

**Transnationalism, Gender and Identities: A Study of South Asian Youth in the
United States**

**A Dissertation Submitted to the University of Hyderabad in Partial Fulfillment of the
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

**In
Indian Diaspora**

**By
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DECLARATION

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I, **Anindita Shome**, hereby declare that the research embodied in the present dissertation entitled “**Transnationalism, Gender and Identities: A Study of South Asian Youth in the United States**” is carried out under the supervision of **Dr. Ajaya Kumar Sahoo, Centre for the Study of Indian Diaspora, University of Hyderabad**, Hyderabad, for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in Indian Diaspora, is an original work of mine and to the best of my knowledge no part of this dissertation has been submitted for the award of any research degree or diploma at any University. I also declare that this is a bonafide research work which is free from plagiarism. I hereby agree that my thesis can be uploaded in Shodhganga/INFLIBNET.

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Part of this thesis have been:

A. Research Papers published in the following publications.

1. Sahoo, A. K. & Shome, A. 2020. “Diaspora and Transnationalism: The Changing Contours of Ethnonational Identity of Indian Diaspora”, *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology*, Vol. 19 (3): 383-402. Leiden: Brill.
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B. Presented Papers in the following conferences.

1. Participated and presented a paper titled, “Identities and Networks Through Online Interactions and Contestations: Use of Social Media by Indian Diaspora and Transnationals”, held on 3rd to 5th July, 2019 at the Seventeenth International Conference on New Directions in the Humanities at The University of Granada, Spain.
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Chapter – 1

INTRODUCTION

The South Asian diaspora has been formed owing to the colonial and postcolonial migratory waves from the South Asian region to different parts of the world. The South Asian diaspora is known for its diversity and heterogeneity and tends to reflect the rich diversities that can be found in the South Asian region. This diaspora has emerged as one of the strongest diasporas in the world and holds significance for both the homeland as well as for the hostland. The South Asian diasporic youth, who are the second- and third-generations of the diaspora, occupy an important space in the diaspora. They negotiate with the hostland spaces differently than the first-generation of the diaspora, and they connect with their homeland or ancestral land differently as well. The South Asian diaspora has become increasingly transnational with the newer technologies of travel and communications that help them form and maintain networks with their kith and kin in the homeland and the ones residing in other parts of the world. The identities that the South Asian diasporic youth carry are important in understanding how the South Asian diaspora has evolved over the years in a particular hostland. The transnational and gendered experiences and identities of the South Asian diasporic youth find their representation through different mediums and modes.

Youth is not a homogenous category and their experiences are rich and varied in any culture, community, or nation. The lived experiences of the youth are windows to our understanding of the present and future tendencies and trends of society. The opinions they form and the choices they make in life help us to comprehend the altering equations of youth to the concepts of nation, home, and belonging. The inclusionary and exclusionary patterns and tendencies of a hostland towards a diasporic or immigrant community can be studied and analysed through a study of the immigrant and diasporic youth in the hostland and how the youth deal with their multiple identities and belonging, navigating

the struggles and prejudices in the hostland spaces. The ambitions, characteristics, and conflicts of the South Asian diaspora have been changing since the first wave of emigration. The South Asian diasporic youth and their ways of understanding and negotiating their ethnic, immigrant, and diasporic identities have experienced important and essential changes as well. When compared to the previous generations of the South Asian diaspora, the youth in the diaspora, at present, are more assertive of their ethnic identities and multiple belonging, navigating the hostland and homeland identities, constructing new transnational and diasporic identities and spaces of interactions and deliberations in the changing contexts of the global, interconnected world. They also form transnational networks with their kith and kin living across the world in different host nations. This thesis aims to study and analyse the transnational and gendered identities, aspects and practices of the South Asian diasporic youth in the United States (US), and fathom if the conclusions would stand true for all the South Asian diasporic and immigrant youth population in the diaspora.

The voices of the youth have never remained subdued and have found innovative mediums of expression in every culture. Youth have been considered to be unbothered by the developments in society. Youth of any community and culture have challenged the old, established ways of living and thinking, and charted out new paths and trajectories in their own, unprecedented ways. They have produced and performed subcultures that provide an insight into the issues pertinent in society. As Steven Vertovec (1999) opines:

“The production of hybrid cultural phenomena manifesting ‘new ethnicities’...found among transnational youth whose primary socialisation has taken place with the cross-currents of differing cultural fields. Among such young people, facets of culture and identity are often self consciously selected, syncretised and elaborated from more than one heritage.” (p. 6)

Culture evolves and moulds itself through time and space, adding and subtracting, and forming new ways of living. When cultures interact with the experiences and aspirations of the youth, both affect each other in unique and complex ways,

giving rise to new cultural forms and trends. The goal of this thesis is to understand how cultural flows and the ever-evolving diasporic youth subcultures give rise to new tendencies and phenomena regarding gender and transnational identities in the diaspora and transnational contexts. The question of identities that youth carry in the hostland is a result of a variety of factors and there can be no generalisations in this regard. As Avtar Brah (1996) contends: “Racism, gender, class, the specific trajectory of an individual biography, for instance, are no less relevant to understanding processes of identity formation.” (p. 41) The South Asian diasporic youth identities are constructed at the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, age, class, caste, etc. Youth and identities are always evolving and changing according to the changing times and also due to an amalgamation of intersecting factors. Stagnancy is rarely a characteristic associated with the youth. In the case of South Asian diasporic youth, the identities also evolve following the political and social milieu in the hostland as well as in the homeland. South Asian diasporic youth reproduce their ethnic identities in the hostland in their distinctive ways combining their local context with the global. Bakirathi Mani (2012) asserts that “locality” is tied to the ways of globalisation and it exhibits the formation of communities as a result of global capital forces and racial developments at a local level (p. 4). The South Asian diasporic youth in the US forms its common identities and solidarities through this locality (Mani, 2012, p. 4). This locality also renders the South Asian diasporic youth in the US transnational identities.

Conceptualising Diaspora and Transnationalism

A diaspora emerges out of the instances where there are migration and settlement of a group of individuals from one nation-state to another nation-state, where eventually they become its citizens, and the subsequent generations of the diaspora are an integral part of the land of settlement. A postcolonial diaspora, which is a diaspora formed out of the movements and settlement of people in the contemporary era, exhibiting newer characteristics and trends of diaspora, and varies in characteristics from the colonial diasporas and pre-modern diasporas.

One example of the colonial diaspora would be the migration and settlement of the Indentured labourers from India to the British plantations during the colonial rule; and the pre-modern diasporas would be the trade diasporas before the advent of colonialism, such as the traders/merchants from parts of India to Central Asia. With the ease of travel and communication technologies in the contemporary world, diasporic individuals and communities connect and form networks using novel technologies, platforms, and ways. Monisha Das Gupta et al (2007) define 'Diaspora' as one which "... returns us to an origin, a homeland, from which communities have been dislocated. At this historical moment the 'homeland' often coincides with the modern nation state." (p. 126) The homeland, no matter how weak the linkages with it, remains a part of the identities of a diaspora. A diaspora exhibits a way of living that brings together influences of two or more nation-states, cultures, and traditions in the adopted homeland or hostland. They assimilate with the host nation while keeping intact the homeland identities the diasporic individuals can recall and reproduce. Diaspora serves a range of functions when it comes to the hostland and the homeland. Michel Laguerre (2006, p. 2) contends that for the homeland, it is an additional means of income and development through the diaspora remittances, making the diaspora a part of the homeland's economic plan. Postcolonial diasporas have become increasingly transnational in characteristics, maintaining strong links with the homeland, and contributing to the development and progress of the homeland and hostland as well. Jonathan Grossman (2019) discusses how a diaspora could be defined as transnational:

"... to say that diasporas are transnational is to say that they not only maintain ties with their homeland ... but also remain involved and invested in their host country's politics, economy, society, and culture, creating symbolic and material bonds with their host society and possibly with group members in other locations." (p. 1269)

Diasporas are becoming increasingly transnational as several transnational agents are at play in a diaspora these days. Diaspora and transnationalism, in

contemporary times, could be said to be interrelated. Thomas Faist (2010) defines diaspora and transnationalism as:

“Although both terms refer to cross-border processes, diaspora has been often used to denote religious or national groups living outside an (imagined) homeland, whereas transnationalism is often used both more narrowly – to refer to migrants’ durable ties across countries – and, more widely, to capture not only communities, but all sorts of social formations, such as transnationally active networks, groups and organisations.” (p.9)

There are several ways in which a diaspora constructs and reconstructs its identities. It has also been observed that the diaspora, sometimes, play on the stereotypes attached to the homeland or the community to which they belong, to reinforce and remain connected to their ethnic identities and homeland. They, sometimes, follow stringent homeland traditions and customs which might have already changed in the homeland. Memory plays a key role in the first-generation diasporic individuals. In present times, diaspora can inform themselves about changes and developments in the homeland through regular travel and communication with the homeland. Vijay Agnew (2005) asserts that contemporary diasporas are shaped by their transnational living in the host nations, indicating, “... a transnational sense of self and community and create an understanding of ethnicity and ethnic bonds that transcends the borders and boundaries of nation states” (p. 4), and the diaspora citizen embracing the “... dynamic tension every day between living ‘here’ and remembering ‘there,’ between memories of places of origin and entanglements with places of residence, and between the metaphorical and the physical home.” (Agnew, 2005, p. 4) The diaspora, thus, integrate the past of the homeland with the present of the hostland and aspire for a way of living combining these both.

The characteristics of a diaspora tend to keep changing according to the changes in technologies of travel and communication, social and political contexts, economic factors, and so on. Vijay Mishra (2007) observes the changes in the diaspora with the advent of technology, which some sections of diaspora

individuals have access to, reminding us of both the ease of connectivity as well as of the diversities in most diaspora communities, making them “travellers on the move” in this contemporary, globalised world,

“... their homeland contained in the simulacral world of visual media where the ‘net’ constitutes the ‘self’ and quite unlike the earlier diaspora where imagination was triggered by the contents in gunny sacks: a Ganesha icon, a dog-eared copy of the Ramayana or the Quran, an old sari or other deshi outfit, a photograph of a pilgrimage, and so on. Indeed, ‘homeland’ is now available in the confines of one’s bedroom in Vancouver, Sacramento or Perth. In short, networking now takes over from the imaginary.” (p. 3-4)

The reproduction of the homeland memories in the diaspora, and the ease at which objects that carry identities of the homeland can be procured in the hostland, through ease of transport and technology, redefine and reconstitute our understanding of diasporas and how diasporas connect with home. Michelle Keown et al (2009) deliberate on the changing concepts and definitions of the diaspora since the emergence of the term, which once was exclusively used for the migration of the Jews, but in the “contemporary cultural analysis”, the word diaspora could indicate the: “... global movements and migrations: Romanian, African, Asian, black, Sikh, Irish, Lebanese, Palestinian, ‘Atlantic’ and so on.” (p, 1) The meaning and definition of the word “diaspora” have come to include several diaspora communities formed in different hostlands, and the word entails a set of characteristics and features that define diaspora communities in the postcolonial world.

With an increasingly global world, where there is movement and settlement of people based on the need to fill the skill gap in the hostland; and want for a better standard of living by the immigrants, the diasporas in the present era, have broadened the meaning of what it means to be a diaspora. There has been a heightened sense of interest in the diasporas of the world due to the unique spaces they occupy, making the homeland as well as the hostland taking note of them, as they act as bridges between the two nation-states that they navigate. Parvati

Raghuram and Ajaya K. Sahoo (2008) assert that several significant stakeholders have been investing in the diasporic spaces, such as the homeland governmental bodies, and so on:

“The sites and means through which diasporic identification is mobilised and where diaspora is represented and contested have also multiplied. ... There has, for instance, been a reimagination of the relationship between domicility, citizenship and belonging in India from one that is exclusive and coterminous to one that recognises that deterritorialised populations may be mobilised to invest in the territories they and their ancestors left behind.” (p. 4)

The homeland governments have benefitted from the diaspora in multiple ways, thus, mutually supporting each other in times of need and crisis. Diasporas have been playing a crucial role in both the homeland and hostland, which necessitates a better understanding of the reasons and patterns of the movements and settlement of humans who cross borders, and how they change and adjust to the changing political and social landscapes of more than one nation. Gabriel Sheffer (2003) writes of the definitions that differentiate between various kinds of migrants and immigrants:

“... the conceptual and definitional borderlines between individuals and groups of tourists, international immigrants, guest workers, asylum-seekers, and refugees, some of whom reside in host countries for extended periods, on the one hand, and members of permanent ethno-national diasporas, on the other, are still rather blurred.” (p. 16)

Diasporas cross the boundaries of space and belong to more than a nation at one given time. The South Asian migratory trends to other regions of the world can be understood through the patterns of migration from the colonial era to the level of skills that the postcolonial immigrants possess, such as the low-skilled, undocumented immigrants, high-skilled diasporas, refugees, exiled, students, and so on. The South Asian traders of the pre-colonial migratory patterns from the region; the indentured labourers during the colonial times to the British

plantations; the skilled workforce to the western nations in the postcolonial era; the semi-skilled labourers to the Middle-Eastern nations; etc. all constitute the rich and diverse South Asian diaspora. The South Asian diaspora have emerged to be one of the most mobile diasporas, making a home in varied situations and contexts. The South Asian diaspora have come to occupy a unique space for the host nations and the South Asian homelands. Sean Carter (2005) defines the unique space a diaspora occupies, transcending the limits of borders and nation-states, in the following terms:

“The idea of diaspora is attractive in the sense that it offers a progressive possibility for a non-essentialized self, and can break the supposed fixed relationship between place and identity. Within diasporic communities this can be achieved through the maintenance of multiple connections, between the present 'here', and a past or future 'there'.” (p. 54)

Youth form an undeniably essential part of any diaspora, as memories, stories, and identities are transferred to them by the earlier generations to keep the homeland identities alive. Gijsbert Oonk (2007) stresses the importance of youth in the “cultural production” as, “They are socialised in cross-currents of different cultural fields and form an interesting market for ‘diasporic cultural goods.’” (p. 18) In the South Asian diaspora, the second-, third- and subsequent generations of youth occupy an important space, a space where traditions are to be continued along with better assimilation with the hostland cultures. With every generation, the ways of negotiations of more than one culture and ways and degrees of assimilation differ from the previous generations in the diaspora. The South Asian diasporic youth, as this thesis argues, exhibit transnational characteristics, as a result of the use of the new technologies of communication and travel. New forms of transnationalism and new platforms to continue older forms of transnationalism are proliferating in contemporary times. The South Asian diasporic youth is redefining the diaspora through the digital mediums making it a digital diaspora as well, that displays transnational characteristics, across the limitations of borders, time, and space. Sandhya Shukla (2001) defines the diaspora as the, “... dispersion, which effectively compresses time and space such

that it enables the experiences of many places at what would appear to be one moment.” (p. 551)

South Asian Transnationalism

The South Asian diasporics are becoming transnational with their connections and networks with their kith and kin in the homeland and across the world. It is the essence of transnationalism to alter cities, towns, villages, and the phenomenon of transnationalism modifies places, people, and structures. The newer and advanced technologies of travel and communication have encouraged the existence and continuation of South Asian transnationalism. Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick-Schiller (2004), contend that transnational migrants occupy spaces of influence and power in two or more nation-states, thus, becoming integral to the socio-political and economic developments of those nation-states (p. 1013). The power structures of the nation-states that the transnational migrants navigate bring about changes in the characteristics of the transnational migrants as well as prove beneficial to them (p. 1013). In the case of the South Asian diasporics and transnationals, the altering political situation determine the attitudes and decisions of the diaspora in relation to the hostland and the homeland. The unprecedented advancement of technologies of travel and communication have made the South Asian diaspora to inhabit transnational ways of living. The South Asian diasporic youth tend to be more transnational than the previous generations as Sam George (2019) argues that the ease of communication, awareness of life in developed nations, and ease of transportation have encouraged young adults to aspire to work and aim for a life abroad, unlike most people of the previous generations who were apprehensive of going against the boundaries of culture, tradition, and religion by crossing the nation-state and moving to foreign lands:

“... Greater affordability, mobility and certainty of return are scattering this wave further than the earlier waves of migrants. The dominant role of Indian technology professionals from elite institutions in advanced nations generated a significant swell in demand for large-scale recruitment from India, and the outsourcing revolution spread software developers and engineers from South

Asia far and wide.... This recent wave also scattered people to remote places in the world and remains more mobile than previous waves of migrants.” (p. 400-401)

Travel forms an important part of transnational life and ways of transnational living because the crossing of borders of nation-states helps the diasporics garner experiences outside the land of settlement. Newer and easier ways to travel across borders help transnational migrants to physically occupy spaces of more than one nation-state beyond the virtual spaces:

“Wherein travel implies an impermanency to the experience of moving abroad, it does so not only in actual terms, relating to the question of whether or not peoples are able and willing to return to their homeland, but also in psychic terms that seem to quite vividly depict those who live outside of what might be perceived of as “home”.” (Shukla, 2001, p. 558)

The postcolonial world has witnessed an unparalleled ease of travel from one place to another with the help of newer technologies of travel. The movement of people from one nation-state to another has become easier with travel, although stricter state regulations and surveillance exist on the immigrants, diasporics and transnationals. An increasingly global and inter-connected world has led to new diasporic and transnational communities. Places and individuals have turned transnational with the global, circular flows of capital and goods. The South Asian diasporic youth exhibit transnational characteristics due to their travels and networks with kith and kin around the world. These diasporic youth, despite being born and brought up in the hostland, maintain ties with the homeland. There are examples of them moving from the adopted homeland to another hostland for education or work. The younger generations of the diaspora tend to assimilate with the hostland habits and cultures because of their interaction with the hostland cultures from a young age. Their ideas of what is “home” differ from the previous generations of the diaspora. Ketu H. Katrak (2002, p. 76) opines that in the transnational context, there have been “new community formations” due to globalisation and the diasporas, and the first-generation of the diaspora might be

attached to the homeland, but the younger generation of the diaspora, usually, are at ease in the adopted homeland. Such tendencies are also visible with the South Asian diasporic youth in their adopted homeland or diaspora. Georges E. Fournon and Nina Glick-Schiller (2002) discuss the second-generation diaspora in the hostland:

“To establish the parameters in which members of the second generation develop their identities we need to employ both a concept of transnational social fields and an understanding that immigration is currently an ongoing process.” (p. 176)

In this thesis, the aim is to study and analyse the representations and negotiations of the South Asian diasporic youth in the US that help them to navigate transnational social fields; construct transnational, cross-border linkages; continue homeland ties; build new transnational connections; form transnational gender identities; and so on. The different mediums of representations of the South Asian diasporic youth's transnational and gender identities will be the focus of study and analysis here to comprehend the changing forms and trends of the South Asian diaspora. Steven Vertovec (2001) contends that: “Newer, cheaper, and more efficient modes of communication and transportation allow migrants to maintain transnationally - effectively both ‘here’ and ‘there’ - their originally home-based relationships and interests.” (p. 574-75) The South Asian diaspora use the new and advanced modes of communication and travel to carve transnational ties.

Conceptualising Homeland and the Hostland

Diaspora is defined in relation to its association with the homeland and the hostland. The concepts of homeland and hostland are crucial when one studies a diaspora. The reconceptualization of the meaning of homeland and hostland implies changes and transformations to the diaspora, to the global flows of people and capital, and so on. The political spaces that the diaspora, homeland, and hostland negotiate contribute, to a certain extent, to the politics of the homeland

and the host nation. Laguerre (2006) contends of the diaspora's political involvement in the homeland:

“The terrain of operation of both homeland and diaspora politicians is transnational or even global because of their ability to relocate from one site to another, because the homeland sees the diaspora as a reserve army of talent, and because the diaspora sees the homeland as a natural target in the trajectory of its political engagement.” (p. 113)

The homeland is essential as the place of origin of a diaspora community and the impact and influence of the homeland on the diaspora is significant. Richard L. Nostrand and Estaville Jr. (1993), while discussing the different definitions and meanings of homeland, note that “For homelands to exist, there inevitably must also be a bonding between a people and their natural and cultural surroundings.” (p. 2) For a diaspora, the homeland means their land of origin, a place which they can call their home, a place of their ethnic identities, even though a range of factors might have made them adopt a different homeland. Migration and immigration are not apolitical processes even though most immigrants might not be directly involved in the politics of the homeland and hostland. Roger Waldinger and Lauren Duquette-Rury (2016) assert:

“... migration is an implicitly and double- pronged political act. In departing home, the migrants vote with their feet, taking a step of quiet rebellion against the state of origin. Although economically induced migrations are explicitly apolitical, representing exit, not voice, a tacitly political conclusion may be behind that apolitical act.” (p. 44)

Diasporas have social, political, and economic implications on both the homeland and the hostland through conscious and unconscious ways. In this globalised, interconnected world, the diaspora plays a key role in determining the relationships between the homeland and the host nation. Diaspora acts as the mediator between nations-states, thus, occupying crucial political spaces in both the nations. Yossi Shain and Aharon Barth (2003) assert that “... diasporic

activities and influence in the homeland, despite their international location, expand the meaning of the term 'domestic politics' to include not only politics inside the state but also inside the people.” (p. 451)

A diaspora navigates structures of power in both the hostland and the homeland through various spaces, platforms and mediums. Diasporic youth hold immense potential for both the homeland and the hostland in the present as well as in the future. Their ways of negotiating with two or more nations could determine the manner in which these nation-states can reap benefits from these young immigrants and diasporic populations so that the policies are beneficial for all the stakeholders. The homeland could benefit from the flow of economic remittances, the flow of knowledge, the flow of investments, and so on. In the case of South Asia, with the nation-states still developing, these South Asian youth in the diaspora could act as a substantial resource to assist in the development processes of their ancestral land; they could act as influencers between the hostland and homeland and positively impact the relations between these nation-states; and they could impact the health, education and employment sectors of the South Asian nations, by bringing in the knowledge and experience of technology of the developed nations, and also investing in the developmental projects in the homeland. Tapping into the potential of these diasporic youth could prove beneficial for the nations to which they belong. The homeland could maintain links with the diasporic youth and involve and engage them in the present and future projects. These transnational involvements of the diasporic youth could render them truly transnational beings. Ajaya K. Sahoo (2013) asserts of the spaces of allegiances that diasporic communities and individuals occupy across borders and nation-states:

“Diasporic communities maintain multiple sites of affiliation, that is, with the homeland and other locations where members of the same community live. When these communities move beyond their individual territory to perform their socio-economic, political, and religious activities, the notion of 'here' is transformed. This produces 'homes away from home' through their participation in transnational networking or through virtual networks.” (p. 24)

Sahoo further observes that the diasporic identities tend to keep on changing according to the changes in the technology which bring changes to a diaspora's idea of the "imagined homeland" (2013, p. 34). The second- and third-generation diasporic youth connect with the homeland and hostland in different ways, which could be dissimilar to the ways of the previous generations of the diaspora. They perform their ethnicities in newer ways and through newer mediums, giving rise to new forms of cultural modes, as Sunaina Maira (2002) contends of the second-generation South Asian diasporic youth in New York City: "These second-generation youth have collectively created a new popular culture, based on dance parties and music mixes, that is as much a part of New York- and also global-club culture as it is of a transnational South Asian public culture." (p. 2) The ideas of homeland and hostland are different for different generations of a diaspora, and with the technologies of travel and communications available easily, the diasporas, especially the younger generations, are living a more transnational life than ever. This stands true for the South Asian diasporic youth as well.

Research Questions

The following are the research questions that this thesis aims to deduce:

1. What are the ways in which the South Asian diasporic youth in the US represent the phenomenon of transnationalism? What new forms of transnationalism emerge out of the confluence of South Asian diasporic youth with the literary and virtual spaces?
2. How do the South Asian diasporic youth assert and negotiate their gender identities through virtual networks?
3. How are the South Asian diasporic youth's gender identities and issues represented through the South Asian diaspora fiction?

4. What are the ways in which organizations and associations that engage with South Asian youth in the diaspora, and the issues affecting them, function in the diaspora?
5. How are these representations to be read within the framework of overall changes and transformations in the diaspora with respect to the homeland and the host nation?

Mapping the Field of Youth Studies

Youth studies provide unique perspectives on the youth subcultures and trajectories of the youth of any culture, community, or nation. Commencing from the Birmingham School studying youth subcultures to contemporary studies, youth studies have evolved in several ways in many disciplines of study. Youth studies is an intergenerational and multigenerational field of study, highlighting the breaks and changes from the previous generations, and addressing problems from an intergenerational lens. Nadine Dolby and Fazal Rizvi (2008) assert, “Youth, then, must move differently in the world today than they did in previous generations, as the sites in which they live are themselves transformed.” (p. 4) With a changing world, the youth absorb the changes and transform themselves accordingly. Youth make use of the modern technologies of the present day to produce cultural modes to voice their opinions and political stance; to indulge in leisure and recreational activities; and to make use of educational and skilling resources; and so on. They navigate the benefits and challenges of today’s world and produce meanings and subcultures through their correspondence with the world. Technologies have a deep impact in the lives of youth and affect the ways in which they interact with the world.

Youth and the Internet are intertwined in deeper and complex ways, leading to numerous interactions and connections across several platforms and spaces. Youth activism has gathered pace in the virtual spaces, with strategic use of the Internet, social media networking sites, hashtags, networking through digital

mediums, instant messaging services, blogs, and so on. The ways of digital activism have been innovative and ever-changing and have garnered support for a range of varied causes. The virtual spaces are no longer just innocent spaces of recreation or friendships, but spaces bursting with energy, activism, and initiatives for change. The youth are at the forefront of this digital activism for change and make the world notice their innovative ways of protests and contestations against injustices, in the process making their presence felt. Brian Wilson (2006) contends that in contemporary times, "... youth-driven, social activist networks/organizations that address a variety of social, political, and cultural concerns have become abundant and at times prominent." (p. 320) These youth organisations deal with wide-ranging causes, such as bullying at schools, climate change, poverty, wars and bloodshed, injustices, etc. participating at local and global stages, with the help of the powerful yet affordable reach of the Internet and "... In most cases, in fact, webpages are a central meeting point and basis for information dissemination and expression for these groups." (Wilson, 2006, p. 320) Blogs, social networking sites, and instant messaging are some of the primary ways through which the youth connect and consolidate their voices in the present era. With the youth becoming increasingly aware of their rights and taking a stand using multiple platforms to vocalise themselves, it is important to understand the ways in which youth contribute, making use of vital resources, to a group, community or nation. It is important to understand how the youth are connecting with each other and making a difference to the world around them. David Alberto Quijada Cerecer et al (2013) write:

"... young people are not passive receivers of information who are solely understood through socializing discourses that presume to shape them into future citizens. Instead, young people are active participants in defining what it means to be a citizen in today's diverse multicultural society." (p. 217)

The youth of today critically analyse the present political and social scenarios, and demand for changes, keeping in mind the kind of futures they want to build for themselves. They are not mute spectators of the ongoing in the world. They take a political stand and speak up for themselves and the weaker sections of

society. They have the agency over their opinions and political leanings and take a stand for causes accordingly. With the assistance of the Internet and social media sites, they disseminate information, call for support from other young people across the world, call for protests, if needed, and start dialogues and discussions. They make use of the information they receive and form opinions that, in turn, lead to concrete action in the form of online and offline protests and demands. They have become active participants in society and are concerned about their present and future. They are ready to take on responsibility and lead the way for better changes in the world.

Research into youth studies opens several windows of understanding a culture or community from different perspectives. In a similar manner, diasporic youth studies are significant as young people of the diaspora would determine the future of the diaspora and its trajectories. Youth chart their own journeys in several ways, sometimes, leading to breakthroughs in the way a community has been living, in the way of thinking, and so on. Lucy Robinson et al (2017) assert that:

“The post-war generation came to be defined by their refusal to reap the rewards of the post-war settlement in simple terms. Instead they took new popular cultural spaces like cinemas, clubs and concert halls, and used them to build new collective identities... It was apparent that young people did not necessarily want to do as they were told and sought to make a difference by making a noise.” (p. 4)

Change is an inevitable part of the youth of any culture or nation, and the effects of the changes in technologies and communication fall on the youth before any other age group, affecting and altering their lives in multiple ways. Diasporic youth experience changes similar to the youth belonging to the majorities, but the changes in their living and thinking, lead to change in the ways they relate to their homeland/ancestral land and host nation. Diasporic youth subcultures represent the assimilatory trends, the exclusionary tendencies, the fusion of two or more cultures, and so on. These subcultures also indicate the power structures in the

host nation. As Enzo Colombo and Paola Rebughini (2012) assert that knowledge of these younger generations of first-generation immigrants tend to provide:

“... privileged perspective for the observation of broader social changes, such as the characteristics of individualization processes in globalized societies, the importance of contingency and practices to understand how social actors interpret situations, their necessity to learn how to navigate between different references, opportunities and constraints, surviving structural uncertainty.” (p. 4)

Studying the younger generations of a diaspora, thus, can offer new and multiple perspectives into the workings of that diaspora, and how the younger generations are negotiating the diasporic spaces in the twenty-first century, and how their ways are different from the previous generations of the diaspora. Youth Studies is interdisciplinary in essence, and, in this thesis, fictional narratives and virtual narratives representing South Asian diasporic youth in the US have been considered for analysis, focusing on the interdisciplinary aspect, for a deeper analysis across different mediums of representations. Youth Studies hold critical importance in the field of education and sociology. A need for research on representations of youth in other fields of study cannot be exaggerated as youth have come to occupy an important place in present times demanding for constructive changes. Andy Furlong (2015) discusses the field of youth studies and, in the process, contends: “... Youth and young adulthood are statuses that must be negotiated, but negotiation takes place in contexts that are never wholly of our making. Moreover, the work put into developing life projects requires us to draw on a range of resources that are economic as well as cultural.” (p. 22)

An understanding of the second- and third-generation diasporic youth will provide diaspora studies with fresh perspectives on the experiences of migration and diaspora. Shalini Shankar (2011) is of a similar view regarding the study of diasporic youth: “Considering diasporic youth as social actors can broaden the purview of questions beyond classic migration areas of intergenerational tension and entry into adulthood to the everyday mechanisms youth develop to handle

changes linked to migration.” (p. 3) Youth studies, especially diasporic youth studies, are primarily also intergenerational studies. The aspect of generational changes is an important one in the diaspora as it indicates a changing diaspora. As diaspora changes, in essence, the meaning of home and adopted homeland also tend to undergo changes for the younger generations in the diaspora. The focus of the thesis being South Asian diasporic youth in the US, it would include an implicit comparison with the first-generation in the South Asian diaspora.

Intergenerational studies are extremely essential in diasporic and transnational studies as the changes in the generations imply how the diaspora community has been changing and transforming through the years. Sabine Fischer and Moray McGowan (1995) discuss the equations amongst generations within migrant families situated in Germany, as they,

“...display the generational conflicts symptomatic of immigration: tensions between the first generation of adult migrants with their close psychological relationship to their home countries and their intentions to return, and the ‘second generation’ who arrived as children and who have a more distant, critical view of these countries and are more orientated towards German society.” (p. 40)

There is also a third-generation, for whom Germany is home, being born there, and “...their parents’ countries of origin often as no more than a holiday destination.” (Fischer and McGowan, 1995, p. 40) With each new generation in a diaspora, what is “home” and how the young generation connects with the homeland or ancestral land, significantly alter. Ayse Guveli et al (2016) contend that one of the ways to study homeland dissimulation of a migrant community would be through an intergenerational approach:

“The second occurs over generations by means of weakening (or strengthening) generational reproduction of family traits, economic, social, cultural and religious resources and behaviours. Intergenerational change

touches on social mobility and changes in values, attitudes and behaviour.” (p. 10)

Intergenerational transformations in a diaspora could reveal the diasporic youth being more comfortable with their ethnic identities in the hostland. Youth and children act as mediators in diaspora communities with the outside world or the hostland. They act as bridges between the natives and their diasporic families as young diasporics grow up with the natives and other ethnic communities and assimilate with the hostland habits and customs much more than the previous generations. The younger generations of a diaspora, in most cases, are more open to interacting and spending recreational time with the youth of the majority communities and other immigrant and diaspora communities. Joanne Westwood et al (2014) assert the value and key role of children and youth in immigration and globalisation trends:

“... expose a range of issues about childhood and children’s contributions in families. Language brokering can enable access to goods and services as well as facilitate social relationships and community cohesion. The involvement of children as language brokers (CLBs) brings a set of concerns related to their maturity and capacity to translate, interpret and advocate for adults, be they a member of the child or young person’s family or local community.” (p. 7)

Diasporic youth act as a bridge between their community and the other communities and individuals in the hostland. They grow up in spaces where there are more interactions amongst youth of different ethnic and racial backgrounds, which help them to assimilate with the hostland better, although racial and ethnic prejudices might exist in these spaces.

The South Asian diasporic youth identities need to be studied and analysed through an intersectional and intergenerational approach. Intersectionality of age, race, ethnicity, gender, identities merge when South Asian diasporic youth negotiations are studied and analysed. The South Asian diasporic youth are characterised by the multiple identities that they might carry with ease despite the

complexities, and their transnational ways of life that help them belong to more than one nation-state, thus, asserting their identities, voices and rights across borders. Travel and transnationalism define the contemporary South Asian diasporic youth, who navigate the homeland or ancestral land, other countries and cultures with the ease of technology and communication. South Asian diasporic youth, in several instances, travel to visit kith and kin in other hostlands, or to the homeland, or for purposes of work and education, making the journeys and airports significant, as they depict the global capitalistic world, that allow legal citizens with documents to travel with ease across the world. Airports act as an important transit and travel point in today's world. Robert Miles (1999) contends:

“... when passing through the international terminal, the airport is not only an expression of how small the world has become but it also serves as the site of a national frontier, across which movement is regulated by the state... a reminder not only of national identity, but also of the passenger's juridical status in the international order. The latter refracts the current balance of economic and political power within the world capitalist economy, in so far as that balance shapes decisions about who may pass across that frontier, and on what conditions. These decisions are also shaped by and reproduce, racism and sexism.” (p. 162)

South Asian diasporic youth is unique due to its diversities, and for them, borders, airports, and homeland might stand for different ideas for different South Asian diasporic youth, depending on the homeland nation, community, caste, religion, and other identities that they inherit and carry. The South Asian diasporic youth produce unique subcultures in the hostland making use of offline and online connections and modes of communication.

