Diverse 'Indianness-es': Reading Different Indian Identities in R. Parthasarathy's and Agha Shahid Ali's Poems

Dr. Indrani Datta (Chaudhuri)
Assistant Professor,
Department of English,
Vidyasagar University.

Abstract:

'Indianness' is often used as an umbrella term in order to cluster poets of Indian origin writing in English despite their diverse contents, styles and locations. This pan-Indian quality which is non-existent in reality and is a figment of imagination, attaining almost a mythical stature, needs to be interrogated. This article explores the different types of 'Indianness-es' that poets writing from geo-political locations exterior to the country engage with. These differences counter the imaginary monolith of 'India'. Drawing upon Nico Israel's theoretical concepts of "exilic emplacement" and "diasporic self-fashioning", I show how the pluralist versions of the place and the space called 'India', in R. Parthasarathy's poem "Exile" and Agha Shahid Ali's poem "A Post Card from Kashmir", create a "metaperspective" (Françoise Král). This singularity and difference go into the making of diverse 'Indianness-es'.

Keywords:
Indianness-es, R.Parthasarathy, Agha Shahid Ali, "Exile", "A Post Card from Kashmir", exile, diaspora, "exilic emplacement", "diasporic self-fashioning", cultural pluralism, "metaperspective".

'Indian-ness' in Indian English Literature, with particular reference to poetry has, become an umbrella term under which all writers, particularly poets, of Indian origin are accommodated despite their diverse contents and styles that have no similarities to each other. It is this 'pan-Indian-ness' in Indian literature, particularly poetry, that needs to be interrogated and revisited through contemporary critical discourses that celebrate differences. India, in reality, should be understood on the basis of its varied cultures and assorted contours, all emphasizing the fact that there not 'a' or 'the' Indian culture but myriads of cultures operating under the rubric of, to use Benedict Anderson's phrase, an "imagined community" (24)[1]. Differences are all the more apparent when we read the works of Indian poets who, under a transnational drift, have settled abroad and are writing from outside the country. Today, we call them diasporic writers (poets).

Given the different locations from which writers (poets) write, there has been a constant argument among critics as to which group portrays the 'real' India. The inherent pluralism of the country creates a complex network of cultures, mutable as well as independent, that makes it difficult or almost impossible to search for and locate the 'real' India. Indian-ness, then, consists of many Indias, its myriad cultures like its myriad languages and religions. This Indian-ness is not limited to and bound by its geographical boundaries and permeates into the ethos and writings of all writers: those writing from within the country and those writing from an exterior geo-political location. According to Salman Rushdie diasporic writers create "invisible … imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind" (*Imaginary Homelands* 15)[2] which are as genuine and indispensable as that created by those written from within India. Indian-ness, then, becomes a metaphor of a unique pluralism, of differences yoked together through, in Françoise Král's words, a 'metaperspective'. It helps us realize that:

> It is precisely when a culture cannot be compared to others, when its singularity and difference asserts themselves more powerfully than the similarities with our own culture that we are on to something, that we start to grasp cultural differences, not the essence but the actual existence of cultural diversity. (Král 25)

A deconstructive effort can be seen in the writings of the diasporic writers as they engage with recreating the "Indias of the mind". It is the intrinsic cultural diversity, in the form of "its singularity and difference" (25), that defines the Indian-ness of India, one that goes into the creation of the "Indias of the mind". It is to prove this point that I close read two poems, one by Rajagopal Parthasarathy, titled "Exile", and the other by Agha Sahid Ali, titled "Postcard from Kashmir". I argue that the two poems, being thoroughly different from each other, not only reveal the differences present within even those writers who are writing from outside India but they highlight that 'Indian-ness' stands as a metaphor of differences. As the former transforms this Indian-ness into a geographical 'place' named Calcutta the latter transcends such place and engenders a 'space' called Kashmir in India. As the notion of 'place' is seminal to the delineation of 'Indian-ness' in Indian English writing (like Malabar in Kamala Das' poetry and Madurai in A.K. Ramanujan's) this article attempts to show how the transformation of 'closed' time-bound places into 'open' a-temporal spaces charts a movement from celebrating similarities to acknowledging differences. More precisely, it shows the nature of diverse 'Indianness-es' portrayed by these poets who are engagement with "exilic emplacement" (Israel 14) and "diasporic self-fashioning" (16)[3].

