and one memoir non-fiction. She has won National Book Critics Circle Award in 1988 for '*The Middle and other stories*'. Her other works are '*Jasmine and Wife*'.

The Middle Man and other stories present the theme of immigration while Jasmine is the story of woman who is reluctant to accept the outdated traditional society. The collection of stories Darkness (1985) focusses the immigrant experience in the USA. In the novel Dimple Das Gupta who dreams to marry a neuro surgeon, had to marry according to the wish of her father and she couldn't adapt herself to the real life situations.

**Shauna Singh Baldwin** is the Indo-Canadian Diasporic writer. She is the author of two short story collections '*we are not in Pakistan*' and '*English Lessons and other stories*'. Her stories in the short story collections have been published in various literary magazines.

The setting of the novel What the Body Reminds the partition theme and revolves mainly around three characters Roop, second wife of Sardarji, infertile first wife and Sardarji who



always struggle for his identity. This book bagged Commonwealth Writers Prize for the best book from the region of Caribbean and also long listed for the Orange Prize in fiction.

**Jhumpa Lahiri** was born to Indian parents from London, who settled in the USA after her birth. Lahiri's debut collection of short stories '*Interpreter of Maladies*' (1999) brought laurels to her by clinching Pulitzer Prize for fiction. In her first novel '*The Namesake*' and her short story collections, she is successful in presenting discontentment at the core in the families she portrays. Her '*Low Land*' is the story of blood relationship that was brutally spoiled by politics, which got shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize.

**Anjana Appachana** is a novelist of Indian origin who lives in the United States. She has written a book of short stories titled '*Incantations*' and a novel titled *Listening Now* is a novelist of Indian origin who lives in the United States. Her debut work '*Incantations and Other Stories*' was first published in England, in United States and was translated into German language. Anjana Appachana is the recipient of O. Henry Festival Prize and National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing fellowship.

Her first novel '*Listening Now*' based on the themes of female bonding, female sexuality and mother-child relations relationships spans three generations in a narrative that is not sequential, elliptical. The novel is written in English, but we find nativity in the rhythms of the language and the metaphors

**Anita Nair** is an English Language writer of India. Nair, who hailed from a small village of Kerala was educated in Chennai. Her '*Satyr of the Subway*', a collection of short stories won her a fellowship from Virginia.

Nair's novels *The Better Man* and *Ladies Coupe* were translated into 21 collections. Her '*Ladies coupe*' is about a middle aged Indian unmarried woman on her journey of self-discovery. The theme of the story is based on a one way train journey which transforms the life and changes the protagonist into a new woman.

**Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni** is poet, essayist, author, fiction and short story writer, book reviewer. She is an Indo American poet. Her short story collection *Arranged Marriage and other Stories* brought her the credit of winning the American Book Award in 1995. Her works are largely set in the United States as well as in India. Her focus sometimes is on the experiences of South Asian migrants.

**Manjula Padmanabhan** is a playwright, journalist, comic strip artist, an artist, illustrator and cartoonist. She was born in India and grew up in Sweden, Pakistan and Trinidad. Her play *Harvest* was selected for the Onassis Prize in 1997 out of 1470 and bagged the prize. Marginalization and separation are the themes of her writings. Her semi-autobiographical work '*Getting There*' depicts the plight of young woman illustrator in Bombay.

**Anita Rao Badami** is a writer of South Asia who settled in Canada. Her novels handle with intricacies of Indian family life, cultural gap that is encountered by the immigrants who settle in the west. *The Hero's Walk* was placed on the top five finalists for CBC Canada Reads Competition. The book, '*The Hero's Walk*' describes the problems in the family life and at last how peace evolved in the family.

**V.S.Naipaula** Nobel Laureate belongs to Trinidad born in a Hindu Brahmin family. Writer of Indian descent, popular for pessimistic themes. In the novel '*Area of Darkness*' he focusses on the post-Independence problems like poverty, caste system, neglected areas of sanitation and segregation by society. In '*A House for Mr Biswas*', Naipaul presents the sorry state of protagonist having house on his own. '*The Mimic Men*' criticises the newly liberated countries and individual's sense of identity.

**Kamala Markandeya** born in Mysore belongs to a Hindu family. She is not only a writer but journalist and activist too. Her marriage to English man, made her settle in London. During intervals, she used to make visits to India. Her ten novels are '*A Silence of Desire*', '*The Nowhere Man*', '*The Coffer Dams*', '*A Handful of Rice*', '*Possession*', '*Two Virgins*', '*The Pleasure city/Shalimar in the American Edition*' and '*The Golden Honey Comb*'. Her novel '*Nectar in a Sieve*' is translated into more than dozen languages with the theme, the pathetic plight of a poor peasant. Markandeya is ahead of twenty years in predicting the diasporic experiences in her work '*The Nowhere Man*'.

**Anita Desai** is an Indian writer and professor of Humanities at Massachusetts. Her name was shortlisted for the Booker Prize three times. Desai's novel, '*Fire on the Mountain*' won Sahitya Academy Award in the year 1978. Her works mainly focus on family in particular, matters about women. Clear light of the day presents the importance of family life. In the work *Custody*, she describes the problem of alienation of college teacher from his deep rooted culture. Anita is expert in handling literary technique, the stream of consciousness in the novel *Cry the peacock*. In another novel '*Bye Bye Black Bird*', she deals with the problem of adaptability; the theme of the story revolves around the three characters Aditi, Dev. and Sarah.

