

## THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE INDIAN DIASPORA TO THE CHANGING FACE OF EUROPE: LITERARY AND CINEMATIC REPRESENTATIONS

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*Keynote speech given at THE BIENNIAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
“FUTURE OF EUROPE”, Faculty of International Business and Economics  
14 – 15 November, The Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania*

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### **Abstract**

*The ties between Europe and India are very old. The Greeks and Romans had traded overland with India and in the Christian era European traders had come to India again, but this time through the sea route. Apart from Trade, India was also at the very centre of the European study of the Orient. Orientalism has been critiqued by postcolonial theorists such as Edward Said in his iconic book, Orientalism (1978) but the fact remains that India has impinged in a major way upon the psyche of Europe and has contributed much to its economy too. As for the Indian presence in Europe it goes back to the colonial times and continues in the postcolonial period too. The postcolonial diaspora includes industrialists and professionals and not just lowly paid workers.*

**Keywords:** Europe, India, Orientalism, Diaspora, Colonial, Postcolonial.

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### **1. Introduction**

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The Indian diaspora in Europe and around the world today is a self-conscious diaspora. It has a greater consciousness than before about its Indian origins. In India too beginning with the early 1990s and the impact of globalization on its economy, the Indian Government has awakened to the fact that in its diaspora it has a huge spring well of goodwill, commercial and political connections and even primordial loyalties that surpass the current nationalities of these diasporics. So the *Pravasi Bharati Divas*, the Indian Emigrant's Day, was instituted on 9 January 2003 and has been celebrated ever since (Singhvi et al, 2001). This day, 9 January, marks the return home from South Africa in 1915, of one of the most celebrated Indian diasporics in recent history, Mahatma Gandhi. The Indian Government on this day felicitates its diaspora with awards. Some of the famous awardees of the *Pravasi Bharati Samman*, Indian Emigrant's Award, are Ms. Khorshed Ginwala, the first speaker of the majority government of South Africa's parliament, Mr.

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Phiroze Nowrojee, Advocate and Human Rights Activist from Keyna, Mr. Fareed Zakaria, journalist and TV host, USA, Lord Bhiku Parikh, Political Theorist, U.K. , the late Kalpana Chawala, US astronaut, Mr. Ujjal Dossanjh, the first Indian origins Premier of British Columbia, Canada (“Pravasi Bharati Samman Award”, 2014).

The Indian Diaspora in Europe today includes those who have taken advantage of the Indian Government’s Persons of Indian Origins (PIO) and Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) as well as NRIs (Non-Resident Indians) and Indian Transnationals who work in different European companies as IT professionals. However as announced by the Indian Prime Minister Modi in his Madison Square Garden speech to persons of Indian Origins in New York on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2014 and ratified by the Indian Government Gazette notification issued on September 30, 2014, all PIO cards are now valid for the lifetime of the cardholder, instead of 15 years as earlier. Also announced was the news that the PIO cards and OCI cards would soon be merged. This is yet another instance of the Indian Government acknowledging the importance of the Indian diaspora and the political and social power it can mobilize in their new homelands in the service of their old homeland, India.

The contribution of all these categories of Indians to the European society and economy is substantial. Their presence in Europe also contributes immensely to the fact that the European Union is one of the largest trading partners of India. The global Indian cinema too has as much impacted upon Europe, as has the Indian Diaspora. If Spain today celebrates a ‘Day of Colour’ in August, it is the influence of Indian films shot in Spain (Akhtar Zoya, 2011) as it is of the Indian Diaspora that celebrates its Day of Colour, *Holi* in the month of March. The German popular culture has been enriched by Bollywood cinema, as much as its landscape has been embellished by Hindu temples. The Bollywood star, Shahrukh Khan and his films, enjoy an iconic status in Germany and have a following in France too.

Europe has from the 1960s onwards been a favourite destination for location shooting for Hindi cinema now better known as Bollywood, for instance *Sangam* – The Union (Kapoor Raj, 1964) had the honeymoon sequence of the lead pair shot on location in Switzerland. Switzerland remains a firm favourite for the shooting of romantic Bollywood songs. From the 1980s onwards due to increased militancy in Kashmir, more and more Indian film makers have shifted their outdoor locations for romantic sequences to Europe. London and other locations in the U.K. are also places where Bollywood has been shooting its films for over 40 years now, for instance *Purab aur Paschim* – East and the West (Kumar Manoj, 1970). Over 80 Bollywood and 200 Indian films have been shot in Switzerland alone till date. With the increased economic prosperity of the Indian middle class these European locations of Bollywood and other Indian films have made these countries favourites among Indian tourists. The late Yash Chopra the king of romance among Bollywood film makers had been honoured by the Swiss Government with an