Nico Israel, in *Outlandish: Writing between Exile and Diaspora*, uses these two concepts: "exilic emplacement" and "diasporic self-fashioning" (17) in order to reconfigure the trajectories of displacement. As he distinguishes between exile and diaspora Israel states that the latter has "lately surfaced with increasing frequency in critical theory". He adds that "in the context of its appearance in Deuteronomy" though diaspora is connected to "a curse, with a perpetual otherness amid others, with blindness, madness, and defeat […], with a spreading that weakens" (2) it has a positive resonance in its articulation of "a sense of tenacity, resistance, and preservation of faith during the worst of circumstances" (2). Israel, therefore, proposes a theoretical framework that helps him in the "mode of reading between exile and diaspora" (ix). He uses the term "outlandish" (x) to define the in-between state that exists between these two conditions of dislocation and displacement and describes it as "nondescript, nebulous" (x). He states:

> The words "exile" and "diaspora" each contain a curious contradiction. "Exile" denotes banishment from a particular place in an institutional act of force … it also expresses a sense of "leaping out" toward something or somewhere, implying a matter of will. "Diaspora" indicates the dispersal or scattering of a body of people from their traditional home across foreign lands; yet, like the agricultural sowing of seeds from which the word comes to us (from the Greek *speirein*), it also suggests an anticipation of root-taking and eventual growth. Beginning an intellectual project, especially a project about exile and diaspora, places one in a strangely analogous contradictory position. Perched precariously between familiar zone of knowledge and an uncharted destination, the writer in the beginning, leaps into the nebulous betweenness of force and will, cohesion and dispersion. (1-2)

While analyzing the in-betweenness between exile and diaspora Israel asserts that the mode of writing which articulates the "outlandish" (ix) state takes "neither side or refuge for granted" and, thus, reveals the "movement from modernism to postmodernism, from coloniality to postcoloniality". He also observes:

> In terms of contemporary literary and cultural studies, at least, "exile" perhaps most closely associated with literary modernism, tends to imply both a coherent subject or author and a more circumscribed, limited conception of place and home. Maintaining a stronger link to minority group solidarity and associated with the intersection of postcoloniality and theories of poststructuralism and postmodernism, "diaspora", by contrast, aims to account for a hybridity or performativity that troubles such notions of cultural dominance, location and identity. (3)

Israel states that while defining "exile" as an "outlandish" (x) condition of displacement and dislocation that involves a "leaping out" (1) and "denotes banishment from a particular place" he has to put forth the idea of "exilic emplacement" (14) in order to critique writing, by displaced authors, about exile. He argues:

> I borrow the term "emplacement" from Samuel Weber, who has written incisively about the intertwined issues of inscription and place. In the context of his examination of Martin Heidegger's essay, …, Weber refers to Heidegger's term *das Ge-stell*, usually translated as "enframing", which Weber instead renders "emplacement". Describing the rationalizing precondition within the technological mind-frame, Heidegger's notion of *das Ge-stell* depicts two contrasting but intertwined possibilities, "the destiny of being placed" and the place "from which to take stalk and take a stand". Weber understands emplacement to be both an act and a defended or guarded zone, a kind of "fort", the building of which involves a "moving of unsecuring". And it is precisely this double movement of standing and unsecuring — of setting-up and up-setting — that applies to both the question of the displaced subject and to writing about displacement. Exile raises the question concerning emplacement, … (14-15)

Having accepted Heidegger's idea that "dwelling" engages with a "kind of homelessness" and relates to "places" and not to "space", Israel explains the condition of exilic displacement as one that "begs for emplacement", one which "demands a sense of place", one which is, at once, a secured refuge and an insecure destiny. It involves both "setting-up" and "up-setting" one's own shelter as well as destiny.

While analyzing "diasporic self-fashioning" Israel shows how the Lacanian "self deludes itself into selfhood, a scenario that takes place in the arena of otherness" (16), a phenomenon best understood through the "mirror stage":

> … the subject, entering the domain of the other (including the other's place and language), proceeds on a path from "insufficiency to anticipation," from a fragmented body image to an "orthopedic" one, and lastly, "to the assumption of the armor of an alienating identity, one that protects itself from the persistent challenge of witnessing the other. (16)

He argues that "in the case of the displaced writers … such a scenario unfolds in reverse" (16):

> … the encounter with the other (who is, in this sense, perceived as a coherent subject) often entails a movement from anticipation to insufficiency. Unmoored (especially when alienated from the mother tongue), the self tries to fashion itself by identifying others, by presenting a coherent spatial

geography in which all can be mapped, comprehended. Such identification can occur in quasi-anthropological, philosophical, or literary-historical discursive forms, or combinations of all three.

