Re-theorising the Indian Subcontinental Diaspora:

Old and New Directions

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Edited by
Nilanjana Chatterjee
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The idea for this book came in the form of a conversation that we had while teaching Jhumpa Lahiri during a semester at Durgapur Government College in 2018. After several discussions with our friends from the Department of History and Economics (who later agreed to contribute to our book), we decided that there were still some areas which were yet to be explored and written about, especially from an Indian subcontinental perspective. We wanted to listen to the roars, murmurs, and even the silence of Indian subcontinental diasporians who, despite being geographically, historically, physically, and psychologically, distant from the Indian subcontinent, are connected to their homelands in both explicit and implicit ways. We talked to our friends and colleagues, teachers and scholars about the idea, and thereupon decided to co-edit a book charting the cartography of Indian subcontinental diaspora in various forms. Besides our own friendships, we were fortunate enough to have constant support and encouragement from Himadri Lahiri, Subhajit Sengupta, and Sharbani Banerjee. Useful suggestions were offered by many whose goodwill has continually enriched us. Angshuman Kar helped us to understand the cultural nuances of 're-migration' and therefore we were able to identify this phenomenon in many of our chapters, and to examine the causes and consequences of it. Paramita Dutta showed us another interesting aspect of New Indian sub-continental Diaspora as she shared her knowledge about the concept of deterritorialized existence, with special reference to the Indo-Canadian poet Rupi Kaur, and her online existence with a huge following on Instagram. Yes, Sri Lanka is an integral part of the Indian subcontinent, but we found ourselves in unsettled terrain when it came to the understanding of the nature of Sri Lankan diaspora and its complex history. Soumi Goswami came to our rescue and provided us with valuable insights into the history and literature of Sri Lankan diaspora. When we approached Cambridge Scholars Publishing with our proposal and they responded positively, we were elated, excited, and nervous at the same time. When we finally decided to proceed with our research, we eventually discovered how difficult a task it actually was. It took us quite some time to accumulate all the papers from the eminent scholars and teachers who responded to our call, and took time out of their busy schedules to write for us. We would like to sincerely thank each one of them.

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INTRODUCTION

NILANJANA CHATTERJEE
AND ANINDITA CHATTERJEE

The term 'diaspora' generally refers to a community or group of people living outside their country of origin. However, what exactly comes within the trajectory of 'diaspora' has been the subject of extensive debate. This is because discourses on diaspora tend to overlap with discourses on exilic experiences or colonial and postcolonial migrations, all of which form an integral part of cultural representations. Sudesh Mishra has coined the term 'diaspoetics' (7) to signify the proliferation of diaspora studies as a field and mode of study in its own right. Initially, diaspora studies tried to stress issues related to the social, economic, and political, adaptation processes of various diaspora groups to the host land, the problems faced while upholding their indigenous ethnicity and culture, and their constant longing for the homeland. But with the passage of time, the narratives of purity and rootedness have been questioned. Diasporic discourses have been initiated to subvert the nationalist constructs of belonging which tried to connect body and space in harmoniously perfected accounts of blood and family with land and territory. The increasingly noticeable diasporic movements of the 20th century, as identified by Khachig Tölölyan, include groups as disparate as "ethnics, exiles, expatriates, refugees, asylum seekers, labor migrants, queer communities, domestic service workers, executives of transnational corporations, and transnational sex workers" ("The Contemporary Discourses of Diaspora Studies", 648). Considering the growth and wide range of the discourse of diaspora in the early 1990s, Clifford calls for a "polythetic definition" of the term—one that addresses the multiplicity of diaspora and reaches beyond the narrow theorization of diaspora as a scattered community around a single point of origin or homeland. Moreover, in keeping with the rapid advances made in cybertechnology, academicians are also taking into account "deterritorialized diaspora[s]" (Cohen 1997, 8). Interestingly, the definitions, meanings, and uses of the term 'diaspora' have been explored, argued, and demonstrated, by various scholars in various ways in the global context. Old and newer

uses of diaspora have confirmed how the term has evolved over time, and yet remained a dominant marker for studying people who live outside their home country.