Mapping the Field of Youth Subcultures

The social category of youth and youth subcultures has to be critically studied and understood as youth and youth subcultures lead to the creation of new and changing cultural trends. Youth subcultures are formed at the intersections of

cultural modes and other influences on the youth. Jon Stratton (1985) asserts that youth subcultures after the Second World War are different from the youth subcultures and groups before the war, as now, there are influences of the “mass media and consumerism” on the youth (p. 196). Subcultures provide a distinctive characteristic to the group it belongs, with their own set of trends, habits, and conducts. Subcultures contest the trends and consequences of the mainstream cultures and express their opinions through newer forms of popular culture, trends, etc. Ken Gelder (2009) writes that “Subcultures are sometimes sentimentalised, sometimes not; and the narratives they are given are therefore sometimes romantic, sometimes antiromantic, depending on the case or, rather, depending on the uses to which a subculture is put and the investments being made in them.” (p.10) Mary Jane Kehily (2007) elaborates that to comprehend the social interactions of the youth, one must grasp “The concept of ‘subculture’...a subculture can be seen as a group within a group”, and how, the social category of youth has led to “many subgroups over the years which come to be regarded as subcultures. Over time these subcultures acquire names and identities such as...skinheads, punks and goths.” (p. 21) Youth around the world do not go through the same kinds of experiences and situations. The experiences of youth differ according to the context in which they grow up and interact with society. Diasporic experiences would also differ according to the diaspora community to which a youth belongs. It is essential to consider an intersection of gender, ethnicity, race, place, socio-cultural factors, economic standing, etc. when we study and research the youth of a particular community. Johanna Wyn and Rob White (1997) assert:

“When a global perspective is taken, the socially constructed nature of ‘youth’ becomes more apparent. For a large proportion of the world’s young people, the idea of ‘youth’ as a universal stage of development was and remains an inappropriate concept.” (p. 10)

There can be no general characteristics that can be applied to the youth of all social classes, communities, and nation-states. Wyn and White (1997) further note that if we must reconsider the concept of youth then the task is to “...

maintain a balance between recognising the importance of physical and psychological changes which occur in young people's lives and recognising the extent to which these are constructed by social institutions and negotiated by individuals." (p. 12) Contemporary youth studies need to critically study the positions from which youth subcultures emerge, and how, most of these, are formed online. For instance, Rupa Huq (2006) discusses the various schools of youth subcultures, from Birmingham CSSS to the present-day youth cultural studies, and contends that, along with the established schools of thought on youth subcultures, we need "... new paths of enquiry too are necessitated by new diverse youth groupings and ever-developing youth cultural phenomena. Grand theories and linear models of youth culture are arguably increasingly redundant in the culturally pluralist, multimedia twenty-first century." (p. 23-24)

There is a long history of youth fighting and contesting for causes and giving rise to protests and movements against injustices. Youth has stood for significant changes not just in the postmodern and postcolonial world, but also had a major role to play in the nationalist movements of the colonised nations against the imperialists, as Benedict Anderson (1991) writes:

"Yet there is a characteristic feature of the emerging nationalist intelligentsias in the colonies which to some degree marks them off from the vernacularizing nationalist intelligentsias of nineteenth-century Europe. Almost invariably they were very young, and attached a complex political significance to their youth—a significance which, though it has changed over time, remains important to this day." (p. 118-119)

An important issue of studying youth and youth subcultures would be to understand if all the genders are equally incorporated in the studies. Gender forms a significant part of the youth subcultures, and women were often neglected in the mainstream narratives of the youth subcultures. Anita Harris (2008) takes note of the emergence of feminist youth subcultures:

“If subculture theory has been the major paradigm through which youth resistance has been analyzed in the West, feminism has been the key theoretical framework to bring young women into these debates about young people’s action for social change.” (p. 5)

Mary Celeste Kearney (2009) discusses how the field of Girls’ Studies underwent significant changes and developed in substantial ways in the contemporary times, by overcoming barriers that existed before the 1990s, and how after that, several factors and changes helped to its rise inside and outside the academic world (p. 2). Thus, youth studies must include and incorporate the feminist perspectives, the queer perspective, and so on, and give rise to diverse and inclusive narratives. This thesis studies and analyses the fictional and virtual narratives on the South Asian diasporic youth to understand the gender identities constructed through these mediums, because gender and sexual identities of the South Asian diasporic youth are significant issues in the diaspora. Aparna Rayaprol (1997) discusses how experiences of Asian Indian women did not find prominence in the immigrant writings earlier, but she goes on to note that gradually there have been more studies in the field of cultural studies that have dealt with gender as a part of the immigrant identities (p. 21-23).

Youth cultural studies research the youth subcultures and popular cultures produced by the youth. Dannie Kjeldgaard and Søren Askegaard (2006) discuss the global youth culture and market and contend that, while the market readily accepts the youth cultures for the profit of the market, but the policy makers looked down upon the youth cultures as immature and problematic, thus, giving rise to this dichotomy of perception of youth cultures in society (p. 232). The South Asian diasporic and transnational youth navigate dissimilar spaces at the same time or at different points of time. A study of the diasporic youth’s contestations and negotiations of the economic, socio-cultural and political developments in the hostland as well as homeland requires an interdisciplinary methodological and theoretical approach and perspective. Sunaina Maira (1999) contends: “Thornton’s theory of subcultural capital also helps to address the ambiguous role of class differences within this Indian American youth culture.

She argues that for some subcultures, class differences are purposefully obscured by uniform expressions of style, language, or music..." (p. 38) It is essential to remember the heterogeneity of youth of a particular culture, community, ethnicity, etc. Mica Nava (1984) discusses youth studies and how generalisations are common in the study of youth as, "Youth in relation to adulthood has been understood as a category undivided by differences of sex, race and class ..." and how categories of age, class, etc. have different effect on men and women, "... class, for example, has been a more significant divider of women at some historical conjunctures than at others." (p. 2) Youth Studies must understand the experiences of young men and women and the third gender differently in different contexts. Youth cultures and subcultures are performed by the youth and absorbed by youth depending on their gender, age, class, etc: "Youth culture of the street and club is relatively unshaped and unsupervised by adults; it thus both transforms and exposes relationships within the category of youth." (Nava, 1984, p. 3)

The everyday interactions of the South Asian diasporic and immigrant youth are part of the youth subcultures, which include their daily practices and popular cultures- music, clothing, cuisine, etc. Youth subcultures represent the heterogeneities and diverse identities of a society, and are alternate representations to the mainstream culture, therefore, these are not acknowledged by the majority and flourish on the peripheries. South Asian youth subcultures in the diaspora thrive alongside the mainstream cultures of the hostland, but do not enjoy the widespread acceptance of the hostland society. These diasporic youth subcultures are practised and made popular by the immigrant and diasporic youth in the hostland spaces. This work would try to understand how the South Asian diasporic and transnational youth subcultures in the hostland break apart from the mainstream cultures of their ethnic communities in the hostland and reflect transnational and gender identities. Multiple belonging and identities of the diasporic youth construct hybrid cultural practices and trends which are an amalgamation of hostland and homeland cultures and influences. These hybrid cultural forms are evident in the diasporic youth's choice of clothing; forms of

music (combination of desi music and hip hop); fusion of food habits of different cultures; languages; etc. The impact of the popular cultures and colloquial practices in the hostland and homeland on the construction of identities of South Asian diasporic youth would be studied and analysed in this thesis. The reconstruction and representations of the hybrid identities of the diasporic youth through fictional and virtual narratives constitute the focus of the thesis.

Research Objectives

This thesis aims at contributing to the field of diaspora and transnationalism by researching the second- and third-generation South Asian diasporic youth in the US. This objective would be achieved through a study and analysis of the literary and virtual narratives representing the South Asian diasporic youth in the United States. The following are the main research objectives of this thesis:

1. To identify the contemporary and changing South Asian diasporic youth subcultures in the diaspora through representation and experiences in the fictional and virtual narratives.
2. To study and understand the role of South Asian youth organizations in the US and how these help in the reconstruction of South Asian diasporic youth's hybrid identities and contest for the rights and justice of the diaspora in general.
3. To understand how the fictional representations of South Asian diasporic youth bring out the intricacies and complexities of their diasporic, transnational, and gendered experiences.
4. To understand how social media networks and digital spaces act as alternate spaces to assert and reinforce the gender, ethnic, and transnational identities of the South Asian diasporic youth.

Methodology

This thesis employs qualitative approach, with qualitative content analysis as the primary tool of study and analysis. This thesis being a part of an interdisciplinary department, I have attempted to understand the South Asian diasporic youth in the US through an interdisciplinary and intersectional approach- drawing analogies across selected literary/fictional narratives and virtual narratives. Content analysis of selected virtual and fictional narratives have been used here for achieving the research objectives and answering the research questions.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is the analytical framework based on which this thesis studies, analysis and attempts to answer the research questions. Intersectionality, as Patricia Hill Collins (2000) discusses it, in the context of “black feminist thought”, and asserts that “intersectional paradigms” will assist in decoding black women’s experiences in the US, and also, help in unpacking and explaining the experiences of other classes who are oppressed in the US (p. 227). Collins contends that rethinking and restructuring of black feminism empowerment through understanding and analysing:

“... how the matrix of domination is structured along certain axes—race, gender, class, sexuality, and nation—as well as how it operates through interconnected domains of power—structural, interpersonal, disciplinary, and hegemonic—reveals that the dialectical relationship linking oppression and activism is far more complex than simple models of oppressors and oppressed would suggest.” (2000, p. 288-89).

She (2000) discusses how this will help in revealing new connections and making resistance and empowerment complex as the systems of oppression. Helma Lutz (2015) discusses intersectionality in individuals’ lives and “how “gender” and “race”, invariably linked to structures of domination, can mobilize and

deconstruct disempowering discourses, and undermine and transform oppressive practices.” (p. 41) She introduces and discusses how “doing intersectionality” would put the focus on: “... how individuals ongoingly and flexibly negotiate their multiple and converging identities in the context of everyday life.” Instead of the accepted understanding that “how structures of racism, class discrimination and sexism determine individuals’ identities and practices”, she further asserts that “doing intersectionality” would mean to “... explore how individuals creatively draw on various aspects of their multiple identities as a resource to gain control over their lives... how “gender” and “race”, invariably linked to structures of domination, can mobilize and deconstruct disempowering discourses, and undermine and transform oppressive practices.” (Lutz, 2015, p. 41)

The convergence of identities, gender, sexualities, and ethnicities makes intersectionality an ideal framework for studying the South Asian diasporic youth. Paola Bacchetta et al (2019) assert that in the present era, “Migration, indigenism, color, racial inequality, nationalism, the legacy of colonialism, the fact of empire, and intersectionality are combining.” (p. 2) The intersectionality of gender, age, transnationalism, ethnicities, and culture to understand the construction and negotiation of identities by these South Asian diasporic youth would remain the focus of this work. It is vital to study and analyse the lives and decisions of these diasporic youth from multiple, intersecting perspectives because issues of gender, identities, race, ethnicity, class, etc. are interlinked and influence each other.

In the two primary chapters (i.e., the third and fourth chapters) of this thesis- qualitative content analysis of fictional narratives and virtual narratives- the selected content would be analysed and divided thematically: transnational identities and gender identities through a range of sub-themes: racial prejudices, ethnicities, and identities at educational and workspaces, homeland and hostland networks, cultural practices, etc. This thesis would attempt to find the points of convergences in the representations of South Asian diasporic youth in the literary

and virtual narrative mediums. These analyses would be undertaken to understand how transnational and gender identities are represented in the selected fictional and virtual narratives on the South Asian diasporic youth in the US. Transnational intersectional approach can, thus, provide a methodology where the context is taken into account, with better understanding and depth, rather than a generalised intersectional method for every place.

Content Analysis

This thesis uses textual and qualitative content analysis on the selected fictional texts and virtual narratives. Kimberly Neuendorf (2002, p. 1) provides a succinct definition of content analysis “... as the systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics. It includes the careful examination of human interactions; the analysis of character portrayals in TV commercials, films, and novels...” This thesis would employ the method of content analysis for its qualitative study of the South Asian diasporic youth in the US through different modes of representations. The selected fictional narratives would be studied and analysed through the qualitative content analysis method to understand the representations and reinforcements of transnational and gender identities of the South Asian diasporic youth characters in the fictional texts. The content analysis of the virtual narratives would require further elaboration here. Frequency content analysis is the qualitative content analysis method employed in the thesis to recognise the transnational and gender themes occurring frequently in the selected content. This thesis would take up a content analysis of two different mediums of representation to understand how the South Asian diasporic youth’s transnational and gender identities find a place across these two mediums.

Virtual Ethnography

The evolution of the Internet from merely connecting individuals across the globe to a complex web of networks and nodes, that has been shaping and moulding our societies and lives, makes for an interesting study. Our online and offline lives are

intertwined in multiple ways, affecting each other in a conscious as well as unconscious manner. The Internet has come to occupy an essential part of our lives, and its impact on young minds is of utmost significance. The ways in which the Internet shapes the lives of the youth cannot be undermined. The networks and connections formed through the Internet, social media networks and other communication technologies have made the Internet a site for research and analysis. Behavioural patterns can be affected through the medium of the Internet, and emerging studies are analysing the role of the Internet in impacting our lives and actions. Niels Brügger (2012) contends of the world wide web and communication technologies that:

“The world wide web - or simply: the web - has become the center of gravity of the digital networked communicative infrastructure, and in many ways also of our communicative infrastructure at large since many off- line activities are entangled in the web such as social, cultural, political, and commercial life.”
(p. 102)

Real-life events could be extended and continued in the social networking sites, emails, messaging services, etc. and vice versa, a phenomenon that makes it necessary to understand how virtual spaces impact and influence human behaviours in real-life social spaces. Ongoing in the virtual spaces might even impact structures of power in offline social spaces, in the form of protests and contestations, and build solidarities and support. Philippa Collin (2015) ponders over the extent of the impact of technology and the Internet on the formulation of policies, and if the impact is significant enough to dismantle hierarchies when policies are formed:

“The increasingly social, peer-to-peer and open systems technology of social network sites (SNS), public publishing and virtual gaming environments are transforming the everyday practices of people, thus changing their expectations and hopes for socio-political expression.” (p. 25)

The omnipresence of the Internet and technology in the lives of young people creates spaces and narratives through these virtual spaces. Young people not only use digital media for their leisure activities, but also for raising awareness on important issues that have a deep impact on society; disseminate knowledge through the Internet within a matter of seconds; lead online movements and, sometimes, arrange for offline protests through an online appeal to join the protests; and so on. Youth subcultures are being created through these online networks and nodes.

As the youth embrace the new and evolving technologies, the familiar ways of living keep transforming, making it necessary for us to study and understand the new social processes of identity construction and formation. A major part of the social lives of the youth is spent online, and social connections are formed through social media networks. These virtual spaces continue the offline social connections of the youth these days and vice versa. Laguerre (2006) contends that “Information technology complicates our understanding of the working of the public sphere because it provides diverse routes used by the people to communicate among themselves.” (p. 122) The public and personal spheres of the youth have changed since the ubiquitous presence and use of the Internet and social networking sites. Virtual spaces have turned into vibrant platforms where multiple opinions, ideologies, and allegiances interact and contest amongst themselves.

The South Asian diasporic youth have a strong and vibrant presence online, for the purpose of voicing their opinions about events at home and in the host nation, and to familiarising the virtual world with their diasporic and transnational ways of being. The South Asian diaspora has been utilising the Internet to sustain old networks, to build community in the hostland, to form new transnational networks across the world, and so on. Robert Latham and Saskia Sassen (2005) argue that:

“Understanding the place of these new computer-centered networks and technologies from a social science perspective requires avoiding a purely

technological interpretation and recognizing the embeddedness of these technologies and their variable outcomes for different economic, political, and social orders.” (p. 4)

It is important to make a note of the age range of the diasporic considered in this thesis. This thesis being a qualitative study of the fictional narratives and the youth organisations and their digital presence, there are no stringent age brackets of the youth represented in the fiction and the virtual narratives. This thesis, thus, understands the diasporic youth as considered by the fictional writer and the diasporic youth organisations. Every diasporic organisation has their own set of age-range for the diasporic youth, depending on their mission, vision, and programmes. This thesis studies and analysis the narratives with an aim of studying the nuances of the narratives and their representations of the diasporic youth, with the flexibility provided by qualitative research methods.

Theoretical Framework

This thesis aims to study and analyse the transnational and gender identities of the South Asian diasporic youth in the US foregrounded in the theories of transnationalism and postcolonialism. Transnational and Postcolonial theories have been employed to complete the analysis of the selected fictional and virtual narratives.

Postcolonialism and the Diaspora

Postcolonial theory studies the impact and consequences of colonisation and imperialism on the once-colonised states and subjects. The South Asian diaspora has emerged out of colonial and postcolonial migratory patterns and trends from the subcontinent to other parts of the world. The South Asian diasporic youth in the US, the ones who are the focus of this thesis, need to be analysed from a postcolonial perspective, as they are often referred to as the “postcolonial diasporics”. The postcolonial diasporas are different in characteristics than the ones in the colonial and pre-colonial eras. Many of the postcolonial diasporas are

a continuation of the colonial diasporas, yet, inevitably, changes have taken place in the diasporas owing to a range of factors. Bill Ashcroft (2020) opines of the postcolonial theory that: “What made post-colonial theory so useful was its ability to comprehend the postmodern movement of culture beyond the nation-state and at the same time to address the particularity of the (largely non-Western) local.” (p. 31) Leela Gandhi (1998) discusses postcolonial theory and contends that postcolonial studies act as spaces where several disciplines and theories interact and intersect as well as a space where different theories contest with each other. Postcolonial theory has made it possible within the purview of the humanities to hold “a complex interdisciplinary dialogue”, yet bringing together conflicting theories such as poststructuralist and Marxist theories, “confounds any uniformity of approach” (p. 3). She further throws light on the question of whether to use the hyphenated “post-colonial” or the unhyphenated postcolonial:

“Whereas some critics invoke the hyphenated form ‘post-colonialism’ as a decisive temporal marker of the decolonising process, others fiercely query the implied chronological separation between colonialism and its aftermath—on the grounds that the postcolonial condition is inaugurated with the onset rather than the end of colonial occupation. Accordingly, it is argued that the unbroken term ‘postcolonialism’ is more sensitive to the long history of colonial consequences.” (1998, p. 3)

Several postcolonial diasporas in the contemporary era interact with and emerge out of, mostly, multicultural societies, thus, making it essential to understand postcolonialism and multiculturalism while studying one such diaspora. Sneja Gunew (1997) discusses multiculturalism and postcolonialism:

“Multiculturalism deals with theories of difference but unlike postcolonialism, which is to a great extent perceived to be defined by its specific historic legacies in a retroactive way, multiculturalism deals with the management (often compromised) of contemporary geo-political diversity in former imperial centres and their ex-colonies alike. It is also increasingly a global discourse since it takes into account the flow of migrants, refugees, diasporas, and their relations with nation-states.” (p. 22)

The fictional narratives of Jhumpa Lahiri, selected here for study and analysis, could be categorised under the term, “postcolonial fiction”, as Lavina Dhingra Shankar and Rajini Srikanth (2000) argue that the “... South Asian American literature offers a unique vantage point from which to view and comprehend this critical time of flux within the Asian American and North American demographic landscape.” (p. 373)

Transnationalism and Diaspora

The twenty-first century provides innumerable instances of transnational living and the diasporas of the world, today, contribute to the transnational ways of life. With borders easier to cross, and with global, capitalised, multicultural cities, almost every part of the world has turned heterogenous and inter-dependent on each other. Vertovec (2009) while discussing transnationalism observes:

“While the term ‘transnationalism’ is fairly new and currently en vogue, sociologists of migration have long recognized that migrants maintain some form of contact with family and others in their homelands, especially through correspondence and the sending of remittances.” (p. 13)

The phenomenon of transnationalism has existed since a long time, in different ways, yet the forms of transnationalism and the ways of maintaining the transnational ties, keep changing and transforming with newer innovations of technology and communication, changes in the global economy, and so on. Thomas Faist (2010) asserts that while the term diaspora usually means:

“... form of transnational organisation spanning a specific country of origin and a set of host countries.” The “transnational community” incorporates a much broader meaning, including “such as cross-border village communities or borderland communities. Thus, transnational communities encompass diasporas, but not all transnational communities are diasporas.” (p. 21)

Some forms of transnationalism have always been prevalent in the movement and settlement of people even before the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries. With the introduction of advanced technologies of travel and communications, the forms of transnationalism underwent a major change and are still under the process of transformation. A transnational living connects and builds networks across cultures and nation-states, transforming homogenous spaces into vibrant, heterogenous ones.

The South Asian diaspora, especially the second- and third-generation diasporic youth, occupy spaces that connect with the adopted homeland as well as the homeland in complex ways. The transnational social fields that reproduce meanings across borders are to be studied in this thesis. Levitt and Schiller (2004) define the social fields as “... multidimensional, encompassing structured interactions of differing forms, depth, and breadth that are differentiated in social theory by the terms organization, institution, and social movement.” (p. 1009) The transnational migrants maintain transnational links, networks, and ways of being and belonging that balance their allegiances and involvement in the hostland, homeland, and transnational social field.

Outline of the Chapters

The thesis is divided into five major chapters.

The thesis begins with the Introductory Chapter, which commences the discussions on diaspora, transnationalism, South Asian diaspora, youth subcultures, South Asian youth subcultures, the ways in which the Internet has transformed diaspora and transnationalism, and the impact of the Internet on the South Asian diaspora in question here. The theoretical framework foregrounds the thesis in transnational and postcolonial theories to analyse the selected content and to understand the transnational and gender identities through the content. The

theoretical entry points of the thesis are discussed here. This chapter discusses the concepts of diaspora and transnationalism in descriptive terms. This chapter also discusses elaborately the methodology that helps to reach my objectives and answer my research questions.

The second chapter discusses the historical and contemporary trends of the South Asian diaspora and transnationalism across the world in general and, particularly, the US. Diasporic communities have become more prominent in the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries, with the unique spaces they have occupied, and the roles they have been playing in both the hostland and the homeland. The South Asian diaspora exhibits similar yet unique trends and this chapter reviews those trends. Their roles have become more prominent in the global, interconnected political and economic scenarios of today's world. This chapter also focuses on the Indian Government's initiatives for Indian diasporic youth residing across the world in any hostland. The study of South Asian diasporic youth subcultures through fictional and virtual narratives in this thesis might be contemporary in nature, but it is essential to understand the historical processes that have led to the contemporary trends of South Asian diaspora and diasporic youth. The South Asian diasporas could be considered to begin as a result of the movement of indentured labourers to the British Plantations in the nineteenth century. The South Asian diasporic youth have had a political identity in the UK as the South Asian diaspora grew in the host nation. The South Asian diasporic youth have an active presence in the US and have been aware of their rights in the hostland. South Asian diaspora has rich histories behind its contemporary forms and an understanding of the historical contexts behind the development of South Asian diasporic communities in each host nation is essential to study the South Asian diaspora at present. As this chapter would entail the historical and contemporary forms of the South Asian diaspora, a note on the term and region of South Asia is added in the chapter.

The third and fourth chapters are the primary chapters of the thesis and focus on how South Asian diasporic youth are represented through fictional narratives and

South Asian youth organizations in the US. The third chapter focuses on the South Asian diasporic youth organisations in the US and their online and virtual narratives for analysing how South Asian diasporic youth are represented through these organisations and the impact of their work. The South Asian youth organisations along with broader South Asian organisations that also include the diasporic youth are reaching out to the South Asian diaspora communities at large, using modern technologies, for disseminating information and spreading awareness. This chapter would attempt to understand and analyse the transnational and gender identities being formed and reinforced through the selected virtual spaces that the South Asian diasporic youth in the US occupy through these youth organisations in the hostland. The methodology of virtual ethnography would be used here, in the form of qualitative content analysis of the selected virtual content from Twitter and official blogs of the South Asian diaspora organizations' pages and Twitter handles or accounts. Twitter is a microblogging platform where posts in the form of tweets and retweets are shared by the people on the platform. This chapter would analyse the content thematically as would be done in the next chapter to understand how two different mediums of representations bring out the transnational and gender identities of the South Asian diasporic youth in the US.

The fourth chapter considers Jhumpa Lahiri's two important short story collections: *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) and *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) to understand how the South Asian diasporic youth in the US find representation in the world of fiction. Due to the constraints of time and for maintaining uniformity in the analysis, these two collections of short stories have been selected. Many of Jhumpa Lahiri's short stories and novels deal with the young generations of the diaspora and how they negotiate with the homeland and hostland spaces. This chapter analyses the selected short stories to understand how transnational and gender identities find reverberance in the selected fictional texts. Fiction forms one of the significant ways in which a diaspora community or individual is represented, read, and understood. Fiction is the window through which we can look and understand the diasporic world of an individual or set of individuals.

The diasporic imaginary is given a range of complex treatment by writers of diaspora through their lived experiences. The longing for homeland, the negotiations in the adopted homeland, the changing definition of home, the nostalgia, the gendered experiences of the diaspora, are the themes that find resonance and are problematized in diaspora novels. This chapter studies the selected texts from a similar perspective.

The fifth chapter is the conclusion of the thesis which draws analogies between the findings of the thesis. This chapter would also include the limitations of the study. Significant light would also be thrown on the scope for future research.

The next chapter will provide a background of the historical and contemporary threads of the South Asian diaspora.

Chapter – 2

South Asian Diaspora and Transnationalism: Historical and Contemporary Contexts

Introduction

This chapter explores the past and present contexts of South Asia and the South Asian diaspora. It is important to understand the histories of the South Asian diaspora; the importance of the diaspora to the South Asian nation-states; and the position of the contemporary context of the diaspora. This chapter would involve discussions and deliberations by considering the literature on South Asians, South Asian diaspora, and South Asian diasporic youth to form a better understanding of the significance of diaspora and transnational trends of the South Asians worldwide. It would also help the thesis to place its themes, arguments, observations, and findings in historical and contemporary social contexts.

South Asia is a region made up of a multitude of nation-states. Languages, communities, cultures, and intersecting histories tie up all the South Asian nations. South Asians have a dynamic history of movement and travel, both internal migration and the phenomenon of crossing borders and settling in newer and foreign lands. Contrary to the Eurocentric views on the mobility of the peoples of the region, South Asia had a rich network of trade routes within its geographical boundaries, and also with the Middle-East, Central Asia, Africa and so on, dating back to the 1st century. The modern migrations such as the indentured labourers; the migration of skilled professionals to the developed countries after India's independence; the unskilled and semi-skilled labourers to the Middle-East; the undocumented labourers to the developed nations; and so on, form the bulk of the migrations that have taken place and, presently, taking place from the South Asian region. More recently, the movement of people inside and outside the region of South Asia has redefined the South Asian nations in significant ways, contributing to the social, political, and economic changes.

“South Asia has been the home to several major civilizations in succession, each being the historical and cultural elaboration of a world religion of great antiquity and wide popular appeal. Not all of these civilizational influences were indigenous to the area, but all of them had great impact.” (David Levinson, 1991, p. xxi)

South Asians have formed strong diasporic communities across the globe, thus, giving rise to one of the most diverse and fascinating diasporas of the world. The definitions of diaspora have changed and evolved over the years, and these definitions have come to accept transnational communities that have travelled outside their homeland and settled in foreign lands for a long time so that they have been accepted as naturalised citizens of the host nation:

“Diaspora has been transformed (at least in a theoretical sense) from a descriptive condition applied largely to Jews in exile, to encompass a multitude of ethnic, religious and national communities who find themselves living outside of the territory to which they are historically 'rooted'.” (Carter, 2005, p. 55)

Contemporary forms of diaspora do not necessarily entail the narratives of pain and trauma associated with traditional diasporas. The reasons for the transplantation from one's homeland to host nations happen to be wide-ranging in contemporary times: the economic pull to the developed nations; political turbulence in the homeland; lack of opportunities in the homeland; skill gaps in the existing population of the host nations; better opportunities for study and research in the hostland etc. South Asian diasporic communities are heterogenous concerning the community traits, religion, language, food habits, clothing, caste, economic standing, and so on. They have made a home for themselves across the world, after uprooting themselves or being uprooted from their roots. Their reasons for emigrating to the countries of the settlement have been equally varied. Some of the South Asian diasporic communities have historical linkages with the host nations, whereas others are a result of the recent phenomenon of

contemporary forms of globalisation. Despite the differences in their homeland nations, such as skillsets, languages, customs, religion, etc. the South Asian diaspora communities share some kind of solidarity in the host nations, i.e., a shared history of origin from the region of South Asia. The South Asian diaspora, in most cases, have been formed due to the aspirations of the immigrants for a better standard of living in one of the developed nations.

There are spaces where the South Asian diaspora communities maintain their identities in the host nations, and there are instances and spaces where they stand together as one South Asian community. As their homeland (motherland or ancestral land) is intrinsically connected with the other nation-states in the South Asian region, in a similar way, their lives and histories are also connected with the other South Asian diaspora communities in the host nation. In this contemporary world of inter-connectedness and global flows of people, cultures, capital, goods, and ideas, it is through shared identities and efforts that the contemporary problems could be tackled and solved. As Claude Markovits (2007) notes:

“... the more fragmented and diverse the actual Indian or South Asian diaspora tends to become, encompassing experiences and trajectories which appear largely incommensurable to each other, the more inclusive the discourse about diaspora tends to become, either because of a kind of nationalist appropriation or because it becomes enclosed within a more general discourse of globalisation.” (p. 269)

The South Asian diaspora, with its linkages and networks spread across the world, and their ties with the homeland, have diasporic individuals who can be considered as transnationals who are globalised citizens. The South Asian diaspora have been engaged and involved in long-distance nationalism, and maintain strong ties with the homeland. The South Asian diasporic individuals, whose ancestors were indentured labourers, connect with the homeland in different ways than the South Asian diasporics who have emigrated in the postcolonial era to the developed nation-states. There exist rich diversities and

heterogeneities amongst the South Asian diasporics in different hostlands. These diversities are, many a time, replications of the diversities present in the South Asian region. Avtar Brah (1996) discusses how, "... in the South Asian sub-continent where the capitalist mode of production coexists with the precapitalist mode, power and privilege devolve along the lines of class, caste and gender, with religion underpinning a complex intersection between the three." (p. 18) And how, this is resonated in the cultural modes, social practices, traditions, ways of living across every group based on class, community, caste, religion, etc. "But, at the same time, since these groups also share some aspects of their history, there are some cultural patterns which are common to them all. This common denominator serves to distinguish the South Asian cultural systems from the cultures of those peoples whose historical experience has been significantly different." (1996, p. 18) These shared cultural modes of the South Asian region are resonated in the South Asian diaspora as well.

South Asia and South Asian Diasporic youth

The term South Asia includes India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bhutan, Maldives, Bangladesh, and Nepal. The Partition of India in 1947 led to the formation of the nation-state of Pakistan. Bangladesh was formed in the year 1971. Modern South Asia is a geopolitical entity that has been deeply impacted by the colonial rule, the Partition, and subsequent political ongoingings amongst the South Asian nation-states. Dhananjay Tripathi and Sanjay Chaturvedi (2020) deliberate on the politics of borders- physical as well as mental- in the South Asian region, and how, despite, innumerable similarities amongst the people of the South Asian region, the borders keep the conflicts and differences alive (p. 176). The entire region of South Asia is rich, varied, and diverse- regarding traditions, people, languages, cultures, religions, political systems, literatures, and so on. Significant diasporas have emerged out of this region, and the South Asian diasporic communities have important social, economic, and political global and local effects. Numerous texts help one understand the South Asian and South Asian diaspora, such as Joya Chatterji and David Washbrook (2013), Rajesh Rai

and Peter Reeves (2008), Ajaya K. Sahoo and Gabriel Sheffer (2014), Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal (1998), and Ajaya K. Sahoo and Bandana Purkayastha (2019) amongst others. The region of South Asia shares interconnected histories and, even in contemporary times, it shares a lot of commonalities despite major differences. The diaspora emerging out of the international migrations from this region to the rest of the world keeps shifting its characteristics and meanings with each generation and each era. The political scenarios and equations within and amongst the nation-states keep changing within the South Asian region, yet, the South Asian diaspora has successfully retained its solidarity in the hostland.