When we think of self-fashioning in terms of being subject to displacement, what emerges for the writers … is a peculiar case of both process and condition. What typically results is wounded autobiography, a type of self-fashioning that is melancholic in the Freudian sense of being temporarily arrested in time. For Freud, it is worth remembering, a melancholic's sense of loss can be "some abstraction which has taken the place of the loved one, such as one's country"…. Loss troubles the very status of the displaced writing subject, rendering the act of self-fashioning diasporic. (16-17)

Israel borrows the expression "self-fashioning" from "Steven Jay Greenblatt's study of subjectivity and power in the Renaissance" and re-situates it in "a twentieth century frame" (16). He argues that the "notion of self-fashioning arises from Greenblatt's avowed interest in 'the power to impose a shape upon oneself', a conception of power and shape that he derives in part from Foucault" (16). While exploring the "discursive ground it rests upon" and formulating how "writers fashion a self out of (a) place" Israel not only derives but also deviates from "Greenblatt's modus operandi" because he intends to analyze not just any kind of subject positioning but only the "perceived dispersion of subjectivity, its fundamentally negative constitution, and its relation to a highly significant but equally ill-defined 'otherness'" (16). Thus, he turns to Lacan's interpretation of Freud. It was Lacan's assertion that "self-reflection and perception are typically based on a fundamental misrecognition; the subject far from being resolute, certain, and self-identical, is characterized by incompleteness, irresolution and contingency". Israel argues that "in the case of displaced writers" the opposite of Lacan's concept of "mirror stage" takes place. Thus the "the encounter with the other" produces a reaction that shows as if "unmoored (especially when alienated from the mother tongue), the self tries to fashion itself by identifying others, by presenting a coherent spatial geography in which all can be mapped and comprehended" (16). The space created by the diasporic writer is a 'non-place' in which there are no borders and there are only routes/roots of the mind, the imaginary.

Here, I argue that in Rajagopal Parthasarathy's poems we find his attempt to "exilic emplacement" in "setting-up and up-setting" both a fort and a destiny for himself. Born in Tirupparaiturai, educated at Don Bosco, Bombay, and then at the University of Leeds in UK, Parthasarathy articulated an experience of exile that, he believed, was the outcome of his "English language education" and the "loss of rootedness" from

his native Tamil culture (King 231). A feeling of marginality and of alienation, synonymous to that of an outcast and outsider, informs most of his poems. While staying abroad, in the UK, Parthasarathy realized that "language is a tree, loses colour/ under another sky" (75); while at home, in India, he learnt that his "tongue in English chains" him and thwarts the return to his "dravidic tether" (80). The resultant nomadic wandering, a sense of non-belonging both at home and in the world, and a sense of loss of identity, all find expression in the portrayal of places that signify an anxiety immanent in the state of exile. The poems in *Rough Passage*, through the construction of an 'Indian' place which beckons for an "emplacement", voice the agony and the ecstasy of the loss and the nomadic search.

In *Modern Indian Poetry in English*, Bruce King observes:

> The 'Exile' section of *Rough Passage* is as much about alienation and the problem of what to do with one's life as about the results of colonialism. Studying abroad creates a crisis for someone who had assumed that he would settle in England and be an English poet. The disillusionment raises a consciousness of being Indian; but after returning to India feelings of dissatisfaction and exile remain as India seems no different from the West, and he is exiled within his own country. (239)

Each poem in this section engages with a place, either London or Madras, which becomes either a fort from where the poet takes a stand or a destiny which the poet intends to attain thereby delineating the exile's sense of non-belonging and subsequent search for roots. Here, I read the last poem, titled "Exile" to illustrate my point.

The poem is as follows:

A grey sky oppresses the eyes:
Porters, rickshaw-pullers, barbers, hawkers,
Fortune-tellers, loungers compose the scene.

Above them towers the bridge,
A pale diamond in the water.
trees, big with shade, squat in the maidan
as I walk, my tongue hunchbacked
with words, towards Jadavpur
to your arms. You smell of gin

and cigarette ash. Your breasts
sharp with desire, hurt my fingers.
Feelings beggar description,

shiver in dark alleys of the mind,
hungry and alone. Nothing can really
be dispensed with. The heart needs all,

The years have given me little wisdom,
and I've dislodged myself to find it.
Here, on the banks of Hooghly,

in the city Job Charnock built.
I shall carry this wisdom to another city
in the bone urn of my mind.