Theorizing Diaspora[1]

From its Greek roots, *diaspora*[2] means to disperse, or 'sow across'. In the early 1930s, academicians applied the term only to the Jewish, Armenian, and Greek diasporas. Tölölyan refers to them as the three classical diasporas, in his *Rethinking Diaspora*(s). Based on this model, early diaspora studies inferred that dispersal is caused by forced exile from the homeland to which natives wish to return sooner or later. William Safran, in his article, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return", first published in 1991, characterises diasporas largely by the relationship between the dispersed people and the 'original homeland' to which, unlike the gypsies, they expect, or at least hope to return (Safran 1991, 83) Though the stress is on the return to the homeland, he does not clearly mention the exact raison d'être behind migrations, that is, his description does not make a distinction between forced and voluntary dispersal. On the other hand, Cohen, in *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (1997) makes certain classifications of diasporas—namely, 'victim,', 'labour', 'trade', 'imperial', and 'cultural' (Cohen 1997, 26-29), which differ from each other, not only on the basis of forced and voluntary dispersal, but also on the basis of conditions of acceptance and adaptation. For example, the occasions that brought about the early dispersal of the African diasporians differ from the occasions that brought about the early dispersal of the South Asian diasporians from their indigenous homelands. Therefore, the challenges which the African and the South Asian diasporians face, while struggling to acculturate to their land of immigration, are different; they become subject to completely different modes of diaspora politics.

While Safran emphasises the physical return to the homeland, Tölölyan considers diasporic existence and experience as not essentially involving a physical return, but to some extent a 're-turn', that is "a repeated turning to the concept and/or relation of the homeland and other diasporian kin" (Tololyan, 14). What Tölölyan calls attention to, is the condition where permanent physical return to one's homeland is not compulsory for fitting into the typology of diaspora. Rather, he argues, several other forms of correspondences or associations with the homeland may exist within the diasporic fraternity. In fact, Stuart Hall, in critiquing the Negritude

movement,[3] goes on to say that, while searching for diasporic identity, one needs not induce "some sacred homeland" to which one must return "even if it means pushing other people into the sea" (Hall (year), 401). He considers this kind of cultural and racial identity of a diasporian as an orthodox, imperializing, and hegemonizing, form of ethnicity. Moreover, Hall eliminates homeland from the nucleus of diaspora, in connection with the Negritude Movement, in order to free diaspora from an essentialist mode of classification and, thereby, exclusion. Rather, he intends to acknowledge diaspora as a challenge to the racially prejudiced British construction of the nation and its inhabitants. Likewise, Paul Gilroy's perception of the Black Atlantic[4] also removes the option of returning to the homeland, and instead, lays emphasis on the multicultural aspects of the diasporic communities. According to James Clifford, the "centering of diasporas around an axis of return" rejects the possibility of "local interactions (both identifications and 'mis-identifications,' both constructive and defensive)" (Clifford, 322), which is an integral part of diasporic social formation and evolution. He recognizes diasporas as breeding grounds of multicultural activities and identity formations, and envisages diaspora as exceeding a "teleology of origin/return" (Clifford, 306). Even, Gilroy (who considers forced dispersal, like Jewish and African diasporas, as an essential factor) also believes in "the social dynamics of remembrance and commemoration" which is defined by "a strong sense of the dangers involved in forgetting the location of origin and the tearful process of dispersal" (Gilroy, 123-124). Therefore, he dissociates Zionism[5] and Hindutva[6] from diaspora, considering them as conservative and essentialist in nature.

Evidently, diasporic discourses (erected upon multiculturalism, postcoloniality, globalization and cultural studies) work against tropes of nation-state, like Zionism and Hindutva, where connection between a place and a people is established on the basis of purity and belonging, blood and soil. The Jewish scholars Jonathan Boyarin and Daniel Boyarin, in *Diaspora: Generational Ground for Jewish Identity* consider such kinds of nation and territory-based discourse as evidently racialized and exclusionary in nature. Instead, they try to locate diasporic hybridity and cultural difference as strategies of resistance against the assertion of legitimacy and purity in connection to territorial dominion. In fact, Gilroy, in *The Black Atlantic,* considers the diasporic history of slavery and its inheritance as a counter history to the modern discourse of the nation-state. Therefore, Gilroy and the Boyarins strategically do away with the homeland in order to address issues related to heterogeneous communities and cultural differences, contributing towards the productivity of diasporic displacements.

Based on Derrida's concept of difference, and Gramsci's concept of heterogeneity, Hall holds up cultural hybridity and heterogeneity of diasporic identities which are "constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (Hall, 401). These identities can never be eternally fixed in some restricted past, as they are subjected to continuous play of history, culture and power.