It is important to understand why the Indian immigrants/ diasporics, Pakistani immigrants/ diasporics, Bangladeshi immigrants/ diasporics, Nepalese immigrants/ diasporics, and other South Asian nations' immigrants and diasporics in the hostland started referring to themselves as South Asians as a unit. It does not only and exclusively have to emerge from the fact that they belong to the group of South Asian nations, but mostly to reinforce themselves as a unit of strength and solidarity against the racial elements in the hostland. Bakirathi Mani (2012) writes that immigrants tend to associate with the South Asian identity, less because of their homeland being one of the South Asian nation-states, and more due to their lived experiences as being identified as a racial minority in the United States (p. 4). She further contends:

“The experience of being South Asian is fundamentally about localizing transnational ideologies of class and race, for immigrants who take on the project of producing locality find themselves struggling against the authority of the state and its requirement of national allegiance.” (2012, p. 4)

The South Asian identity, as a whole, takes on newer meanings and connotations in the diaspora and different political and social contexts in the host nation. A part of the negotiations in the host nation for a diaspora is the formation of new identities and merging of the old and new ones. When South Asians identify themselves in the diaspora as a unified group, despite differences back home, they

are adapting to new identities in the host nation. Being open to changes and adapting to new cultures and ways of life are a part of the new life at the adopted land for immigrant and diaspora communities. Sandhya Shukla (2001) contends of the South Asians:

“And the grouping of "South Asian," too, as a geographical reference that does not have nation or religion in its root meaning, constructs a highly provisional language, a kind of theory itself, for thinking about how people see themselves as part of broader social formations.” (p. 553)

Globalisation leads to new and transnational formations, linkages and identities, which applies to the South Asian diaspora as well. The nation-states in South Asia and the South Asian diaspora have rich and interesting migratory histories. There has hardly been any culture or community which has not been shaped by the history of the movement of its people. People have moved for newer opportunities and discoveries since the time of early civilisations. There are different ways in which these immigrant individuals and communities confronted and tackled the difficulties of settling down in a foreign land. Sticking together as a community, assimilating with the ethnics of the hostland, making use of networks, and, in contemporary times, the abundant use of technology and the Internet mark the characteristics of the South Asian diasporic communities. The continuation of homeland art forms, religious practices, culinary habits, ethnic clothing, celebration of homeland festivals, community and caste adherences, community identities, etc., are some of the ways through which the South Asian diaspora communities have kept the homeland alive in the diaspora. Diaspora organisations help the diasporic individuals stick together as a community and practice their ethnic identities through a range of functions and programs.

Every diaspora community forms associations and organisations to form networks and links within people of similar origins, and which act as support systems in the adopted lands. Organisations have always been a significant way in which diasporic communities have survived in the host nation, for example, the Croatian diaspora:

“... what perhaps was more unusual about the revival of hrvatsko (literally 'Croatian-ness') in the early 1990s was that amongst those involved in the social and political organizations which sprang up were second, third and fourth generation 'Croats', most of whom had never seen their 'homeland’” (Carter, 2005, p. 56)

Diasporic organisations also act as ways through which the second- and third-generations of the diaspora- who are citizens of the adopted homeland- connect with their ethnic origins and to a homeland they have hardly or never visited. Diasporic organisations have assisted in assimilatory activities as well as served as ways through which the homeland cultures are retained and redefined in the diasporas for successive generations. These diasporic organisations have also fought and challenged racial and ethnic injustices against the minorities in the hostland. Technological advancements in the fields of travel and communications have led to unprecedented networks and nodes amongst the diaspora communities, homeland and the hostland. Digital media and social media play a major role in keeping diasporic and transnational connections alive and thriving in contemporary times. Sheng Ding (2007) writes while researching on the digital diaspora of the Chinese diasporic community, that:

“In the post-Cold War world, economic globalization, democratization and the spread of ICTs have greatly deepened global interdependence, universalized certain values like democracy and human rights, and expanded the flow of information. Some scholars call this period the global information age,⁴ in which national image is becoming increasingly important in world politics. All governments have become more attentive to their national images, which are now regarded as intangible but important national power resources.” (p. 628)

It is to be noted that immigrants and diasporic individuals from Asia or South Asia have a lot of diversity amongst themselves- based on religious beliefs, linguistic identities, food habits, clothing, festivals, skill sets, etc. The settlement

patterns and mobility trends of Asians immigrants in the US vary on a lot of factors, as Min Zhou and Jennifer Lee (2004) argue, and those factors could be the reasons to migrate to the host nation- movement of other family members; investments in the host nation; fill the gap for highly skilled workers in the host nation; to avoid political and religious wars in the homeland; and to improve one's economic condition (p. 13). There are also differences between native-born diasporic youth and foreign-born immigrant youth in the host nation, and as Zhou and Lee write about the native-born diasporic youth:

“While they are infuriated by their unfair treatment as foreigners, native-born Asian Americans find themselves caught between two vastly different social worlds and at ease with neither...The uncertainty of their status, along with bicultural and intergenerational conflicts, marks a third unique feature of today's Asian American youth.” (2004, p. 14)

South Asian diaspora have been defined by the different waves of international migration from the region; the skills of the migrating people; the laws of the adopted nations; etc. The different waves of migration from South Asia to the other parts of the world have been distinct, and every wave of migration carried unique characteristics and push and pull factors behind it. The different waves of international migration of South Asians are, at many times, brought together under the old diaspora, the new diaspora, and the modern or contemporary diaspora, each with its different sets of characteristics and equations with the homeland and the host nations. Chandrashekhar Bhat (2018) writes about the emergence of Indian diaspora and transnational organisations significantly due to the “advent of technologies of superfast travel and also information and communication highways.” (p. 45) The Internet has helped these organizations with a vivid presence through posts, updates, uploads, tweets, and retweets. Usha Raman and Sumana Kasturi (2014) use Turkle's term ‘second self’ (1985) to describe how the online identities could be true to an individual or community's offline identities and add significantly to those real-life ones by forging new connections, build communities, and create new identities and aspects of personality (p. 21). Anupama Jain (2011, p. 6) contends that for South Asians in

the diaspora, there exists a complex mesh of identities and affiliations due to the migratory movements during the British colonial period, due to the partitions that the region witnessed, and due to their tendencies to move and migrate. Migrations from the South Asian region began during the pre-colonial era, but it was noticeable from the time of the formation of indentured labourers under British colonial rule. The twentieth- and twenty-first centuries, then, witnessed migrations of highly-skilled workers to the western nations to semi- or low-skilled workers to the Middle Eastern nations. These varied, diverse, and multiple migratory and settlement patterns of South Asians, who are a diverse group of people, to begin with, have led to the formation of a highly heterogeneous diaspora that remains connected despite the differences. There are multiple nodes and networks formed out of the South Asian diaspora, and the characteristics differ from one community to the other, or one hostland to the other, or even one homeland to the other. The South Asian diaspora makes for an interesting and rich area of study and research.

Sometimes, the South Asian diaspora is referred to in terms of the Indian diaspora, which is gradually changing as the South Asian diasporic communities of the other South Asian nation-states are reinforcing their unique identities in the host nations. Representations of South Asian writers and other cultural forms are increasingly focusing on their particular ethnic identities, Bangladeshi diasporic identities, Pakistani diasporic identities, Nepalese diasporic identities, etc. Gijssbert Oonk (2007) opines that:

“This idea of a South Asian subcontinent ‘unity’ is nowadays reproduced in the vast and growing literature on the ‘Indian diaspora’, which emphasises how and to what extent ‘Indian’ culture was reproduced in the various host countries... In this literature, the word ‘India’ is often rightly substituted for ‘South Asian’ to refer in particular to the pre-independence migrants whose origins lie in contemporary Pakistan or Bangladesh.” (p. 13)

The trend of the Indian identity, many a time, being predominant in the South Asian diaspora is gradually changing as the other South Asian nations are

reinforcing their own identities through literature, art and cultural modes. The South Asian diasporic identity is a space where diasporic individuals can challenge stringent identities of borders and nations. The term signifies a space for mutual understanding, existence and interdependence, as Jain (2011a) contends that scholars from varied fields of study have been dealing with the South Asian communities settled beyond the region of South Asia and they have:

“... have theorized about the broader implications of such “cracking” and other types of diasporization. In actual, historical migrations as well as in what Salman Rushdie aptly calls “imaginary home-lands,” diasporas seem to invite alternative narratives of belonging to replace dominant, nation-based ones that modernity and its empires engendered.” (p. 35)

South Asian diaspora communities are stronger when they stand together and can contest prejudices in the hostland. They can act together on the basis of their commonalities and build a strong political consciousness to survive together in the adopted land. Mani asserts that in the US: “Immigrants come to identify as South Asian within domestic frameworks of race and ethnicity ..., as well as in relation to neoliberal formations of citizenship in South Asia.” (2012, p. 5) Despite their differences, the South Asian nations share several historical moments and events, cultural forms, similar ways of living, and so on. The points of cohesion, too, act as a binding factor for the South Asian diaspora. Mohammad-Arif (2014) asserts: “While the description of historical and cultural commonalities may convey anthropological substance to the idea of South Asia at the level of ground reality...”, yet there are people and groups of people for whom South Asia is not just “... a mere geographical expression or as an emotionally-cum-commercially productive platform of interaction. Rather in the wake of tense relations between the countries of the region, they deliberately engage in discourses about South Asia as an entity...” (p. 13)

The term and meaning of what it is to be a “South Asian” as a unit might have different connotations in the diaspora than in the homeland regions. The South Asians in diaspora, in contemporary times, need to be examined through the lens

of postcoloniality. South Asian diaspora communities have emerged out of colonial and postcolonial migratory movements to different host nations. The postcolonial global and capitalist world has brought innumerable changes to the South Asian diaspora, and the flow of capital and technology has helped the diaspora transform into a transnational one. Sandra Ponzanesi (2004) contends:

“Diasporic spaces allow for the representation of those who straddle two or more cultures, languages, and ethnicities and offer a way of rethinking postcolonialism as blurring the lines of national enclaves.” (p. XV)

The South Asian diaspora occupy complex and unique spaces intertwined with colonial and postcolonial histories and events of the homeland and the hostland. The effects and influence of globalisation and capitalism have been immense on the South Asian diaspora communities. Modernity and globalisation resulted in the easier flow of people, capital and ideas which connected nations across the world. Sandhya Shukla asserts of the South Asian diasporas:

“Historically, and more globally, South Asian diasporas can be linked to crucial shifts in the development of capitalism and explanatory discourses of difference; in both the political and military domination of the eastern and southern hemisphere, as well as in the insertion of their peoples into European and North American systems of labor, can be found the origins of the racialization of South Asian diasporas.” (2001, p. 554)

Diaspora and Globalization

Diasporas and globalisation cannot be separated as the processes of globalisation added to the formation of contemporary forms of the diasporas around the world. Brah et al (1999) define globalisation as a phenomenon that can be broadly:

“... understood as referring to the processes, procedures and technologies - economic, cultural and political - underpinning the current 'time-space' compression which produces a sense of immediacy and simultaneity about the

world. The question of globalization is inextricably linked with the movement of capital, commodities, people and cultural imaginations and practices.” (p. 3)

It is interesting to note where migration and diasporas stand in the processes of globalisation and changes in identities of the migrants. As Virinder Kalra et al (2005) assert:

“Combined with a hyphenated, hybrid identification, it can be argued that diaspora allows us to move beyond the static, fixed notion of immigrant... It also allows us to see migration not as a one-off event with one-way consequences, but rather as an ongoing process of building links and relationships at the material and cultural levels.” (p. 14-15)

They further comment that these continuing processes lead to relationships that alter the homeland and the host nations, “This relationship has many connotations which are absent when thinking in immigration terms alone.” (Kalra et al, 2005, p. 15) The act of immigration and the processes of forming a diaspora transform homogenous societies and cultures into transnational, global, and heterogeneous ones. Postcolonial diasporas are formed out of different factors than the diasporas of the past eras. Saskia Sassen (2005) writes of the formation of the contemporary characteristics of the diasporas in the contemporary era as communities that have been formed out of the need for “economic migrations”, which applies to “... whether it is the small entrepreneurial class of the Sikhs or the wage-labor migrations of the Kurdish Turks in Germany. Trying to understand the formation, evolution, and meaning of diasporas and diasporic networks in global cities requires understanding the economic incorporation of these migrants.” (p. 502) These diasporas of the present day have forged new meanings of home and belonging as well. The South Asian diaspora is heterogeneous and a lot of the threads of this diaspora have emerged out of movements of people due to economic factors. The South Asian youth in the diaspora holds a crucial place in the present and future standing of the diaspora. Kari B. Jensen (2011) asserts,

through his study on South Asian diasporic youth in New York and Oslo, that his participants discussed about:

“...strong social norms influence identity production in both negative and positive ways. The negative aspects include oppositional identities, feeling sometimes confused about one’s identity, and for some, living a dual life. The main positive aspects are perceived as being able to switch between different cultural frames in different settings, and having incorporated educational efforts as an important part of identity work.” (p. 91)

Negotiations of two or more cultures could be challenging for the South Asian diasporic youth, yet, several times, these could act as strengths which make the youth transnational. These exposures to transnational ways of living could prepare them as “global citizens” of the world. South Asian diasporic youth are the precursors of change in the diaspora, as the second- and third- generations of South Asian diasporic youth can adapt themselves according to the needs of the hostland and grow comfortable with their ethnic identities as well, which, in turn, leads to reconnections with the homeland. Similar to the youth of other communities, South Asian youth have their exclusive sets of cultures and subcultures as well, based on their experiences of being of South Asian origin in the host nations. Zhou and Lee (2004) define culture “... as the ways, forms, and patterns of life in which socially identifiable groups interact with their environments and express their symbolic and material existences.” (p. 3) South Asian diasporic youth, through their negotiations and adaptations, produce subcultures that help them navigate their ways in the hostland, and keep the homeland or ancestral land alive in varied and complex ways. Youth needs to be studied through different theoretical and methodological lenses to understand the diversities that exist within the broader category of youth. Multiple factors are at play at multiple levels in every society that determine how youth produce cultures and subcultures. South Asian diasporic youth produce subcultures out of their myriad lived experiences as ethnic youth in the host nation. The social milieu of the hostland determines the kind of subcultures the diasporic youth would produce. South Asian youth in the diaspora merge their traditions, music, dance

forms with the trends of the host nation, to reclaim their ethnic identities as well as be a part of the hostland. It is through art forms that they interact with the other immigrant communities as well. “Ironically, the youth do not want to lose their own culture and they use traditional bhangra lyrics along with more modern rhythms, to be a part of their hybrid world- part of North American culture as well as part of the India of their parents ...” (Katrak, 2002, p, 79) The ethnic identities, in contemporary times, provide the South Asian diasporic youth with identities that make them unique in the host nation. The second- and third-generations of diasporic youth form their own distinct and unique cultures because they tend to occupy spaces that are unique to their lives experiences as a diasporic youth: “The second generation, in particular, youth are in an especially unique position, in comparison to their parents, because they are socialised and exposed to the conflicting expectations of each culture.” (Arshia Zaidi et al, 2016, p. 234) There are several factors on which the immigrant and diasporic youth are conditioned and influenced in the host nation. “Yet immigrant parents’ human capital, family composition, and gender socialization do not exhaust the range of forces molding types of acculturation and subsequent outcomes. The outside environment—in particular, the co-ethnic community—supplies the other main determinant.” (Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut, 2001, p. 64)

Citizenship and Identity

The question of home and citizenship forms a central part of the South Asian youth diaspora identity. It is interesting to understand which nation the diasporic youth consider as home. South Asian diasporic youth and citizenship are intertwined concepts and the question of citizenship remains inherent in any South Asian diaspora studies. The South Asian diasporic youth carry socio-political identities which include the citizenship aspect. Sunaina Maira (2009) notes that:

“Citizenship has become an increasingly prominent theoretical lens, as well as organizing principle for movements, that represents the nexus of pressing

issues of nationalism, globalization, immigration, cultural pluralism, democracy, empire, and human rights.” (p. 5-6)

The issue of citizenship intersects with other issues in the diaspora to form identities of the South Asian diasporic youth. The organizations they form, the movements they take part in, the identities they create and recreate through various mediums take the question and meaning of citizenship into account. Maira (2002) discusses how immigrant communities are perceived and on what factors the perceptions are dependent:

“...on particular struggles over class and constructions of race and citizenship that shape and sometimes constrain, the identity strategies that are dialectically related to histories of arrival, entry, or exclusion. Notions of ethnic authenticity and performances of nostalgia...always relate to the material experiences of immigrant communities at particular moments in time.” (p. 9)

South Asian youth identities are formed out of intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, class, caste, skills, and so on. Identities are fluid and complex, and they keep changing with the ever-changing times and with each new generation defining and redefining the group identities of the culture and community they belong to, according to their lived realities and experiences. Brah et al (1999) note that:

“It is argued that, rather than social collectivities authoring self-identity through their intrinsic authentic claims, social collectivities are dependent upon the establishment of other social groups relation ally to themselves. One way to conceptualise responses to the complex interplay of changing processes of racialisation and wider socioeconomic change is to view them as a set of narratives of self-production that are dispersed through a multiplicity of power relations. Hence, individuals are not the passive recipients or objects of structural processes.” (p. 4).

The South Asian diasporic youth identities are formed out of the diasporic structural processes as well. Maira (2002) contends that for the South Asian

diaspora children in the hostland, certain labels are “racially coded message” which segregate them from the other kids of the majority communities, “...makes them feel unwelcome and leads them to devise ways to strategically manage their stigmatized ethnic identity in childhood, a move that has important implications later in their lives and shapes the youth culture...” (p. 6-7) She further observes that: “The economic resources, class aspirations, and financial anxieties that second-generation youth inherit from their parents significantly influence their reworking of racial, ethnic, and gender ideologies as they move through adolescence.” (p. 10). This thesis attempts to conclude if the idea of “ethnic authenticity” that often play among the diaspora groups exist with the South Asian youth in the diaspora today, and how these are represented through their transnational and gender identities with the help of different mediums of communication and portrayals.

Gender, Youth, and Identities

The South Asian diasporic youth perform their ethnic identities through numerous ways. The reinforcing and performing of one’s diaspora identities is an important aspect of the diasporic youth’s lives. This section looks at several aspects of the South Asian diasporic youth’s performance of their identities in the diaspora such as gender identities, performance of identities through popular cultures, linguistic identities, caste identities, and so on.

Reinforcement of one’s gender and sexual identities are important factors of identity formation of the South Asian diasporic youth. With the study of texts, organizations and social media tendencies, this thesis would try to analyse how the South Asian diasporic youth deal with their gendered selves and sexualities. The manifestation of their multiple identities in the hostland and homeland are intrinsically related to the negotiation of their gendered identities and sexuality. It has to be considered that these diasporic youth belong to a social set-up, that is different from the hostland’s social set-up. The way these youth might be comfortable with their sexuality in some hostland societies might not be the same

when they visit their homeland or in their own homes in the hostland. It is also essential to understand if the experiences of diasporic youth differ according to their gender. An in-depth analysis of the fictional representations and work of the diasporic youth organizations would help us to understand the gender issues faced by the South Asian youth in the hostland. These findings could reveal larger gender issues faced by the entire ethnic communities, or even, the entire host society at large. Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) asserts that:

“This means untangling whiteness, Americanness, as well as blackness in the United States, in trying to understand my own story of racialization. So the theoretical insights I find useful in thinking about the challenges posed by a radical multiculturalism in the United States - as well as, in different ways, early twenty-first century India - are the need to think relationally about questions of power, equality, and justice, the need to be inclusive in our thinking, and the necessity of our thinking and organizing being contextual, deeply rooted in questions of history and experience.” (p. 191-2)

The contestations and deliberations on asserting one's gender and sexual identities are crucial issues in the South Asian diaspora. Roksana Badruddoja (2008), discussing South Asian diasporic youth and queer identities in the United States, observes how the western framework falls short with the question of queer identities in South Asian ethnic communities in the diaspora, “South Asian-American GLBTIQ community members find it enormously difficult to construct fluid identities within the available GLBTIQ discourse.” (p. 162) South Asian gender and queer identities, thus, must be unpacked, studied, and analysed through frameworks that do justice to the diaspora identities.

Linguistic identities are the next important identity markers of the South Asian diaspora. Bilingualism or multilingualism is common in almost every South Asian diasporic youth, as they are proficient in more than one language. Diasporic youth make use of homeland and hostland languages innovatively, altering between domestic and public spaces. The use of languages by the

diasporic youth exhibits several characteristics of youth subcultures, as language is a medium through which interactions and dialogues take place:

“Examinations of youth language use outside of formal pedagogical contexts can address central questions of migration and diaspora, including generational change, racial and ethnic formation, gender, and class. Informal environments - such as social spaces at school, time with peers, and family and community settings - are sites where youth can use language in creative and social ways.” (Shalini Shankar, 2011, p. 4)

The use and negotiation of homeland and hostland languages are an integral part of the diasporic identities. Languages evolve with the innovative ways of the youth, and diasporic youth make use of languages to reinforce their identities and assimilate with the hostland societies. South Asian diasporic youth belong to different linguistic communities from the region of South Asia. The language spoken at home is usually the mother tongue- it could be Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Bangla, Marathi, Gujarati, and so on. South Asian diasporic youth, like several South Asian youth back in the homelands, negotiate between English outside the home and the mother tongue inside. They could be proficient in more than two languages as well. South Asian immigrants’ accents are another matter of debate in the diaspora. Shilpa Davé (2005) constructs a “Brown Voice” which she defines as: “The term “brown voice” identifies a specific racializing trait among South Asians which simultaneously connotes foreignness and class and cultural privilege.” (p. 314) She contends that the theory of Brown Voice speaks of a privileged stance of certain accents:

“...that the practice of brown voice is a form of cultural inflection: a variation on cultural citizenship that reinforces a static position for South Asians regardless of their status or occupation in the United States. South Asians are represented as one undifferentiated group who are saddled with one accent and one voice. This image frames South Asians as an acceptable and privileged ethnic group (in comparison to other minority and immigrant groups) that in current times also has considerable political and economic consequences.” (Davé, 2005, p. 315)

South Asian Diaspora and linguistic identities are interconnected and remain a significant characteristic of the South Asian Diaspora community in the United States. Ravinder Barn (2008) contends that the significance of “heritage language skills” were emphasised by the parents with regards to “practical and relationship terms” and:

“A common reason given for inculcating bilingualism in the child was so that he/she could communicate with the grandparents (over a third of the Hindu and a quarter of the Sikh households included resident grandparents) and other relatives who did not speak English. However, the importance of learning one’s heritage language was also seen to be important in cultural terms, in that it helped to foster ethnic group identities by facilitating knowledge and understanding of parental values and culture.” (p. 200)

Homeland values and identities are passed on to the younger generations of the South Asian diaspora through the proficiency of one’s ethnic language.

South Asian diaspora, with the introduction of the Internet and social media networks, has a simultaneous digital diaspora presence as well. The role of technology in the South Asian diaspora cannot be exaggerated. The Internet has revolutionised how we connect, interact, travel, and live. The Internet and digital media have been playing a significant role in the South Asian nations as well. As Ralph Schroeder (2018) observes about the role of digital media in India, he notes that the virtual scene is vibrant in India, but restricted to the urban youth, even though the Internet has been playing a crucial role in India’s social and political life, “But internet use, and also internet-based mobilization, is still mainly confined to a small, urban and younger minority.” (p. 55) Diasporic communities have been using technology in ways which have shaped and re-shaped their identities. The South Asian diasporic communities have followed a similar trend and have been utilising technologies to connect and re-connect with their kith and kin across the world, with their homeland, with other diasporic communities, and so on. The role played by social networking sites and the Internet in the lives of

the South Asian diaspora stands undeniable- the renewal of religious networks through online religious groups; the family groups on messaging services; Facebook groups of national alliances; blogs recounting immigrant and diasporic stories and journeys; forging connections and ties through e-mails; YouTube Channels; and much more. The Internet and new technologies have been playing a crucial role in bringing the South Asian diasporic communities to the mainstream. Political activism; dissemination of information regarding political happenings; social and cultural events; voicing their opinions, reinforcing their diasporic identities; maintaining links with the homeland; sustaining transnational linkages, are a few of the activities of the South Asian diaspora in the virtual spaces. As Kathrin Kissau and Uwe Hunger (2009) contend: "... the internet as a meeting point – for private and public as well as personal and communal – reflects different levels of migrant interaction. Online platforms are used for personal discussions between friends, the organisation of community activities or the publication of alternative information about the home country's or diaspora's situation." (p. 247)

Developments in technology have brought changes in the way diasporic individuals and communities connect to homeland and kith and kin across the world which need deeper analysis. These changes and connections over the Internet have important implications, as information is shared in real time, and support for any cause is extended across the globe with the use of different mediums of communications from anywhere in the world. The virtual networks have influences and connotations in real life as well. The Internet and social media networks have changed the way the entire world connects and formed new kinds of globalisation. One could be transnational in various ways now. An individual could be transnational by never moving out of one's native place through the usage of global products and taking part in global discussions and deliberations through the social media networks and Internet. One could also be transnational through the use of the advanced technologies of travel and communications. Popular cultures- music, cinema, radio, television- also act as mediums of communication and have always remained a space for cultural

dissemination, reconstruction, and reflection. With the dawn of the Internet and advanced technologies, this trend was alleviated to an altogether advanced and intricate level. Bhat (2018, p. 32) contends that the ground-breaking growth and development in technologies in the field of communication, information, and travel in the late 20th century has led to a sharp rise in the “... global transfers of people, capital, technology, cultural commodities, media and ideologies across several nations.”

Geopolitics of the South Asian diaspora indicates the unique political space they occupy so as to be able to influence the international relations of the hostland and the homeland, as well as involve themselves in the politics of the homeland. The identities of the homeland or ancestral land are essential for the diaspora to reassert themselves in contemporary times in the hostland. The second- and third-generation South Asian diasporic youth do not discard their ethnic identities to survive in the host nations. The homeland identities are embraced, forming ethno-national diasporas, which help them find a voice for themselves in the host nations. Diasporas live with conflicting or multi-identities, cultures, and value systems. Contrary to what was thought before, the diaspora communities retain their ethnic identities to shape their identities in the hostland. Integration to the point- where diasporic communities abandon their ethnic roots- has never proved to be successful or free of complexities. Homeland identities form an integral part of their living in the land of settlement. There are times when diasporas retain and reinforce their ethnic identities for the sake of not being generalised into a group that is subordinate to the natives of the host nation. Diasporic and transnational individuals and communities fight prejudices and racism using various tactics of survival and performance of their identities when deemed necessary. Sanjay Chaturvedi (2005) contends, “It is equally important to bear in mind that the internal politics of India, or for that matter of South Asia, often find echo in the politics of diasporic identity overseas.” (p. 164)

Amid the generalisation that all of the South Asian diasporics are highly successful, skilled, and affluent in the hostland, there lies a grim reality of undocumented South Asian immigrant workers, especially, in the developed hostlands. The South Asian undocumented, refugee and the exiled are the immigrants that fall through the cracks of the system. With the highly skilled South Asians in the diaspora, who occupy important job roles in the host nations, there is another side to the diaspora, that of the unskilled and semi-skilled, undocumented workers. Linta Varghese (2013), while writing on these undocumented South Asian immigrants in the US, notes:

“Many members’ ability to remain in the United States was structured by immigration and labor law, and the privatization of care work, all of which contributed to labor exploitation in their places of work, someone else’s home and household.” (p. 157)

The diversity in the South Asian diaspora can be understood from this one example of the Indian diaspora in the US, which is considered to be highly successful, yet, the real picture presents an economically-diverse Indian diaspora community in the US:

“Although the successful and fabulously wealthy Indian-American immigrant entrepreneur is currently the figure of popular imagination, admiration, and envy in India, the actual population of Indian migrants in the US is far more diverse and less uniformly privileged.” (Johanna Lessinger, 2003, p.167)

The transnational trends of the struggling South Asian diasporic individuals might be different from those of the highly successful ones. The ways in which the homeland and hostland networks work are, certainly, different for the subaltern in the South Asian diaspora from the successful ones. Their capacity to influence policies and economies remains, vastly, different and is not visible in the mainstream South Asian diaspora narratives.

“The visibility of South Asian cabdrivers has made them a focal point for expressions of hostility against South Asian immigrants. Associations such as the Lease Drivers Coalition and the New York Taxi Workers Alliance have been formed, often through the leadership of progressive young second-generation South Asian Americans who have strived to be inclusive and multiethnic in their organizing efforts.” (Nazli Kibria, 2007, p. 619)

The undocumented South Asian immigrants work in inhuman work conditions, and live and survive in worse housing arrangements in the hostland, trying to evade the police and legal action in every way. They fall between the success stories and narratives of the larger, successful South Asian Diaspora across the world. The South Asian diasporic youth organisations include such narratives and try to fight for their rights and justice in the hostland. South Asians in the diaspora are diverse and belong to different homelands, yet, on many occasions, they are united and identify with the South Asian identity in the host nations. The skill sets of the South Asians in the diaspora differ, which, in many ways, also determine the ways of living in the diaspora: “The skills that immigrants bring along in the form of education, job experience, and language knowledge are referred to as their human capital and play a decisive role in their economic adaptation.” (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001, p. 46) to learn how to survive in the host nation, how to build a political consciousness to fight for equal rights, and how to negotiate spaces where assimilation is inevitable with the natives of the host nation. As Amit Sarwal (2017) contends:

“Most of the South Asians abroad (moving on to different places) have realized that it might be the mind and heart that matter but the country where one survives on a day-to-day basis, constantly engaging and negotiating with its complexities— local and global, does affect the mind and heart.” (p. 2)

South Asians have made a new home for themselves across the world: from the US to the UK, from Australia to New Zealand, from Malaysia to Singapore, from the Caribbean to the African nations. Owing to different historical events, the South Asians have settled in newer lands, in different social, economic, and

political contexts, producing new cultural modes in each hostland. The South Asian diasporic youth, thus, reinforce their diaspora identities through the popular cultures. Immigrants carry their homeland cultures and memories with them when they move to their adopted land. The diasporic population then keeps these memories and cultures alive through everyday practices. The inculcation of the homeland habits and practices in the younger generations also help in the reconstruction of the homeland identities. Ketu H. Katrak (2002) contends that: “Communities often take on a collective task of “preserving,” and at times internally “policing” the expressions of certain traditions often by members of different generations and class backgrounds.” (p. 75) Forms of dance, music, theatre, religious beliefs, traditions, festivals, etc. are carried to the host nation and preserved for the present and future diasporic generations. Bakirathi Mani contends that these popular cultures help in “The circulation and consumption of South Asian popular culture generate narratives of race and class that bind together a fragile coalition of immigrants who are otherwise divided by generation, national origin, religion, and language.” (2012, p. 6) She asserts that for several South Asian immigrants, “... locality is embodied through the production and consumption of popular culture: through reading literature and watching films made by other South Asians; performing at and attending cultural events; and participating in online forums. These everyday practices of identifying with other immigrants—a process that requires negotiating differences of language, caste, and region—lay the groundwork for formations of diasporic community.” (2012, p. 4) Music, especially fusion music, has garnered popularity with the South Asian diasporic youth, with reverberations of this diaspora music genre in the South Asian homeland as well. The forms and genres of music that the South Asian diasporic youth practice have given them distinct identities in the diaspora.

“Hip hop expresses a similar sensibility concerning identity ... Regardless of the lyrics, rap music is a form of powerful personal expression where youth claim a voice that emphasizes individual identity. In today’s global context, youth are positioned to craft an identity politics that criticizes the social issues

that they face under neoliberalism.” (Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, 2016, p. 117)

Describing the Asian music scene, Dhiraj Murthy (2007) writes: “‘Asian electronic music’ uses this ‘electronic’ framework to weave together samples and styles diverse genres as jazz, drum and bass, techno, classical Hindustani, reggae, dub, Bhangra, house, hip hop, and Bollywood soundtracks.” (p. 226-7) Transnational forms of music, dance and theatre forms are the highlights of diasporic lives in present times. Vertovec (1999) contends: “... transnationalism is often associated with a fluidity of constructed styles, social institutions and everyday practices. These are often described in terms of syncretism, creolization, bricolage, cultural translation, and hybridity. Fashion, music, film and visual arts are some of the most conspicuous areas in which such processes are observed.” (p. 6) Sunaina Maira (2002, p. 12) notes that: “The “Indian party scene” is a major component of Indian American youth culture in New York City and a significant context in which social networks are created and ethnic as well as racial and gender ideologies are produced and refashioned.” She further notes that:

“This ethnically exclusive space reflects the social networks and college cliques among youth who participate in this “desi scene”... belong to campus communities where those who are identified as “truly” Indian or South Asian are those who fraternize only with other South Asians... The role of remix music in the subculture of Indian parties is a critical site for analysis, opening up debates about reinventing ethnicities, performing gender roles, and enacting class aspirations.” (Maira, 2002, p. 12)

South Asian diaspora and the homeland cinema have a strong connection as the homeland films, especially the Bollywood movies, have a deep influence and impact on the South Asian diaspora and more specifically South Asian diasporic youth. Bollywood appeals to the South Asian communities abroad due to the fact that several of these movies include diasporic themes and characters:

“... what is 'common' to these moving images of Hindi cinema that unites different communities of subcontinent who possess shared memories of cultural totality and conflicting national histories of partition. Broadly, three attributes of Hindi cinema can be traced in the general narrative of post- 1990 Hindi films: the filmic language, filmic codes and styles and the centrality of the concept of family. These attributes of Hindi cinema provide a common and united cultural discourse to different communities of south Asia.” (Nazima Parveen, 2003, p. 3754)

Shalini Shankar (2011) notes on the influence of Bollywood movies on the South Asian diaspora by asserting that the influence of Bollywood on the South Asian diaspora is strong, but it is immense on the Indian diaspora in particular: “During the film viewings, youth speak in Hindi, Punjabi, and other heritage languages as well as English with their parents and grandparents. These language practices provide a more complex sense of how Desi youth use Bollywood as a cultural and linguistic resource in constructing identities.” (p. 9) Nostalgia plays an important role when the South Asian diasporic individuals watch these Bollywood movies and reminiscence about their homeland. This brings this section to the South Asian diaspora and the place of homeland customs in it. One of the ways in which the homeland is kept alive in the host nation is through the continuation of homeland customs and practices in the diaspora. Diaspora communities tend to adhere to reimagining and recreating the homeland traditions in the diaspora. These practices keep the ethnic identities alive and the subsequent generations of the diaspora inherit the homeland customs through their parents and grandparents. Weddings, the celebration of ethnic festivals, offering of prayers, are all conducted in the same ways as in the homeland.