Honorary Swiss Ambassador Award and he was also been given the ‘Ambassador of Interlaken’ title by that town which had been his favourite location shooting spot in Switzerland. A train named after him was also launched in the Jungfrau Railways. This marks the serious economic advantages that have accrued to this European country through Bollywood films. As for France after the success of *An Evening in Paris* (Samanta Shakti, 1967), Bollywood films have continued to be shot in Paris. Some of the most recent ones are *Jhoom Barabar Jhoom – Let us Have Fun* (Chopra Yash, 2007), *Yeh Jawani Hai Diwani – This Youth is Crazy* (Mukherji Ayan, 2013). France has honoured the Bollywood icon Shahrukh Khan with its top civilian award, the Knight of the Legion of Honour in July 2014. The Salman Khan Aishwarya Rai starrer, *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam – My Heart is Yours, My Beloved* (Bhansali Sanjay Leela, 1999) was shot substantially in Budapest in Hungary. *Rockstar* (Ali Imtiaz, 2011) had Prague in the Czech Republic as its foreign location. Where Indian film makers go, the Indian tourists also follow and these Eastern European countries have seen an increase of tourist traffic from India. Salman Khan’s *Jai Ho – May We be Victorious* (Khan Sohail, 2014) had a romantic song shot in Sibiu in Transylvania, Romania. Unlike for Hollywood, Transylvania is now a romantic place for Bollywood. In the past tour operators from India used to take tourists to spots in Kashmir where Indian films had been shot, now the action has shifted to European destinations.

As for the contributions made by members of the Indian Diaspora to Europe, they head Universities and corporations in Europe. Dr. Singaravelu was the President of Bordeaux 3 University in France in 2005. Lakshmi Mittal of Arcelormittal was named the sixth wealthiest person in the world by Forbes in 2011. He sits on the board of the European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company. He is an NRI. Persons of Indian Origins have a presence in the political domain too. They have contested and won parliamentary seats in Britain as well as in the European parliament in Brussels, which is interestingly the largest democratically elected parliament after that of India. The first Indian member of the British Parliament was Dadabhai Naoroji in 1892. He was followed in that same decade by Mancherjee Bhowmagaree and Shapurji Saklatwala. All three of them were Parsi Zoroastrians who were in a very old diaspora from Persia even in India. Naoroji had also been the founder-member of the Indian National Congress, the political party which had spearheaded the freedom struggle in India against the British rule. Then till Keith Vaz in 1987, there was no other Indian M.P. in the British Parliament. Since then however, there has been a steady stream of Indian origin M.P.s in the British Parliament. Apart from Lord Bhikhu Parekh, there are other Indians too in the House of Lords – Lord Meghnad Desai, Lord Paul and Lord Billimoria. Claude Moraes who was born in India is an incumbent British Labour Party **M.E.P.** in the European Parliament in Brussels. Germany till date has had **three elected members of Indian origins in the German Bundestag**. The first being Sebastian Edathy, whose father was a pastor from Kerala in India, was elected four times – 1998, 2002, 2005, 2009. The second German parliamentarian

of Indian origins is Joseph Winkler, the son of one of the many nurses from Kerala in Germany, who had won on a Green Party ticket in 2002. Yet another person of Indian origins in the German parliament is Raju Sharma who had won in 2009. The Indian diaspora has also made a substantial contribution to popular culture and sports in Europe. Nasser Hussain of Indian origins has been the captain of the British cricket team. Vikas Dhorasoo plays soccer for the Olympique Lyon team, in France while Michael Chopra plays for Sutherland F.C. in the U.K. The lead singer of the pop group *Queen*, Freddie Mercury was a Bombay boy. Ben Kingsley and Cliff Richard have Indian connections – the former's birth name being Krishna Pandit Bhanji and the latter having been born in Lucknow, in North India. Gurinder Chadha the Indo-British film maker is a double Indian diasporic whose trajectory to the U.K. was through the Indian colonial diaspora in Kenya.

All these men and women of the Indian Diaspora have enhanced and enriched the multicultural fabric of Europe and added hitherto unknown facets to it. However, in spite of these contributions, immigrants from India face several problems in Europe today. As noted in a case study of Indian immigrants undertaken for the European Union:

*The opinions about the employment scene in Europe can indicate how Europe is perceived economically and in a futuristic way. For many of the Respondents the hey-days of European development are over; they see a slackened economy and rampant unemployment. The immigrant situation is seen to be linked to the economy.* (Thapan and Deka, 2011: 11)

There are also issues of immigration laws and naturalization procedures which hamper the ultimate assimilation and inclusion of Indian immigrants into Europe, especially in the less migration oriented European countries. There are also issues of racism, overt and covert, which hamper these processes.