At the moment of the postmodern era, migration walks hand in hand with globalization and hypermobility. People travel from one end of the globe to the other, with modern means of communication like aeroplanes, telephone, e-mail, the internet, videocassettes, DVDs, video-links and webcams. Therefore, according to Vijay Mishra, in a thoroughly global world with an open market system, the act of displacement makes diasporic subjects "travellers on the move" (Mishra, 4), and their idea of homeland includes the simulacral world of visual media, discarding the earlier option of imagining their homelands through letters and cultural fetishes for objects like icons, outfits, photographs, etc., attached to their homelands. In fact, 'homeland' can now be accessed from any corner of the world and is just a finger tap away. In short, networking now takes over from the imaginary. Today's flexible human beings find these modes of travel and communication, which operate across several nation-states in a transnational space, extremely helpful. But this is only part of the story. Even when we talk about the fluidity of hyphenated identity of a diasporian, say, a Canadian Indian or a British Asian, we are at least ascribing an in-between space, which is restricted to two nation-states, where homeland and host land can be distinctly identified. But there are diasporians who have grown up in one nation-state which is not their ancestral land, and further settled in a different nation-state. For them, the very concept of homeland is volatile and complicated. Often, diasporians may even choose to migrate from one host land to another in search of better opportunities and, thus, the very notion of host land is highly unstable. Their identities, for obvious reasons, cannot be fixed with one single hyphen, as they have multiple belongings and cultural affiliations. While some of them have no connections with their ancestral home, some are attached to their ancestral land by a sacred thread of religion. There are also people who are very culturally and emotionally attached to their ancestral land. A diasporian's level of attachment with the homeland is highly relative, and depends upon several factors, such as to which generation, to which family, or to which point of time, does s/he belong in the history of diaspora, or in which age s/he has migrated to a different nation-state, etc. Equally fluid is a diasporian's connection to the nation-state where s/he has grown up. Thus, in a postmodern age, identity has

become highly slippery, and for a diasporian, it cannot be divided merely between the homeland and the host land. There are also diasporians who have illegally established themselves abroad, and whose identity is neither global nor (hyper)mobile. Their conditions are somewhat similar to people under indenture. Their attachments to the host land and homeland are highly problematic, as they are stuck to the nation-state of the host land due to a lack of valid passports. Therefore, as Vijay Mishra quite pertinently observes, "All diasporas are unhappy, but every diaspora is unhappy in its own way" (Mishra, 1). However, there is one emotion that, perhaps, every diasporian shares, and that is his/her perception of the homeland, which, when not available in any stable sense, exists as an absence. This palpable absence gathers cultural significance as time passes. The acceptance/rejection of this absence influences a diasporian's identity formation.

In the postmodern era, appropriations of diasporian identities have taken place with the rapid expansion of cyber technology, where dispersed individuals and communities are rapidly forming networks around various points of filiation. Robin Cohen has suggested the possibility of thinking about "deterritorialized diaspora[s]" to signify the extent to which "space has become re-inscribed by cyberspace" (Cohen, 8). The growing accessibility of online databases has brought the world closer, and has greatly influenced the transnational affiliations and connections. Moreover, diaspora has introduced a cyber receptivity and responsiveness among the people all round the globe who habitually interact, exchange, switch over, replace, and restore cultural practices, and this has ushered in a complex age of digitalised virtual diaspora where everyone, irrespective of actual displacement, is a part of everyday diasporic experiences. Sukanya Banerjee, in her Introduction to *New Routes for Diaspora Studies*, talks about the decentralized social networking service called DIASPORA. Like other networking sites, this networking site helps to maintain a connectivity across the globe. In the 21st century, it is impossible to generalize and make water-tight the divisions between the diasporic origins, identities, territories, and entities.

What, therefore, we can do in present day diaspora studies, is to address this multiplicity of cultural identities and global histories of geographical and cultural movements, and to identify different factors that mediate these complex identities and histories. Angshuman Kar, in *Contemporary Indian Diaspora*, identifies four significant parameters of diaspora. Along with Safran's concept of homeland and religion, he includes ethnicity and language as two other significant constituents of diasporic identity which try to negotiate with the changing circumstances of a diasporian that

intersect and diverge from time to time, depending on the situation and subjectivity of the individual. Other than these factors, gender and generation also play significant roles in the identity formation of a diasporian. Scott considers diaspora as "an obscure miracle of connection" (Scott *Refashioning Futures*, 106),[7] to emphasise the mutually elusive and evident history of diaspora that brings together communities which are not altogether nation, or race, or religion, or wistful homesickness, or linguistics, or ethnicity, and yet may, or may not have something to do with nation, race, religion, ethnicity, language, and longings for homeland. All we can do is remain open to the evolutions of the term 'diaspora' by remaining aware of its continued possibilities. We need to maintain an equilibrium between over-expansion of it into too-voluminous an umbrella term, so that it does not include any kind of mobility, and over-crystallization of it into too narrow a term, so that it does not exclude the multiple angles of diasporic movements and conditions.