“Looking at the texts and functions of arranged marriage shows how South Asian Americans and Canadians promote new diasporic identities by returning repeatedly to the idea of arranged marriage, making arranged marriage arguably the preeminent symbol of South Asian identity. They do so not only through negation, meaning by rejecting or altering the custom; they also do so by reaffirming the notion of arranged marriage for new reasons or in new ways.” (Marian Aguiar, 2018, p. 142)

The homeland customs and traditions, when followed strictly, inevitably carries the identities that formed these customs in the homeland. Thus, the practice of customs according to one's caste cannot be ruled out in the South Asian diaspora, especially in the Indian diaspora. The role of caste and class in the South Asian diaspora has to be problematised and unpacked. The South Asian nations have been segregated on the basis of caste and class for centuries, and the South Asian diaspora, many a time, seem to carry these prejudices along with them in the host nations. Peter Robb (1995) notes, while talking of the concept of *Jati* that existed and still exists in India, that "... perhaps it is racial in its definition of essential, hierarchical, distinctive characteristics and roles (*dharma*), which are 'inherited' (even if cyclical in theoretical underpinning)." (p. 10) Robb continues to content that, "Jati may be racial too in emphasising purity, and fearing miscegenation, factors which at least imply a biological origin for identity and Otherness." (p. 10) Huzan Dordi and Margaret Walton-Roberts (2016) assert on the presence of caste in the Indian Diaspora:

"The Indian diaspora considers caste and creed based institutions as legitimate ways of networking with a similar kind of Indian while exploring financial, social and cultural opportunities. Institutions like the Iowa Malayalam Association, Patidar Samaj, Texas Brahman Association, Gujarati Samaj of Austin, and New Jersey Tamil Sangam are examples of caste-based associations." (p. 91)

The South Asian diasporic identities have formed in different ways in different hostlands in different eras. There could be similarities but there exist differences as well, in the way the South Asian identities that have been constructed in the former plantation colonies to the ways in which South Asian identities were formed in the developed nations. This thesis focuses on the South Asian diasporic youth in the US, and, although there are several differences, there are similarities amongst the ways in which South Asian diaspora identities and consciousness are formed in the developed nations, especially, the UK, the US, and Canada.

South Asian Diaspora in the Global North

This section will discuss the South Asian diaspora in the global north, especially the US, the UK, and Canada, for its implications of colonial and postcolonial histories. Some similarities could be drawn across the South Asian diaspora communities in these three nations, with highly skilled and successful South Asian diasporic individuals along with a lurking presence of undocumented immigrants. The aspirational value attached to migrating to these three nation-states also is one of the similarities amongst the three nations concerning the South Asian diaspora. South Asian diaspora in the United Kingdom comprises of the twice migrants from the British plantation colonies, and also, the highly skilled immigrants from the South Asian homelands. South Asia and Britain are inextricably related due to the colonial past, and South Asians in Britain are as much a part of Britain's history and present as the "natives". Sophia Ahmed (2006) writes how the dish, Chicken tikka masala, acts as a metaphor of the South Asian/ BrAsian experience-

“... Had it not been for colonisation and migration South Asian foods such as tandoori chicken would not have arrived on Britain's shores...had it not been for the British experience there would have been no gravy (masala) with our chicken today... chicken tikka masala which existed neither in South Asia nor in Britain, occupies a 'third space' between the purities of South Asian and British cuisine. It exists only because of the fusion of these cultural experiences and as a consequence is now eaten both in Britain and throughout South Asia.”
(p. 62)

Assimilation and fusion of two cultures are ways through which the diasporics make a space for themselves in the adopted land. South Asians in Britain are an undeniable part of Britain's history and this is visible through the cultural trends in the hostland, that have been formed due to the presence and influence of these immigrants, who have tried to make Britain their “new home”. Salman Sayyid (2006), while writing on the different labels given to South Asians in Britain across the decades, observes that this never-ending debate on what to call these

settlers does not end in academic and public policy spaces, but this debate continues, "... in kebab shops and bazaars, in streets and clubs, in homes and offices...in locales that bring together people who share a sense of belonging to South Asia, a sense mediated by coloniality ... racialised subordination..." (p. 4) As Barnor Hesse and Salman Sayyid calls the South Asian in Britain as *BrAsian*, they assert that these BrAsians are "the racialised ex-colonial 'immigrant' who stands betwixt and between citizen and foreigner, a colonial past and a national present, West and 'non-West', one of us or them." (2006, p. 30) The majoritarian narrative considers the South Asians in diaspora, like other immigrants, as undecided as to which nation-state they belong to, whereas the South Asians could be comfortable with their dual/multiple identities. Harking back to the initial waves of South Asian migration to Britain, Brah (2006) contends that these migrations took place in the 1950s as a direct effect of colonisation of the home nations and a shortage of cheap labour in the hostland- "If once the colonies had been a source of cheap raw materials, now they became a source of cheap labour." (p. 36). These immigrant workers were treated as inferiors and were subjected to racist laws and poor-quality living and working conditions. There are stereotypes that a diaspora nurtures for the retention of their identities, and then there are stereotypes that come to define them in the eyes of the "natives/locals", constructed by the natives themselves based on their sense of superiority. A very common stereotype that emanated negativity and racism has been observed by Brah (1979) "... the Asian was an undesirable who 'smelled of curry', was 'dirty', wore 'funny clothes', lived 'packed liked sardines in a room', practiced 'strange religions', and so forth." (p.)

South Asian diasporic women occupy an extremely significant place in the diaspora:

"The focus on SAW as reproducers of the cultural lives of their communities in early literature on South Asian migration and settlement in the UK resonates with recent re-articulations of the centrality of culture within diaspora studies, particularly its emphasis on matters of adaptation and cultural change, and on questions of ethnicity and identity." (Sundari Anitha et al, 2012, p. 756)

The gendered experiences and treatment of South Asian diasporic women manifest issues prevalent in these diasporic communities, the patriarchy that runs strong, and the ways in which they are comprehended by the natives of the host nations: “When minority ethnic women come to the attention of policy makers, it is as vectors of the integration of their community, not as active participators in the labour market in their own right.” (Anitha et al, 2012, p. 756-7) For the longest time, the potential and presence of South Asian diasporic women had remained neglected. They were viewed as mere carriers of the homeland traditions and, mostly, remained confined to the spaces of their homes. The first-generation South Asian diasporic women were viewed as transporters of homeland cultures and values to the younger generations of the diaspora. Avtar Brah (1996) writes of identity that it is subjective and social at the same time, and this identity is established in and through culture. One cannot separate identity and culture from one another (p. 35). South Asian identities and cultures have become an undeniable part of the hostland cultures, and the identities that they carry cannot be generalised, as identities are multi-layered and depends on the contexts in which they are being formed (1996, p. 60). The identities that South Asians carry in Britain are an amalgamation of caste, class, religious and linguistic factors, and these do not continue the exact forms as existing/existed in South Asian nations, but these are “mediated via cultural, political and economic dimensions as these are forged in Britain.” (1996, p. 47) These identities are etched in the multicultural life of Britain and are part of the nation’s contemporary histories.

South Asian diaspora in the US have been born out of the “American Dream”. The history of South Asians in the US spans decades, with waves of South Asian migrations of various skill levels and educational qualifications.

“The early history of South Asian immigration to the United States, similar to that of other Asian American groups, has been defined primarily by the migration of peasants and laborers who faced exclusion, racial hostility, and denial of citizenship. This history, marked by resilience on the part of South

Asians in the face of all odds, produced mobilizations to contest racism in the United States and challenge colonialism in the home country.” (Sangay K. Mishra, 2016, p. 20)

It is the highly skilled South Asian immigrants that garner most of the attention in the US, but a considerable number of undocumented South Asian immigrants also form an integral and undeniable part of the South Asian immigrant and diasporic communities in the US. Race plays a crucial part in any diaspora narrative, especially in the host nations. The diasporic communities in the US negotiate with race in multiple ways, and at multiple levels. Racial identities define the diasporic communities in the US along with their other identities. The race is as present in national-level politics as its strong presence in everyday lives. Zhou and Lee opine (2004):

“In the United States, race often overrides many major socioeconomic and cultural factors—including education, occupation, language, and religion...While social scientists generally agree that race is a social and cultural rather than biological category, there is often a tendency to racialize others into a limited and discrete set of racial categories such as white, black, Hispanic, American Indian, and Asian.” (p. 11)

Race and ethnicity span out in distinct ways in the US. The people of colour navigate and negotiate multiple levels of racism, prejudices, etc. to varying degrees. The ethnics and the natives are aware of the racial identities that exist in the fabric of the society in the US. The race has come to define the politics of the US in prominent ways, in contemporary times, clearly defining the lines between “insiders” and “outsiders” with each passing day.

“In America, race is a paramount criterion of social acceptance that can overwhelm the influence of class background, religion, or language. Regardless of their class origin or knowledge of English, nonwhite immigrants face greater obstacles in gaining access to the white middleclass mainstream and may receive lower returns for their education and work experience.” (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001, p. 47)

The relaxation of stringent immigrant laws in the US, in the year 1965, ensured the movement of skilled Asian and South Asian immigrants to the US, along with their families. The highlight of this wave of immigration to the US has been the highly skilled and successful Asian and South Asians, who held high-paying jobs and persisted in the host nation, till they became green card holders. For the highly skilled South Asians, this offered an immense opportunity to make their mark in the new world. This wave of immigration laid a path for family reunifications, students moving to the US universities, and several undocumented immigrants from the South Asian region: “The passage of the Immigration and Naturalization Act in 1965 opened up the possibility for large- scale immigration from Asia, even as it laid down the legal basis for future waves of immigration.” (Mishra, 2016, p. 26) In the mainstream narrative of the highly-successful and exemplary achievements of the South Asian diaspora in the US, the minority and alternative narratives of the unskilled and undocumented South Asians are left neglected. These alternate immigrant and diasporic stories render diversity to the South Asian diaspora in the host nations. As Lessinger (2003) notes of the skilled migrations to the US from South Asia:

“Born to middle-class Indian families, college-educated and fluent in English, these post-1965 immigrants arrived in response to new US immigration laws which simultaneously opened the US to migration from the former third world and gave precedence to migrants with advanced education, professional training or large amounts of capital to invest. Indian scientists, engineers, medical personnel, financiers, entrepreneurs and a host of other professionals began to arrive, recruited to fill perceived labour shortages in the ranks of American science and medicine.” (p. 169)

The South Asian diaspora, presently, in the US, is heterogenous, and holds diverse skill sets and jobs, with diverse economic statuses. As Kibria (2007) asserts:

“South Asian ethnic economies in the U.S. today encompass a variety of businesses, ranging from stores that cater to South Asian consumers to those that provide services to the larger U.S. population. Besides their role in the economic adaptation of Bangladeshis, Nepalese, Pakistanis, and Sri Lankans in the U.S. today, these ethnic economies are important to intra–South Asian relations and potentially even to the development of a pan–South Asian community.” (p. 618).

The first generation of South Asian diaspora made a living for themselves in the host nation, and despite their yearnings for the homeland, most of them decided to never permanently return to their homeland. This has resulted in strong South Asian second- and third-generations of diasporics, who are citizens of the US and have been nurtured in the workings of two cultures and two nations. The second- and third-generations of South Asian diasporic youth in the US negotiate their identities in the host nation according to contemporary times. Being native-born of the US, these diasporic youth represent new ways of negotiations and assimilatory trends. “Indeed, the children of today’s immigrants represent the most consequential and lasting legacy of the new mass immigration to the United States.” (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001, p. 18) The South Asian diasporic youth are embedded in the fabric of the US societies, mixing and mingling with other diasporic youths, the youth belonging to the majority, etc. The South Asian diasporic youth practice and produce cultures and subcultures that are distinct to their ethnic belongings, and also, display signs of assimilations and integration with the other cultures. The representations and self-representations of South Asian diasporic youth are ways in which we can comprehend how much the South Asian diaspora has retained of its homeland and how much of integration with the host nation has taken place through the decades. South Asian diasporic individuals are often referred to as the desis:

“One cannot be content to simply ask who desis are, a question that assumes clear contours of identity and relies on simplified notions of authenticity; rather, we need to explore how desi-ness is being constructed, imagined, and produced, both by desis themselves and by white America in relation to

contemporary aspects of life, work, mobility, and security in transnational, capitalist America.” (Madhavi Mallapragada, 2014, p. 118)

The contemporary times, globalization, global flows of capital and workforce, have made it possible for the diasporas of the world to form newer modes of nation-building. As Anupama Jain (2011a) notes:

“Diasporization may invite more pluralistic modes of nation-building based on recognizing difference, but of course we cannot forget that conditions of national liminality and marginalization—such as those also experienced by minorities who are women, immigrants, and Americans of color—often compel full-scale assimilation or otherwise result in insularity, invisibility, or exclusion.” (p. 41)

Peggy Levitt (2002) writes of the second-generation immigrants in the US that connections with the homeland tend to change with every new generation in the diaspora. There could be instances of continuing the intensity of ties with the homeland as the previous generations but in different forms, or there could be weakening of the ties:

“Increasing numbers of contemporary migrants continue to be active in the life of their homeland even as they are integrated into the United States. They do not exchange one membership for another but instead enact various aspects of their lives across borders. For many groups these ties will weaken with each generation. But for others the second generation will sustain ties to their ancestral homes from a firm base in the United States.” (p. 124)

Nancy Foner (2002) also discusses second-generation immigrants in the US and how the diasporic youth of today embrace their ethnic identities despite certain contestations while growing up amid two or more cultures:

“Moreover, in today’s multicultural America, where there is an official commitment to cultural pluralism and cultural diversity, transnational ties are more visible and acceptable—and sometimes even celebrated in public

settings. Today members of the second generation often feel pride—not shame—in their connections to their parents’ homelands.” (p. 246)

The United States, with its complex relationships with immigrant and ethnic communities, forms a fertile ground for the South Asian diasporic youth to construct new identities through new cultural modes. The South Asian diasporic youth, thus, have active youth organisations in the US, which occupy an important place in the construction and reinforcement of identities and diasporic youth politics by the diasporic youth.

South Asian diaspora in Canada is still undergoing major changes with the influx of South Asian immigrants increasing each year. Canada has turned into a much sought-after destination for South Asian immigrants in the last few years due to the environments of acceptance of immigrants; a welcoming attitude by the governments towards immigrants; the presence of skilled jobs and easier Canadian citizenship process than the US; and a strong, multicultural society. But, even before this trend, there was a steady migration of South Asians to Canada. Canada is a multicultural society and the presence of South Asian immigrants, especially Punjabi immigrants, in Canada, can be traced back to the 20th century. G. S. Basran (1993) discusses how the first immigrants from East India, mostly from Punjab, arrived in Canada approximately in 1905, and “Many of these early immigrants received information about Canada from Sikh soldiers in the British army who travelled through Canada in 1898; others got information from Sikhs in Hong Kong, China, Singapore and Malaysia, or from the advertisements from the CPR and other companies in Punjab to recruit workers.” (p. 340) Marian Pirbhai (2015) discusses *Komagata Maru* in the context of South Asian Canadian Diasporic histories:

“In revealing the protracted struggle for what the passengers, and those who fought on their behalf, considered their birthright as “fellow” British imperial subjects, the Komagata Maru episode epitomizes the fact that these journeys are never benign, but rather part of a complex and ever-unfolding history of

ideological and sociopolitical debate, activism and hard-won legislative change, both acted upon and by South Asians themselves.” (p. 6)

Himani Bannerji (2000) discusses Canadian multiculturalism, its history, and its contemporary stand, by noting how in the official ways, Canadian multiculturalism formed:

“... through the 1970s and '80s, and has become in the '90s a major part of Canadian political discourse and electoral organization. The development of this discourse in Canada rather than in the United States, which is also a multi-ethnic country, may be due to the lack of an assimilationist discourse so pervasive in the U.S. The melting pot thesis has not been popular in Canada, where the notion of a social and cultural mosaic has had a greater influence among liberal critics.” (p. 8)

The South Asian diaspora communities have greater acceptance in the present multicultural milieu of Canada, although instances of racism are not uncommon.

South Asian Diaspora Politics

Diasporas are not apolitical, similar to all other groups and communities across the world, and the reinforcement of their identities form a part of the diaspora politics. South Asian diasporic communities have retained strong ties with the homeland, and have, successfully, made a living in the host nations. South Asian diaspora take a keen and active interest in the politics in the South Asian region. Political involvement of the South Asian diaspora is one of its important characteristics. The turbulent histories of several South Asian regions bring about factions not only in the South Asian countries, but also, amongst the South Asian diaspora, miles away, in the host nations. Diaspora politics either try to intervene and bring about peace in the homeland, or take extreme political stances and fund organisations that brew trouble in the homeland. The South Asian diaspora, being so diverse, have indulged in both these forms of homeland politics. Diaspora politics carry agendas that benefit the political and social standing of the diaspora

in the homeland and host nations: “The relations among sites, between diasporic sites and the homeland, and with their respective host land redefine the global field of practices within the diasporic political realm.” (Laguerre, 2006, p. 119-120) Immigrant and diasporic organisations play an active role in providing a platform and a space for the immigrant and diasporic communities to practice their diasporic politics. There are several diaspora organisations based on religion, linguistic affiliation, caste, community ties, gender, etc. Habibul Haque Khondker (2008) contends:

“There has been a mushrooming of Bangladeshi and Bengali community organisations in North America. In the major cities, there are Bangladeshi organisations, organised around locality, i.e. districts of origin in Bangladesh, such as Feni Foundation or Noakhali Society; occupation-based, for example the Bangladesh Medical Association, Engineers Association; or alumni associations of various educational institutions. These associations are primarily support groups which also become sites of intense political activities.” (p. 130)

The diaspora organisations in the hostland help in the processes of community building and act as a support system in times of crisis in the diaspora. Shain and Barth (2003) discuss the three different kinds of diasporic individuals and how they differently involve themselves in politics:

“Members of mobilized diasporas may be divided into three categories: core members, passive members, and silent members. Core members are the organizing elites, intensively active in diasporic affairs and in a position to appeal for mobilization of the larger diaspora. Passive members are likely to be available for mobilization when the active leadership calls upon them. Silent members are a larger pool of people who are generally uninvolved in diasporic affairs (in the discursive and political life of its institutions), but who may mobilize in times of crisis.” (p. 452)

The South Asian diaspora has, mostly, maintained ties with the homeland, whether weak or strong. South Asian diaspora communities share strong links

with the homeland due to the strong community networks that have always existed in the homeland. Technological advances have also brought about unimaginable changes in the way the diaspora now connects with the homeland. These homeland ties, sometimes, also depend on the homeland government's policies for its diaspora. The younger generations of a diaspora retain homeland links through multiple means, including socialising with the new immigrants from the homeland. Nancy Foner and Philip Kasinitz (2007) contend that the first-generation young immigrants and the second- and third-generations of diaspora of the same community form homeland ties in the following ways as well:

“Second- and third-generation young people share neighborhoods, classrooms, and workplaces with recent immigrants their own age. “Old country” ways and identities are thus less associated with chronological age than in the past. Further, new immigrants may bring more up-to-date versions of the sending society's culture to ethnic communities. The situation is also complicated by the greater degree of transnationalism and circular migration among contemporary immigrants. Some second-generation members, although born in the U.S., spend considerable time in their parents' homelands while growing up, and many recent immigrants come from communities where large numbers of returned migrants have already challenged traditional ways.” (p. 271)

The ways in which connections with homeland are maintained remain diverse and complex. Rubén G. Rumbaut (2002) asserts of international migrant movements and patterns that: “International migrations are rooted in historical relationships established between the sending and receiving countries—including colonialism, war and military occupation, labor recruitment and economic interaction, and sociocultural exchanges.” (p. 45) These networks and histories lead to these international migrants finding stability in the hostland; connecting with the kith and kin across the transnational field; and homeland receiving remittances from them (Rumbaut, 2002, p. 45). The South Asian diaspora, in several instances, have made themselves successful in the hostland, and sent remittances to the

homeland, which have contributed to the economic growth of the homeland. The homeland governments, thus, have diaspora economic policies in place.

Policy Perspectives

This section tries to comprehend the different policies that South Asian nations employ to connect and reconnect with their diaspora. There are policies for the diasporic communities to invest in the homeland, economically uplift their communities back home, invest in the skilling and educational initiatives, philanthropic work, developmental projects, and so on. Similarly, there are policies of the host nations that leverage the skills and services of the immigrant and diaspora population in various sectors. A critical analysis of these policies and how these impact the relationship and networks of the South Asian diaspora with the homeland and the land of settlement will be conducted here. Progress and development of one's homeland and contributing towards the progress is an important way in which the diaspora connects with the homeland. Rubin Patterson (2006, p. 1891) contend that: "When citizens of the global South, with advanced human capital, migrate to a rich Western society such as the United States and they maintain strategic dialectical interplay between the old and new locations, brain circulation occurs." Patterson notes that nation-states, such as China, India, etc. have made use of their diasporic communities in developed nation-states to help in the homeland development (2006, p. 1892). It is an irrefutable fact that our diasporic communities have assisted in the developmental projects and ventures of the homeland's communities and states. Continuing and better networks and linkages between the diasporic communities and the homeland can be mutually beneficial to both. There are instances of the Indian States of Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala have been helped by the remittances of their immigrant and diasporic populations. Dordi and Roberts (2016) contend:

"... in order to appropriately conceptualize how and why national governments interact with their diasporas, it is necessary to challenge an undifferentiated view of the diaspora as merely an extension of some singular national unit, when in fact the more salient social, economic and political diaspora processes

are nested at other scales and sources of affiliation and are mediated through different axes and intersections of identity.” (p. 84)

The South Asian diasporic identities, too, lie at the intersections of several political, economic, socio-cultural developments, both at the hostland and at the homeland. They further observe that, in the case of the Indian diaspora, which could also be applied to other South Asian nation diasporas:

“While there is merit in sketching a national overview of diaspora formation, it is at the regional level that we can fully appreciate how India’s diasporas were formed, what factors framed their exit from the country, and how those communities might remain connected with their local and national sites of origin through policies of engagement. Regional state-based associations and governments started to coalesce around the diaspora long before the Indian central government began targeting their financial and social potential.” (Dordi and Roberts, 2016, p. 87)

Highly successful and established individuals in the diaspora make use of their position to influence homeland and hostland policies. Bahar Baser and Ashok Swain (2008) discuss that a diaspora have the capabilities to take an important part in the processes of political decisions in the hostland and the homeland, and influence the politics and developments of both the nation-states they occupy. They contend that several diasporic communities are akin to lobby groups or interest groups:

“In the host countries, they have influence with the policymakers since they constitute an influential electorate base or they are part of the political and economic elite. With regards to homeland politics, diasporas matter as they use political and financial means, such as economic investments, remittances or political contributions, and controlling and manipulating the media to play an important role in influencing decision-making processes.” (p. 13)

It is not surprising that, with the rich and diverse pool of semi-skilled, skilled, hard-working and successful individuals that the South Asian diaspora is

composed of, the homeland as well as the hostland would formulate policies that would help harness the potential of this population to influence their economic and political decisions. As Devesh Kapur (2003) contends: “With one of the largest pools of relatively low wage semi-skilled and skilled labour, India is potentially poised as a critical center of global sourcing of labour. The past few decades has seen an upsurge of migration from India, first to the Gulf and more recently to North America.” (p. 445) Baser and Swain (2008) note on the diaspora involvement in the homeland for developmental projects and initiatives that, the contemporary ways of globalisation have helped the diaspora communities to take part in transnational politics even across the long-distance, and this effort has had a positive impact “... and that has enabled them to build up vast transnational networks contributing to peace, reconciliation and development.” (p.12) Diaspora organisations have a role to play when involvement with the homeland is concerned. Ludger Pries and Zeynep Sezgin (2012) contend of Migrant Organisations that these organisations help the homeland with “...humanitarian and development aid; facilitate funding for public and private investment projects; support certain religious and/or political movements; provide social and financial assistance to their counterparts and cooperation partners in the Cos.” (p. 1) The importance of the migrant and diasporic communities to the homeland cannot be exaggerated.

Indian Government and Diasporic Youth: Online and Offline Ties

The increasing use of the virtual spaces for disseminating information on government policies and work has led to the Indian Government take its diaspora initiatives online, which include initiatives for the Indian diasporic youth. The immense possibilities of the Indian diasporic youth have been recognised by the Indian Government and a number of initiatives are in place to encourage the diasporic youth to maintain links and ties with the homeland, understand the traditions and cultures of the homeland, and contribute to the development of the homeland. There are several Indian diaspora pages specific to the country of settlement, such as “Indian Diaspora in Egypt, Indian Diaspora in Norway”, etc.

The Indian government keeps note of the achievements and issues of the Indian diaspora across the world and extends support to them, to keep the connections alive, and encourages commercial exchanges and collaborations. The Indian Government actively takes part and invites the diasporic youth to take part in the initiatives for them in the homeland. As can be observed from the following online post on Twitter:

“Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi invites entries for ‘Know India Programme- Logo Design Contest’. (Know India Programme of MEA is a programme for diasporic youth conducted with a view to promote awareness on different facets of life in India).” (India in Oman, 2019)

The “Know India Programme” is an initiative of the Indian Government to encourage Indian diasporic youth across the world to visit and know their homeland better. This programme offers a range of varied experiences in India to the diasporic youth. This is one of the many endeavours that keep the diasporic youth connected to the land of their origin. This programme is attended by the selected Indian diasporic youth and the intention is to strengthen the ties with the young diaspora and make the young diaspora understand their ancestral land through personal experiences. As the following online post depict:

“Between the age group of 18-30, grab the opportunity to connect with your motherland through the #KnowIndiaProgrammes for the #Indian youth diaspora! Avail this unique forum to connect with & explore the various aspects of contemporary #India Details at <http://kip.gov.in>.” (India in Birmingham, 2019)

The Indian Government has several programmes especially designed for the Indian diaspora as can be understood from the following:

“Indian Government Policies for its diaspora: National Pension Scheme for NRIs; Online Services for Voters; Overseas Citizenship of India Scheme; Know India Programme; Know Goa Programme; Scholarship Programmes for Diaspora Children; Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF); Pravasi Bhartiya

Kendra; Bharat ko Jaaniye Online Quiz (BKJ); Students Registration Portal; Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Conferences; Marital Issues of Indian nationals married to overseas Indians; India Development Foundation of Overseas Indians (IDF-OI); Pratishtit Pravasi.”¹

These initiatives for the Indian diaspora have been received positively by the diaspora individuals and reciprocated as well. The South Asian diaspora in have been associated with several success stories. The reasons for migrations from the South Asian region, many a time, in the contemporary period have been economic and social upward mobility in the homeland. Studies (Parida et al, 2015; Adapa, 2008; Panda, 2009) have shown improved economic and social positions of the families in the homeland who have members who live and work abroad. Gifts and remittances to the families back home by NRIs and the diaspora population improve the financial status of the families in the homeland. The fact cannot be denied that, in most instances, emigration to developed nation-states for work has resulted in the economic and social development and progress of the emigrants as well as of their families back home. There are examples of Canadian Punjabis contributing to the progress, upliftment, and development of their villages back in Punjab. The State of Kerala has benefitted economically from the remittances sent home by the immigrant population from the state. Several projects and initiatives related to the development of the homeland have been funded and supported by the Indian diaspora and transnational individuals and communities residing in different host nations across the globe.

Adapa Satyanarayana (2008) opines that emigration improves “... socio-economic mobility in so far as the emigrants returned with greater awareness and were less willing to abide by traditional values. Emigration was particularly beneficial to the lower/ weaker castes because after a few years' stay in foreign countries the emigrants returned with hard cash with which they bought land and housing property and improved education and health conditions.” (p. 904) Remittances have had a positive effect on several economies of the Indian states

¹ [MEA | Diaspora Engagement](#)

and helped in many developmental projects. The upliftment of the family left behind in the homeland, contribution to the developmental projects in the homeland villages and community, and so on, have helped in better economic outcomes for states with strong diaspora population. Vertovec (2001) discusses the financial support that immigrants send home in the following manner:

“The money migrants send not only critically supports families, but may progressively rework gender relations, support education and the acquisition of professional skills and facilitate local community development through new health clinics, water systems, places of worship and sports facilities. Remittances may also undermine local labour markets, fuel price increases, create new status hierarchies and generate patterns of economic dependence.”
(p. 575)

The first generation of the diaspora maintains strong links with the homeland and, thus, there is a flow of remittances that help the Indian economy to an extent. The need to continue this trend will fall on the younger generations of the diaspora who have not experienced the homeland first-hand, in many cases. There, thus, arises the need to formulate policies and initiatives for better ties with the Indian youth diaspora for future collaborations. The Indian Government and the Indian diasporic youth have a rich and active exchange of knowledge. The Indian Government has diasporic policies for its diasporic youth to keep the ties alive with the homeland. Homeland policies for the diasporic youth act as significant measures to maintain the diasporic networks in the younger generations of the diaspora. These policies and initiatives pave the way for better foreign policies with the host nation with the help of the diasporas as mediators in the future.

Chandrashekhar Bhat (2018) notes of HLCID (High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora) that: “The HLCID has drawn a list of programs and activities through which Indian culture and media can effectively reach the younger generation in the diaspora.” (p. 38) The second- and third-generations of a diaspora are key members to act as links between the homeland and the host nation. With their better assimilation with the other communities in the host nation, the diasporic

youth could act as navigators and negotiators in the peace processes and diplomatic talks. They could occupy spaces where they could influence the political decisions of both the homeland and the hostland regarding certain matters. The diaspora programmes for the Indian diasporic youth encourage the diasporic youth to familiarise themselves with the homeland. This familiarisation could open a new understanding of the homeland or the ancestral land, and lead to sustained ties with the diaspora in the present and the future. The Indian Government has educational policies for the Indian NRIs and diasporic youth, and this initiative helps the diasporic youth to spend considerable time in the homeland, understand the educational processes of the homeland, and strengthen their ties with the homeland. There is a need for stronger and more inclusive diasporic youth policies on the part of the homeland for the Indian diasporic youth, and this need for stronger diasporic youth policies could be applied to other South Asian nations as well.

In the case of Nepal, Pratima Sharma (2021, p. 94) contends that:

“The government of Nepal has embraced its responsibility to protect its national both at home and abroad. It, too, has adopted different policies to encourage them to engage in various social and economic activities in Nepal. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, other related Ministries and Departments, and the diplomatic missions stationed at capitals of various host countries are now extensively engaged in a wide array of work related to Nepali Diaspora.”

The Nepali diaspora plays an important role of contributing to the progress and development of their homeland. This proves that the South Asian diasporic communities can act as significant contributors to the development of the South Asian region.

Conclusion

This chapter engages with the transnational histories and tendencies of the South Asian diaspora as an entirety. South Asians, as a whole, constitute varied communities with distinct traits, with stark similarities and distinctions as well, that keeps the heterogeneity of the diaspora alive. The rich political, social, and cultural histories of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Nepal, Maldives, and Bhutan contribute to making its diasporas abundant with wide-ranging and engaging intricacies. Each nation carries its multitudes of histories and communities, with multitudes of languages and dialects, traditional festivals and dresses, cuisines, and so on. Each nation's diaspora not only carries its histories and traditions with them in the hostland, but, sometimes, also the conflicts and struggles of the homeland. To understand the South Asian diaspora communities in the hostland, it is essential to be familiar with the networks of factors and struggles that have shaped the South Asian nations through the centuries. Migrants, diaspora and transnational individuals tend to carry and retain experiences of their homeland along with their process of assimilation with the hostland cultures. This thesis analyses how South Asian youth in the diaspora create and recreate ideas of the homeland and their belonging to both the homeland and hostland. Cultural indicators, such as clothing, food, socio-cultural events, music, and so on, reflect how these immigrants and diasporic youth are constructing their identities, forming new ideas of the nation, and reinforcing the older ideas of previous generations as well. Do these South Asian immigrant and diasporic youth identify themselves as belonging to the hostland more than their homeland, a land they might never have visited to date, or are they comfortable with their dual or multiple identities? With increasing recognition of the significant roles these immigrant and diaspora communities have played in the development of the hostland, do the immigrant and diasporic youth claim their place in the hostland while retaining their homeland ties? Preliminary observations of trends in literary narratives, popular culture, and social media display changes in the ways these immigrants and diasporic youth deal with their identities in comparison to the previous generations, and this thesis delves deeper

to understand these shifts, through transnational and gender identities, reinforced across the mediums of representations.

The next chapter would be a study and analysis of the virtual narratives of the South Asian diasporic youth organisations in the US. It would be a study of the ways in which the diasporic youth are represented through these online spaces, and how analogies could be drawn between the themes found in the virtual narratives when compared to the fictional narratives.

Chapter-3

South Asian Youth & Youth Organizations in the Diaspora: Transnational and Gender Identities

Introduction

This chapter will analyse the South Asian diasporic youth organisations, as to the nature, vision, activities, reach, and impact of these organisations, through which transnational and gender identities are being formed in the diaspora. The official blogs and Twitter pages of the selected organisations would be studied, and selected content would be analysed thematically in this chapter.