In spite of these problems dealing with the economic downturn, tightening of laws regarding citizenship and residence permits, racism and problems of assimilation, Europe is still considered to be a space of economic opportunities by many Indians, especially of the transnational variety, who today look at European countries not so much as places for permanent residence but as places of employment of short and medium duration.

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## ***2. Representations in Literature***

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The Indian diaspora and its present status in Europe are represented in Literature by writers such as Salman Rushdie, Atima Srivastava and Sunetra Gupta among many others. In cinema produced by and about this Diaspora there are film makers such as Gurinder Chadha, Aditya Chopra and Karan Johar. A look at these literary and cinematic images of Indians in Europe would point to a more multicultural, multilingual, multi-religious and thus more inclusive Europe.

Rushdie has at least two books in which he has focused on the situation of the Indian Diaspora in the U.K. – *The Satanic Verses* (1988) and *East, West Stories* (1994). While *The Satanic Verses* has been mired in controversy and had resulted in a *fatwa* on Rushdie, *East, West Stories* has been much neglected by critics and readers. In *The Satanic Verses* Rushdie has not just as alleged by some, blasphemed against Islam and the Holy Prophet, but also told the stories of immigrants from not just India, Pakistan and Bangladesh – the Indian subcontinent, but also from other former British colonies like the Caribbean islands. The problems they face with assimilation and acceptance in their new homeland and the stereotyping and injustice they have to endure at the hands of the British Immigration Department, forms an important section of the novel, but has got buried under the controversial parts dealing with Mecca. At the heart of this discourse is Salahuddin Chamchawala, who has anglicised his name to Saladin Chamcha and has in an attempt to deny his Indian origins retreated into Englishness. Yet the colour of his skin does not let him become fully English, only a “kind of Englishman”, as famously said by another character in another Indian sub-continental novel, Hanif Kureishi’s *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990: 1). Notwithstanding Chamcha’s Anglophilia, he was the “wrong colour for their colour TVs” (Rushdie, 1988: 61).

A counterpoint to Chamcha was the ‘archangel’ of Hindi cinema, the superstar Amitabh Bachchan, re-christened here as Angel Gabriel, Gibreel *Farishta*. Intertwined into their stories is the chapter “The City Visible but Unseen” (241-356), the great Colonial centre, the city of London, to which are attracted immigrants from Britain’s former colonies. This is not just the city of London, but London the capital of U.K., under the Prime Ministership of Margaret Thatcher – it was the Age of Thatcher. The immigrant’s London was composed mainly of Southall, Brick Lane and Brixton. In these visible but invisible city boroughs, Rushdie created the imaginary borough of Brickhall, in which live the orthodox Muslim owners of Shaandar Café and their rebellious daughters. The racial situation in Brickhall is incendiary and it is feared that the prophecy made by British Nationalist Party’s Enoch Powell in his controversial anti-immigrant ‘rivers of blood’ speech was about to come true (Powell, 1968). Fuelling the fear and panic was the thought of losing their jobs on one side and losing their lives on the other. The act of Migration as Rushdie has written in *Joseph Anton*, “...puts into crisis everything about the migrating individual or group, everything about identity and selfhood and culture and belief. So if this is a novel about migration it must be that act of putting in question. It must perform the crisis it describes” (Rushdie, 2012: 21).

‘Ellowen Deeowan’ (a child’s nursery rhyme name for London), is the chapter in which Chamcha and Gibreel clasped in one another’s arms, cartwheel from a disintegrating airliner, in a free fall into England. Surviving this fall the men, both actors, one in Britain, the other in India, metamorphose into the Devil and the

Archangel Gabriel. So Saladin the bonafide 'kind of Englishman' grows horns and Gibreel gets a halo around his head, announcing his 'divine' nature. Saladin is picked up by the immigration police along with a group of other immigrants, all metamorphosed now into animals, trots into London and takes refuge in the Shaandar Café, growing hairier and smellier all the time. The café itself is under siege from skinheads. This section of the novel is a blistering indictment of how immigrants into Britain are not just deracinated but also dehumanized and treated as the animals they become in the novel. As the manticore explains to Saladin the goat, this is how the Immigration Department sees them all – as animals. This section of the novel may also be seen as Postmodernist Gothic (Beville, 2007).

