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## Indian diasporic literature in English- An offshoot of globalisation

Neha Nandal

Research Scholar, Department of English & Foreign Languages, M.D.U., Rohtak, Haryana, India

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### Abstract

The Indian diaspora is the second largest diaspora in the world after the Chinese. There are at least 26 million Indians living in diaspora today. And, what marks them as diasporic community is what we think of as home consciousness, which is the awareness that they have a home in the land they have left behind and they have a home in the new land that they have adopted. They may be first; second or third generation diasporics but most of them still retain their home consciousness. This home consciousness is what leads to either a hybrid or a hyphenated identity amongst diasporic Indians. It leads them to search for their roots and this is what they write about; this is what diasporic literature written by Indians is all about. The paper focuses on what is diaspora (its origin) and how the concept of home, exile, memory, identity and globalisation gets represented in the works of a handful of Indian diasporic writers.

**Keywords:** diaspora writers, literature, home consciousness, identity, globalisation

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### Introduction

“Diaspora” (from the Greek word for “scattering”) refers to a scattered population whose origin lies within a smaller geographic locale or it can also refer to the movement of the population from its original homeland. Generally, the term diasporic literature is defined by the works that are written by authors who live outside their native land. But it may also be defined by its contents, regardless of where it was written. For example, the story of Joseph is often called a “diasporic story” because although its final form was written within the land of Israel, it describes how Joseph learns to survive outside his homeland. The book of Job, also considered being an example of diaspora literature because it was written in the wake of the Babylonian destruction, which gave rise to the question, why would God punish Israel, the chosen people, with such mass suffering?

Indian diaspora consists of individuals that each has their own sense of being Indian and what being Indian means for their lives. This includes how they feel towards other NRIs, in what way they integrate the Indian culture into their lives, whether they feel comfortable living in the western world or dream of returning to India, whether they appreciate their “otherness” or will try to hide it. The sense of homelessness which every immigrant suffers is genuine and intense; but in recent times it has been seen that this concept has been minimized and made less intense through their social networking and sense of solidarity. This aspect can be described in Bhiku Parekh words: The diasporic Indian is “like the banyan tree, the traditional symbol of the Indian way of life, he spreads out his roots in several soils, drawing nourishment from one when the rest dry up. Far from being homeless, he has several homes, and that is the only way he increasingly comes to feel at home in the world” (Bhikhu 1994) <sup>[1]</sup>.

The fundamental features of the diasporic writings deals with alienation, displacement, existential rootlessness, nostalgia and quest of identity. It also focuses on issues related to amalgamation or disintegration of cultures. Diaspora is also a socio-cultural construction of an identity based on nationalistic sentiments, political affiliations, and religious belief. It is mediated by processes of migration, mobility, globalization, historical contingency, the media and governments. Most of the Indian diasporic literature deals with the issue of identity. The question of: Who am I? Where do I belong? Am I West Indian or Am I still an Indian? Am I British or Am I Indian, Am I American or Am I Indian. These are questions that haunt the diasporic writers. Postcolonial meta theorist Homi. K. Bhabha sees hybridity as a Third Space in the context of diasporics. The diasporic writers turn to their homeland for various reasons, for example V.S. Naipaul who is in a continuous quest for his roots turns to India for the same. Salman Rushdie visits India to mythologise its history whereas Rohinton Mistry visits India to re-energize his aching soul. All the same it is essential to realize the importance of cultural encounter, the bicultural pulls which finally help in the emergence of the new culture.

Modern diaspora have been greatly influenced by the advent of mass media and the innovations in communication technologies. Media and communication technologies are an integral aspect of globalization. Such technology allows for real time communication in addition to time-space compression allowing for more frequent communication with the, “homeland”. Therefore, the importance of (relatively) new technologies in facilitating transnationalism should not be undermined. Thus, media is an active agent in the construction of a diasporic identity and parallelly provides diasporic communities with the opportunity to construct alternative and empowering discourses, an opportunity earlier unavailable to them.

The feeling of longing for the old homeland is most clearly expressed in the poetry of the Indian Fijian poet Sudesh Mishra. Mishra has in his poems use Hindi poetries Bidesia tradition. Bidesia being one who is foreigner, he writes about beloved who has been left behind by the lover and who longs for him, as he has become Bidesia or foreigner. In Mishra's poetry though this strategy of inversion makes the old Indian homeland Des and the man who has left the Des becomes the Bidesia the foreigner for which the poet in the guise of the beloved longs for and calls his Bidesia home.

Sanjena Sathian is an American novelist and journalist, raised by Indian immigrant parents. Her debut novel *Gold Diggers* deals with the theme of immigrant identity, community, and the underside of ambition. It centers on Neil Narayan, a second-generation teenager growing up in Atlanta, who falls for his neighbour Anita Dayal. However, Anita and her mother have been making an ancient alchemical potion from stolen gold that binds the ambition of the jewelry's original owner. The work is a great example of social satire and magic realism, aiming on the idea that what a community must do to attain the American dream.

As a British-Indian writer, Sunjeev Sahota dwells on the dualities of identity and belonging. His novels foregrounds the struggles and anxieties of people grappling with desires:- for home, love or freedom. In the Booker-longlisted *China Room*, Sahota harvests his own family history; the woman protagonist in the novel is based on his great-grandmother, a part of family lore passed down through generations. She married into a family of four brothers but remained clueless about the identity of her husband till she saw him cradling their child. In the novel two characters, living more than half a century apart but united by the ties of blood, try to escape oppression of various kinds. The novel foretells a shattering tragedy that lies at its heart.

The writers of the Indian diaspora write about India; painting the vastness and the intricacies of the homeland which contains everything in multitudes- multiple truths, multiple realities and this diversity is portrayed for the readers who experience different and relatively unpalatable trends of life in foreign lands. If examined positively, diasporic literature can also help to fight larger evils such as terrorism, drug trafficking, environment degradation, combating the spread of contagious disease and various other political and social hurdles. Viewing at it optimistically, diasporic literature also helps in spreading values, virtues and universal peace.

### Conclusion

To conclude we can say that diaspora is an expedition towards self-recognition, self-realization, self-knowledge and self-definition.

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