Indian Subcontinental Diaspora and its Representation

History provides several instances of Indian subcontinental migrations beyond the subcontinent which conform to multiple incarnations of the definition of diaspora. Rai and Reeves divide South Asian diaspora into two distinct phases—the 'old' diaspora, born out of the age of colonial capital and the 'new' diaspora, formed by people closely connected to the massive changes that have taken place in the ongoing age of globalisation (Rai and Reeves, 3). Such a division is true in case of the Indian subcontinental diaspora as well. Various groups including Indian slaves abroad, the exilic prisoners from the subcontinent to penal settlements in various parts of the Indian Ocean, the employed manual workers through indenture during the colonial era, traders, imperial auxiliaries, 'free' (qtd. in Rai and Reeves, 2) migrants and long-term migrant professionals have started migrating from the Indian Subcontinent since the early 19th century. Both elite and subaltern diasporians belong to different positions and conditions, which are often contradictory. Obviously, every Indian subcontinental diasporic community has not been through equal degrees of oppression or suffering at the time of dislocation. For diasporians such as slaves, the indentured or convicts, the experience of dislocation and the subsequent understanding of the diaspora was evidently different from that of a contemporary diasporian who has migrated to Silicon Valley in search of greener pastures.

The movement of people from the Indian subcontinental origin to other parts of the world might have begun long before colonialism, but it is through colonialism that the present familiar diasporic patterns have come into existence. Sandhya Shukla in *India Abroad* informs us that the scarcity of labour supply in sugar and other agricultural productions, due to the abolition of African slavery in 1834, led to the movement of these people from home to places like Mauritius, Malaya, Burma, Ceylon, Reunion, Jamaica, Trinidad, Martinique, British Guiana, Natal, and elsewhere. Some of them became a part of England's population from the late 1700s to the mid-1800s as underclass labourers, lascars, nannies or household servants. By the late 1800s, agriculturalists from Punjab travelled to the newly developing North America, and attached themselves to fishing industries, railroads and agriculture as labourers. Sandhya Shukla mentions of a small number of Indians who entered North America in the early 1900s for academic, business, or religious purposes. The influence of Thoreau upon Gandhi, Gandhi's writings upon Martin Luther King Jr., or the visit of Swami Vivekananda to Chicago World's Fair (1893) prove that the intellectual people of the Indian subcontinent were also travelling across the globe. Some people also went to Washington during that time to work as manual labourers. This movement continued, to various parts of the world, in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. However, the British maintained an "elaborate system of surveillance" (Shukla, 40) over the diasporic movements to repress any form of extremism. It was Indian Independence in 1947 which greatly influenced the diasporian consciousness for both contemporary and future migrants. Pakistan was established on 14 August 1947, including the Muslim-majority eastern and northwestern regions of British India. In the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, East Pakistan broke away and emerged as an independent nation, Bangladesh. From the 1960s, qualified people from the Indian subcontinent migrated to Western countries in search of better academic career and job opportunities. The *Encyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora* (2006) informs us that the mid-20th century saw the beginning of a change in the pattern of Indian migration. For the first time, people from the subcontinent went to the metropolitan centres "at the heart of the Empire-Commonwealth" instead of the colonial periphery (66). While earlier migration to the United Kingdom was chiefly in search of manual labour and livelihood prospects, over the last three decades of the 20th century, it became a steady flow to the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand—all of which were economies looking for highly skilled, trained, qualified, and professional migrants. These migrants, who came to the host lands in the late 20th century changed the essential nature of the Indian

Subcontinental diaspora by introducing high levels of skill and commercial elegance to their host society.

In the case of Sri Lankan diaspora, the migration pattern is somewhat different. The early forms of this diaspora took place during the pre-colonial era, as Sri Lankans migrated to South, South East, and East Asia, either for religious or for secular interests. While the Buddhist and Christian groups migrated for religious purposes, the secular groups migrated for economic reasons. Like the Indian diaspora, the beginning of modern Sri Lankan diaspora was engendered by British colonialism in Sri Lanka, as people emigrated from British Ceylon to countries like Malaysia and Singapore during this period. By the 19th and the early 20th century, a large number of Sri Lankans were brought to South and South East Asian countries to work as labourers for railway construction or plantations. Merchants and financiers also emigrated during this period. Moreover, English education under British rule engendered the emigration of skilled labourers like civil administrators, doctors, lawyers, teachers, and students, for better career opportunities. After 1948, there was a slow and steady outflow of post-Independence professionals and students who emigrated to Europe, North America, and Australia, in search of better career prospects. Due to political instability and violence, the next two to three decades observed the maximum outflow of the educated middle class to destination countries like Australia, the UK, the US, and Canada.