Rushdie's *East, West Stories* are divided into two sections and are fairly autobiographical. Terry Eagleton in his review of *East, West Stories* has said that, "The most important thing about the title is the comma, because it can be seen both as a separator and a bridge. This demarcation seems to be an element of playfulness that invites readers not to take the two terms too seriously, and as each other's opposite, but to accept them because they exist anyway" (Eagleton, 1994: 20). Homi K. Bhabha has said that *East, West Stories* "furnishes the little room for literature with a voice that rises from the comma that both divides and joins East and West" and that in 'The Courter' Rushdie writes from the fluid perspective of the comma, where histories of cultural difference exist side-by-side, in a state of creative interruption or interpolation (Bhabha, 2004). Rushdie has said of his own narrative style that "It rejoices in mongrelization and fears the absolutism of the Pure. Mélange, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is how newness enters the world" (Rushdie, 1994: 394).

'The Courter', is a cross-cultural story of an *ayah* – nanny – from India and a porter from an Eastern European country, set in London of the 1960s, in which intersect the lives of rich Indian expatriates, (like Rushdie's own father), former rulers (Maharajas and Maharanis) of princely states in India and the London underworld. In this space racism overtakes even the socio-economically privileged Indian sub-continentals and results in violence against the chivalrous courter/porter who tries to defend the nanny and her charges. 'The Courter' is a tender love story which begins with a mispronunciation and ends with a heart that is pulled in the contradictory directions of East and West. Here we have Rushdie remembering his adolescence in London, and telling us the story of his *ayah*, Certainly-Mary. This character like that of the father figure in the story are hyphenated characters – typical of the diaspora, who try to fit into the new Homeland and sometimes succeed and sometimes fail. In spite of the porter/courter, Mercir's gallant defense of the *ayah* against the racist goons, Mary returns to India. However, the young narrator manages to get his English passport, though as he tells us at the end of this story, "I ... have ropes around my neck ... pulling me this way and that, East and West, the nooses tightening, commanding, choose, choose!"; "Do you hear? I refuse to choose" (211), thereby asserting his right to a hybrid identity. Thus is

born the translated man. As Rushdie has put it elsewhere, “The word ‘translation’ comes, etymologically, from the Latin for ‘bearing across’. Having been borne across the world, we are translated men. It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation; I cling, obstinately, to the notion that something can also be gained” (Rushdie, 1991: 17).

Like Rushdie’s ‘translated men’, Atima Srivastava the British Indian author and her protagonists are ‘translated women’. Srivastava’s discourse locates women as aliens in an alien landscape, trying to construct a sense of identity, home and belonging. Srivastava’s Angie/Ungellie/Anjali in her novel *Transmission* (Srivastava, 1992) tries to reconcile the complexities of her second-generation Indian ethnicity within the context of the trendy media world of a 1990’s London. In Angie’s case, the collision of cultures, the project of empire, was actually inscribed across her body. This is an inscription that spans continents and generations and survives decolonization.

Angie’s narrative marks not just the trauma of mapping a woman’s identity within an ethnic minority – peripheral context – but also speaks of the paradoxes inherent in such a discourse emanating from the metropolitan centre. *Transmission* problematises the questions of identity and belonging and presents them as never complete but always in process, and always constituted within, not outside representation. Bhabha has noted an awareness of subject positions – “of race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale (and) sexual orientation” (Bhabha, 1994: 2). *Transmission* focuses on almost all of these positions. Yet in this text these are not the positions of the passive victim as Angie writes her home into existence and creates her own space. Her attempts at creating her own ‘Homeland’ are also informed by her gender. She is not merely a translated migrant, but also a woman and thus also handicapped by the patriarchal forces in her own world. “Angie is not just ‘the other’ in European terms, but is also the opposed ‘she’ to the androcentric ‘us’ within her own social groupings” (Bharucha, 2014: 184-85).

*Transmission* is set in the media world and located in the Soho, in London. Two of its characters are AIDS patients and the main protagonist, Angie, is a woman of Indian origins, thus bringing on board questions of racism and feminism. Angie rushes in and out of her several worlds and links them with her diverse selves. As a woman who has lived in Britain since she was a little girl, she ‘belongs’ as much to the trendy T.V. world and Soho, as she does to her ‘Asian’ world.

As Edward Said has pointed out, the process of identity construction is not “a static thing... (It’s) a much worked over historical and political process that takes place as a contest involving individuals and institutions in all societies” (Said, 1995).