These ashes are all that's left
of the flesh and brightness of youth.
My life has come full circle: I'm thirty.

I must give quality to the other half.
I've forfeited the embarrassing gift
innocence in my scramble to be man.

In this poem Calcutta, a city with a fixed root and route in India, embodies the exile's experience of estrangement as well as his quest for a substitute that would fill up his loss of identity. Its situated-ness is revealed through the picture of "porters, rickshaw-pullers, barbers, hawkers, fortune-tellers, loungers" who "compose the scene" (76) and through co-relatives like the "bridge", the "maidan", "Jadavpur" (76), "banks of Hooghly" and "the city Job Charnock built" (77). It is here that the exile's "life has come full circle"

(77) in such a manner that "feelings beggar description" and "shiver in dark alleys of the mind" (76). It is here that the exile, with his experience of alienation, rushes towards the "arms" and the "breasts, /sharp with desire". The sense of not being able to belong, to be rooted in one's own culture, searches for a refuge and solace, even if temporary, in human desire. The poet asserts that "the heart needs all" (76) for life to become a "full circle" (77) so that the wisdom received here might be carried to "another city". The place called Calcutta, then, becomes a fort and a destiny from where the poet "emplaces" himself through both non-belonging and a search that needs to be reconciled with. Thus, the "bone urn" containing the "ashes" remind one of the "flesh and brightness of youth" (77). It turns into that that place in which the poet realizes, "I've forfeited the embarrassing gift/ innocence in my scramble to be man" (77). The displacement that is intrinsic to the trajectory of exile, then, converts the city, Calcutta, a place that forges an "unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home" (Said 173) and, thus, demands a shelter through, what Nico Israel calls, "emplacement".

Calcutta, then, emerges as that site from which the nomadic wanderer might be able to forge an "exilic emplacement" (Israel 14) for himself. It is insecure under the "grey sky" (Parthasarathy 76) and secure as a "defended and guarded zone" (Israel 14) where "feelings beggar description" (Parthasarathy 76). It is that fortress which displays the "double movement" of "setting-up" (Israel 14) through the carrying of the "wisdom to another city" (Parthasarathy 77) and of "up-setting" (Israel 15) through the forfeiting of "the embarrassing gift" (Parthasarathy 77). This place, the city of Calcutta, therefore, signifies a different kind of dwelling: one that engages with homelessness and an initiative to search for the roots. Calcutta becomes a motif of the condition of exile: of displacement, emplacement, sense of homelessness, and nomadic search for some kind of dwelling even within the native culture that has become alien. It reflects that "Indian-ness" from which the poet feels alienated and yet in which he tries to build up his shelter and his destiny. This place called India not only constructs a notion of the country but deconstructs it to create multiple versions of Indias, each a place for an "emplacement" for the poet as well as for others from which they can chart anew their route and search for the root.

Another kind of "Indian-ness" that engages with a space in which the poet's "diasporic self-fashioning" is forged and completed is seen in Agha Shahis Ali's poems. Shahid Ali, a trilingual (he writes in Urdu, Kashmiri and English) diasporic poet settled in the US, articulates a nostalgia distinctive to transnational writers who have experienced and have accepted the flexibility of boundaries: national, cultural and

linguistic to mention a few. Born in Delhi and, later, immigrating into Indiana in USA, Ali, like most diasporic writers, transforms his sense of non-belonging and cultural alienation into a more encircling dream that validates the etymological root of the term diaspora: to be scattered like seeds, with the "anticipation of root-taking and eventual growth" (Israel 1). In his poems the temporal places, located in India, become a-temporal, a-historic sites of negotiation and exchange which "interrogates, destabilizes and ultimately debunks what Sudesh Mishra refers to as "the three discrete columns" (Mishra 57), the homeland, the hostland and the 'ethno-racial cluster'" (Král 13). The "India" of the mind, denoted by Kashmir in most cases, develops into a "metaperspective" representative of a liminality and dislocation that is, to quote Stuart Hall, "not an essence but a positioning" (226). Françoise Král explains "metaperspective" in the following manner:

> The advantage of such positioning is not only that it allows the immigrant to embrace a metaperspective, but that it also frees the subject position of its natural correlative, namely subjectivity. What makes double subjectivity a useful concept is that it is not a theoretical construct but a de facto metaerspective rooted in the locus of in-betweenness. It is not an imaginary category but an existential one which is both a blessing and a curse — a curse in the sense that the diasporic writer is doomed to a life of in-betweenness, but a blessing in the sense that s/he enjoys a double outlook … (15)

It is primarily because of the diasporic author's embracement of the "double outlook" — the double bind of the blessing and the curse — that s/he, unlike one living in a state of exile, is able to fashion herself/himself afresh.