The worldwide recognition of the economic, political, and social importance of the Indian subcontinental diaspora has led to a parallel growth in the field of literature based on issues related to the lived experiences of diasporians. Fiction writers have attempted works on these lived experiences by adopting an interdisciplinary approach, drawing mainly from cartographical, historical, economic, political, ethnical, and ethnological sources. Their fiction chiefly narrates the causes that trigger diasporic movement, or a series of movements, the unrelenting connection between host land and homeland, the emergence of complex diasporian identities constructed from the negotiation of cultural values carried from the homeland, and the generational differences and the multicultural environment of host societies. With the advent of electronic and satellite communications, recent diasporian trends have given a completely new dimension to the nature of connectedness between host land and homeland, something unthinkable in earlier times. According to Nalini Natarajan, the 20th century diasporic experiences become “significantly more complex and ambivalent than the earlier ones” (Natarajan, xiii) and all these have been reflected in the fiction of the Indian subcontinental

writers. For example, the Indian-Canadian poet and global youth icon Rupi Kaur fits into Vijay Mishra's designation of 'new' Indian diaspora.[8] Interestingly, she has a large virtual presence and voice, as she is an Insta-poet with 2.2 million followers on Instagram. This diasporic spoken word poet and performer's online existence is fluid because it is marked by the intermingling of forms and overlapping of positions and trajectories in space and time. Kaur's immigrant experience and connection with her roots, which emerge from her two collections of poems; *milk and honey,* and *the sun and her flowers*, (written in the lower case as a tribute to the Gurmukhi script), show how in this age of globalisation, the internet has influenced and contributed to her process of identity formation.

Wherever the Indian subcontinental diasporians have migrated, they have carried with them the social, religious, and cultural practices (as they remember or are taught) of their homelands which are reflected in private and public domains. Consequently, Indian subcontinental religious and cultural markers, like restaurants, movies, music, and fashion, are a common sight all over the world. In many cosmopolitan cities, entire localities have been transformed into what might be called 'mini-Indias' (*The Pragmatist Imaginations*, 249) or 'Banglatown' (*The London Encyclopaedia,* 91), where one can easily acquire Indian subcontinental goods and enter into a recognisable subcontinental setting. However, according to Rai and Reeves, the communities themselves are confronted by major questions: what identity can a community, be it united or segmented, preserve? What common features of the group are most important to preserve a sense of community identification? How will the community deal with changes that originate from adjustment to the new society in which the community is now living, and of which it has inevitably to be a part? Equally intriguing is the manner in which an individual within the community adjusts to, and deals with, the issues related to identity formation. Kar, in this context, talks of "multiple parameters" that intersect but never negate each other (Kar, 3). He explains this by citing the case of a Bengali diasporian in the US, whose multiple identities (as a South Asian, Indian, and Hindu/Muslim diasporian) converge and disperse to give birth to a prismatic form of identity, characteristic of a diasporian alone. It is this prismatic or hyphenated identity, according to Vijay Mishra, that a diasporian seeks to explore, but that s/he will possibly not "press the hyphen too far for fear that this would lead to massive communal schizophrenia" (Mishra, 1). Then there are issues beyond these immediate concerns: How can the sense of identity be passed to succeeding generations? Will the succeeding generations, who may come under increasing pressure to adapt to the host land's demands, be able to

preserve the cultural flair required to sustain their diasporic identities? To Rai and Reeves, these questions were – and are – essential issues for diasporic communities (Rai and Reeves, 6). But even if the community successfully deals with them, the host society might be ill at ease with the surfacing of new social entities in its midst. These social and cultural dynamics of diasporic conditions have received great attention in contemporary scholarly literatures.

Although the writers of the Indian subcontinental diaspora come from different backgrounds (be it religious, social, historical, or cultural) and write of their respective indigenous experiences and perspectives, there are some common issues that emerge out of their writings: experiences of immigration, memories of their homeland, an ambivalent perspective towards the newly arrived land (a sense of simultaneous dislocation and relocation), the gendered nature of the diaspora space, problems of assimilation and its intersection with traditionalist ideologies, intergenerational conflicts, etc. There are, again, debates on who could be considered Indian subcontinental diaspora fiction writers,[9] and what are the common features of the Indian subcontinental diaspora writing. Is the term 'Indian subcontinental diaspora writings' apt enough to incorporate all kinds of writers, such as those who left India between 1875 and 1947 for other parts of the British Empire such as Britain, Fiji, South Africa, the Caribbean, or writers who left India for other parts of the world after 1947, or writers who frequently shuffle between homeland and host land? Should the term 'Indian subcontinental diaspora writers' include another group of writers who deal with diasporic experiences in languages other than English? Can the term be used to accommodate all the above groups of writers? Equally baffling is the question regarding what the theme of 'Indian subcontinental diaspora writings' should be — should they necessarily deal with Indian subcontinental cultural issues, should they always write on the theme of angst and trauma of cultural alienation? and so on. Whatever the case, watertight compartmentalisation of Indian subcontinental diaspora writings is neither viable nor essential. In this book, therefore, we have strategically included chapters that deal with the overlapping experiences of serial diaspora, such as Indo-Caribbean-Canadian and Chinese-Indian-Canadian diaspora, or Sri Lankan-Canadian migration followed by remigration, in order to address the intrinsic, but implicit, cultural nuances of Indian subcontinental diaspora. We have also incorporated the English translation of Sukirat's Punjabi text "Jalawatan" (Exile) to make visible the hidden predicaments of Indian-American lesbians, as lived in the homeland and host land.