All these contesting selves clash with the spaces created by Angie's job with a T.V. film company. The 1990s ethos of the media world which considered all aspects of existence, as so much raw material for the T.V. screen, is presented in all its amoral glory. Angie's desire to 'belong' to this largely white world is fulfilled when she becomes a researcher for the T.V. film makers, Madeline and Charles. As their 'researcher', she comes up with the stunningly spectacular story of Lol and Kathi. By the standards of an older, middle class morality, this is a sordid tale of sexual promiscuity and banal working class lives, spiced up with the late 20<sup>th</sup> century scourge, AIDS. However, for Madeline, Angie's American boss, and her director Charles, the British Public School product, this is a story with enormous market value in a society which has a tremendous appetite for sex and scandal, especially if it has a veneer of political correctness. In this story the political correctness is supplied by the angle of the oppressed working class and sexual politics and sexual harassment in the work place.

Yet in the ultimate analysis, *Transmission* is a very positive book. Also unlike others in its genre, it is not a stilted, self-conscious text. The voice and the location are here both quite authentic. In fact, Srivastava's text is a very London novel – albeit it is a London which is different from Martin Amis's city, as seen in his London trilogy beginning with *London Fields* (Amis, 1989), but it is still very much London - a London that is shared by different racial groups, sometimes in acrimony and sometimes in uneasy amicability. There is in this novel an acceptance of the reality of a multicultural and multiracial London. An imperfect, often dangerous place sometimes, for religious/racial minorities, but nevertheless a place in which all these groups live and work and in which they all have a stake.

Sunetra Gupta, like Srivastava, was born in India and now lives in England. She is married to an Irishman and is Professor of Theoretical Epidemiology at the University of Oxford with an interest in infectious disease agents that are responsible for malaria, HIV, influenza and bacterial meningitis. Her first novel *Memories of Rain* (Gupta, 1992) tells the tale of an Indian girl who marries an Englishman and how their marriage is rocked by cultural misunderstandings and infidelities. Gupta saw this novel as her own paean of praise to Rabindranath Tagore and the influence he had on her work, and was annoyed by how critics labeled the books 'experimental' and 'multicultural' and she has this to say on her own website:

*Memories of Rain was labelled as experimental and multicultural. This first perplexed me, and the latter irritated me. I find multiculturalism – as it is currently practiced - to be the product of anxiety, just like political correctness... Culture is not about bhangra dances in Community Halls. If anything multiculturalism ghettoises people and stops them from building a culture. Pasting elements of people's ancestral culture onto them, simply reinforces the idea*



that British culture, the culture of the country where they were born doesn't actually belong to them. It runs counter to any idea of integration. (Gupta website)

This is an interesting observation on 'multiculturalism' and is a strong indictment of cursory surface level attempts of any host society at accommodating the diasporics within their midst. When Anthony, the male protagonist of *Memories of Rain*, had married Moni and taken her to London as his wife, he had been in love with his image of her, rather than with the real woman. The delicate beautiful virginal girl who had caught his imagination in India, does not 'translate' well into London. He soon begins a relationship with Ana, who he constantly brings into contact with his wife. Moni on the eve of their son's sixth birthday secretly plans to leave England and return to India with the child. Her inability to communicate this to Anthony is symbolic of the lack of cultural understanding between them. Anthony had in a sense like his colonising ancestors, 'colonised' Moni and mistaken his stereotypical Orientalist attraction of the West for the East as a basis for marriage.

The heroine of Gupta's second novel *The Glass Blower's Breath* (Gupta, 1993), is very different from Moni. She lives across borders and is more transnational. The trajectory of this book takes the reader to some of the great metropolises of the world – Calcutta, London, New York. She constantly evades the attempts of the three men in her life to capture and embed her in societal female spaces of marriage, motherhood and family or even nation spaces.

The cities of Calcutta and London once again feature in Gupta's third novel, *Moonlight into Marzipan* (Gupta, 1995). This is a rather strange and surreal book, in which Prothmesh the chemist from Calcutta takes his wife Esha and immigrates to London. Here the death of Esha takes him close to the rather bizarre events in his life where he makes an important scientific discovery. This process which had started in his crumbling laboratory in Calcutta finds strange fruition in London and this fictional finding in photosynthesis takes him close to the brink of discovering the secret of life itself.

*A Sin of Colour* (Gupta, 1999) was a novel that was inspired by a request from *The Daily Mail* in London to contribute to a feature they were running on Susan Hill's sequel to Daphne de Maurier's *Rebecca*. Thus Gupta's novel is on obsessive love and infatuation. The protagonist is an Indian man who lives in England. This is the story of Debendranath Roy who disappears one fine day in Oxford, where he is last seen entering a legendary Oxford institution, the punt. He leaves behind a widow and a mystery that takes 20 years to unfold. An obsession that is taboo – a passion for his brother's wife – had made Debendranath flee Calcutta and his home called naturally, Mandalay. It's only his niece Niharika's detective work in Oxford a generation later that explains his mysterious disappearance.