Youth signifies changes and continuities in the ways of living, cultures, traditions, political stances, popular cultures, recreational activities, changing skill sets, and social and economic standings of a community or nation. Immigrant and diasporic youth negotiate identities, cultures, and traditions that they inherit from being a part of two or more nations- hostland and the homeland. Diasporic youth tend to inculcate the homeland cultures in the home and community spaces and derive the hostland cultures through their interactions in the hostland spaces with the natives and other immigrants and diasporics. Dual or multiple identities are common with diasporic youth as the amalgamation of hostland and homeland cultures takes place in the diaspora. With new technologies of communication that have made connecting with the homeland easier, diasporic youth can be updated about the developments and ongoing in the homeland while being an integral part of the hostland. The diasporic youth, thus, tend to represent the homeland as well as the land of settlement. Youth inhabits an important space in a diaspora and influences the future trajectories of the diaspora. According to UNICEF Report (2018), in the year 2017 there were 30 million children who lived outside their homeland. The Report states that: “Millions of young migrants and refugees have the potential to be great innovators, job creators, skilled

workers and pillars of families and communities around the world.” (p. 1) By harnessing the skills of the diasporic youth, both the hostland and the homeland stand to benefit. The focus of researchers and policy-makers on the immigrant and diasporic youth across the world could lead to more inclusive policies which will serve for the betterment of these young immigrants and diasporic populations as well as have a positive impact on the host nation and homeland societies in the future. The second-generation diasporic youth aim for a hostland living that is coterminous with homeland identities. Popular culture, digital media, fictional narratives, everyday activities, cultural practices, food habits, bilingualism or multilingualism, maintenance of networks with kith and kin, occupational choices, etc. help the diasporic youth to form new linkages or retain old links between the hostland and the homeland.

One of the platforms that have been helping the diasporic youth in the hostland in numerous ways is the migrant, diaspora and transnational organisations which are important platforms through which these transnational links are formed and maintained. Diaspora and transnational organisations play a vital role in the lives of diasporic individuals and communities in the hostland. These organisations provide a feeling of community belonging, solidarity and support for the diasporic communities. These diaspora organisations act as platforms and spaces through which the diaspora contests prejudices, demands equal rights, fights for justice, and reinforces and reproduces their identities. Chandrashekhara Bhat (2018) observes that:

“Diaspora, as an idea and a reality, today occupies a key position in the transnational space that is increasingly rendered accessible by contemporary globalization. Diaspora communities dispersed around the world have established global organizations, transcending the boundaries of multiple nation states.” (p. 33)

This chapter focuses on understanding how the South Asian diasporic youth are represented through the South Asian diasporic youth organisations in the virtual

and real worlds. The focus is also on understanding the reinforcement of transnational, ethnic, gender and racial identities of the South Asian diasporic youth in the US through these youth organisations and the role played by these organisations in the South Asian diaspora communities. The exchanges and negotiations between the diaspora and the hostland have made these organisations a vital part of their communities in their fight for immigrant rights and justice in the host countries, as well as contribute to the developmental projects and activities in the homeland. As Nauja Kleist and Ida Vammen (2012) point out:

“In contrast to the private and often family-based nature of remittances, the development activities of diaspora organizations usually focus on the community level or are intended to benefit broader parts of the population through supporting social service provision, poverty reduction, and civil society.” (p. 43)

The diaspora organisations work on several causes, such as education and skilling of youth and women in the diaspora; rights of undocumented immigrants; protesting against any injustice; taking a stand on an issue online and offline; calling for and arrange protests against any arbitrary action against immigrants and diasporas; help victims of gender abuse in the community; prepare diasporic youth and women for the workplace and jobs; and much more. These organisations bridge the gap between the diasporic communities with other immigrant and diasporic communities; help connect with the local and national-level political bodies; help maintain links with diasporic members across the globe; help in better integration and assimilation with the majority communities; and so on. Sometimes, these organisations, through the Internet and digital platforms, connect the diasporic and transnational communities to the global-level politics and similar communities across the world, who share and advocate for similar causes. Kleist and Vammen (2012) note that these diaspora organisations engage themselves in reconstruction and developmental processes in varying degrees; these diaspora organisations take part in rendering support to vulnerable sections of the society, help in advocacy processes, etc (p. 43). Diaspora organisations are formed based on various affiliations and points of belonging- be

it linguistic, regional, religion, national, and so on. Pries and Sezgin (2012) contend that every organisation is formed on the basis of clearly demarcated aims and objectives; members who have joined following the set of criteria; and systematic structure, function and roles in the organisation (p. 9). Bhat (2018) observes that the organisations formed based on region or language are global and help in the promotion of their region, culture, language, socio-economic and political interests (p. 42). This holds for other diaspora and transnational organisations which are based on other mutual connections, ideologies and interests as well. These diaspora organisations serve the purpose of bringing immigrants and diasporic individuals together in the host nations and highlighting their ethnic and homeland identities. With their campaigns, workshops, and other initiatives, these organisations bring to the forefront problems that the diasporic communities are facing and are vocal about, or problems that are not immediately visible, and also, issues that are prevalent yet not talked of in public spaces, or considered taboo, such as domestic abuse and violence, gender violence, etc.

The Study of Diaspora and Transnational Organisations

What place do organisations have in our societies and what roles do they fulfil in the diaspora? Why is the study of migrant and diasporic organisations one crucial way in which to understand the ties and connections being formed and retained by the immigrant and diasporic populations with the hostland and the homeland? Migrant and diasporic communities tend to form associations and organisations in the host nation, these could be for-profit or non-profit organisations, but these organisations work towards bringing about a significant change in the diaspora through a range of varied activities. Thomas Faist (2008) argues that:

“Major actors in development policy, such as the World Bank and Transstate spaces and development myriad NGOs, propagated more participatory forms of development on the local level. Ideas of globalisation from below have logically focused on diasporas, cross-border associations and transstate communities.” (p. 24-5)

Ludger Pries (2008, p. 18) places the meso-level of organisations alongside the macro- and micro-studies of migration and transnational spaces. He argues that the meso-level components of study and analysis such as organisations or transnational organisations are placed between the micro-level studies on migrant individuals, family networks, identities, daily life, movement of migrants, and the macro-level studies on issues of the role of governments, the question of citizenship, large institutions of societies, etc. Migrant and diasporic organisations have become transnational, connecting people- who share similar ethnicities, ideologies, etc.- across the world. Pries (2008) further argues that:

“... the organisational research tradition allows for comparisons of for-profit and non-profit organisations, thus integrating different streams of transnational studies, such as economic or sociological analysis of corporate business and for-profit organisations on the one hand, and anthropological, sociological or political analysis of non-profit organisations on the other hand.” (p. 19)

This chapter focuses on selected non-profit, youth organisations in the South Asian diaspora, the ones that specifically engage with and involve South Asian diasporic youth to bring about awareness and changes in their diasporic communities. The rationale behind choosing the South Asian diasporic youth organisations has been the need for understanding the transnational and gender identities being formed and reinforced through these youth organisations in the diaspora. The virtual presence of these youth organisations is rich and emulates diasporic and transnational spaces. The diverse issues of the South Asian diaspora in the US find reflection in the online discussions and posts of the virtual spaces occupied by these organisations. These youth organisations also imply the significance of diasporic youth in bringing about positive changes in the diaspora, as well as constructing newer meanings of belonging to the diaspora and being transnationals. This chapter considers these diasporic youth organisations at Pries’ meso-level, from which these organisations can act as links between the diasporic citizens and the governmental and state bodies. Youth organizations in the diaspora become a voice for the entire diasporic population sometimes, and at other times, they break apart from the age-old conventions and give rise to new-

age youth subcultures and politics. A study of the emergence of South Asian youth organizations in the US presents a picture of the regular as well as historically-significant events in the hostland and homeland(s) that have had an effect on the South Asian diaspora communities. Celina Del Felice and Lillian Solheim (2011) discuss youth organisations and contend that:

“Youth organisations with various degrees of autonomy are usually voluntary, activist-led organisations which focus on non-formal education and social activities. Youth organisations start, change and evolve, and also disappear rapidly given the fact that their leadership and participants are often, and naturally, changing. This poses a challenge to conceptualisations of organisations as rather stable in time.” (p. 1096)

South Asian Organisations in the United States

The motivation behind considering the US is the presence of a strong and visible South Asian diasporic community in the US; the heterogenous social fabric of the South Asian diaspora; and the existing strong diasporic youth organisations that are at work in the host nation, along with their strong online presence. It also brings about the aspect of considering how the diaspora and transnational navigate the “western societies” and the “non-western” homeland. South Asian diaspora in the US plays a crucial role in influencing to some extent the foreign policies of the host nation toward the South Asian nations and vice-versa. The aim of this chapter is to understand the changing and continuing trends of the South Asian diasporic community in the US through the narratives of the South Asian diasporic youth organisations. Youth entails changes and transformations, and the South Asian diasporic youth replicate certain trends of assimilation of the previous generations, but they also forge newer ways of assimilation and belonging in the host nation. Anupama Jain (2011, p. 3) argues that immigrants add to the narratives and stories of the land by including and improvising their own, newer ways of assimilating in the adopted land, through their own choices, scope and limitations. The South Asian diaspora in the US is, mostly, considered

a highly-skilled, elite, and successful diaspora. Rajiv Shankar (1998) writes that: “South Asians...are a significant and fast-growing branch within the Asian family, and are by themselves highly successful and self-conscious participants in the American idiom.” (p. ix)

South Asian histories in the US have been distinct from the East/Southeast Asian American histories in the US. The justification behind including the South Asian diaspora as a whole is because most, if not all organisations, work toward the goals of the Indian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Afghani, Nepali, Sri Lankan, Maldives, Bhutanese diasporic communities in the US. These diverse diasporic communities work together under the identity of South Asian immigrants from the Indian subcontinent and the twice migrants from Trinidad and Tobago, etc. The fight for rights and equality in the countries of the settlement gets stronger when approached with unity despite their diversity. Shankar and Srikanth (1998, p. 2) note that the unified “South Asian” identity for all the South Asian diaspora communities in the host nations is embraced by the second- and third-generations of the South Asian diaspora much more willingly than the previous generations. This is due to their envisioning and acceptance of the similarities and solidarities that the South Asian diaspora communities share and overlooking of the differences (Shankar and Srikanth, 1998, p. 2).

This chapter has selected South Asian diasporic youth organisations in the US that cater to and represent the entire South Asian diasporic community in the host nation and that work for the rights of the community and fight against injustices as a unit. These diaspora organisations have been leveraging the empowering aspects of technology for their causes. Technology has transformed the way the world stays connected and newer connections have been etched in the digital world. Migrants, immigrants, diasporics, and transnationals have been using technology for their benefit and constructing and reconstructing their networks and identities in the process. Søren Frank (2008) writes that major historical events across the world, such as the two world wars, countless regional and national wars, end of colonialism and imperialism, emergence of autocratic

regimes led to the movement of refugees, exiles, migrants, etc in the twentieth century world (p. 1). He further asserts that:

“In addition, technological developments from the late nineteenth century until today (e.g., Greenwich mean time [GMT], telegraph, telephone, railway, automobile, airplane, radio, television, internet, etc.) have made traveling and communication possible on a scale previously unimaginable.” (2008, p. 1-2)

The twenty first century world has seen an intense acceleration of migratory movements of people- voluntary as well as forced migrations- across the world. The ubiquitous use of technology has made travelling and communicating much easier than before, although surveillance has also intensified on the part of the nation-states. The diasporic youth organisations make use of the Internet and social media networks to a great extent to disseminate information about their causes, protests, and activities. They occupy virtual spaces to reinforce their identities and arguments, garner support and solidarities, and start conversations on their mission, vision, and a wide-range of topics affecting the diaspora.

Transnational and Gender Identities

The concern of the chapter is to understand how transnational and gender identities are depicted through the virtual narratives of the diasporic youth organisations. The South Asian diasporic youth organisations and their online presence have formed a new space for South Asian diaspora and transnational identities:

“... given the increased capacity for diasporas to 'act at a distance' due to technological advances in communication, and indeed the greater prevalence of diaspora communities in the contemporary world, we need to reconsider the ways that we think about the nation and its territorialities, as well as diaspora and its territorialities.” (Carter 2005, p. 60-61)

These organisations become transnational when they display solidarity for causes across the globe transcending borders; connect with the homeland through celebratory wishes on homeland festivals such as Diwali, Holi, Eid; and form networks with the rest of the South Asian diaspora through the Internet. Multiple social, cultural, political and economic processes mould the ways in which South Asians in the diaspora are seen by the majority and other minority groups and how they see themselves. As in Bandana Purkayastha's (2005) work on second-generation South Asian Americans, this chapter strives to understand how the nation-states, as well as transnational influences work in globalised and multicultural spaces. Pries and Sezgin (2012, p. 3) argue that affordable means of newer technologies of travel and communications encourage in reinforcing and nurturing transnational bonds and networks, across the world, with the help of digital technologies, social networking sites like Twitter, phone calls, quick and easy transfer of money, "transnational local radio transmission", and many more. They further argue that the meso-level study of migrant organisations is yet to be extensively researched and studied within the broader field of studying migration. This chapter tries to contribute to the body of research on diasporic youth identities, diaspora and transnational youth organisations, and the emerging body of research on digital diasporas.

Reclaiming Virtual Spaces and the Diaspora

The internet, the virtual spaces of communication and networking, and new technologies are being utilised by today's youth for recreational activities as well as for constructing and reconstructing their social and political identities. The diasporas of the world have also been using the help of the Internet and technology to form new transnational networks with kith and kin across the world. The virtual spaces have become an important medium through which diasporic youth reinforce their identities, claim their rights and liberties, and fight for causes. The South Asian diasporic youth organisations make their voices heard through the online mediums, engaging and commencing discussions and deliberations on various issues affecting the diaspora, and thus, construct a unique

and democratic space for themselves. They involve the diasporic youth in their conversations as the youth comment, retweet, and like the online content. They form digital and online transnational communities based on their identities and beliefs.

“The construction of such transnational communities involves setting up organizations and structures that facilitate ongoing movement and participation across national borders. In other words, when groups are unable to construct their lives in ways of their choosing in their host countries, they often create alternative transnational structures to mitigate the effects of racialization.” (Purkayastha, 2005, p. 11)

Online mediums of communication are an integral part of the lives of today’s youth. Their representation in the media and their self-representation in the virtual spaces indicate the trajectories of contemporary youth politics. Koen Leurs (2015, p. 27) cites Livingstone and Couldry:

“Media play an important role in children and young people’s “new responsibility to construct an explicit project of the self” especially because they are expected to “increasingly participate in explicit discourses of identity and identity construction” (Livingstone, 2002, p. 301). For example, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp mark “the emerging requirement in everyday life to have a public presence beyond one’s bodily presence, to construct an objectification of oneself” (Couldry, 2012, p. 50).”

The online activities of the South Asian diasporic youth involve participation in creating and re-creating identities that connect them to their kith and kin residing in different parts of the world; highlight their ethnic identities; connect with the South Asian diaspora worldwide; become a part of the homeland as well as host nations; forge new transnational identities and networks; and voice their opinions and stances on important issues. The diasporic youth, sometimes, deliberately form and construct the identities they choose for themselves in both the real and virtual worlds. It is informative to observe how different social networking sites

and blogs are used by the diasporic youth in various ways. Virtual communities are formed by thriving online dialogues and interactions amongst people of the same community and background, or based on other affiliations and beliefs by people of diverse backgrounds. The flow of information and awareness keep these online networks and communities alive, as Janroj Keles (2015, p. 105) citing Larsen and Urry (2008, p. 23), contends that the ebb and flow of information is primary not only to give rise to the virtual communities but also to create a "... 'network capital', which is defined as the 'capacity to engender and sustain social relations with individuals who are not necessarily proximate, which generates emotional, financial benefit.'" Keles (2015, p. 106) adds that the online communities are significant as these imply and are strengthened by the migrants' lived "experiences of discrimination, isolation, homesickness and exclusion from the labour market and political participation" in the host nations. The diaspora and transnational organisations and their online presence engage with and indicate the contemporary issues that the diasporic communities and individuals are facing at the hostland, and also the homeland facets to which they feel closely connected and want to make a difference.

Immigrant and diasporic youth and virtual spaces are related in unique ways in this era of technological dominance. There are numerous reasons for immigrant and diasporic youth to make use of virtual media to assert their identities and viewpoints. It gives them a space to reinforce their political and cultural stance regarding both the homeland and the host countries, which might not be otherwise possible in other forms of media. Online spaces are locations where the diasporic youth can integrate as well as distinguish themselves from the homeland and hostland cultures, forming new youth cultures. They can assert and reassert their representations of their selves to the outside world. Even though actions on online mediums are restricted to the design and limitations of each platform, yet diasporic youth make use of the digital platforms to their advantage by reinforcing their viewpoints and political stances. Online spaces could be utilised for innumerable purposes, that could range from social, economic to political. Howard Rheingold (1993) opines:

“The technology that makes virtual communities possible has the potential to bring enormous leverage to ordinary citizens at relatively little cost- intellectual leverage, social leverage, commercial leverage...political leverage”. (p. 6)

The unique aspect of focussing on the online aspect of the South Asian youth organisations in the diaspora is the fact that it concerns today's youth who are considered as “digital natives” (Radhika Gajjala, 2008, p. 272)- young people whose lives are as much online as offline. The significance of the online presence of these organisations increases manifold when we realise that the targeted audience can navigate through the Internet spaces with ease, and thus, the information and awareness being raised and disseminated could have a deeper, and much-intended impact, reaching a larger audience. Keles (2015, p. 108) writes that the online presence of any diaspora organisation does not mean their real-life significance gets diminished. On the contrary, these organisations have gained more visibility and empowerment through the digital medium and can render their local help and services online and also give rise to political movements that are transnational. Shalini Shankar (2011) notes that: “New media, especially online communities, offer multilingual domains for youth that may not be easily found in their everyday lives.” (p. 9) The benefits of a strong and constructive digital presence of the diasporic youth and the diasporic youth organisations are aplenty. Youth subcultures are being moulded and shaped by the Internet and digital technologies. Technology and the production of youth cultures and subcultures need to be studied because technological interventions are giving rise to newer forms of cultural forms. The intersections of technology and social and cultural forms give rise to new forms of youth subcultures. Peter Robb (1995) notes that,

“Cultural development may be backward-looking and hence cyclical, but the scientific and technological revolutions are generally cumulative. The first may produce societies in which, despite diversity, one generation lived and thought recognisably as its predecessors did; in other words only limited changes were possible. But advanced technology produces rapid and sudden changes in

lifestyle, politics, values and ideas, within a single generation. It produces a specific kind of progress, a kind of sustained and accelerating crisis ...” (p. 17)

This chapter considers selected blogs and Twitter pages- the official pages of the selected South Asian diasporic youth organisations in the United States. *Twitter*, being a user-generated content platform, that users can use to post content within a limited word limit, can be utilised for “public sociology” as Christopher J. Schneider and Deana Simonetto (2017, p. 236) discuss, the social media platform can be divided into “institutional and individual forms of traditional public sociology” where the institutional sociology may comprise of tweets of news media updates, or educational institutional updates, whereas the individual public sociology would be tweets and retweets of individual sociologists. Blogs are web pages which could be used as personal blogs or as official web pages of any kind of organisation. Henry Farrell and Daniel W. Drezner (2008) assert that blogs are unique as they include hyperlinks, which helps in building a network and dialogues with other blogs and bloggers, and this “networked phenomenon” of the world of blogs is essential for both how blogs operate as well as how the blogs could be studied, “...That blogs are linked together in a network provides much of their specific character- blogs interact with each other continuously, linking back and forth, disseminating interesting stories, arguments and points of view.” (p. 17) This chapter would focus on the content of the South Asian diasporic youth organisations on their blog pages and Twitter pages, and understand how these virtual spaces are being made use of, and how the content can be read as texts which reinforce transnational and gender identities of the South Asian diasporic youth in the US.

Virtual Identities, Transnationalism, and Gender

This chapter is placed within the framework of transnational and postcolonial theories to understand how, through the selected virtual content, South Asian diasporic youth’s transnational and gender identities are reinforced. Transnational and postcolonial theories have been used to understand the digital media and

narratives of the South Asian diasporic youth organisations in the US in this chapter. Media has always played a role in reinforcing the diaspora and transnational identities of diasporic individuals. Sanderien Verstappen and Mario Rutten (2007, p. 230-31) discuss the complex ways in which transnational media, such as homeland cinema, influences the diasporic youth, and the multiple levels of meanings that arise out of the youth viewership of the homeland cinema in the hostland. New forms of media, such as social media sites and blogs, also help in influencing the youth to create and reinforce meanings and identities through these mediums. The South Asian youth have had a long history of being politically aware and have raised their voices against injustices in the hostland. The 1970s witnessed the emergence of South Asian youth politics in Britain, after numerous racial incidences and the protests of these South Asian immigrant youth against these racial attacks- “The emergence of the youth groups marks the coming of age of a new form of Asian political and cultural agency...having grown up in Britain they articulate a *home-grown British political discourse*.” (Brah 1996, p. 58) Avtar Brah explains that these South Asian youth consider their local milieu as their home, and despite their status of being considered outsiders, they fight for these spaces in the host nations from the place of being insiders and as belonging to the host nations. Brah further adds, “...Even when they describe themselves as ‘Asian’, this is not a reaching back to some ‘primordial Asian’ identity. What they are speaking of is a modality of ‘British Asianness’. These home-grown BrAsian identities inaugurate a fundamental *generational change*.” (1996, p. 58) When there is a discussion of youth groups in Britain, that were formed to bring about a change in the political scenario of that time, it is important to remember that these groups were not constituted by only young South Asian males, but some of the groups included young people from both Asian and Afro-Caribbean descent. Some of these groups were formed by young women dealing with the issues of patriarchy, race, class, and questioning the patriarchy evident in the male-dominated youth groups, and the racism and ethnocentrism obvious in the white feminist groups (Brah, 1996, p. 56). This chapter studies the South Asian diasporic youth in the US in a similar vein due to the political awareness and activism of the diasporic youth in the hostland. The

diasporic youth are vocal about their rights and identities. The South Asian diasporic youth in the US consider themselves as much a part of the American culture as much as they are proud of their ethnic identities. The South Asian youth subcultures in the United States cannot be studied without the inclusion of the essential place of women and the third gender in it. The South Asian diasporic youth political activism and other activities through the youth organisations need an inclusive and intersectional approach as well.

The South Asian diasporic youth organisations are situated at spaces where identities, gender, and ethnicities merge, and address issues that need intersectional approach to solve them. They have a vibrant and flourishing online presence through their official pages, blogs and social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc. The number of US-based diasporic youth organisations, with a strong online presence, is higher than the ones found in other hostlands, according to the research conducted in this thesis. The strong presence of South Asian diasporics and immigrants of varying skill-sets in the US and the activities of these organisations make for an interesting study. The offline and online transnational linkages formed through these organisations hold significance. This contestation of online and digital spaces has rendered these organisations more intersectional and dynamic, as the politics of gender, race, ethnicities, and identities in real lives now exist with the politics prevalent in the online networks. Koen Leurs (2015) writes- “Similar to offline institutions, across digital space, templates, norms and interface decisions reserve certain dominant consumer, national, gendered, ethnic and racial positions.” (p. 16) Leurs adds that these online sites and networks do not mutely observe the identity formation processes, these are not “neutral and external backdrops” to the shaping of the identities of the users, but these digital and virtual spaces are “... distinct expressive cultures filled with ideologies, hierarchies and politics.” (2015, p. 18) Radhika Gajjala (2008, p. 37) notes that digital diasporas help in bringing forth multiple representations, and a meeting ground for the global and the local, and the international and the national. The self-representation of individuals and self-assertion of their identities online have created spaces where prejudices exist but

are contested as well. It operates as a fairly liberal and democratic space where ideologies are continued and confronted from real life. Leurs observes that the Web 2.0 Internet applications extend a promise to the users of becoming active agents of self-representations. Blogs and social networking sites signal the ongoing shift from people being represented by the media to people asserting self-presentation (2015, p. 20). These online self-representations serve varied purposes and different voices. The heterogenous nature of offline/real-life communities manifests itself in the virtual representations of these communities as well. Leurs further adds-

“Repurposing Pierre Bourdieu’s understanding of the habitus, online platforms can be considered as social structures where communities of practice engage in digital practices that cultivate habituated dispositions. Conceptually, a habitus dialectically emerges at the interplay of structure and agency, and continuity and change.” (2015, p. 21)

The online spaces where these organisations construct their virtual identities help the diasporic communities and individuals to continue existing practices and also chart out new routes and identities for themselves and the communities as a whole. These online narratives of the diasporic communities could be considered a part of their social capital, similar to the ones in real life- While talking of the relation between social capital and migrants, Keles (2015) writes how it, “... has become a relevant theoretical concept for understanding the way in which migrants get access to resources and participate in social, economic and political life across national borders.” (p. 102) This participation takes place through digital mediums and online spaces as well, and carries its own set of agendas and politics, reconstructing new transnational identities in the process. Leurs (2015, p. 24) notes that online spaces are fraught with inequalities and prejudices, represented and controlled by the privileged gender and races, yet immigrants, especially young immigrants fight these “representational hierarchies by using digital space invader tactics to manifest themselves across different online territories.” The South Asian diasporic youth organisations, in a similar manner, reinforce their ethnic identities, their multiple belonging, their political stances,

and other ways of surviving and thriving as diasporic youth. Paul Gilroy (1994) contends:

“It encourages us to proceed in ways that do not privilege the modern nation-state and its institutional order over the sub-national and supra-national networks and patterns of power, communication and conflict that they work to discipline, regulate and govern. The concept of space is itself transformed when it is seen less through outmoded notions of fixity and place and more in terms of the ex-centric communicative circuitry that has enabled dispersed populations to converse, interact and even synchronize significant elements of their social and cultural lives.” (p. 211)

The virtual spaces allow diasporic populations to interact and form networks that, on some level, do not involve the state forces, although the nation-states have been making their presence felt with the controlling, manipulating, and surveillance of the Internet and digital spaces, along with the corporate powers, yet, cross-border networks and communities are still formed by immigrant and diasporic individuals. The processes of meaning making through the social media networking sites and the Internet, as Ganaele Langlois (2014) notes:

“... semiot technological software, that is, software that directly participates in the production and distribution of meanings, is becoming, for better or for worse, an essential component of human communication to the extent that it is now dedicated to the production of modes of existence—who we are, who we want to become, and who we connect with.” (p. 16)

He further notes of Twitter that, with its “... 140 characters limit on the microblogging platform...” compels users to keep their online posts short, and in this way, “... the platform imposes specific modes of expression and communication among users—sound bites rather than longer argumentation, dialogue rather than soliloquy.” (p. 77) Twitter’s character limit has been increased to 280 characters since then, and there are longer posts and discussions through comments on the posts.

Youth Diasporic Identities and Virtual Spaces

This chapter understand the representations of South Asian diasporic youth in the virtual spaces utilised by the South Asian diaspora and transnational organisations. The selected online content from the blogs and Twitter pages have been treated as text in this chapter, and content analysis and intersectionality of this text have been carried out. The focus of the chapter has been to study and analyse the South Asian diasporic youth organisations in the US. It must be noted here that a few of these diasporic youth organisations are focused on the South Asian diasporic youth, while there are others that have a significant aspect where South Asian diasporic youth are encouraged to be politically active in the diaspora to bring about lasting and positive changes for the entire South Asian diaspora community. The focus of this chapter is on the South Asian diaspora organisations in the US which are especially working with and for the South Asian diasporic youth in the host nation. Through an intersectional study and approach, this chapter attempts to read and understand how the South Asian diasporic youth organisations operate; their virtual presence through the use of the Internet and digital technologies; their significance in the lives of the South Asian diasporic youth and how the South Asian diasporic youth might be influenced and construct a part of their lives and realities through these organisations; and how do these organisations represent the second- and third-generation of South Asian diasporic youth in the US through their narratives-online and offline.

This chapter would delineate South Asian diasporic youth groups and their significance in the hostland against a historical background of South Asian youth groups across the decades and the events that led to the formation of these groups. The formation of youth politics through these organizations and the contemporary nature of the South Asian youth politics would be traced keeping in the background Avtar Brah's and a few others' studies on Indian and South Asian youth in the hostland. Gender would be one of the essential lenses through which

these youth organisations as well as organizations working specifically on gender and sexuality issues would be studied. Transnational identities are another one of the other major lenses through which analysis of the virtual text would be conducted in this thesis. The selected content from the blogs and *Twitter* pages would be thematically analysed on the basis on multiple transnational and gender themes applicable to the diaspora.

This chapter employs qualitative content analysis, which is, according to Inhwa Kim and Jasna Kuljis (2010), “... qualitative content analysis is similar to textual analysis in that it is primarily interpretive in nature, and often does not utilise statistics for data analysis.” (p. 370) The virtual content selected are from the years 2015-2021. The first reason for this is due to the focus of this chapter on the contemporary representations of the diasporic issues through the virtual spaces. The second reason is the presence of numerous diasporic online pages in recent years and the present age of digital activism.

Online collection of data and selection of respondents through various SNSs and websites are increasingly becoming popular in migration and diaspora research studies. Virtual ethnography is used either in combination with conventional ethnographical methods or in isolation. This chapter focuses on the virtual spaces occupied by the South Asian diasporic youth organizations and how these organizations represent and involve the diasporic youth in the diaspora for their causes and activities. A detailed study and analysis of the following South Asian diasporic youth organisations on Twitter and blogs have been carried out in this chapter, namely: Improving South Asian American Students’ Experiences (ISAASE), South Asian Youth in Houston Unite (SAYHU), South Asian Youth Action (SAYA), Sakhi for South Asian Women, Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM), and Chicago Desi Youth Rising (CDYR).

These six diasporic youth organisations involve the diasporic youth in a significant way in their activities, goals, vision, and mission. This thesis studies

the online presence and digitization of the selected South Asian diasporic youth organisations and identities to understand the recurrent themes, the interrelated diasporic issues discussed, the networks being formed, and so on. The six diasporic youth organisations were selected on the basis that these organisations were based out of the United States to maintain a uniformity. The next selection criterion was that these organisations must have a strong online and offline presence for the selection and analysis of virtual content. Ethnic, racial and gender identities are being formed and shaped through “posts, tweets, retweets, shares, likes” on Twitter, blogs, Facebook, etc. Discussing about the theoretical and methodological hurdles that she faced during her research, Anna Everett (2009) contends that her research work focussing on twentieth-century and especially on “cybertext”:

“... black print publications did not prepare me for what I want to call the “hyper-ephemerality of the cybertext.” What this means is that conducting Internet content analysis presents a unique set of problematics involving access to and availability of the material under scrutiny. The fleeting nature or short shelf life of most individual, grassroots and private, nonprofit and nongovernment organization (NGO) websites and social networking sites necessitates the immediate downloading and printing of those sites that might be considered worthy of study because, as I have learned the hard way, a second page or site view may not be possible.” (p. 11)

The ease at which the content shared or created on the Internet is removed poses a problem to the work of virtual ethnography, as hardly any remnants remain of what might have once been an active and thriving website or social media page, making it difficult for a researcher to go back to the virtual data. During the study and analysis of the selected virtual content for this chapter, there were a few posts which did not exist after a period of time so those online posts had to be removed from the analysis. As Everett (2009, p. 11) contends, “Too many of these sites disappear without a trace, or they are upgraded to the point of unrecognizability...These are among the challenges of historicizing contemporary or present day events.”

Daniel Miller et al (2016), while discussing the scope and nature of research of social media, contend that: "Other than media studies and sociality per se, perhaps the main drive towards a specifically anthropological study of new media has come from the latter's importance for migrants and diasporas, often the results of political disruption or the requirements of our modern political economy." (p. 23)

This chapter also takes into account one South Asian diaspora gender organisation because the awareness and knowledge of gender violence and abuse are critical for the youth of a community. Gender and youth politics and subcultures cannot be separated, and any study on youth remains incomplete without understanding the role of gender in it. Gill Cressey (2006, p. 9) argues that gender occupies a significant and explicit space in the narratives of youth. Gender and sexuality have been critical aspects in the lives of the South Asian youth in the diaspora, as they have to negotiate between the different ways in which gender and sexuality are dealt with in the host nations and the homeland. Virtual ethnography understands that the Internet and the online platforms on it are not apolitical or inert in nature. The online platforms in their essence and the users' use of these contribute to the creation and re-creation of new and old forms of social phenomena in real-life/offline societies. Christine Hine (2000, p. 9) writes that the ethnographic research of online mediums and spaces helped strengthen the "view of the Internet as a culture where the uses people make of the technology available to them could be studied." Youth produce meanings with their interactions with the technologies and digital mediums, and are not simply the passive and inert consumers of media anymore. Julian Sefton-Green (2006) argues that there is requirement for "more methodologically imaginative and complex studies of diverse young people learning across all kinds of social domains so that we can gain an enhanced understanding of the meaning of media culture for young people." (p. 300) This chapter, thus, tries to contribute to the research for understanding South Asian diasporic youth and the digital diaspora through a new perspective.