The Book and Its Issues

While migrating from the homeland for various reasons, people of Indian subcontinental origin maintain parallel identities and the intention to negotiate between their homeland and the host land, the local and the transnational. What is evident from the huge body of research associated with Indian subcontinental diaspora is that it involves a sense of simultaneous relocation and dislocation which can be self-willed or forced, or can include both. Contemporary researchers seek to investigate and analyse this diasporic location in order to understand the hyphenated individuals and communities who are in the process of metamorphosing and evolving into hybrid identities. They chiefly focus on the notions of loss of homeland, and longing for it, a sense of alienation in new land, fixities, sacrifices, adversities, compromises, and redefining identity. But this book is not just about the people of Indian subcontinental origin who are emotionally connected to their homeland, and contribute in terms of ideas and services to their host land. As Indian readers, we also look closely at the economic, political, historical, social, and cultural interactions between the sending country and the migrants, as they make significant contributions in terms of ideas and services. Against the background of the current trends of Indian subcontinental migration, this book includes chapters which take a multidisciplinary approach in order to understand issues that remain outside the fixed perspective of any one area of expertise. Both established and new scholars have taken diverse chronological, methodological, and disciplinary routes to look at Indian subcontinental diaspora from different vantage points. The book incorporates chapters that deal with old trajectories from new perspectives and identify certain new trends in Indian subcontinental diaspora, thereby inviting readers to become involved in multidirectional discussion, and open the debate of the contested, rather than settled, notion of this migratory pattern.

In "Introduction: Diaspora in the New Age", Sahoo and Pattanaik encourage the scholars to look at practical issues of diaspora (Sahoo and Pattanaik, 2) by examining its contemporary economic, social, and cultural context. We have consciously incorporated chapters that look at Indian subcontinental diaspora from socioeconomic, cultural, and historical perspectives. Debasish Chakraborty's chapter investigates the socio-economic impact of the process of emigration in shaping the Indian economy. It sets up the context of this book by answering the fundamental question; why, as Indian scholars, is it necessary for us to trace cultural responses and representations of migrants of Indian subcontinental origin?

We know that literary and cultural preferences are related to economic outcomes. We need to understand that Indian subcontinental diaspora has been beneficial in certain ways for the domestic economy through the process of remittances. In fact, Chakraborty argues, that in 2017 alone, over 25 million Indian migrants have spread across various countries of the world, sending over 113 million USD as remittances. For a developing country like India, this massive inflow of remittances has a seminal role in achieving India's millennium development goals (MDGs). Reduction of wage inequality, and solving the unemployment problem, to certain extent, for a labour-surplus country like India, are amongst the positive effects of this diasporic movement. Chakraborty therefore argues, that although a 'brain drain'- the emigration of India's rich human capital - has an adverse effect on the Indian economy, Indian diaspora undoubtedly has a significant role to play for the economy of its homeland. Gargi Banerjee identifies certain economic factors that led contemporary women of Indian origin to migrate to America over the last two decades. She also identifies the recent challenges faced by these women in their host society, especially with the advent of the new immigration laws. She also examines the gender distribution pattern of Indian American migrants to analyse their economic transition.

Arpita Bose gives a historical explanation of the recent trend that we have been able to notice in the Indian subcontinental diaspora by narrativising the emigration pattern of Chinese-Indian migrants to Canada. She not only traces the trajectories of the doubly-displaced Chinese-Indian-Canadian migrants, but also identifies certain issues related to their notion of home and identity. These Chinese migrants, who began to arrive in India in the late 18th century, temporarily settled in various cities of India, considering Calcutta as their favourite destination; 'the paradise of fortune'. However, their immigration pattern had changed by the first half of the 19th century, as a considerable number of Chinese were forced to take refuge in Calcutta from 1920 to 1930. The news of economic success in India, along with political turbulence in their homeland, led Chinese immigrants to settle in India during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. The establishment of Chinese temples, schools, clubs, shops, restaurants, bazaars, and even opium dens in Calcutta bears testimony to the slow and steady settlement of the Chinese community in India. After the 1962 Indo-China border dispute, the Chinese migrants started to apply for Indian citizenship, and after a great legal battle with the Indian Government, they were granted Indian citizenship in 1992. As a result, their new identity as 'Indian Chinese' was formed. However, in recent times, many of the settlers are emigrating to places like Toronto or Canada, where they are identified as Chinese-

Indian-Canadian immigrants. Bose argues that, despite their Chinese origin, their social ties with India still remain.