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### 3. Representations in Cinema

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As for the representation of the Indian Diaspora in films we have among the diasporic film makers Gurinder Chadha and among the Bollywood film makers Aditya Chopra and Karan Johar.

From among Gurinder Chadha's repertoire, the films which are most appropriate for this paper are *Bhaji on the Beach* (Chadha, 1993) and *Bend it Like Beckham* (Chadha, 2002). These are films that deal with cultural negotiations and adjustments on the part of both the host and the diasporic communities. They are set in post-imperial Britain in which the former colonials have come to make their homes, either directly from the sub-continent of India or through its other colonies in East Africa. Cultural conflicts and resolutions even if partial form part of these cinematic narratives.

In *Bhaji on the Beach*, a group of diasporic Indian women, young, old and middle aged from Birmingham, set off in a bus for a day trip to Blackpool, that quintessential British beach resort. They sing their way to their destination in a sub-text that brings to mind the Cliff Richard film *Summer Holiday* (Yates, 1963), a film and song the older women would be familiar with thanks to the continuing hybridizing effects of the Raj even on postcolonial India. On this road trip of self-discovery are Simi the committed feminist and believer in Black Sisterhood, who is the organizer of the trip; Asha a middle aged woman who feels neglected by her husband; Hashida a young woman who is about to start medical studies and who finds herself pregnant by her black boyfriend; Bina who works as a shop assistant at Marks and Spencers; Ginder an unhappy young housewife and Ladhu and Madhoo two teenagers who are out for fun and games with some white boys at the beach. There is also Pushpa, played by the indomitable Zohra Sahgal, an elderly housewife and grocer. Added to this motely bunch is a fashionable Indian tourist Rekha. They spread out their *bhaji* and other picnic food on the beach and establish themselves there, fully clad as opposed to the beach wear in which most of the English visitors are to be found thus "appropriating the public space of the English seaside resort" (Mendes, 2010: 327-340).

Each of these women experiences a kind of epiphany on the beach, for instance Asha meets a dapper Englishman who by paying her attention, raises her self-esteem. As for the other women they find within themselves the courage to challenge the hegemony of patriarchy. This is one of the roles that diaspora cinema plays in the context of gender: " [It] disrupts South Asian gender normativities of heterosexuality through challenging the dominant gendered ideologies such as female chastity and virginity, multiracial romance, and arranged marriages" (Desai, 2003: 214).

With *Bend it Like Beckham* we are in the double diasporic spaces of the Indian Punjabi Bhamra family which has made it to Britain via Kenya, which like India used to be a British colony. While Mr. Bhamra, the airline pilot carries the baggage of remembered racial slights from Nairobi, his younger daughter Jasminder (Jess) Bhamra, crosses gender and race boundaries by appropriating the 'male' spaces of football, while the elder daughter Pinky Bhamra, subverts without apparent rebellion, the patriarchal expectations of virgin daughters-in-law. Mrs. Bhamra oversees all these familial activities in her own quiet way, while insisting that her daughters learn how to make round *chappatis*. Played out against this backdrop of diasporic spaces and Indian patriarchy are the homophobic prejudices of both the mainstream British as well as Diasporic Indian societies in Henslowe, London. Jess and her football buddy Juliette (Jules) Paxton, played by Keira Knightley, are suspected to be lesbians by Jules' mother. Ironically the short haired, slightly built Jules is taken to be a boy by Jess's mother's friends and Jess is suspected of befriending white boys. This is of course a dramatic irony as the viewers know that though Jules is a girl, there is a white boy in Jess's life the football coach Joe, an Irishman, who in Britain also knows the meaning of racism firsthand.

Like in *Bhaji on the Beach*, in *Bend it Like Beckham* too there is a road trip that leads to self-discoveries and new loyalties. Jules and Jess have to face the fact that their friendship might not be able to accommodate the attentions that Joe pays Jess while in Germany, where they have gone to play a match. Jess has to own up to her double life, that of a footballer, which she has so far kept a secret from her parents. The Bhamras senior have to face the fact that their younger daughter is a footballer. Mr. Bhamra has to go back into his past and deal with the racism he had faced while playing cricket in Nairobi, as he watches his daughter becoming a victim of similar racism on a football field in Britain. However, matters resolve themselves happily against the backdrop of a 'Big Fat Punjabi Wedding' with *bhangra* dancing et al. The patriarchal constraints of the Bhamras and the racist prejudices of the Paxtons are 'bent' like the balls that Beckham used to bend so famously to hit the goal, to allow their daughters to go away together to a University in the USA, which has given them both a football scholarship. Mr. Bhamra also bridges racial distances with Joe with whom he plays cricket on the local cricket field.