South Asian Organisations in the Diaspora: Range, Diversity and Impact

This section provides a concise description of the overall presence of the South Asian diaspora and transnational organisations in the United States. Before studying and analysing the selected organisations for this chapter, it is important to understand the extent and prevalence of these diaspora organisations and their importance in the lives of the South Asian diaspora individuals and communities. The South Asian diaspora organisations contribute to the larger phenomenon of increasing transnational identities of the South Asians in the diaspora. These organisations are one of the significant ways through which South Asian diaspora identities are reinforced- especially, gender and transnational identities. James Clifford (1994) contends that, “Transnational connections break the binary relation of minority communities with majority societies-a dependency that structures projects of both assimilation and resistance.” (p. 311) Purkayastha (2005, p. 8-9) notes that “... transnationalism and assimilation may not be contradictory processes. Just as the growth in technology and communications facilitates the availability of “cultural products,” that facilitate the practice of symbolic ethnicity, such transnational networks make it easier for groups especially the middle-class groups and their families in multiple countries who can access such technologies to maintain ties with people who are scattered all over the globe. Their ability to maintain meaningful connections with globally dispersed family and friends’ networks replicates a type of virtual ethnic enclave. South Asian diasporic youth reinforce their ethnic and transnational identities through cultural practices and modes. Katrak (2002) writes, in his paper on Bhangra music and South Asians, that:

“A noteworthy example of how bhangra fused with reggae and rhythms rap can promote progressive cultural and community politics is embodied in the work of DJ Rekha who promotes new forms of music in New York City. She draws social, political, and cultural connections between the music and the lived realities of South Asian Americans. She is also exemplarily involved in

community organizations and demonstrates how cultural and community politics can work harmoniously. DJ Rekha is a founding member of South Asian Youth Action (SAYA), and has also worked with Sakhi (an activist women's group that deals with issues of domestic violence.” (p. 77-78)

This section would delineate briefly some South Asian diaspora organisations in the US to provide a glimpse into the strong presence of the diaspora organisations in the hostland. The South Asian diaspora organisations, and in a few cases, Asian diaspora organisations included in this section, centre their activities, vision, and mission, on networking with the South Asian or Asian communities; work together with other similar organisations in the diaspora; forming links and networks with other communities; and so on. A transnational field, as Levitt and Schiller discuss (2004), is being created through these South Asian diaspora organisations in the United States, and these organisations create a transnational field that reinforces transnational identities and living that is not restricted to one nation-state. These organisations focus on community building, diversities in the diaspora, and inclusion of all. The South Asian identity is highlighted and reinforced through the work and digital presence of these organisations.

Manavi is an organisation based in the United States for women of the South Asian immigrant and diaspora communities in the US. It was started in the year 1985 and has been contesting and fighting against gender-based violence on South Asian women in the host nation. It reaches out and supports the victims of violence by providing them legal support, counselling, training and so on. Their blog shares stories and posts on gender issues faced by South Asian women, both in the homeland and the hostland.

Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence CAAAV : which brings together Asian immigrant and diaspora communities together in New York City to fight for their rights in the host nation. CAAAV also fights for the refugees from the Asian nations in New York City. Attaining racial, economic and gender equality is the aim of this organisation, for which it runs programs for Asians immigrants speaking Bengali, Mandarin, Korean, etc. Their “Asian Youth in Action” was an

internship program that engaged South Asian, Southeast, Asian young women and trans and gender nonconforming (TGNC) youth, aged fourteen to twenty, to take part in a variety of activities that would make their voices known, contribute to the low-income groups amongst Asian immigrant communities, and so on. This organisation aims, through their activities and actions, to increase the Asian community power at the grassroots level.

SALGA NYC: The South Asian Lesbian and Gay Association of New York City, focuses on the cause of the *LGBTQIA* individuals of the South Asian diaspora. South Asians in the diaspora struggle to reinforce their gender and sexual identities without being discriminated against, especially within the spaces of their home and communities. *SALGA NYC* extends political and social support to the South Asian trans and queer community in New York City. It aims to provide the much-needed space for the *LGBTQIA* community to thrive, and for others to inculcate a more inclusive approach towards them, and extend acceptance and inclusion.

SASA: South Asian Studies Association encourages a better understanding of the importance of South Asia and South Asians in the global context. A conglomeration of people from academics, scholars, influential business persons comprises this association to study and discuss the South Asian region's rich history, significant present, and promising future. The histories, cultures, languages, literatures, economies, religions, etc are studied to understand the region from a holistic viewpoint. Education, the celebration of homeland festivals, help, support, and action are the ways through which *SASA* works towards its goals. *SASA* organises conferences on the theme of South Asia across educational campuses.

Asian/Pacific Islander Coalition on HIV/AIDS (APICHA): provides community health services, mental health services, etc. to the communities that are discriminated against and treated as "others". Immigrants, diaspora, and other subjugated communities often face difficulty in availing the basic services, such

as health and education. *APICHA* not only caters to the health needs of these communities but specifically offers transgender health services, providing for their health needs and tests, which are otherwise considered taboo. *Chai Connect* is an organisation and, as its official website, notes, it is a “community space”, which brings people, especially South Asian women in the diaspora, together over tea, community and dialogues. It especially encourages networks, dialogues and communication amongst South Asian women, and discuss their important roles in the community and also, discuss the significance of chai/tea. Their Twitter page takes up issues such as the prevalence of gender pay disparity, education, the safety of women, etc. *Chai Connect* tweets and retweets on South Asian American representation, especially of South Asian women in the host nation. This organisation talks of the politics of appearances and how skin colour determines the number of prejudices women face online and offline.

SAADA: South Asian American Digital Archive, which is a digital archive focussing on South Asian Americans. It believes in the presence and maintenance of dynamic archives for a community to reinforce their identities and rights, and also act as a platform for dialogues, conversations, and debates regarding issues affecting the community. In an age of ground-breaking technological advancement, this digital archive is keeping up with the times and engages in the collection, preservation, documentation, and sharing of South Asian American lives, histories, and stories. It believes in the ethos of diversity and how immigrants’ stories and histories are an integral part of the host nations’ histories. *SAADA* runs an online magazine, community activities, and several other projects to foster their mission and vision of empowering the South Asian diaspora community, with its diversities and solidarities, through the amalgamation of technology and history, which can be understood from their online posts.

Another diaspora organisation and digital media page is *The Teal Mango*, which provides news and perspectives on South Asians in the diaspora through the digital medium. It shares news and articles on lifestyle, food, entertainment,

culture, popular culture and fitness news for its readers and viewers. The official website shares stories and blog posts on a range of subjects, from ethnic food to Partition experiences, from literary narratives to undocumented immigrant workers in the US.

SAALT: South Asian Americans Leading Together, yet another diasporic organization, which is a non-profit organisation that works toward the inclusion of all South Asians in the United States. It strives for the civil rights of the South Asian diasporas and aims to provide racial justice to South Asians across the United States. This organisation supports policy changes at the local and national level that would bring about positive changes for the South Asian communities. It encourages other South Asian organisations, that operate at grassroots level, to initiate and actualise transformation at the community level. It believes in commencing and continuing dialogues at the national level on issues that affect the South Asian diasporas in the US. By collaborating with other South Asian organisations across the US, they aim to gradually and structurally bring about a change by adopting an intersectional and intergenerational approach. Striving for social justice, SAALT focuses on learning at the community-level to influence and advocate changes at the national stage. *Young Leaders Institute* (YLI) is one of SAALT's programs that encourages youth, belonging to the age group of 18-22, to work on their leadership skills, connect with fellow community members, connect and network with activists and social changemakers, and understand various approaches and strategies that lead to the betterment of the South Asian diaspora communities and other immigrant population in the US. By building on their skills, YLI aims at preparing these young South Asians to become critical thinkers and initiators of social change. *National South Asian Summit* is another initiative of SAALT's where dialogues on issues faced by South Asian diasporas are encouraged. The official website of SAALT provides all the necessary information about the organisation and its work in the diaspora. The organisation fosters a community feeling and solidarity amongst all South Asian diasporic individuals irrespective of their caste, colour, faith, and so on.

Speak Mentorship is a diasporic organisation that hopes to witness diversity and gender equality pertaining to all fields of work and study. They aim at mentoring women of colour belonging to varied and diverse backgrounds to become leaders in whatever they choose to pursue. Economic and technological empowerment, English language skills, leadership qualities, workplace skills, work opportunities, etc. are some of the areas in which *Speak Mentorship* trains these young immigrant women of colour.

Another diaspora organisation that focuses on South Asian feminism and digital mediums is the *Brown Girl Magazine*² - and as their own Twitter page bio reads: “A digital stomping ground for South Asians to challenge traditions and embrace feminism.” Domestic violence, acts of oppression against South Asians in the past, contributions of South Asians to the global South Asian community in the past and present, politics in the host nations as well as homeland are a few of the topics of discussion and deliberation on the organisation’s website and Twitter page. *South Asians in Sports* forms a network for South Asians in the world of sports and encourages more participation and involvement of South Asians in the sports industry. They have an active Twitter page and website. *We The South Asians’ Twitter* account fosters unity amongst the South Asian communities and promotes their interests in host nations. *Desis for Progress* forms a network of South Asians to contest conservative attitudes and bring about policies that are liberal and progressive and bring about positive changes.

3rdI South Asian Films is a diaspora organisation on South Asian cinema, from the homeland as well as the diaspora. Identities are formed, re-formed, reconstructed, and represented through popular cultures. Films are one of the important mediums of popular culture influences as well as depicts the ways in which South Asians are perceived by others as well as themselves. *3rdI South Asian Films* aim at depicting and representing the diversity of South Asians across the world through the medium of independent films.

² <https://browngirlmagazine.com/>

Daya Houston caters to the needs and issues of South Asian families in Houston, United States. Spreading awareness on social evils, such as domestic violence, abusive relationships, teenage issues, and so on. *#SolidarityIsThis* deals with the trainings of educators in schools to sensitise them about immigrant children in their classes. *SouthAsians4USA* is an organisation active on its Twitter page that shares information and stands for the South Asian community in the US.

These organisations, at many times, network amongst themselves for similar causes, and form transnational links connecting organisations, diasporic people in the hostland, and also, South Asian diasporics and transnationals across the globe. The virtual presence of these organisations helps in the distribution of information and political awareness to a larger audience. Intersectional approaches make these organisations and their virtual activities, more inclusive space for the diversities in the South Asian diaspora in the US. The next section focuses on selected South Asian youth organisations in the US through an intersectional lens to understand the identities being formed through their narratives.

Youth Identities, The Internet, and Digital Platforms

Observing and studying the range and extent of the online presence of the South Asian diasporic and transnational individuals and communities give us proof of the strong virtual networks that have led to newer forms of solidarities and transnationalism. Through tweets, hashtags, likes, blogs, comments, and so on, alternate narratives are being constructed that complement or contest the offline narratives and identities. All of the diaspora organisations employ a multi-generational and intersectional approach to address issues and bring about changes in the South Asian diaspora community. Transnational social fields are constructed through the South Asian diaspora organisations and their actions and activities. This section shows how significant a role these diaspora organisations

play in striving for positive changes in the lives of the South Asian community, and occupying and reconstructing transnational spaces in the offline and the online mediums, and constructing spaces for youth identities of the diaspora. Their active and rich presence in the virtual spaces makes it easier for this chapter to qualitatively analyse the selected content as texts.

Transnational and Gendered Identities

This section studies and analyses the selected virtual data from the South Asian diasporic youth organisations' online presence and interprets how their virtual presence reconstructs and reinforces transnational and gender identities of the diasporic youth. The organisations discussed here are ISAASE, SAYA, Sakhi, SAYHU, DRUM, and Chicago Desi Youth Rising.

ISAASE: Improving South Asian American Students' Experiences: This organisation aspires to provide South Asian American children and youth with equal opportunities in schools and beyond. It collaborates with schools, educational organisations, and other South Asian organisations with similar aims to provide South Asian American students an improved educational environment. The official website of the organisation includes a blog that initiates conversations on issues facing the South Asian diaspora community in the United States. Tweets and retweets from ISAASE's Twitter page spread awareness and initiate debates on how the model minority concept affects students in a negative way, especially the ones who do not fit in that stereotypical concept. This organisation also raises concerns over the need to understand and acknowledge the diversity existing in South Asian communities and how, in educational institutions, a few students must not represent the entire community or communities. ISAASE's researches the plight and issues affecting South Asian American students and seeks to provide an environment that will encourage growth, positivity and equality. Fighting prejudices and stereotypes, spreading awareness about their research findings, and working toward providing a better

environment and quality of education to South Asian American children and youth are the areas of work of this organisation.

SAYA: South Asian Youth Action is a diaspora organisation for the South Asian youth in the United States. This organisation is based out of New York City, and it is a “youth development organization” striving to bring about positive changes. The emphasis of this organization is on the South Asians, but SAYA does not discriminate and believes in supporting youth to reach their potential and connecting them to opportunities irrespective of them belonging to any background. Working on the principles of secularism and inclusiveness, SAYA has been an alternative space outside the classrooms for the youth to develop and grow. South Asian youth, or youth of the diaspora in the regions SAYA operates in, can trace their ancestral origins to Guyana, India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Trinidad and Tobago, etc. From the early days of its existence and work, SAYA has been a space where prejudices in the hostland have been contested and “This space quickly became a culturally affirming place where young people from all over New York City explored issues of race, gender, class and ethnic identity through leadership building initiatives and the arts.” (SAYA) This organisation conducts its activities and events in New York City, Brooklyn and Queens. They have their advocates in schools, who resonate with their vision so that South Asian youth have a support system for the issues they face in educational spaces in the host nation. It is interesting to note how this youth organization, through its programmes, is contesting and reclaiming the identities of immigrants in the hostland. The issues faced by South Asian youth and other immigrant youth in the hostland are a reflection of the politics of race, ethnicity, age, and gender played out at different contexts in the host nation. A platform to raise your voice or make your voices heard is a space where discrimination is contested and challenged. SAYA helps immigrant and diasporic youth to cope with their inner and outer struggles in the diaspora.

Sakhi: For South Asian Women is a diaspora organisation that works to counter and fight against gender-based violence in South Asian families by providing services, involving and engaging community and its resources, efforts for policy initiatives to curtail domestic violence, and through advocacy. This organization came into being against the silence and inaction in matters of domestic abuse and violence. There was an absence of any organization or community centre that addressed domestic violence cases in the South Asian communities in New York. Sakhi caters to gender-based violence in South Asian immigrant communities and South Asian communities from West Indies and Africa. It was founded in the year 1989 by a group of South Asian women from diverse professional backgrounds. Sakhi provides support to any South Asian women in the diaspora without the barriers of language, age, religion, ethnicity, immigration status, profession and education. The work is done by providing support and empowerment by integrating and involving survivors, communities and institutions to bring an end to domestic violence. Sakhi is in pursuit of healthy and violence-free South Asian communities and families. It provides a space for South Asian women to talk about domestic abuse, which was otherwise never openly discussed. It is a space where domestic abuse is fought against in particular and patriarchy, in general.

DRUM: Desis Rising Up and Moving is an organisation based in New York City and focuses on generations of low-income South Asian and Indo-Caribbean immigrant workers and young people in the city. It specifically deals with the undocumented South Asian immigrant workers and youth to provide them with “immigrant rights, educational reforms, civil rights, and workers’ justice”. *DRUM* caters to the “desi” youth in NYC who hail from low-income groups and aims at making these youth well-informed about their immigrant rights and justice. Their “YouthPower!” program trains youth of the 13-21 age group to collaborate with other youth of color and voice their opinions for policy changes and other reforms. This organisation concentrates on South Asian youth in public schools and public colleges, and also on South Asian workers with low-income. They look into the issues of school dropouts amongst these low-wage immigrant youth

and how these drop-outs and suspensions lead to the youth faring poorly in their courses, eventually being “pushed-out” of the education system. Working towards ending this prevalent practice, DRUM is a part of the “Dignity in Schools Campaign- NY Chapter”; “DACA Clinics: Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Clinics”; “National Dignity in Schools Campaign”; “AEJ: Alliance for Educational Justice”; “DREAM Act”; etc. DRUM actively participates in various initiatives and policy changes for the immigrant youth in the US.

SAYHU: South Asian Youth in Houston Unite is a diasporic youth organization and identifies itself as a “transnational feminist collective” that deals with youth in the South Asian diaspora in Houston, US. Through a digital archive, yearly summer institute, community meetings, and a youth summit, SAYHU addresses the issues South Asian immigrants face as a community in the hostland. It is a unique space that fosters a politically-informed and politically-active South Asian immigrant network in Houston so that policy changes can be brought about and contemporary issues can be dealt with collaboratively. The official website of SAYHU, runs a blog, which shares poems and narratives of South Asian diasporic youth. These creative modes of expression to reinforce and recount the lived experiences of the youth living in a diaspora depict how youth are receptive to their diaspora experiences similar to adults. SAYHU’s website dedicates a vibrant section to contributions of poetry and articles narrating diaspora experiences and stories from the South Asian immigrant and diasporic youth. The writings are the lived experiences of these youth in the hostland and how they have dealt with their identities, sexuality, ethnic backgrounds, and so on. This organisation exists on the intersections of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, identities and youth. The blog stories also bring forth the multigenerational changes in the South Asian diaspora. “The Preservation Project: The SAYHU Archive” is a unique initiative of documenting the oral stories of “South Asian Houstonians” and preserving it digitally. This digital archiving intends to preserve the lives, experiences, stories, and diversities of the South Asian diaspora in Houston, so that these digitized materials are available easily for future generations and research purposes in the future. Digital archiving has made

the histories, stories and lives of marginalised communities accessible to the world. Online spaces can be used to reclaim one's assertion over one's own life and narrate events through a different perspective. Alternate histories can be digitized and preserved online to counter majoritarian narratives that turn out to be exclusionary most of the time. The Internet and digital archiving by SAYHU help in rendering authority to the South Asian diaspora communities to collect, digitise, and self-assert their narratives and histories in digital formats.

Chicago Desi Youth Rising is a diasporic youth organisation that works at the grassroots level and is a non-profit organisation, which offers a summer leadership program for South Asian youth in the diaspora, in the age range of 15-21, who aspire to bring about a change in their communities. They accept applications from- "... adoptees, desis of mixed heritage, any immigration status, all LGBTQTSIS (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual and more) youth, and residents of Chicago and Chicagoland suburbs." (CDYR)

The next section will select and analyse the virtual content of the above-mentioned organisations and deduce how transnational and gender identities are reinforced through the digital presence of these organisations.

Diaspora, Virtual Spaces, and Gender Identities

Gender identities and gendered experiences are integral to the study of any diaspora. The South Asian diaspora community provides richer and newer perspectives with the inclusion of all the genders in the study and analysis of the diaspora. The South Asian diaspora is also faced with many forms of gender violence, domestic abuse, forced marriages, and so on. The South Asian diasporic youth organisations aim to counter these gender abuses in the diaspora, and also, provide a safe space for reinforcement of one's gender and sexual identities in the diaspora. An online post by SAYHU on Twitter reinforces the diasporic youth

gender and ethnic identities, "Of solidarity, sisterhood and new hope," by Srushti Mahamuni and how she narrates her own experiences in the hostland (SAYHU, 2018). Online posts such as this engage in understanding personal experiences of diasporics in the hostland and encourages connections amongst the youth diasporics.

The need to support each other and fight against gender violence is important in a diaspora because, away from the support systems that might be found in the homeland, the solidarities formed amongst diasporic women help in forming support networks in the land of settlement. Women in the South Asian diaspora are, usually, understood as carriers of the traditions and cultures of the homeland. This stereotype often leads to unequal gender rights and treatment in the diaspora.

"Women often face the additional difficulty of maintaining community cultural traditions, while also integrating into sites of settlement. They have to navigate between heritage, upbringing and the lifestyle of the host country, thereby traversing radically contradictory social settings and having contested identities." (Dordi and Roberts 2016, p. 90)

The organisation, SAYA, posts on one of their activities in which the focus is on improving the leadership skills of the diasporic young women as employability skills will ensure economic independence of women in the diaspora:

"SAYA young women at MS 172 are boosting their leadership skills and closing the gender gap through improv with Funny Girls!" (SAYA, 2017)

South Asian diasporic young women being trained in employability and leadership skills leads to women strengthening their voices and skills, both in the spaces of home and outside the home.

The use of the medium of films to disseminate knowledge and awareness on gender equality is reiterated by the following online post by SAYA:

“Don't miss FREE films on "Gender Around the World" from [@GenderSpectrum](#) with films from [@framelinefest...](#)” (SAYA, 2017)

SAYA involves diasporic young women to participate and find their voices through various activities, such as the following one, which helps in community building as well as building the confidence of the young women:

“A group of young women at one of SAYA's partner high schools participated in a poetry and performance project in Fall 2017. Check out some poems and a select performance from these youth, who are all English language learners.” (SAYA, 2017)

The following tweets by SAYA is an example of how the organisation involves the youth and young women to reinforce their identities and voices in assertive ways:

“This Saturday, SAYA will be hosting our annual Young Women's Leadership Conference. The theme is autonomy, encouraging our young women to find and amplify their voices. The day will feature 3 interactive sessions...!” (SAYA, 2019)

These activities of the diaspora organisations help in the construction of newer³ gender identities in the diaspora, as well as countering stereotypical gender roles. SAYA also engages with intersectional approaches where race, gender and justice meet, as can be understood from the following online post:

“Interested in learning about racial, gender, & social justice? Apply to the Young Women's Advisory Council by 8/25! ...” (SAYA, 2017)

³ Newer gender identities which do not adhere to stereotypical understanding of gender roles; gender identities that are non-conforming; etc.

Dialogues, discussions and conversations lead to awareness, understanding and acceptance of issues otherwise considered taboo in a conservative environment. One of SAYHU's blogpost's headline and its content reads:

"The Intersection of South Asian and LGBTQ Identity: How Alok Vaid-Menon Makes Me Proud of the Brown and Queer...When I learned that SAYHU was going to co-host a performance by Alok Vaid-Menon at UH, I was ecstatic. Alok's work has been such an inspiring, shining example of what it means to be visibly queer and visibly brown..." (SAYHU, 2018)

The above blog post is a first-person account of how a performance by a South Asian Queer artist encouraged another brown and queer youth to accept and be proud of herself. The sincere tone of the writing brings forth a plethora of issues that gender non-conforming immigrants face in the host nation, such as the need for better representation of South Asians who are queer; a space where the prejudices and injustices meted out to South Asians and gender non-conforming people in the host nation could be voiced; the need for solidarity among queer and immigrant people; and belief and encouragement that the world belongs to everyone irrespective of their choices in life. Such blogposts and voicing of one's sexuality, sexual identities, and opinions show the gradual acceptance of the identities that the South Asian immigrant and diasporic youth carry in a host nation, and how, they are fighting for a place for those identities in where they reside and also in the homeland.

An online post on Twitter by SAYHU reinforces the sexual identities of the South Asian diaspora and the need for speaking up for the health and reproductive choices of the queer community in the diaspora, as the following Tweet suggests:

"Aren Aizura is speaking powerfully to queer and trans reproductive justice in queer family formation, medical surrogacy, & trans pregnancy. #SAYHUatNWSA #NWSA2019" (SAYHU, 2019)

These organisations contest for the reproductive choices of women and the third gender of the diaspora and beyond. The agency of women on their own reproductive choices is contested by patriarchy in almost every community, and the youth organisations work towards making diasporic women and the third gender assert their rights and agency over their identities and choices.

SAKHI, a diaspora gender organisation, encourages the diasporic youth to participate in their activities, employing an intergenerational approach to their initiatives to bring about changes in the diaspora, as can be understood from the following online post by “Queens Museum”, on Twitter, and retweeted by SAKHI:

“As a #YearOfUncertainty Community Partner, @SakhiNYC has developed a Community Mobilization Arts Practicum. 10 youth participants who identify as part of the South Asian diaspora will work with mentors to craft a community mobilization arts project...” (Queens Museum/SAKHI, 2021)

The above online post indicates networking amongst South Asian diaspora organisations, and how, they encourage and support each other’s work, thus forming diaspora and transnational solidarities. Gender identities through digital mediums and online narratives take on newer forms as virtual spaces are occupied in innovative ways and identities are reinforced in a novel manner. Incidences of gender-based harassment, abuse and violence are recurrent in the South Asian diasporic community and the diaspora organisations address this issue through a range of initiatives and endeavours that aim at fostering gender equality and ending gender violence and abuse in domestic and public spaces of the diaspora. Domestic violence and other gender-based harassment and crimes are other critical issues in the Indian and South Asian diaspora that need urgent and long-term solutions. DRUM, through their blog, posted:

“Men’s Eckshate Anti-Street Harassment Dhaba!” (DRUM, 2018)

This blog post refers to DRUM's gender justice program, which brings together men to discuss gender issues faced by both men and women, and their relationships with both genders. This initiative conducts workshops on matters such as street harassment and other gender-based subjugation. DRUM realises that if gender violence and trauma have to end, and if families and societies are to grow healthier, then it is essential to include and involve the men in the process as well. DRUM's Twitter page spreads awareness on issues related to undocumented immigrants, discrimination against people of colour, rights of street vendors, and other issues in the host nations for working-class South Asian and Indo-Caribbean diaspora and immigrant communities. The following online post or Tweet by SAYA, on how a space is constructed to connect diasporic young women in the workshops arranged by the organisation to improve the young women's leadership skills, raise awareness on violence, and so on:

“Our Young Women's Leadership Conference took place on April 6th! Over 50 young women participated in 3 workshops - songwriting with artist Deepali Gupta; negotiation skills, led by Dr. Dilshad Dayani; and violence prevention, led by Prepare...!” (SAYA, 2019)

SAYA's Twitter page shares, discusses, and opens spaces of deliberations and contestations on empowering every gender in the diaspora, to community work, and skilling and leadership of the youth. The focus on skilling the diasporic young women, suggests the efforts to skill, upskill, and reskill them to empower them in the diaspora and make their voices stronger. Solidarities amongst the young diasporic women are also essential:

“Young women in SAYA's leadership program recently spent an afternoon designing t-shirts. During the activity, they shared the qualities they admire in their peers, including their confidence, ability to speak their minds, listening skills, and friendliness!” (SAYA, 2019)

The involvement of youth around gender issues leads to awareness in the diasporic youth of the importance of gender equal roles in society and the gendered experiences of the diaspora. The following tweet depicts the significance of making young women aware of their meaning of success and goals.

“Youth in our Young Women’s Leadership Program recently created individual success maps, and discussed goal setting and the path to their accomplishments...” (SAYA, 2018)

The above tweet had a link to the official website of SAYA, where one participant of the leadership program wrote about the event, and how each of the participants were encouraged to find their voices and their idea of success, instead of emulating someone else’s (SAYA, 2018). This program makes young diasporic women think and formulate their voices, and this skill can be applied by them outside in the real world, as well as in the domestic spaces.

Networking forms an essential part to find opportunities and progress professionally, and thus, women in the diaspora are encouraged to network and form connections. Sakhi’s *Young Professionals Network* (YPN) is one such endeavour by the diaspora organisations. Through this *Young Professionals Network* (YPN), Sakhi recognises the significance of involving youth in the change-making process and involves young South Asian professionals to be a part of a range of activities that raise awareness against domestic violence in their communities. These young professionals bring with them a diverse range of skill sets, but they are all united to bring about a change in the patriarchal patterns of South Asian families and the violence that, at many times, exists in them, especially toward women. These young South Asian volunteers for Sakhi carry varied gender identities and educational and professional backgrounds. There are “book launches, feminist talks, healthy masculinity workshops, movie screenings, Gender Justice & the Arts.” (Sakhi)

According to the website, these activities are aimed at making the community aware of the gender-based violence present amongst them and for “fundraising” and “friend-raising”. This youth network is critical to fighting domestic violence as the present young generation can pave the way for more awareness about domestic abuse amongst the future young generations. Sakhi makes available to South Asian immigrant women “Domestic Violence Services” and “Sexual Assault Services”. The support they provide to the South Asian immigrant and diasporic women survivors is sensitive toward cultures and languages. The survivors are given emotional support, assistance in advocacy in court, help with translation, prompt response to crisis and emergency, etc. The safety of these women is of critical importance when dealing with domestic abuse cases. Linta Varghese (2013) asserts that:

“From their start at Sakhi for South Asian Women, Worker’s Awaaz members recognized that a pivotal part of their struggle lay in challenging and recasting both common sense and legal understandings of the home. It is worth noting that in its first incarnation as the Domestic Workers Committee in Sakhi, Worker’s Awaaz was firmly situated in an organization that had confronted dominant conceptions of the private, the domestic, and the household in the framework of fighting domestic violence.” (p. 166)

Sakhi critically analyses the space of a home and how domestic spaces might not automatically translate to mean “safe” places for domestic abuse victims. Economic independence is essential for women to take decisions about their bodies and life. Sakhi recognises this fact and provides “The Economic Empowerment Program” to South Asian women in the diaspora. The survivors are given scholarships that help them gain the skills and education to get employed and retain their jobs to sustain themselves and their families. This initiative helps survivors of domestic abuse to break away from the cycle of economic dependency on their partners and domestic violence at their hands. With most of these South Asian women being immigrants in the diaspora, this organisation assists them with the technicalities of being an immigrant and surviving as one. It has an active blog that can be found on its website. Sakhi has

a strong virtual presence and their posts include the South Asian diasporic youth constructively. This organisation has the following posts on gender justice and gender violence through Twitter:

“This past Saturday, Sakhi held its first-ever [#genderjustice](#) youth summit in collaboration with [@CAENYC!](#)...” (SAKHI, 2019)

“We're excited to collaborate with the Center for Anti-Violence Education to host our first-ever Gender Justice Youth Summit on Saturday...[#SakhiNYC](#) [#genderjustice](#) [#empoweringyouth](#) [#youthsummit](#).” (SAKHI, 2019)

Gender justice and action against gender violence are issues that require immediate attention in the South Asian diasporic community, and these organisations address acts of gender violence and abuse through various mediums and means. Sakhi's blog has a rich discussion on critical diaspora issues:

“Why Digital Literacy is Important to Gender Equality...This summer, I had the honor of being selected as a US Youth Ambassador for the international TechGirls Exchange Program...sponsored by the US Department of State and connects young women from countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA nations) with young women from the US.” (Gurumurthy, Sakhi, 2017)

This blog post is a first-person account of a young Sakhi activist, who narrates her experience of being selected for and being a part of the prestigious “US Youth Ambassador for the International TechGirls Exchange Program”. It is a program where young girls from the US get to connect with resources for technical skilling. Thus, these South Asian diasporic youth organisations, through a range of information, programs, activities, workshops, online sharing of knowledge and awareness, helplines for the gender abuse victims, work towards a gender equal diaspora. The blog can be understood as an initiative to encourage young women in the diaspora to apply for such programs where they can connect and network with others for their professional growth.

Transnational Identities and Digital Spaces

Culture forms a significant part of a diasporic life, and decisions such as what cultures to carry forward, what to retain for the younger generations, what to discard, and which ones to fusion with the hostland cultures are an everyday practice. Homeland and hostland cultures merge in a diaspora to form transnational cultures. South Asian diasporic youth in the US, take part in the hostland cultures while carrying their ethnic identities of the homeland. Diasporas also expect the hostland to understand the nuances of its ethnic and minority cultures, as the following tweet or online posts on Twitter, by ISAASE, suggests:

“...Cultural Proficiency is a JOURNEY, and while learning the "basics" about a culture isn't enough, making the effort to continuously improve our knowledge is a good place to start.” (ISAASE, 2018)

The yearly *ISAASE Toolkit* addresses a lot of issues, such as, the correct pronunciation of South Asian names; the background information on South Asian Americans; the model minority myth; the ways in which educators can help the South Asian American students; and so on.

“What is #culturalproficiency? More than JUST cultural knowledge (although that's part of it!) ...” (ISAASE, 2017)

The inculcation of homeland culture; the recognition of ethnic cultures in the hostland; and the changes or rigidity in the cultural practices in the diasporic spaces are an essential part of diasporic living. Cultural proficiency is an important part that is inculcated in the younger generations of the diaspora. This is usually done in the domestic spaces for the inculcation of homeland cultures, but these diasporic youth organisations work towards making the youth aware of one's own as well as other cultures to foster understanding and empathy. The activities and resources on one's ethnic cultures help the diasporic youth in

recognising one's homeland cultures and constructing a transnational identity for themselves.

Digital Diaspora

The digital networks and connections of the South Asian diasporic youth organisations and the South Asian diasporic youth, in general, are leading to the formation of a strong South Asian digital diaspora.

“Don't forget the hashtags [#SAYHUSummit2018](#) and [#SouthernSouthAsians](#) when sharing your summit memories on all of your social media platforms!...”
(SAYHU, 2018)

The social media networking platforms and the websites have, especially, helped the South Asian diasporic youth organisations to have a strong virtual presence and reinforce diasporic youth identities in newer forms.

Contesting Discrimination and Prejudices

Discrimination and being treated as outsiders are common prejudices that diasporics face in the land of settlement. Prejudices against the diasporics lead to loss of opportunities for growth and progress in the hostland. The diasporic youth organisations offer support and lend their voice against any injustice committed against any immigrant group in the hostland.

“Stand in solidarity w/ all POC and oppressed/targeted groups, look for the commonalities in the struggles [#AAPIsResist...](#)” (ISAASE, 2017)

ISAASE's blog, which is their official website, shares articles on improving the South Asian students' experiences in the United States. The blog posts engage with numerous diasporic issues of the South Asians, and, in the process, produce transnational identities, where the ethnic identities are encouraged to form an

integral part of the diasporics in the hostland. One of the blog posts' headlines reads:

“Training Guidelines for Teachers of South Asian American Students...” (Punita Rice, 2019):

This blog post is for the promotion and awareness of the need for better understanding of South Asian American cultures by the educators in the host nation. It is a list of things to keep in mind when training educators for being sensitive and appreciative of other cultures. The blog post stresses on addressing the needs of diverse learners while conducting the training and how in-person interactions work better than online training. The virtual space, in the form of a blog post, is being used to assert the right of the diasporics to be recognised in the mainstream spaces of the hostland.

Another ISAASE's blog post headline reads:

“3 Questions to Spark Courageous Conversations...While knowing some culture-specific facts doesn't make us experts, what do we know? And, do we recognize the diversity of South Asian Americans? (There's no single, monolithic “South Asian” culture; South Asian Americans are extremely diverse).” (ISAASE, 2018)

This particular blogpost encourages teachers to ask themselves if they are aware of the different South Asian cultures and South Asian Americans; if they provide varied learning environments to different students; if they indulge in “harmless” racist humour or not in the classrooms and beyond; if they use diverse literature to teach diverse students; and so on.