Within the dynamics of Indian subcontinental diaspora, writers, as privileged international informants, represent their diasporic experiences through their writings. Certain questions remain, however. For example, how far are these representations authentic? Moreover, as Indian readers, should we accept or reject these representations, and why? Kar, in "Literary and Cultural Representations of Indian Diaspora: New Perspectives", argues that both Indian diaspora writings, and Indian writings with diaspora dimensions, need to be analysed, not just to understand Indian diaspora writers' negotiations with globalized and transnational forces, but also to understand our own position on a global map. He argues:

> We cannot, and should not, reject a text that offers nothing other than Indian-bashing as the reasons for the bashing - and the mentality that produces the bashing needs to be studied. This should not mean an invitation to an uncritical celebration of Indian diaspora and its cultural representations. Neither does it mean that the cultural representations of Indian diaspora are important only as cultural sites, and are above aesthetic judgement (8-9).

In this book, we have incorporated chapters where scholars have critically looked at Indian Subcontinental diaspora writings, and examined the representational strategies used to describe the homeland, the host land, or the space in-between.

Nandi and Basu have explored literary and filmic representations of the 1947 inheritance of simultaneous loss and gain coupled with the Partition of India. Nandi contextualises Salman Rushdie's fictional work to look at the predicament of a post-independent Indian who inherits a tradition of loss and separation in the form of cultural and historical absence. Nandi factors in this double inheritance as the foundation of a national identity which is built on political and ideological coalitions on the one hand, and communal/cultural conflicts on the other. These tendencies originate from the intersection of contradictory postcolonial conditions - western liberal democracy and sub-cultural conflicts in post independent India. Moreover, the tendencies lead to a new socio-political dialectics of simultaneous harmony and violence. The nature of harmony is an apparent and ideological one, pillaring upon partisanism and political representation, a temperament derived from the Western model of liberal democracy. Nandi argues that this double-bound narrative of harmony and violence eventually leads to a

fragmented representation of a post-colonial Indian and the poetics/politics that s/he embodies. Debasri Basu examines films on the Partition of India rendered by filmmakers having Indian subcontinental roots. Her chapter includes films by Deepa Mehta, Vic Sarin, and Gurinder Chadha, which have elicited distinctive portrayals of this seminal event and its aftermath on celluloid. Basu argues that, while the corpus of homegrown movies on this topic in the vernacular [including Hindi, Bengali, Punjabi and Urdu] target mainly local viewers, the three English movies are produced, in collaboration with international financiers, to cater to a global audience with diverse tastes and expectations. Therefore, the makers have to tread a particularly fine line in the course of handling the subject, bearing in mind the web of contested nationalities which ineluctably casts its long shadow on a theme as contentious as Partition. Moreover, their respective locus, coupled with the filmmaking ethos, assumes vital significance in this context, for it combines the dual vision of their current diasporic consciousness with that of their ethnic identity. Within the dynamic of intricate negotiations that such filmic ventures entail upon their directors, Basu also explores the complex in-betweenness of the diasporic filmmakers and their twofold intellection.

Sanjoy Malik's chapter uses a close reading of Meena Alexander's poems to explore the three-day inter-communal violence that took place during the 2002 Gujarat riot. After the demolition of the Babri Masjid on 6 December 1992, 58 Hindu *karsevaks* (religious devotees), lost their lives on 27 February 2002 while travelling by the Sabarmati Express, in a fire in their cabin near Godhra station. Some Muslims in Godhra were suspected of setting fire to the cabin. But there is no conclusive evidence of this, or of the cause of the fire. This suspicion generated an anti-Muslim sentiment. The result was brutal communal violence in Ahmedabad, which spread across the state of Gujarat. Malik examines how Alexander addresses the terrible crisis of the Muslims in Gujarat, and how they were ‘Otherized’ despite their larger identity as Indians. He looks at the ways in which Alexander makes a plea for the tolerance for, and recognition of, ‘difference’ that can bring in peace and harmony in India.