Thus what these films do is create what Brah has called a 'diaspora space', "the point at which boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and otherness, of 'us' and 'them' are contested"; "as a conceptual category [it] is 'inhabited,' not only by those who have migrated and their descendants, but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous" (Brah, 1996: 208-09).

In the context of Bollywood films on the Indian diaspora, Aditya Chopra's *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge* – The Bravehearted Shall Take the Bride (Chopra, 1995) was a trend setter which has led to several other Bollywood films with a diaspora theme. DDLJ is the love story of Simran and Raj, played out against the backdrop

of European (London, Paris and Switzerland) and Indian Punjabi locations. So here the diaspora spaces of Europe are juxtaposed with the home spaces of Punjab replete with yellow mustard fields, macho back slapping fathers and uncles, docile and not so docile, grandmothers, mothers and aunts and strapping young suitors who will not be denied their brides.

This is the diaspora from an Indian point of view, a view in which the umbilical cord that ties the diasporic to the old homeland is not only strong but strong enough to pull the first generation diasporic Indian shopkeeper in London, Baldev Singh and his wife Lajjo, back to India, with their two daughters Simran and Rajeshwari aka Chutki in reluctant tow. Yet this is not a stereotypical Hindi film in which everything Western is portrayed as bad and everything Indian as good. So while Raj had in London tricked the strict shopkeeper Baldev Singh into letting him have a few cans of beer after closing time, he is actually a better man than the one Baldev had selected for his daughter Simran in India. The latter, the trigger happy Kuljeet, completely blots his copybook with Baldev, when he shoots down some of Baldev's beloved doves, who he was feeding as assiduously now in the Punjab, as he used to do in London's Trafalgar Square. The doves of course can be seen as metaphors for the diasporics who as Rushdie says in *Shame* have "performed the act of which all men anciently dream, the thing for which they envy the birds; that is to say, we have flown" (Rushdie, 1983: 84). Yet doves not only fly away, they are homing birds which also like Baldev return home – so they become a complex metaphor for both diaspora as well as the 'return home' phenomenon.

However, while the first generation of diasporics dream about and in this case achieve the 'return home' journey, the second generation diasporics Simran and Chutki, in the Indian patriarchal tradition, have to go back home with their parents, without much heed being paid to their own wishes by a strict father and a hapless, powerless mother. Yet it is this mother who ultimately finds the courage to dream through her daughter her own dreams which had been aborted by marriage. She encourages Simran and Raj to elope as Baldev was unlikely to listen to their pleas. It is here that the film displays a certain conservatism which was till the 1990s not commonly found in Indian films. Young lovers in Indian cinema right from the 1940s onwards have displayed grit and gumption in the face of parental opposition to their union. Raj Kapoor and Nargis in the 1950s, Dimple and Rishi Kapoor in the 1970s, Rajesh Khanna and Zeenat Aman in the 1980s have played umpteenth characters in Hindi films who have defied parental *fatwas* and run away with their beloveds. However in the mid-1990s, in a post-Babri masjid India, the public mood had swung away from revolutionary romances to conservatism and a bowing down to parental authority, right or wrong, began to become the norm with films like *Hum Aapke Hain Kaun* - What Am I to You (Barjatya, 1994) released a year before DDLJ. In HAHK the obedient young lovers decide to sacrifice their love in the wider interests of the good of the family and its only through the agency of the family dog that they are reunited once again. DDLJ displays and does not display

the conservatism of this earlier film. Here Simran almost plays the run-away bride at the railway station where Raj is leaving on a train. However, the stern patriarch till the very end holds her back, and only as the train has almost left the station, releases her wrist with the injunction that she should join Raj and find her own destiny. This makes this film a little more complex to deconstruct especially as what Simran and Raj are going back to, is the diasporic space. However, this should not lead to the conclusion that the diasporic space is more progressive than the Indian space as in the case of Simran and Chutki, the Indian norms had ruled very strongly even in London, just as they had for Jess and Pinki in *Bend it Like Beckham*. Apart from the beautiful Alpine scenery of Switzerland and the charms of Paris, what did this film mean to Indian viewers? There was of course the aspirational aspect of travel to those same locales as well as the 'feel good' factor as the film vindicated the values and culture of India, though not to the detriment of the West, as had been done by earlier films like *Purab aur Paschim* (Kumar Manoj, 1970).