An important issue that plagues South Asian American students is the incorrect pronunciation of their names. ISAASE's blogpost on this reads as:

“Pronouncing Names Correctly – Education Weekly...” (Punita Rice, 2017)

This blog post shares the article, published in the “Education Week Teacher”, which talks of how correctly pronouncing a student’s name in the classroom can enhance the social and emotional welfare of the student, and this provides impetus and encouragement to students from ethnic communities in the hostland. “ISAASE’s Name Pronunciation Guide” is one of the resources through which educators can work on their pronunciation of students’ names belonging to diverse cultural backgrounds. The mispronunciation of names of students belonging to minority cultures is common in educational spaces and is one of the ways through which, minority students feel as “outsiders” in the adopted homeland. Therefore, a guide to help educators to pronounce the names of minority students correctly is a positive step towards helping the ethnic minority students to belong to the adopted homeland, as well as encouraging them to be proud of their ethnic roots along with assimilating with the other students of different backgrounds.

Contesting Inequalities and Prejudices

It is important to counter the hate and the racial prejudices that exist in the hostland towards ethnic minorities. Islamophobia, hateful speeches, prejudices in educational and work spaces, institutional racism, and so on are prevalent in hostland spaces. The diaspora organisations work towards countering racial and ethnic hatred as can be witnessed through the following online posts of SAYA:

“Check out Mark Bennington's work capturing the faces of Muslim American Youth in NYC, featuring one of SAYA's own!” (SAYA, 2016)

“I will not be silent and afraid, I am writing #desiletters to combat hate and ignorance...!” (SAYA, 2016)

These South Asian diasporic youth organisations occupy spaces where one can contest the racial prejudices existing in the hostland through various campaigns and protests. One can voice one's opinions against such racial biases and hate incidences, and hateful racial crimes could be condemned through various forms of protests as a community. The following Twitter posts of SAYA assert their stance against racial and ethnic phobias:

“Learn to take a stance against bullying, Islamophobia, hatred & Xenophobia at the ARISE NY's Interfaith Anti-Bullying Summit!...”
(SAYA, 2016)

“SAYA youth speak about their personal experiences with Islamophobia and the stereotypes they regularly encounter...” (SAYA, 2016)

Equality for all is one of the basic demands of every diaspora and immigrant community in the hostland. Countering and contesting stereotypes, that result in hatred and prejudices against ethnic minorities, are one of the several tasks that the diaspora organisations take up, through their activities. One of the ways in which diasporic youth find a space for themselves in the hostland is, through a successful professional life, and to this end, the diaspora organisations hold workshops to prepare them for the job market and educational spaces. Equality in professional spaces is a right of the diasporics in the hostland. The South Asian diasporic youth organisation, Chicago Desi Youth Rising, posts the following content online on Twitter, that addresses the serious issue of Islamophobia:

“A 2018 retreat memory from Sophia Zaman: the hilarious and on-point [@hodakatebi](#) leading workshops for us on orientalism and anti-muslim surveillance...2019 youth leadership retreat applications are due THIS SUNDAY...” (Chicago Desi Youth Rising, 2019)

Belonging and Diaspora

The “whoami” story telling project reflects the dilemma of every youth while growing up, such as the self-doubt, the need to belong, and so on, and SAYA helps the immigrant and diasporic youth to learn how to belong, to vent out their thoughts, and to use their talents to the fullest potential. The following poem on Saya’s blogpost, titled, “#WhoamI Storytelling Project 2017”, reads:

“I remember....
I remember when I was new
I remember when I was pure and innocent
...I remember when I first saw tears from one I loved
I remember when i wrapped myself in a veil
I remember when I was discriminated
I remember when I was scared in a place fear shouldn't be allowed to enter
I remember what I don't want to remember
I remember what I have to remember” (Amina, SAYA, 2017)⁴

Discrimination leaves a deep and lifelong impact on young victims, and discriminatory practices against young immigrants and diaspora in host nations are frequent occurrences, thus, leaving them vulnerable and scarred through their experiences in schools and colleges. The South Asian diasporic youth, while growing up in the hostland, face various forms of bullying and racial prejudices. “I AM” *Poetry and Performance Project* was an event that provided immigrant and diasporic young women to recite poetry that reflected their lives and struggles. Through these programs and events, SAYA tries to assist the immigrant and diasporic youth to stand up against prejudices and stereotypes; grow and develop their identities; gain relevant skills to succeed personally and professionally; and so on. The poems are written in crisp and simple English, but they are filled with the emotional

⁴ <https://www.saya.org/whoamistorytellingproject>

upheavals that the diasporic youth experience as they grow up in the hostland.

Another poem on SAYA's blogpost, titled, "I AM poetry and performance", reads:

"I AM"

"... I understand to survive in New York is like to find gold mine

I say I really believe my religion

I dream I will be an engineer

I try to make good relations with everyone

I hope I will have a shining life

I understand to survive in New York is so hard

I am emotional and a good listener" (Asmaul, SAYA, 2017)

The above poem by a South Asian diasporic youth depicts the aspirations, dreams, and emotions of the young diaspora, as he dreams of carving a good life in New York, despite understanding its difficulties and challenges. The young and youth diaspora face challenges of being an ethnic minority in the hostland or adopted homeland, and have to reinforce and assert their right to belong to more than one culture and nation-state, and to reclaim their rightful place in the hostland.

The following online post of SAYHU can be understood as a South Asian diasporic youth's experiences of their dual/multiple belongings. The negotiations of identities that the diasporic youth inherit and construct, by being a part of both the hostland and the homeland, sometimes, include contesting prejudices and stereotypes from the hostland as well as homeland:

"In India, I was almost consistently presumed an Indian citizen until my neutral American accent gave me away. I would be subjected to similar presumptions from non-Indians, who would assume I was an Indian citizen before I revealed myself to be American. My occupation of a complex identity that subverts expectations across Indian and non-Indian populations

internationally has resulted in a similarly complex relationship with the concepts of “foreignness” and belonging.” (Shilpa Roy, 2020)⁵

The question of belonging is crucial for the diasporic youth as they inherit complex identities that do not fully belong in the homeland or the hostland, due to the prevalent stereotypes.

Racial Justice

Racial prejudices and hatred are prevalent in the hostland, and one of the important tasks of the youth organisations is to work toward contesting racial and ethnic hatred, attacks, and abuses. The “Recent Posts” category of SAALT’s blog includes news on racial attacks on South Asians and other immigrants in the US and across the world. The online posts range from a racial attack on a 13-year-old in Northern California to the attack in Christchurch, New Zealand. SAALT, through these regular posts, informs about the significant events and simultaneously takes a stand against racism and supremacy based on race. Each online post carries the support of other organizations who stand with SAALT for each particular cause as well. This gives rise to a network of solidarity and strength amongst organizations that are fighting for similar issues and causes. The hashtags with each post highlight the issues that SAALT focuses on- instances and narratives of islamophobia, cases of mental health, instances of racial hate, white supremacy, hate crimes, hate violence, prejudices, inequalities, racism, etc. SAALT pushes for policy changes regarding racial justice and provides a synopsis of their work for the attainment of racial justice in their blog. It provides a list of resources and organisations that fight against racial profiling of South Asian immigrants and other immigrants. The discrimination and profiling faced by South Asians and other immigrants in the US after 9/11 is a major concern of South Asian organisations in the US, and SAALT takes up this issue with other organisations, and spreads awareness to bring about policy changes that would curtail such profiling. SAALT (2018) released “Communities on Fire”, a

⁵ <https://www.sayhu.org/blog/2020/7/19/the-same-but-different-life-as-an-indian-american-in-india>

document on hate violence, on their website. It is a detailed report on how political rhetoric increases and fuels hate violence and crimes. The organisation writes that more than news reports, it receives more authentic information on how South Asian communities in the US face racial profiling through their “online intake form” (Communities on Fire, 2018, p. 4). “Intersectionality, which we define as the relationship between various components or aspects of one’s identity, plays a key role to animate hate violence against South Asian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Middle Eastern, and Arab communities.” (Communities on Fire, p. 5) According to the report, the most vulnerable and susceptible to hate crimes were Muslim women due to the profiling on the basis of gender, religion, skin colour, outsider, etc. Intersectionality of age with other factors led to youth being targeted for bullying and threats.

SAALT’s Twitter page takes a stand against racism through their tweets and retweets: “No family should go through what Dhriti and her family going through right now...” (SAALT, 2019) read a tweet on the racial attack on a South Asian immigrant in the US. Another tweet (2019) reads: “We tracked a significant rise in hate incidents in April with 10 incidents of hate violence and 6 instances of xenophobic political rhetoric...”

The Twitter page of SAYHU shares tweets and retweets on political developments in South Asia and the US. The page informs its followers of significant community gathering events in the US; gender issues in South Asia and the US; political strife and struggles of immigrants in the US; and so on. The virtual spaces occupied by the diaspora organisations start and take up dialogues and discussions on issues of the immigrants and diasporics in the United States. Sometimes, they share their stance on issues in the homeland or other regions of the world. Digital networks are being formed through these online activities, which are transnational. SAYA posts on Twitter about the narratives of racial hatred present in the hostland, which can be understood through the following online post:

“Racist, hateful rhetoric has no place in politics or in schools. #desiletters are changing the conversation at <http://desiletters.org!>” (SAYA, 2016)

A tweet from SAYHU’s Twitter handle, which mentions the racist behaviour towards immigrants in the hostland, reads:

“Jakelin Ameí Rosmery Caal Maquin, a 7 year old from Guatemala died after being taken into Border Patrol Custody last week. These inhumane conditions MUST end. Sign the petition here: ...!” (SAYHU, 2018)

The above tweet depicts that SAYHU does not restrict itself to fighting for the rights and causes of the South Asian communities, but stands for the rights of other immigrant communities in the US as well. The injustices meted out to any immigrant in the detention camps and immigration practices are criticised. It makes people aware of the unjust practices at the detention centres and how and what immigrants and diasporics are subjected to and treated.

Inclusion and belonging in the adopted homeland are an important part of the identity of the diasporic youth, and the South Asian diasporic youth organisations reinforce the need for inclusion through their online narratives:

“#3WordsICannotStand "You speak 'Indian?'" NEVER ASK ANY SOUTH ASIAN PERSON THIS. Across South Asia and all its diaspora, hundreds of different languages are spoken with different dialects.” (SAYHU, 2018)

“We are here to stay & unafraid South Asians write #desiletters of inclusion & justice to address #Election2016 fears <http://desiletters.org>.” (SAYA, 2016)

DRUM contests and challenges injustices, inequalities and stereotypes through their blog. Their blog brings forth news articles and stories on the issues that plague the South Asian immigrants and diasporics, especially the undocumented immigrant workers in the hostland. It also includes a short description with

pictures of the workshops conducted by them. The following are the headlines of their blogposts, news stories and updates:

The following blogpost, titled, “YouthPower! Summer 2018” (DRUM, 2018) depicts the activities that empower youth with a critical understanding of the power structures in societies. This workshop of DRUM’s Summer Youth Organising Institute focussed on understanding power and oppression, and how they can form worker unities and solidarities and contest forms of oppression that are embedded in the society. The following blogpost of DRUM reads:

“Raising the Alarm: The DACA Database is a Registry of Undocumented Immigrants!” (DRUM, 2017)

This blog post was on DRUM’s demand to erase the data collected by the DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) database on undocumented immigrants in the US. The blogpost further mentions: “We call on our movements for immigrant, racial, worker justice, privacy rights, and human rights to demand the deletion of the DACA database.” (DRUM, 2017)

The above online post depicts how the rights of undocumented immigrants are an important issue in the hostland, and DRUM takes up this issue through their offline and online activities. DRUM stands for the rights of undocumented immigrants in NYC and the above blogpost is a testimony of its work and support for the immigrants. One of DRUM’s workshops is titled: “Know Your Rights, Realities, and Responsibilities!” (DRUM, 2018). This workshop conducted by DRUM trained the participants on being aware of and understanding their rights, ground realities, and their responsibilities in the host nation. This workshop also simulated situations where the participants might have to face authorities at home or workplace due to their immigrant status. The blogpost, titled, “Communities Vs. Gender Oppression” (Drum, 2019), revealed that DRUM caters to the linguistically heterogenous Indian and South Asian diaspora and transnational individuals. The poster, as included in the blogpost, had made use of English as

well as two other Indian vernacular languages. The blog post was about a play on domestic violence issues and also harassment of women in public spaces. It was an attempt to spread awareness about how members of a community can come forward and take measures to confront harassment and abuse against women, instead of waiting for big organisations and outsiders to take some action to eradicate such social evils. “Wins For Education Justice In NYC!” (DRUM, 2019), is another blogpost that talks of the immigrant rights to the educational spaces of the host nations that have always been one of the most important issues. DRUM highlights the continuing efforts of the diasporic communities and organisations to bring about changes in the education system for the diasporic youth and the changes that have been brought about by these initiatives and campaigns.

The online dissemination of such awareness campaigns and initiatives ensures that the message is seen and read by a larger audience. This increases the chances of a positive outcome in similar diaspora and transnational communities and also to other immigrant communities struggling with similar issues. Immigrant rights and equality form an essential part of the mission and vision of the diaspora organisations. SAALT endeavours to achieve a broad, structural change in the immigration rights of South Asians. South Asian immigrants include US citizens, undocumented immigrants, refugees, dependents, asylum-seekers, permanent residents, temporary workers, etc. SAALT undertakes numerous initiatives to fight for the rights of South Asian immigrants and diaspora, who are made to go through harsh immigration policies. It provides a list of documents and community educational resources on the immigration rights and concerns of South Asians in the US. Each of the online post or tweet on these pages are consciously chosen and make a statement of social or political impact. It gives a voice to the minorities and subjugated- immigrants, women, widows, etc. The posts are an ongoing struggle for equal rights and freedom, and to reclaim/claim a space dominated by patriarchy and state forces. The Twitter page of ISAASE posts against stereotypes and challenges that affect South Asian diasporic youth; how pronouncing South Asian names correctly is a significant factor toward

recognizing and respecting South Asian cultures and identities; achievements of South Asians worldwide; and so on. The following online post of SAYA on Twitter is an example of the efforts of the organisations:

“As an immigrant serving organization, we want our youth and families to know their rights. The Immigrant Defense Project [@ImmDefense](#) has some excellent resources in multiple languages...” (SAYA, 2019)

One of DRUM’s blogpost, in support of the street vendors in the hostland, reads as: “Street Vendors Unite and Win” (2019). This blog post is in support of the street vendors and their means of making a living. It is a celebratory post on their win of a lawsuit by street vendors against some city forces which destroyed the street vendors’ property, such as food, carts, etc. This post is in support of immigrants’ rights and means of livelihood. “Drivers licenses = a major step forward for immigrants in NY!” (Drum, 2019) is another blog post in support of the State agencies granting drivers’ licenses to undocumented immigrants in New York. The post concisely states the struggle and efforts from various organisations of the community and many years of persistent efforts from the community as a whole to achieve this momentous moment. These organisations have an inclusive approach as they include all South Asian diaspora and transnational communities, and also, by fighting for the rights of both legal and undocumented immigrants in the country of settlement.

Legal Rights

One of the roles that these diasporic youth organisations play is to make the immigrant and diasporic individuals aware of their legal rights. SAYA organises events where the immigrants and diaspora can be familiar with their rights in the hostland:

“DACA Recipients: Register TODAY for a free legal consultation with immigration lawyers at NY Law School on 12/1/16!...” (SAYA, 2016)

Equality in the legal and judicial systems of the hostland is essential to dispense justice to the minorities in the instances of hate crimes and racist attacks. The importance of being aware of one's legal rights as an ethnic minority in the hostland is an important skill because an immigrant or diasporic must be aware of the citizenship laws of the hostland. The youth organisations help in the process of making immigrants and diasporics aware of their legal rights, and often provide opportunities for workshops or consultations with lawyers.

Skilling of Diasporic Youth

SAYA shares information on its activities of skilling diasporic youth for the future through its Twitter page in the following ways:

“On August 1st, SAYA hosted [@GoldmanSachs](#) [#CommunityTeamWorks](#) volunteers, who met with youth to practice networking, hold mock job interviews, and craft elevator pitches. SAYA youth gained skills to use in their future careers...” (SAYA, 2019)

As understood from these online posts, SAYA helps the diasporic youth to build professional networks, to be ready for the job market, and make them employable. These networking opportunities help the diasporic youth to inculcate the skills and build the networks that would help them succeed professionally in the hostland. These tweets of SAYA reveal how essential it is for the diasporic youth to gain the skills that would give them economic independence and career development in the hostland.

“Last Thursday, SAYA youth from CQA visited The [@CenterForArch](#). They attended a presentation on sustainable buildings and how they are built to support different issues. Using their newfound knowledge, youth then had the opportunity to create their own sustainable building models.” (SAYA, 2019)

Homeland Solidarities and Support

The South Asian diasporic youth organisations act as a unit for the entire South Asian diasporic communities in the hostland, and the solidarity and support offered by SAYA through the following Twitter post depicts the community feeling. This extension of solidarity with the incidences in the homeland depicts that the South Asian diaspora considers themselves as an integral part of the homeland, even in the land of settlement:

“Today our thoughts are with our Sri Lankan youth and community members, and the people of Sri Lanka. We stand with them, and wish them peace and comfort during this difficult time.” (SAYA, 2019)

The tweet or online post extends support and solidarity to a tragedy that Sri Lanka, a South Asian nation, had faced, and resonated how the South Asian diaspora organisation stands with the nation and its people as a unit in the diaspora as well as back in the homeland.

Negotiating the Homeland Cultures and Identities

Accepting and reinforcing one's ethnic identities and simultaneously being a part of the host nations are the tenets of contemporary diasporics and transnational individuals. The diaspora and transnational organisations take a strong interest in the politics, culture, traditions, languages, food and clothing of the homeland. A post conveying wishes on Diwali, Eid, etc.; an update on the elections in the homeland; taking a stand for some gender issue in the homeland; and so on, can be found on the virtual pages of the organisations. Celebration of homeland festivals and sharing the wishes through the online pages are ways through which one connects to one's ethnic backgrounds and homeland people. Purkayastha (2005c), while writing about the Punjabi second-generation youth and Vietnamese adolescents in New Orleans, writes that “While these children of immigrants within tight-knit communities are subject to the social control of the

ethnic group, their membership in ethnic networks allows them to mobilize valuable social resources that ease their adaptation into America.” (p. 8)

SAYA posts online content on the practicing of Hindi cinema songs from the homeland in the diaspora:

“As part of our summer programming at PS 124, SAYA youth ranging from first to fifth graders have been practicing Bollywood dancing. On August 7th, they presented their learnings in a performance titled "Bollywood Turn the Ocean....!" (SAYA, 2019)

One of SAYHU's *Diaspora Stories* has a blog post titled: “Preservation & Politics: Locating Privilege in Language.” (Sayhu, 2020) This blog post discusses the power structures in languages. The question of home is a crucial one in a diaspora. The meaning of what one generation of a diaspora considers to be home is important when trying to understand the place of home in the lives of the diaspora individuals. The meaning of home is bound to change with every generation of a diaspora, and the same stands true for the South Asian diaspora as well:

“Where is home for them symbolically, and, more importantly, what kind of social structural relationships do they encounter when they move between countries? Are they welcomed in their parents' countries of origin? Do they encounter barriers because of their religion or gender or class?” (Purkayastha, 2005, p. xii)

The binational or multinational consciousness of a globalised world produces multiple identities of the diaspora in a transnational space. Diasporic youth navigate multicultural identities and belongings in offline and online spaces. The causes the youth organisations fight for, thus, represent binational or multinational consciousness. The rights of immigrants in the host nations; the celebratory messages on homeland and hostland festivities; gender issues in the homeland and hostland- all of these form a consciousness that transcends a

homogenous representation or identity. The conglomeration of youth subcultures, ethnic identities, the assertion of their selves in the country or countries of settlement, popular culture of host nations and homeland, etc. manifest themselves through the diasporic youth and the diaspora and transnational youth organisations.

Community Building

Community solidarities and support are built through community activities in the residential areas, predominantly occupied by immigrants and diasporics, as the following online post of SAYA, on Twitter, suggests:

“On September 8th, 12 youth from our Young Men's Leadership Program took part in a day of healthy gaming. They played card games, and discussed signs of addiction. Through this exercise, they increased their understanding of addictive behavior and built peer support.” (SAYA, 2018)

The following online posts of SAYA on Twitter, indicate how community building can help in fostering professional dreams, wellness, and cultural activities in the diasporic youth.

“Richmond Hill High School held its annual Community Night, with more than 500 attendees! SAYA youth led a forum on topics such as culture, wellness, and community. The evening also included student performances and announcements of college acceptances...” (SAYA, 2019)

“On July 28, SAYA staff and youth participated in the 'We Are 13: Neighborhood Bash' in Jackson Heights. The event, hosted by State Senator [@jessicaramos](#), highlighted District 13 with local music, food, and entertainment. Thank you to everyone who came out to celebrate with us!” (SAYA, 2019)

The above online posts suggest that it is essential for the diasporic youth to form networks and a feeling of community with each other. These networks help the diasporic individuals to find support and help, in professional and personal lives, when needed in the diaspora. These diasporic youth organisations arrange and conduct activities and workshops that help the South Asian diasporic youth to act as a community and unit.

The South Asian diasporic youth organisations aim to be inclusive and, through their activities and events, take part in the processes of familiarising the youth with other cultures and communities, fostering unity and solidarity. The following Twitter post of SAYA depicts this:

“Last week, SAYA youth from our programming at Central Queens Academy attended “Retumba! Journey through the Caribbean,” at New York's Apollo Theater. Through song and dance, they traveled across Africa and several Caribbean Islands, learning all about communities and cultures.” (SAYA, 2019)

Displaying and voicing solidarities and support for each other is an important part of the South Asian diaspora identity as a unit and for the South Asian diaspora organisations. The following online post on Twitter by SAYA exhibits the same quality of extending support in any time of crisis:

“We hold our Muslim youth and community members in our hearts, and send them strength and love. We are grateful for messages of solidarity from our elected officials... May we find peace and comfort during this difficult time.” (SAYA, 2019)

The diversities within the South Asian diaspora need to be included in the narratives representing the diaspora. The online discussions of the organisations indicate an effort to be inclusive of differences in the diaspora.

Homeland and Ethnic Identities

Homeland holds an essential place in the South Asian diaspora living, and the South Asian youth organisations do not discard the ethnic identities, but embrace these and help the youth know the homeland better, as the following online post of SAYA suggests:

“Indiaspora Forum is offering free trips for high school students of Indian descent to connect with their ancestral homeland. The program is aimed to build connections and foster relations between India and their diaspora populations...” (SAYA, 2019)

Building, fostering, and maintaining networks and connections with the homeland or ancestral land is one of the important ways to build transnational connections with the homeland for the South Asian diasporic youth. South Asian diasporic youth, as evident from the transnational positions that the South Asian diasporic youth organisations occupy, do not discard their ethnic identities, but embrace the homeland identities, and assert them in their adopted homeland. They do not perceive their ethnic identities at loggerheads with the hostland/adopted homeland identities. These youth organisations in the diaspora celebrate diversities and heterogeneities. These organisations might act as a unit for the entire South Asian diaspora community, but they acknowledge the uniqueness of each of the South Asian diaspora communities, as well as of the diversities in the hostland. As the following online post of SAYA suggests:

“Check out the latest article in [@NatGeo's](#) "Diversity in America" series, which looks at various racial, ethnic, and religious groups in the United States and examines their changing roles in 21st-century life.” (SAYA, 2018)

The South Asian diasporic youth organisations in the US help in the building of community for all the genders of the diaspora and encourage them to embrace their ethnic identities and be assertive in the adopted homeland. Celebration of diversities in the hostland is one of the important works of these organisations.

An online post on Twitter by Chicago Desi Youth Rising (CDYR), addresses the need for the diasporic youth to remember their heritage and become changemakers in the diaspora with leadership qualities, where South Asian diasporic youth aged from 15-21, can apply for “CDYR’s 2019 summer leadership retreat”, where the focus is on tracking and understanding the South Asian youth’s heritage regarding South Asia and the South Asian diaspora, and, in the process, encourage them to develop and grow with leadership skills that would help them become changemakers in the community and hostland (Chicago Desi Youth Rising, 2019). It is interesting to note how, unlike the conventionally-understood narrative that one has to shed one’s heritage and ethnicity to become a leader in the hostland, the workshop of this youth organisation is encouraging knowledge of one’s roots which would be the basis on which the diasporic youth would bring about changes in the present and future.

Importance of Language

Language is an important matter of discussion and one essential part of one’s identity in the diaspora and hostland. The homeland languages occupy a significant place in the lives of the first-generation of immigrants and diaspora, and they try to encourage the next generations of the diaspora to be fluent in the homeland languages as well, which is understood as one of the ways through which the homeland is kept alive in the diaspora. There are several online posts of SAYA that reveal the importance of homeland languages for a diaspora, as one post mentions a “... Bengali Language Family Engagement Conference...” where it is also mentioned that the ongoing and information will be in Bengali language (SAYA, 2017).

Another online post of SAYA asks the South Asian immigrants and diasporics to:

“Please join the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs at the Mother Language Celebration, Tuesday 4/18!” (SAYA, 2017)

These diaspora organisations include the diaspora as well the immigrants who are yet to become a diaspora, and some of the immigrants are more fluent in their mother tongue than the English language or other languages of the hostland, thus, SAYA conducts workshops on making South Asian immigrants and diasporics aware of their rights in several of the South Asian languages and also distributes resources in South Asian languages, such as, Bengali, Hindi, Punjabi, etc. (SAYA, 2017, 2019).

The active use of South Asian languages in the hostland to acquaint the immigrants and diasporics with their rights gives rise to transnational spaces. Linguistic identities are part of the diaspora and transnational identities of the South Asian diaspora, and these identities are an integral part of the identities of the younger generations of the diaspora as well. The proficiency in the homeland languages, as well as the languages of the hostland, makes the diasporic youth transnational.

Educational Spaces and The Myth of Model Minority

Stereotypes and immigrants are unavoidable in the host countries as much as in the countries of origin. Indian and South Asian diasporic communities and individuals, especially children and youth, deal with stereotypes attached to them and their communities, in educational spaces. The myth of model minority emerges out of the stereotype that Asian and South Asian immigrant and diasporic children excel in studies and so on. As the following tweets of ISAASE depict:

“Why does it matter if teachers believe #modelminoritymyth? - falsely think students don't need help - students' needs may go overlooked - students w/ needs more likely to go undiagnosed - perpetuates stereotypes - creates racial wedge btwn peers...” (ISAASE, 2018)

“The #ModelMinorityMyth is misguided, misleading, and is a FALSE stereotype, find researchers Leong, Chao, & Hardin. It HURTS students, especially those who are furthest from fitting the stereotype.” (ISAASE, 2018)

The stereotype of the model minority is not inclusive and leaves out the ones who do not fit into the narrative. ISAASE works towards addressing this myth and stereotype and aims for a more inclusive environment in the educational spaces in the hostland for the diasporic children and youth. Educators and teachers in the hostland could help the immigrant and diasporic children better if there is awareness of each other's cultures and histories. As the following tweet suggests:

“A whopping 81% of South Asian Americans surveyed by @punitarice report feeling their K-12 teachers knew more about peers' backgrounds than theirs. While you can't become culture expert via "Intro to Desi kids," at LEAST start there. FREE fact sheets at <http://ISAASE.org/resources>.” (ISAASE, 2018)

The diasporic youth organisations disseminate information about the South Asian cultures online so that these resources can be utilised by the teachers and educators of the hostland. An understanding and familiarity of other cultures will help the educators to be more sensitive towards the minorities in the class. As ISAASE posts online on Twitter:

“... Culture-specific proficiency can never truly be achieved; you can't be an expert in a culture. BUT, knowing some of the basics can help. We have a primer on South Asian American culture(s) for teachers and other educators...” (ISAASE, 2018)

Educational experiences of the South Asian diasporan youth are significant as these experiences are impressionable and construct the attitudes of the diasporic youth towards themselves and towards the adopted homeland as well as their homeland/ ancestral land. ISAASE provides materials for educators to better acquaint themselves with the South Asian diaspora experiences, as the following online post by them on Twitter suggests:

“Help us compile booklists for k12 teachers and students, related to South Asian American cultures, experiences, voices! #BROWNbooksproject.”
(ISAASE, 2017)

There is a use of a hashtag appropriate with the message conveyed by the above online post, and this use of hashtags not only helps in spreading the information on a larger scale but also, helps in forming networks with others who share the same beliefs and are sharing similar messages online. The online dissemination of information on the need for equality and understanding of minority cultures and practices in the educational spaces help the information to reach a larger readership and also helps in building connections and networks, through these digital mediums, with organisations and individuals who work on the same issues and share the same values. A digital community is being formed through the online presence of the diaspora organisations:

“Be part of our digital community!...Use the hashtags #SAYHUSummit2018 and #SouthernSouthAsians!” (SAYHU, 2018)

Youth Conferences and Networking

Conferences to bring together the South Asian students and others in the hostland are important platforms to critically engage in diasporic discussions. ***South Asians Millenials Conference (SAMC)*** is a yearly conference that is a combined effort of the students of Yale University and Columbia University to encourage

and initiate discussions and dialogues amongst the South Asian diaspora in the US. South Asian Americans and South Asians residing in the United Nations are invited to attend this conference for community building and building a space for thoughts and ideas on South Asians and the diaspora. One of the ways through which the diaspora organisations work is through continuous community building and strengthening.

Design of the Websites and its Implications

The design and template of the websites of the organisations are as significant as the content shared through the platforms. As these organisations deal with sensitive issues such as domestic violence and abuse, the helpline numbers are highlighted on the main page, for maximum visibility and easier access. The *Homepage* of the organisation Sakhi has a “Safety Exit” option at the top of the page so that the browsing history is cleared, in case the online activities of the victim of domestic abuse is being tracked by the perpetrator. It is essential to provide a list of available resources for further study, thus, every organisation makes available a separate page for further browsing and reading of materials on relevant topics and issues. SAYA offers “Covid-19”⁶ and “Anti-Racism”⁷ resources on their official website. The Covid-19 pandemic resources include helpline numbers and other resources that offer help during the pandemic. The anti-racism resources are aimed at discussing about the anti-Black racism that exist within the South Asian diaspora. This initiative of spreading awareness on the need to address and contest racism within the South Asian diaspora implies how there is a need to form solidarities across marginalised and minority communities instead of differences and prejudices. Sakhi has resources listed for fighting the pandemic as well as for other issues. The ISAASE website provides resources, such as the toolkit of ISAASE; resources for educators, etc. to spread awareness of the South Asian Americans and the stereotypes around them. With

⁶ <https://www.saya.org/resources>

⁷ <https://www.saya.org/antiracism-resources>

these resources being digitally available through the Internet, a constructive space of deliberations and contestations of diasporic issues is being formed. The ease of access makes these digital resources more accessible than offline spaces.

Conclusion

The online presence of these South Asian diaspora organisations is a depiction of the extension of their activities and political viewpoints in the real life. These online spaces are negotiating their identities, hostland politics, ethnicities, homeland connections, gender issues through what they share online through their pages or their support to online content that resonates with their cause. As rightly pointed out by Leurs (2015):

“Having mapped out how digital spaces are constructed as prescriptive, normative spaces the question arises how they can be subverted, invaded or transformed by the contributions of subaltern subjects, as they create diversity in spaces that were previously defined as neutral and universal.” (p. 253)

The diaspora and transnational organisations have come to occupy an important place in the entire narrative of the diaspora, hostland, and homeland. Their contribution is unique as they help in, as Bhat (2018, p. 45) argues, expressing the present problems, challenges, solutions and prospects that concern the diaspora, host nation and homeland, ensuring that both the homeland and host nation mutually benefit. These organisations, with their offline and online existence, involve in dissemination of information concerning South Asians and their diasporas, advancing dialogues and interactions regarding immigration laws and rights, barriers in educational and work spaces in the hostland, etc. Whether the online presence of these organisations make a difference or not in the real-life/offline, Gajjala (2008) writes about digital diasporas that- “... point to a more nuanced and layered existence in cyberspace than that suggested by either the utopic or dystopic views.” (p. 42) The online existence of the diaspora and transnational organisations or diasporic individuals do not solve the prejudices

and problems that exist online or offline, but they help raise and spread awareness across the community and beyond.

The next chapter will focus on selected fictional texts to understand how transnational and gender identities of the diasporic youth are reconstructed through the narratives. Fictional writings form an important part of the representations of the South Asian diasporic lives. Youth diasporic experiences find a significant place in writings on the diaspora.