This book includes chapters that capture a variety of Indian subcontinental diasporian lives, as lived in host lands, that generally remain hidden to us. For example, set against the backdrop of an Indo-Trinidadian family living in Canada, Taniya Niyogi explores the conflict-ridden, hybrid consciousness of female migrants from old Indian diaspora, as they negotiate with their household history of multiple transnational migration. For this, Niyogi not only traces the double displacement of the Indo-Caribbean-Canadian

woman migrants, but also makes visible the invisible indentured women who crossed Kala Pani to escape the ordeals of colonial India in search of a better life. Soumi Goswami analyses how political violence in Sri Lanka impacts the lives of three generations of women in Selvadurai's writings, and shapes their concept of Sri Lankan diaspora. She interrogates and explores how familial and intergenerational conflicts enact within one's homeland as well as host land, and shape the predicament of women in Sri Lanka. Nilanjana Chatterjee seeks to uncover the Indian subcontinental Muslim home workers' lived experiences in the host land by examining the fictional works of Monica Ali (a Bangladeshi-British writer) and Farhana Sheikh (a Pakistani-British writer). She intends to find out what leads these Indian subcontinental Muslim women to enter into the invisible transnational labour market of home workers in the UK. She examines why this group suffers the most, and also tries to identify possible solutions.

Arnab Kumar Sinha sheds light on an important but implicit aspect of diasporian life; the problematic interface between one's religious affiliation and political commitment. Sinha situates the nuanced criss-crossing of a disasporic protagonist's affiliation to the Shamsi faith with his involvement in the anti-Vietnam war campaign, thereby identifying the intertwined strands of religious identity, guilt, and forgiveness.

Paromita Dutta identifies the dilemmas of Indian-American women in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's collection of stories, *Arranged Marriage*. These women, initially accustomed to the comforts of utopian domesticity, become prominent victims of crises and trauma under circumstances that threaten or deprive their existence when they leave India for the United States. This group of disillusioned Indian American women also includes those who flee their homes and familiar identities to discover spatial liberation in a faraway land.

Anasuya Bhar makes a close reading of Sukirat Anand's selected Punjabi short stories to look into the dynamics of the lesbian relationship, and also explores the need of an individual to travel or escape elsewhere from her homeland for sexual as well as professional reasons. In doing so, Bhar addresses multiple issues of home and travel from a lesbian diasporian's perspective. Shyamasri Maji interrogates an Anglo-Indian-Australian's search for the ideal habitat of the 'white' regime in Sydney J. Ellis' *Coloured! So What?* Keeping the theoretical perspective of diaspora as a framework, Maji analyses the isolation and anxiety stemming from the doubly-hyphenated identity of an individual who belongs to a mixed-race community, such as the Anglo-Indian diasporians. Resha Barman thinks

that the stereotypes that are prevalent in India about people from the 'northeast' make them feel misrepresented. They are either labelled as people hailing from the land of natural beauty, or indigenous people involved in insurgency. These stereotypes restrict literary and cultural expectations from the region, stunting the growth of literature, film, and music, produced from the region. Barman therefore analyses the writings of two diasporic writers who have challenged such efforts by emigrating and freeing themselves to reflect through literature, the authentic image of the 'northeast' tag and its culture; Easternie Kire (born in Nagaland and re-located in Norway), and Siddhartha Deb (born in Meghalaya and re-located in New York). Barman identifies the peripheral position of these writers from where they write about their homeland and the host society. The chapter explores not just their physical re-location, but also their psychological re-construction. Himadri Lahiri explores the cultural nuances of the term 'liminality' in the context of Bharati Mukherjee's fiction, and analyses how a person moving between two states, or countries consequently adheres to the roles and responsibilities of neither. Here, Lahiri also points out how Bharati Mukherjee's work makes a clear distinction between immigration and expatriation. While immigration has exuberance, which comprises a series of fluid identities which is celebrated, expatriation is a static state which involves a process of resistance and refusal to be amalgamated into the new society.

Having looked at various diverse issues relevant to the Indian Subcontinental diasporian existence, we are tempted to quote Lalit Mansingh, the former Indian ambassador to the United States, who addressed the crowd of Indian Americans at the annual awards banquet of the weekly news magazine *India Abroad* on December 12 2003, and observed:

> I was looking for some kind of symbol which would represent the success of Indians abroad, something that would symbolize what they have gone through in their long history . . . But look at it metaphorically. Indians have gone abroad, have lived in the most challenging environments in the world and they have done well. Indian coconuts have done very well abroad. Now, what is the coconut famous for? It grows on sandy soil, requires very little water, and needs virtually no maintenance. In other words, send an Indian anywhere, just let them be, with minimum nourishment, and watch the tree grow taller and taller until it dominates the landscape. That is what I think the Indian Diaspora is like. (qtd in Mannur 1)