What a film means to an Indian audience is an important question as the Indian audiences cannot be discounted by Bollywood film makers like Aditya Chopra even when they make films on the Indian diaspora. The Indian market is huge and even given the differential in ticket prices, the sheer numbers even out the playing field. Moreover in India film makers also count on the repeat value of films to making the cash registers keep ringing again and again. DDLJ for instance is still running at Mumbai's big single screen cinema house, *Maratha Mandir*, after nearly 20 years. It has earned over 17 million US dollars in India and over 2.6 million US dollars in overseas markets. It has been declared the biggest ever hit film in India and is one of the two in the '1001 Movies you must see' list, the other being the 1957 classic *Mother India* (Tagliabue, 2010). In 2006, members of the DDLJ team were honoured at a dinner event on the occasion of the film's 500 week anniversary. This event was hosted by the Consulate General of Switzerland in Mumbai and by Switzerland Tourism. In 2010, Yash Raj Films signed an agreement with Indian and Swiss tour companies to provide a tour package called "YRF Enchanted Journey". It allows people visiting Switzerland to view sites and filming locations from famous Yash Raj films including *DDLJ* (Yash Raj Films, 2010).

From the Yash Johar stables comes the iconic *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham* - Sometimes Happy Sometimes Sad - (Johar Karan, 2001). *KKKG* like *DDLJ* has become a firm favourite with European, especially German viewers and both are screened regularly and repeatedly during the football and Christmas seasons by German TV networks. *KKKG* was also the first Indian film in 2003 to be given a theatrical release in Germany. It reiterates classic Indian family values, romantic love as opposed to sex and familial/social support systems. The film is set partly in Delhi and partly in London. A larger than life patriarch played by Amitabh Bachchan, yet another global Indian film star, plays the role of Yashvardhan

Raichand. His real life wife Jaya, plays the matriarch, once again helpless and powerless in the face of the rampant patriarchy of her husband. Shahrukh Khan is Rahul their adopted son who falls in love with Anjali, an unsuitable lower middle class girl played by Kajol, who had also played the role of Simran in *DDLJ*. They have to leave not just the Raichand mansion after their marriage but also the country and settle in Britain. Rahul's younger brother Rohan, the natural son of the Raichands, grows up and learns that Rahul and Anjali are now in London and sets out to affect a family re-union, which he ultimately manages in a shopping mall, where the elder Raichands and the younger banished couple finally meet again. However the men still refuse to talk to one another and it's only the death of Yashvardhan's mother that finally reunites the family. The plot here though is a little simplistic as compared to *DDLJ*. Also there is much more jingoism and bling and glamour in this film than in its 1995 precursor. The jingoism takes the form of Anjali manipulating a full throated singing of the Indian national anthem at her son's English school and the bling and glamour are managed well by her reel-sister Poo – Pooja – Sharma and Rohan. With swishing blondish hair, glamorous clothes and well-toned abs they epitomize yet another aspirational level for young Indians and young Diasporic Indians too.

Unlike the Chopras, Karan Johar's diasporic locations are more varied and include New York in *Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehena* – Never Say Goodbye (Johar Karan, 2006) and San Francisco in *My Name is Khan* (Johar Karan, 2010), so he has not been picked out for honours by European states. But he enjoys a great reputation with the Indian Diasporic audiences around the world.

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#### **4. Conclusion**

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Thus, although the Indian Diaspora in the U.K. is the oldest Postcolonial diaspora, the American and even Canadian, Australian, New Zealand spaces are now more attractive to the Indian Diaspora than the European ones. The fact that the Diaspora in the USA, although just 1% of the US population, has on an average double the income of most Americans is a significant aspect. Also, India in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is looking more and more at the USA markets even though the EU is still India's largest trading partner. However, while the EU accounts for 20% of India's foreign trade, India has only a 1.8% share of the EU trade (European Commission website: 2014). The fact that the new Indian Prime Minister has chosen to make his international debut first in Japan and then in the USA is an indication of how India is now looking at Europe. This should be in my opinion a cause of concern to Europe today given the fact that India is the largest parliamentary democracy in the world and after China has the largest population. What is even more significant is over 65% of this 1.2 billion population is under 35 years of age ("India's Population 2014": 2014). This is not the case with China after its one child policy. India is on the march today whether it be in reaching out to the moon and Mars, or challenging China's out-reach programmes in the Indian Ocean in the form of its

'Maritime Silk Road' proposal ("China's Initiatives on Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road": 2014), with its own "Project Mausam" ("Project Mausam/ Mawsim: Maritime Routes and Cultural Landscapes": 2014) which has a focus on the Indian pre-European colonial trade and political influences in the Indian Ocean, where the Monsoon winds used to and to some extent still dictates the trade trajectories between India and the countries bordering the Indian Ocean. Europe and its future in the areas of trade, commerce, political influences, space programmes and sheer multiculturalism would find this India a useful ally which can be best accessed through the thriving Indian Diaspora today.

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