**Salman Rushdie** was born in India and studied at Cambridge in England. He is popularly known for his controversial works. His '*Satanic Verses*' was published amid controversy and violence. It has been banned in various countries. Death sentence was proclaimed against him by the then President of Pakistan. His themes are innovative and about migration and spiritual alienation.

**Meera Sayal** was born and brought up in an immigrant Punjabi family in England. Meera Sayal MBE is a British Indian comedian, writer, playwright, singer, journalist and actress. Her Punjabi-born parents came to Britain from New Delhi and she has risen to prominence as one of the most UK's best-known Indian personalities. She was awarded the MBE in the New Year's Honours List of 1997.

In '*The House of Hidden Mothers*', Meera Sayal, as an accomplished novelist, takes on the timely but underexplored issue of India's booming surrogacy industry. Western couple pays a young woman to have their child and then fly home with a baby, an easy narrative that ignores the complex emotions involved in carrying a child. Shyama, a forty-eight-year-old London divorcee, already has an unruly teenage daughter, but that doesn't stop her and her younger lover, Toby, from begetting a child together. Their relationship may look like a cliché. But despite the news from her doctor that she no longer has any viable eggs, Shyama's unfair pair is not ready to give up their dream of having a baby. So they decide to find an Indian surrogate to carry their child, which is how they meet Mala, a young woman trapped in an oppressive marriage in a small Indian town from which she's desperate to escape. But as



the pregnancy progresses, they discover that their simple arrangement may be far more complicated than it seemed.

**Meena Alexander** is an internationally acclaimed poet, writer and scholar. Born in Allahabad, India and brought up in India and Sudan. At present she lives in New York City. She is the author of numerous collections of poetry, essays, and works of fiction, literary memoirs and literary criticism.

Her novel '*NampallyRoad*' published in the year 1999 is haunting and lyrical. The novel *NampallyRoad* brightly portrays contemporary India a woman's struggle to cut together her past. In the middle of the novel she becomes the victim of the gang rape by the police. The people in that place rise up and burn the police station. The incidents in the novel resemble the recent tragic events in Delhi.

**Amit Chaudari** belongs to a new group of writers whose roots trace back to the post emergency period in India. Setting in his works is in India and in England. His themes are not revolutionary and turbulent but deals with city life servants, Indian culture and family life. Themes are close to diasporic experiences. His major works are '*A Strange and sublime Address*' (1991), '*Afternoon Raag*' (1993) '*Freedom Song*' (1998), '*A New World and Real Time*' (2002)

**Vikram Seth** became world famous through his novel '*A Suitable Boy*'. Setting of the novel is in a late post-independent India. The theme of the story is social and financial issues; a Hindu Mother who searches a suitable son in law for her daughter. It highlights the issues like land rights, inter religious marriages and identity crisis in sections. This novel is frequently compared to Leo Tolstoy's '*War and Peace*' by critics and reviewers.

**Kiran Desai** is an Indian author. Her novel '*The Inheritance of Loss*' won the 2006 Man Booker Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Fiction Award, is one of the most highly praised Indian writers of second generation. She grew up in India, the U.K. and the U.S.A. where she has settled down. Her debut novel, '*Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*' published has praised so much for its subtle portrayal of India. '*The Inheritance of loss*' eclipsed the first novel. This book won the Man Booker Prize in the year 2006 and received The National Book Critics Circle Fiction Award in the year 2007. Themes include post-colonialism and globalization as they relate to a modern India. It is considered a master piece of Indian literature in 21st century.

This extraordinary novel, long listed for the Man Booker prize and produces a strange effect. It is a lengthy novel that stretches from India to New York; an ambitious novel that reaches into the lives of the middle class and the very poor; an exuberantly written novel that blends colloquial and more literary styles; and yet it communicates nothing so much as how impossible it is to live a big, ambitious, exuberant life. Everything about it dramatizes the fact that although we live in this mixed-up, messy, globalised world, for many people the dominant response is fear of change, based on a deep desire for security.

**Sunetra Gupta** Bengali born settled in London, who spent her childhood in Ethiopia, Zambia and Liberia. Her debut novel '*Memories of Rain*' published in 1992 won her Sahitya Academy Award in 1996. Her works mainly present stream of consciousness style entering on the interior monologues of the characters. Her writings reflect cultures, histories and



human understanding and considerations. Her fiction moves the central preoccupation of diasporic writings from the crisis of uniqueness to the mapping of a process of experience and feeling.

In 'Memories of Rain', plot from beginning to the end is concentrated within the span of a single day. On that day, Moni, an Indian woman who had come to England after having married the English Anthony, decides to leave her untrustworthy husband and returns to India with her daughter. The association between Moni and Anthony presents regular paraphernalia of cross-cultural differences and racism, with the responsibility of 'originality' reversed and applied implicitly to cold England.

However, writing is not something that we encounter everyday: almost no period as the prose seems to mimic the rain, sometimes it's a downpour like when Anthony and Moni meet and fall in love. Sometimes, it is light like when Moni is feeding the doves in England and putting water in the bird bath and she remembers her grandmother's words.

## CONCLUSION

The list of Diaspora writers is very lengthy and elaborative. The roots of Diaspora spreading from time to time had been representing their home land culture and their nostalgia through their works. The readers of such literature sporadically experience different and relatively unpalatable trends of life in alien lands. At times, they even identify themselves with protagonists and other influential characters in the works. The fundamental element and innate soul in ordinary Indian families under no circumstances are eclipsed by almost all writers. The indissoluble attachment to one's ground and roots is the common under current in all works.

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