The poem discussed here is:

Kashmir shrinks into my mailbox
my home a neat four by six inches.
I always loved neatness. Now I hold
the half-inch Himalayas in my hand.

This is home. And this is the closest
I'll ever be to home. When I return
the colors won't be so brilliant,

the Jhelum waters so clean,

so ultramarine. My love

so overexposed.

And my memory will be a little

out of focus, in it

a giant negative, black

and white, still undeveloped.

In Shahid Ali's "Postcard from Kashmir" the place, Kashmir, becomes that "coherent spatial geography" (Israel 16) in which the diasporic poet creates a site "in which all can be mapped and comprehended". It emerges as the space where the fashioning of the self can be initiated and completed. The three-dimensionality of the place called Kashmir is flattened into a two-dimensional virtual reality through the post-card, formless and alive only in and through memory, the construct of the 'imagined' home so essential to engender the diasporic poet's "self-fashioning" (Israel 17). Kashmir can be rooted anywhere and everywhere, even on the host-land, for the postcard can be carried worldwide. The transnational nature of the picture post-card makes it a space for negotiation and exchange. It can be visited and re-visited only by memory. It is a space, unchangeable and unchanged, as it eliminates the influx of time, one that contracts centuries of culture, antiquity and topography into a "neat" picture frame. Thus, Agha Shahid Ali writes: "Kashmir shrinks into my mailbox, / My home a neat four by six inches." Kashmir, transformed from the geo-political to the metaphorical "home" is, now, a representative and representational space which, Ali claims, "Now I hold/ the half-inch Himalaya in my hands" and which is "the closest to home". It is that which fashions the displaced subject's identity, in the unfamiliar world, with imaginaries and memories with a "neatness" that are never the same as the real, the original. Ali apprehends:

…… When I return

the colors won't be so brilliant,

the Jhelum's waters so clean,

so ultramarine. My love

so overexposed.

With the valley painted upon the mind, the picture post-card transforms into a mindscape that can be taken anywhere and everywhere, reminiscent of another diasporic Indian writer's comment: "home is where the heart is". Kashmir, for Shahid Ali, is the "diasporic imaginary" that helps in redefining his self through the delineation of his diasporic identity. As Nico Israel has argued: "When we think of self-fashioning in terms of being subject to displacement, what emerges for the writers … is a peculiar case of both process and condition" (17). For Ali Kashmir, of the post-card, is a "process" of self-fashioning as well as a "condition" evocative of "memory" which is "out of focus" because it opens up that wound called displacement. This, Israel claims, culminates in a "wounded autobiography, a type of self-fashioning that is melancholic in the Freudian sense of being temporarily arrested in time" (17). Hence, the concluding lines of Ali's poem speak of the memory of his beloved Kashmir as being "out of focus" and the real place is changed into a "giant negative, black/ and white, still undeveloped". The temporality of the place, Kashmir, transforms into the spatiality of a space that signifies a sense of loss and an act of reconciliation. And such a space, now, stands for "some abstraction which has taken the place of a loved one, such as one's country …" (Israel 17), a non-place — created out of the complex components like home, memory, imagination, migration and the dissolution of boundaries — which is, Ali feels, makes his "love/ so overexposed" and his "memory … / still undeveloped". The open-endedness of Kashmir, a space, is, therefore, engraved in "black and white" on a photo-frame like mind betraying the fact that it is time that adds colour to life, to place, to the world and that it is space that shrinks all into immortality. The real Kashmir will change but the post-card will remain.

The journey from the place "Calcutta" to the space "Kashmir" not only contests the so-called pan-Indianness of Indian English poetry but also underscores the fact that "Indian-ness" ought to be perceived in its pluralism, diversity, its shift from temporality to spatiality that marks the difference[4] between "exilic emplacement" in a home located somewhere and "diasporic self-fashioning" at a home located nowhere and/or everywhere. This distinction, however, is not sequential in nature because both the trajectories of displacement, exile and diaspora, are "peculiar cultural chronotopes" that might be seen as metaphors, turning points, or "torrid zone(s)" (Israel 4) involved in a "kind of tension without resolution" (17). Yet their mutual mutability and porosity offer a "vibrancy" and a "dynamic potential" (Král 14) to explain different kinds of 'Indianness-es' in Indian poetry written in English.

Notes:

[1] The imagined community, a concept coined by Benedict Anderson, in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), states that a nation is a community socially constructed, that is, it is imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group. Benedict Anderson defined a nation as "an imagined political community [that is] imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign". An imagined community is different from an actual community because it is not (and cannot be) based on quotidian face-to-face interaction between its members. Instead, members hold in their minds a mental image of their affinity. As Anderson puts it, a nation "is imagined because 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". These communities are imagined as both limited and sovereign. They are limited in that nations have "finite, if elastic boundaries, beyond which lie other nations". They are sovereign insofar as no dynastic monarchy can claim authority over them, an idea arising in the early modern period:

> [...] the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm. Coming to maturity at a stage of human history when even the most devout adherents of any universal religion were inescapably confronted with the living pluralism of such religions, and the [direct relationship] between each faith's ontological claims and territorial stretch, nations dream of being free, and, if under God, directly so. The gage and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state. (6-7)

Finally, a nation is an imagined community because "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings." Imagined communities can be seen as a form of social constructionism on a par with Edward Said's concept of imagined geographies. Anderson is not hostile to the idea of nationalism nor does he think that nationalism is obsolescent in a globalizing world. He values the utopian element in nationalism.

[2] In the articles "An 'Outlandish' Text: *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran" and "About 'Hybrid' Identities and 'Interstitial' Spaces: A Reading of Salman Rushdie's *Moor's Last Sigh* and *Enchantress of Florence*", as well as in the book *And I Too Am My Own Forerunner: My Reading of Kahlil Gibran (Notion Press, 2020),* I have discussed at length Nico Israel's thesis on "Outlandishness" in relation to the trajectories of dislocation and displacement, namely exile and diaspora.

[3] Salman Rushdie states that "the broken mirror may actually be as valuable as the one supposedly unflawed" (*Imaginary Homelands* 15). Rushdie's definition, of Indian Writing in English by diasporic authors, offers an interesting alternative to the existing definitions which emphasize the archeological dimension of diasporic literature.

[4] Stuart hall, in Cultural Identity and the Diaspora, argues that this "sense of difference" is not the "pure 'otherness'" that engendered/engenders the formation of binaries like the East/West, Us/They; rather it remains elusive to, and outside of, the stark oppositional forces operating within both colonial and postcolonial discourses. Hence, Hall suggests: "…. we need to deploy the play on words of a theorist like Jacques Derrida. Derrida uses the anomalous

'a' in his way of writing 'difference' — *differance* — as a marker which sets up a disturbance in our settled understanding or translation of the word/concept. It sets the word in motion to new meanings without erasing the trace of its *other* meanings" (115). Hall's belief that identity-politics should be based on/generated from "difference", thus, tries to unsettle existing discourses by rupturing those grand-narratives that are viewed as "omnipotent definitions" by Shu-meih Shih.

Works cited:

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism.* London: Verso, 1983.

Datta Chaudhuri, Indrani. *And I Too Am My Own Forerunner: My Reading of Kahlil Gibran*. Chennai (India): Notion Press, 2020.

----------. "About 'Hybrid' Identities and 'Interstitial' Spaces: A Reading of Salman Rushdie's *Moor's Last Sigh* and *Enchantress of Florence*. *Journal of the Department of English, Vidyasagar University*, Vol. 9: 2011-12.

----------. "An 'Outlandish' Text: *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran". *Journal of the Department of English, Vidyasagar University*, Vol. 8: 2010-11.

Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" in Jonathan Rutherford ed. *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. London: Lawrence &Wishart, 1990, 222-37.

Israel, Nico. *Outlandish: Writing Between Exile and Diaspora*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2000.

King, Bruce. *Modern Indian Poetry in English*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Král, Françoise. *Critical Identities in Contemporary Anglophone Diasporic Literature*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Mishra, Sudesh. *Diaspora Criticism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006.

Parthasarathy, R. *Rough Passage*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism*, 1981-1991. London: Granta Books, 1991.

Said, Edward. *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*. Cambridge, Masachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Shahid Ali, Agha. *The Country Without a Post Office* (1997). New Delhi: Penguin, 2013.