Chapter-4

South Asian Youth in the Diaspora: Representations in the Fictional Narratives of Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies* and *Unaccustomed Earth*

Introduction

This chapter analyses selected short story collections of Jhumpa Lahiri to understand the experiences of South Asian diasporic youth characters as diasporic citizens. How does the South Asian diasporic youth build, rebuild, and reinforce their diasporic and transnational identities by navigating and negotiating the spaces of the hostland and the homeland? Representation is a critical aspect through which individuals, communities, cultures, and nation-states construct and reconstruct their identities and selves. Representation also entails how one gets represented through others and different literary and cultural modes. How cultures and communities get reflected in different forms of representation implies the structures that define those cultures and communities. The social construction of the self is important when we begin to understand how an individual not only builds but also interacts with cultural and literary forms, and through these interactions, constructs one's identity and notions of the self. Charles Cooley's (1902) "Looking glass-self" on the social construction of the self could be applied to understand how individuals view themselves according to the ways they are perceived or represented by others. Representation constructs and reconstructs how a community or culture views itself and the ways in which other cultures and communities perceive it as a result of those representations and portrayals. Stuart Hall (1997) writes: "Representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It does involve the use of language, of signs and which stand for or represent things." (p. 15)

Fiction is an important medium through which individuals, societies, cultures, and lives are represented. It is important to understand what these portrayals and representations signify, as these give an insight into beliefs, practices, customs, and prejudices in real life. Fictional narratives are liberating spaces, where arguments, contestations, and representations that challenge authority find a place. What might not be possible in real life spaces, can be given a voice in literary narratives, and what cannot be articulated through regular speech, can be expressed through imageries and symbols. Fiction could also become a space where stereotypes are reinforced and prejudices are practiced, thus, reflecting as well as strengthening the existent beliefs and existing belief systems of the people and cultures being represented. Postcolonial literatures have witnessed a proliferation of narratives that have been shaped by movements of peoples, the exchange of cultures, and the changing ideas of nations and borders. The role of nostalgia and a yearning for a lost or imagined home play a defining part in postcolonial fiction. Postcolonial literatures are also a quest for a new home or the lost home. The movements and mobilities that took place during the colonial period, and after the end of colonisation, have made it possible for the former colonial subject to make his/her presence felt in the former coloniser's lands and cultures. The altering homogenous spaces to multicultural, heterogenous ones, with the intermingling of people and cultures, have been a major tenet of the postcolonial era. The postcolonial narratives, thus, reflect these multicultural spaces and the interactions that exist within these spaces. Postcolonial fiction also reflects the prejudices of the "natives" of land and their fears of their homogenous culture being diluted by the increasing number of immigrants. Diana Brydon (2007) uses William Walters' term "Domopolitics" and argues that:

"... domopolitics naturalize stories of threat in which anxious citizens seek security through shutting out the unfamiliar, including immigrants, building walls and seeking refuge from the world in an illusory private sphere while at the same time directing this quest for security outward into taming and conquering what lies beyond this controlled space." (p. 35)

Postcolonial fictional narratives tend to bring together the “home” and the “adopted home”, creating a bridge between them built out of memories and experiences of a migrant or a diaspora or a transnational. Fiction is an important medium through which diasporic and transnational experiences are treated and unpacked in complex ways, providing the readers with multiple perspectives of the transnational lives of a diaspora community and individuals.

Representations of Diasporic youth in Fictional Narratives

Diaspora fictional narratives engage with diasporic youth characters frequently as these diasporic youth have complex relationships with the hostland and the homeland. What insights could we achieve of the postmodern, postcolonial subject who travels the world, crossing borders at regular intervals, settles and moves at ease, through fictional narratives?

“With its deterritorialized characters who not only roam the world at their ease but who sometimes seem to have jettisoned all cultural moorings, the global novel not only offers new models of togetherness and citizenship, it also reflects an actual change in the way some diasporians negotiate their double belonging and cope with the de facto in-betweenness of their condition.”
(Françoise Kral, 2009, p. 2)

Fiction on immigrant, diaspora and transnational lives and experiences are authored by writers who have first-hand experiences of the act of migration or living as a diaspora, and also, by writers who write on these experiences from an outsider’s perspective. Migration and flows of varied kinds have determined the fictional narratives of the twentieth century and the twenty-first century. The spaces that migrants occupy define the in-betweenness- the spaces between rigid border controls; the spaces between two nation-states, vastly different from each other; the spaces where rigid ideas of nation and nationhood transform into ideas of being a global, transnational citizen, yet retaining their ethnic identities. The act of migration has shaped and re-shaped human civilisations since the

beginning, with different forms, characteristics, and traits. Søren Frank (2008) asserts that:

“Migration is indeed both a historical and a transhistorical concept: historical in that the twentieth century and beyond can be described as “the age of migration,” and transhistorical in that mankind and literature have always migrated.” (p. 10)

The flows and settlement of people have always existed, but the migratory patterns of the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries have transformed the world in unprecedented ways, with the emergence of the ubiquitous presence of technology, communication, and travels in our lives. It is interesting to note how different eras have been affected by different kinds and degrees of migration, and how fiction evolves to mould these experiences into its narratives, to understand the complex ways in which migrating humans negotiate their identities, and recreate a home away from home. Literature of the diaspora has held a significant space for the diaspora and transnational individuals and communities. It is also one of the ways through which the people of the homeland, and natives and other minority communities of the host countries, get an insight into the experiences and lives of the particular diaspora individuals and communities. The fiction of the diaspora also provides a view of the contestations and deliberations experienced by the diaspora through its evolution. The experiences of being brought up by parents who are immigrants; the negotiations of being part of two or more cultures; the question of belonging; the multiple layers of meaning to the idea of home; the changing meaning of living as a diaspora; are unique to the diaspora and transnational individuals. Literature of the diaspora can be studied through a postcolonial lens bringing out both the optimistic as well as the painful and discomforting experiences of the postcolonial world:

“... particularly in literary and cultural studies, the term ‘postcolonial’ addresses itself to the ramifications of colonialism from the point of first contact, to beginnings as well as putative endings.” (Julie Mullaney, 2010, p. 5)

The question of identities is pervading and unavoidable in the diaspora and transnational contexts. The dual or multiple identities, a diaspora or transnational being embody, reflect the global and transnational world and spaces they inhabit and navigate. It also brings forth the continuing effects of colonisation and imperialism that determine the power equations between the western and eastern nation-states. Fictional works concerning the diaspora are replete with the question of identities and belonging, and as Salman Rushdie (1992) asserts:

“Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools. But however ambiguous and shifting this ground may be, it is not an infertile territory for a writer to occupy.” (p. 15)

Diasporic writers write from the personal experiences of trauma, confusion, displacement, travels, negotiations of two or more cultures and nations, and so on. They write from their lived experiences of the diasporic spaces: “Diasporic spaces are often likened to border zones or borderlines, indicating overlaps of histories and narratives.” (Carol E. Leon, 2009, p. 39) Diasporic writers make use of these overlapping histories and narratives in their works of fiction. When writing of the homeland or ancestral land, Salman Rushdie wonders: “Can they do no more than describe, from a distance, the world that they have left? Or does the distance open any other doors?” (1992, p. 13) South Asian diaspora writers relate to the homeland in their writings in various ways, and keep the door open to their origin and past, and integrate it into their writings. They write from a space where the diasporas have the right to belong to the hostland as well as to the homeland, without having to go through the difficult or painful process of choosing allegiances to only one. Diasporics belong to two worlds and nations, and learn to live with the realities and intricacies of both these worlds, as Rushdie (1992) contends:

“And we are not willing to be excluded from any part of our heritage; which heritage includes both a Bradford-born Indian kid’s right to be treated as a full member of British society and also the right of any member of this post-

diaspora community to draw on its roots for its art, just as all the world's community of displaced writers has always done.” (p. 15)

The Indian diasporic writers write from a unique perspective, their idea of the homeland manifests itself in different ways in their narratives. Rushdie writes about a double perspective that belongs to the Indian diasporic writers, which could be extended to apply to other South Asian diaspora writers from different regions of South Asia as well, which is that, these diaspora writers, “... who have migrated into the north from the south, are capable of writing from a kind of double perspective: because they, we, are at the same time insiders and outsiders in this society...stereoscopic vision is perhaps what we can offer in place of ‘whole sight.’” (1992, p. 19) Similar traits are shared by the South Asian diaspora writers with homelands that have been shaped by colonial histories. South Asian diasporic literature is rich and varied, similar to its diaspora, with several overlapping threads and histories, with complexities and entanglements of the past and the present. As Tamara Bhalla (2016) writes: “For South Asians, particularly those in the United States, legacies of British colonialism and Indian nationalism haunt the formation of idealized male and female South Asian diasporic subjectivities.” (p. 83).

Fictional Narratives, Gender and Transnational Identities

The primary tool of analysis used in this chapter is a content analysis of the selected fictional texts. This chapter considers Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) and *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) for a study and analysis of literary representations of South Asian diasporic youth in the US. One of the ways to understand diasporic and transnational experiences has been through literary representations of these experiences from multiple perspectives. This chapter of the thesis employ content analysis and interpretive research on the selected fictional narratives. Content analysis has been employed to critically analyse and understand how the South Asian diasporic youth in the US are portrayed and represented in the diasporic fictional narratives, and what are the

themes that emerge out of a study of these narratives. Depictions of diasporic youth in literary narratives are important as they signify how their lives and experiences are perceived by the writers; and how these writings might influence the readers of both the homeland and host nations; and how cultural forms perceive and unpack the diaspora and transnational experiences. Literature is one of the significant spaces where the nuanced equations of the South Asian diasporic youth with the homeland and hostland can be understood. This chapter, after the section on introduction, focuses on a literature review of selected South Asian diasporic literary works, where themes of South Asian diaspora and transnational youth form a significant part of the narratives. These texts help the thesis to form a foundation on which the two central or primary short story collections by Jhumpa Lahiri are being analysed in the chapter. This helps in the formation of a larger context within which the two primary fictional narratives, that are taken into account in this chapter, are studied and analysed. The thesis posits the chapter within the South Asian diaspora literary and cultural studies frameworks. Textual analysis of the two primary texts has been conducted with the help of transnational and postcolonial theories to deduce the transnational and gender identities in the narratives. This chapter attempts to understand, how these texts through the narratives, represent South Asian diasporic youth developing their transnational and gender identities in the hostland as well as related to the homeland.

The short story collections selected for analysis in the chapter have been based on the following criteria:

1. The work must focus on second- or third- generation South Asian diasporic youth in the United States;
2. There should be the presence of the intergenerational shift in the ways in which South Asian diasporic generations negotiate with the diasporic spaces they inhabit. There should be the scope of comparison in the ways in which there is a

shift in the South Asian Diaspora from one generation to the other, from one time frame to the other;

3. There should be uniformity in the format of the fictional texts chosen, such as both being short story collections; and
4. There should be representations of the diversities comprising the South Asian diaspora in the US.

Qualitative critical content analysis of the selected fictional texts is the research method that has been employed in this chapter to reach the objectives intended in the thesis and to answer the research questions. The selected texts have been placed in the context of the changing decades due to technology and mobility. This chapter, similar to Wanda Brooks and Desiree Cueto's (2018) research article on children and YA literature, places the texts "... within a particular historical, social, and political context as a top-down analysis." (p. 20) This chapter makes use of frequency analysis along with the qualitative content analysis to understand which themes are recurrent in the selected texts, and what do these representatives of the South Asian diasporic youth in the US represent. Stefanie Ernst (2009) discusses frequency analysis and contends that it is employed in content analysis research "... to compare certain text elements. For instance, the frequency of certain topics, of manifest and latent contents, associations, contexts, and explanations found in the material may all be relevant to the analysis." (p. 253)

Fictional Narratives and Diasporic Youth

The focus of this thesis being South Asian diasporic youth, this chapter examines selected literary works of Jhumpa Lahiri, *Interpreter of Maladies* and *Unaccustomed Earth*, to understand the diasporic experiences of South Asian diasporic youth, not only from the Indian diaspora perspective but from the larger

perspective of the South Asian diaspora, through the interactions and presence of the characters from different South Asian nation-states in Lahiri's short story collections. This section considers the South Asian literary narratives which deal with the South Asian diasporic youth in question in different hostlands. The two primary texts of the chapter would be placed in the larger contexts of the other South Asian diasporic literary narratives that have dealt with the theme of South Asian diasporic youth as well. Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003), Ziauddin Sardar's *Balti Britain* (2008), Roma Tearne's *Brixton Beach* (2009), and Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* (2017), are a few of the literary texts that focus on the South Asian diasporic youth identities. The South Asian diaspora fiction comprises rich literary narratives of the Indian diaspora, Pakistani diaspora, Sri Lankan diaspora, Bangladeshi diaspora, and Nepalese diaspora. Within each of these diasporas, there are varied literary and cultural representations of the differences and similarities of the communities that make up these diasporas. Thus, the South Asian diaspora fiction is a huge body of diverse representations and narratives, with multiple differences as well as similarities within the communities. A significant character in many South Asian diaspora fictional narratives is the diaspora child or youth, whose equations with the hostland and homeland, stand different from the equations shared by the previous generations. A second- or third-generation diasporic child has the right to belong to the nation s/he is a citizen of, while, simultaneously, being a part of his/her ancestral land, and also maintain links with kith and kin in other nation-states. The unique connotations of belonging and home that a diaspora offers make the second- and third-generations of the diaspora a global and transnational citizen, with distinct negotiations and allegiances. These diasporic youth navigate the diasporic spaces in different ways than the previous generations. It could also entail an understanding of the non-western homeland through the western frameworks of the host nation.

An important fictional text focussing on South Asian diaspora family dynamics in the diaspora, dealing with intergenerational changes in the perception of the hostland, is Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*. Literary representations of the intergenerational and multigenerational narratives depict the changes or

continuation of how different generations of immigrants and diasporics self-define their identities and their notions of belonging. There are differences in reinforcements of these identities and the politics behind these reinforcements from one generation to the other as well. Jhumpa Lahiri's *Namesake* (2003) is an example of how different generations of a diaspora approach their ways of integration and assimilation in different ways. Other South Asian diaspora writers have successfully dealt with the themes of the intergenerational changes in the diaspora. For instance, Monica Ali, who is one such South Asian diaspora writer of prominence. Monica Ali was born in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in the year 1967, and moved to Britain with her parents in the year, 1971. One of her significant literary works is *Brick Lane* which was published in the year 2003. The novel is about an immigrant family from Bangladesh and living in London. Ali narrates the novel through the life of Nazneen, the protagonist of the work, who is a first-generation South Asian diasporic in the UK. The novel depicts her to be a strong believer in fate, and she is married to a man who is forty years elder than her. Her husband, who is named Chanu, after their marriage, takes her to England with him. Though Nazneen has learned to live and adjust to the patriarchal demands of her husband, their children- Shahana and Bibi- struggle to keep up with the cultural clashes at home, and relate more with the world outside in the hostland. Shahana, the elder daughter, relates more to the hostland culture she is growing up in, as she assimilates better with the hostland, which her father failed to do. She dreads her father when he makes her learn the ways of the homeland, a homeland to which she has never been, and with whom she shares a complex equation. This irks Chanu, who misses his homeland, and never could integrate with the hostland, and these differences in assimilation and perception of the hostland, lead to frequent alterations between the father and the daughter. The intergenerational differences of perceiving one's identities in the hostland can be observed here, which stands true in most of the diaspora families. The family in the novel lives in East London, in an area called Brick Lane, where it is shown that minor clashes between the locals and the "outsiders" are not uncommon- such as the poster campaigns; slogans; and even a situation that leads to a riot. The novel includes instances of multigenerational differences and conflicts of identity

formation and reinforcement. When Karim- a young Bangladeshi immigrant born in Britain- exclaims to Nazneen- “When I was a little kid...if you wanted to be cool you had to be something else- a bit white, a bit black, a bit something...” (Ali, 2003, p. 262) He goes on to comment that being Bangladeshi wasn’t cool in Britain when he was growing up. This highlights the phenomenon where certain ethnic cultures gain more acceptance and popularity than the others in the hostland, which could lead to stereotyping of all the others. It is essential to maintain solidarity along with respecting and acknowledging the unique characteristics of each community. Karim regrets how: “...Even when it all took off, bhangra and all that, it was Punjabi, Pakistani, giving it all the attitude. It weren’t us, was it? If you wanted to be cool, couldn’t just be yourself. Bangladeshi...” (Ali, 2003, p. 263).

Where Chanu wants to hold on to his roots and return to his native land, Karim- who has never been to Bangladesh- wants to be accepted in the hostland, with his ethnic identities intact, as an equal citizen in the UK, like the others. Shahana, the eldest daughter, wants to assimilate more with the hostland cultures as well, relating more to her peer group than the teachings of the homeland in the domestic spaces of the home. The ways in which each generation of the diaspora makes meaning out of their need to exert and reinforce their identities and belonging depict the multigenerational change in negotiating with the hostland and the homeland. The instances of intergenerational clashes are the interactions between Chanu and Shahana, with the younger generation finding it easier to merge with the hostland cultures, and the first-generation immigrant never being able to call the hostland his/her home. The meaning of home differs for each of the diaspora generation in this fictional narrative on the South Asian Diaspora. The South Asian diaspora has strong linkages and networks with their kith and kin in the homeland as well as across the world, owing to strong familial and community ties. Earlier, the homeland customs, traditions, and memories were kept alive in the South Asian diaspora through everyday practices in the domestic spaces in the diaspora. In contemporary times, with advanced technologies of

communication and travel, the homeland links are kept alive through regular communication and mobility. The second- and third- generation South Asian youth in the diaspora experience the ways of their ancestral land through cultural and traditional practices at home, and through the transfer of memories from the previous generations to them. In Ali's *Brick Lane*, Chanu makes Shahana and Bibi recite poetry from their native land. If there was a show of disinterest or any mistake while reciting the lines, he would chastise his daughters, which would lead to further altercations between the two generations. While Chanu does not want to dilute any tradition or way of life of his homeland (or the memory of the homeland), the younger generations tend to assimilate more easily and readily with the hostland. Sometimes, these assimilatory tendencies would lead to compromising on their ethnic identities, and, at other times, these would take place by reinforcing their ethnic identities and belonging. The intergenerational or multigenerational disagreements exhibit themselves with regard to acceptance of the hostland as one's home; equations with the homeland; marriage; peer groups; clothing; food habits; etc. Lisa Lau (2016) asserts on Sinhalese Diasporic writings to highlight the transformation in the generations of a diaspora: "These twenty-first-century SLWE diasporic novels, however, begin to move away from the previously classic diasporic tropes of the migrants feeling alienated and misunderstood, homesick, nostalgically longing for their country of origin." (p. 48-9) She discusses that in these diasporic writings, the diasporas are neither entirely rejecting the homeland, nor intensely:

"... seek acceptance in the new, Western host country, embracing the host country with the fervour of converts. Instead, in these SLWE Sinhalese diasporic novels, Selvadurai and Ferrey both depict young, male, middle-/upper middleclass protagonists whose relationships with home and host countries are more complicated, more nuanced, less binary, less melodramatic, and definitely less clear cut." (2016, p. 48-9)

The literature of the diaspora carries notes of melancholy irrespective of the literary work being a tale of pain or positivity. While the first-generation immigrant experiences the immense pain of displacement, their children go

through the lifelong tussle or negotiations between two or more cultures and have to prove their loyalty to one or the other, and being called an immigrant and outsider, even after being born in the hostland. The status and tag of an immigrant remain with them throughout their lives, no matter the level of integration and assimilation in the hostland. To have to prove their allegiance, to being subjected to prejudices, and to be torn between where to belong and not to belong, are the recurrent themes in the fictional narratives that deal with second- and third-generation diasporas. Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* (2017) is an important text to understand how the transnational South Asian youth navigates host nations once uprooted from the homeland owing to conflicts. Mohsin Hamid, a British-Pakistani writer, deals with the South Asian immigrant youth and their transnational experiences in the postcolonial world through his novel, *Exit West*. It is a transnational fictional narrative of youth refugees who have been forced to leave their homeland and find a safer land.

“In their phones were antennas, and these antennas sniffed out an invisible world as if by magic, a world that was all around them, and also nowhere, transporting them to places distant and near, and to places that had never been and would never be.” (Hamid 2017, p. 35)

The novel is an unconventional narration, making use of magic realism, of the transnational lives of two young refugees from the Global South. Hamid doesn't mention the name of their homeland. As the two refugees flee a war-torn homeland, they struggle to find acceptance in the host nations, fleeing from one place to another, in search of a “safe home”. Naida and Saeed, the primary characters of the novel, through their journeys, living in refugee camps, and so on, depict an altogether different kind of migration from the Global South to the Global North. These refugees are termed as illegal bodies in the host nations, and they struggle to find a safe home or stable work for themselves.

This novel is a contemporary narrative on transnational living by a South Asian diaspora writer in the UK. This section, thus, provides an overview of the important South Asian diaspora fictional narratives that have South Asian

diaspora and transnational youth as the central characters. The increasing transnational characteristics of the South Asian diaspora and transnational youth are depicted through these fictional narratives, providing us with rich and complex insights into their relationship with the homeland/ancestral land; their expectations of the hostland or their adopted homeland; their complicated notions of “home”; their negotiations and navigations of domestic and public spaces in the diaspora; their memories of the homeland; their ethnic identities and hybrid identities; and so on.

South Asian diasporic writings have made a mark as a strong literary genre. South Asian diaspora has emerged as a significant literary genre, with prominent first- and second-generation of writers, settled in different host nations, writing on the issues of race, ethnicities, search for a home, identities, and so on. Christiane Schlote (2006) opines that: “While the common scenarios in the context of South Asian immigration- entering North America as dependent wives or as students- continue to provide the main impetus to leave for a large number of characters, these journeys are hardly ever taken lightly.” (p. 396) The fears, confusions, and struggles of these first-generation diasporic women form an important part of the South Asian diasporic experiences and narratives, “... most are accompanied by fearful apprehensions, particularly in the case of the young Indian and Bengali women characters so omnipresent in Divakaruni's and Lahiri's short stories and novels, who embark on their first flight in order to join their engineer husbands (whom they were married to only shortly beforehand) in Silicon Valley's suburbia or at New England's MIT.” (Schlote, 2006, p. 396) The diasporic writings of the South Asian diaspora women writers on the first-generation South Asian women in the US, largely, dealt with the loneliness, diasporic experiences, travel of the homeland, memories of the homeland, etc. of these first-generation diaspora women. Over time, the intergenerational aspects were incorporated, as the second-generation of diasporas were already negotiating their spaces in the diaspora. The South Asian diasporic youth is given a central place in many of the fictional narratives on the diaspora. The study of South Asian diasporic youth in the US is placed under the larger field of Youth Studies, which focuses on the

social, political, educational, and cultural development and growth of the youth in varied contexts and cultures. The construction of knowledge by the youth through their interactions with the world, and their lived realities, are incorporated into the study of the South Asian diasporic youth here. This thesis, thus, makes use of the content analysis in the primary chapters to understand how through the different mediums of representations the South Asian diasporic youth's transnational and diasporic identities are being constructed. The social construction of the diasporic selves of the South Asian diasporic youth has been considered in both the chapters: on South Asian diasporic fictional narratives and on South Asian diasporic youth organisations.

Fiction and Construction of Identities

This chapter considers the two primary texts: Jhumpa Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth* and *Interpreter of Maladies* for an in-depth textual study and analysis. Both the selected texts are short story collections and have been chosen to maintain the uniformity of the narrative form in the process of analysis. There is a gap of nine years between these two short-story collections by Jhumpa Lahiri. A comparative analysis of the changing dynamics of the South Asian diaspora and transnational youth, from one generation to the other, is a part of this chapter. The two fictional texts would be analysed based on how they deal with ethnic identities, family ties, ethnic authenticity, the question of language, interracial friendships/relationships, the role of clothing, cuisine, intergenerational differences, and so on. Through Lahiri's short stories, this chapter would try to understand how, the South Asian diasporic youth in the United States, indulge in performance of their dual/multi-identities; recurrence and reassertion of homeland identities through their food, spices, sweets; reinforcing one's ethnic identities; formation of youth subcultures; formation of networks and nodes with the homeland; negotiations of identities in the hostland; etc. The objectives of the chapter being how literary or fictional narratives represent the South Asian diasporic youth in the US is important to understand how the society at large views them or how fiction writers treat this set of diaspora citizens. It is indicative of the undercurrents of youth identities and

subcultures in a society or nation. The objectives of this chapter would be to understand how South Asian diasporic youth in the US are represented in South Asian diaspora literature. Through a thorough reading and analysis of the selected fictional texts, this chapter would attempt to understand how the dynamics of South Asian diasporic youth in the US have changed with the hostland and the homeland, and the differences with the previous generations, and how this chapter can construct points of similarities, continuities and differences with the virtual representations of the South Asian diasporic youth on digital mediums/narratives through the South Asian diaspora organisations, which is the focus of the previous chapter. The aim is also to identify the themes that are recurrent and important in these literary narratives and understand these with the real-life situations of the South Asian diasporic youth in the hostland, and understand the key role that the South Asian diasporic youth play in the diaspora, and the changing and continuing transnational and gender identities of their diaspora lives.

In order to do that I use an intersectional approach where it has been placed at the junctures of race, ethnicity, gender, and transnational identities. The chapter has been foregrounded in the theories of postcolonialism and transnationalism. These theories form the framework that provides shape to the study and analysis of the selected fictional texts in this chapter. Brooks and Cueto (2018) use the postcolonial theory to research African diasporic children and Young-Adult texts, and amongst other things, they contend that, “Furthermore, we look at how authors present complexities, even within the diaspora, based on historical and colonial circumstances.” (p. 18) In this chapter as well, the historical and contemporary contexts would be used to study and analyse the selected short story narratives of Jhumpa Lahiri. Postcolonialism is employed in the chapter to understand and decode the South Asian imaginaries through literary narratives. Sandhya Shukla (2001) contends that postcolonialism can be used as an explanatory category to study South Asian diaspora and transnationalism as:

“The realities, memories, and rebuttals to British colonialism have profoundly affected diasporic peoples and their cultures. In idea and deed, colonialism, then, has created a language in which to understand the development of nationalisms, at home and abroad. And although anthropological work on South Asian migrant cultures has been more inclined to utilize transnationalism or diaspora as explanatory rubrics, I would suggest here that postcolonialism can be of service, too.” (p. 553)

The South Asian diaspora writings considered in this chapter are postcolonial writings of the South Asian diaspora writers, with their unique sets of characteristics and literary motifs, navigating the contemporary world with memories of the past lurking, merging, and shaping the present. Transnationalism is one of the theories through which this chapter is constructed. The question of which is home- the hostland or the ancestral land- is a significant one for the second and third generation diasporas. To call the ancestral land one’s home, a home they never have been to is as intriguing as finding themselves as outsiders in the hostland, where they are more at home than anywhere else. What is home to these second- and third-generation immigrants becomes crucial in constructing their identities that affect their decisions regarding the hostland as well as to the land of their origin? With not experiencing the nostalgia that their parents have learned to live with in the hostland, the reasons why these younger generations carry their ethnic identities around in the hostland could determine the negotiations carried out by them at different spaces of interactions. These younger generations could be comfortable in feeling at home in the hostland by acknowledging and reinforcing their ethnic identities without any camouflage. The changing ideas of home across generations are depicted through several fictional narratives on the diaspora. Transnational feminist theories look at how gendered experiences need to be problematized in the transnational processes. This chapter analyses the selected short story collections of Jhumpa Lahiri using the transnational feminist lens. Carolyn Zerbe Enns et al (2020) define transnational feminism as the feminism which concentrates on the heterogeneous experiences of transnational women,

“... who live within, between, and at the margins or boundaries of nation-states around the globe; they transcend nation-state boundaries and speak to a wide range of interacting forces that have an impact on gendered relationships and experiences in a geopolitical context.” (p. 1)

They further elaborate that transnational feminism emphasizes the diverse experiences of women through an interdisciplinary and intersectional approach that also interconnects with activism and social justice (2020, p. 2). This chapter also acknowledges that the lived experiences of women are varied and cannot be generalised under one kind of feminism. A marginalised woman of a particular place will face discrimination and struggles according to the ways in which caste, class, and space intersect in her context and positionality. In the same way, women around the world face discrimination in varied ways, and these forms of gender abuse and violence need to be analysed and understood through an intersectional framework. Transnational feminist theories take into account the heterogeneous ways in which women who migrate, or are forced to migrate, counter gendered experiences, racial attacks, power asymmetries, and so on. South Asian diasporic women's experiences differ according to the host nation, class structures, caste identities, and status of citizenship (legal or undocumented), and so on.

This chapter attempts to understand the youth experiences of South Asian diasporic youth through transnational feminist and gender frameworks. This would provide a non-Eurocentric and decolonised perspective to the study and analysis of the South Asian diasporic youth based on their positionalities in the diasporic and transnational spaces. The South Asian diasporic young women's experiences need to be analysed to understand how the gender equations change according to the generations. Gender issues of the diasporic youth need to be critically analysed as well so that spaces are created for discussions on the contemporary issues that are plaguing the youth in the diaspora. LGBTQIA South Asian diasporic youth need to be given ample spaces to strengthen their voices and representations. Thus, transnational feminist and postcolonial theories will

critically examine the gender inequalities and stereotypes faced by the South Asian diasporic youth in varying degrees through multiple mediums.

Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies* and *Unaccustomed Earth*

South Asian American women writers occupy a significant place in representing the gendered experiences of women in the diaspora, as well as in bringing out the diaspora experiences of the community as a whole. Christiane Schlote (2006) contends that similar to other South Asian immigrants and diasporas, the

“... South Asian American women writers reflect South Asia's proverbial diversity in terms of religions, languages, and cultures while sharing the experience of direct or indirect migration, life in the U.S. as members of visibly different citizen groups, and postcoloniality.” (p. 394)

Schlote further notes that if we compare the ways in which “Western Orientalist” represents the South Asian Women, which is “passive victim” representation, the

“... South Asian women writers also foreground South Asian women's long tradition of activism and resistance on the subcontinent and in the diaspora. Within this framework they develop alternative models of negotiating such culture-specific and often misrepresented concepts as sati, arranged marriages, or Muslim body politics, and they provide transnational contextualizations.” (2006, p. 402)

South Asian diasporic women writers give the readers unique and first-hand perspectives on the South Asian diaspora experiences, especially the gendered experiences of a diaspora. These first-generation of South Asian diasporic women, who were, in most instances, home-makers, and the narratives on their diasporic lives, provide the negotiations and contestations in the domestic spaces

of the South Asian diasporic homes. Linta Varghese (2013) writes that “home and household” in the literal sense of the terms, have acted:

“... as a critical space in the articulation of South Asian diasporic life in the United States has been an area of intellectual focus for South Asian American feminist writers and activists, many of whom point to the gendered constructions of the national that are imbricated in heteronormative household formation.” (p. 157)

The primary texts of analysis in this chapter would be critically analysed to understand how transnational and gender identities are reinforced in diasporic spaces through fictional texts. This chapter considers two short story collections of Jhumpa Lahiri for study and analysis to understand how transnational and gender themes are dealt with in the writings. The two short story collections have been selected for the presence of diasporic youth characters and their negotiations with the homeland and hostland cultures. This chapter has selected the two short story collections to maintain the uniformity of literary form in the analysis. Jhumpa Lahiri is an acclaimed, American writer of Indian origin, and writes in English and Italian. She was born in the year, 1967, in London, UK, and, later on, moved to the US with her family. Her works include *Namesake*, published in the year 2003; *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999); *The Lowland*, published in the year 2013; *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008); etc. Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Interpreter of Maladies*, published in the year 1999, is a collection of short stories in the following order: *A Temporary Matter*; *When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine*; *Interpreter of Maladies*; *A Real Durwan*; *Sexy*; *Mrs. Sen’s*; *This Blessed House*; *The Treatment of Bibi Haldar*; and *The Third and Final Continent*. Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Unaccustomed Earth* is a collection of short stories divided into two parts. The short stories in the first part are titled as follows: *Unaccustomed Earth*; *Hell-Heave*; *A Choice of Accommodations*; *Only Goodness*; *Nobody’s Business*. The short stories in the second part are titled as follows: *Once in a Lifetime*; *Year’s End*; *Going Ashore*. Stephanie Li (2012) writes of how Jhumpa Lahiri’s narratives, most often, does not deny the presence of race and racial identities that shape the characters’ lives and experiences:

“Although Lahiri’s characters have clear ethnic identities (many are specifically identified as Bengali), they rarely speak about race; instead, they assume an intimacy that seems to transcend difference. However, their unstated racial identities and the racialized associations they impose upon others fundamentally structure how they relate to one another.” (p. 103)

The next section will be divided into transnational and gender themes that have been found in the narratives of the two short story collections:

The Home and the Diaspora

The notion of home and homeland in the South Asian diaspora writings finds a central place in the diaspora writings as the meaning of home is not without complexities in a diaspora. The idea of the home plays a crucial role for a diaspora as the meaning of what entails home for a diaspora has never been unchanging and simple with each generation. The home and the homeland have shared a complicated relationship with the diasporic individuals. Any diaspora relates to what they consider as home in complex ways. The definitions of home and the homeland for a diaspora differ with every generation. As Susheila Nasta (2002) asserts:

“For diaspora, does not only create an unrequited desire for a lost homeland but also a ‘homing desire’, a desire to reinvent and rewrite home as much as a desire to come to terms with an exile from it. Diaspora is therefore as much about settlement as displacement and exists on a shifting axes of differently articulated positionalities, which may be linked to specific histories of recent migration but can also, in later generations, depart from them.” (p. 7-8)

The South Asian diaspora community has, similarly, displayed a desire to nurture a longing for the homeland that has been left behind, but, at the same time, they

have strived to recreate “home” and belong to the hostland in multiple ways. The South Asian diaspora negotiate the spaces of the hostland and the homeland, the meaning of belonging to both, in complex and innovative ways. The instance of highly-skilled South Asian diasporas would be a case where the ethnic identities are kept alive, but a desire to assimilate and be an integral part of the hostland remains a part of the diaspora ambition. Chandrima Karmakar (2015) contends that for Diasporic Indians, the “Engagement with the idea of 'home' is not merely an intellectual quest... It is an engagement that helps them resolve their existential and identity issues. The consistent engagement with the idea of 'home' often leads one to trace her/his ancestral roots.” (p. 80) This thought could be extended to the rest of the South Asian Diaspora as well.

The South Asian diaspora being heterogenous and settled in several different host nations under different social, political and economic contexts, their ways of relating to the home and the homeland also differ and cannot be generalised. Ruth Maxey (2012), on writing about the connection between home and South Asian writers located in the UK and the US, argues:

“For some critics, the continuing emphasis by US-based writers on South Asia is also part of a cultural contingency plan, since Americanness is still largely associated with whiteness and racism continues to impact in multiple ways on Americans of colour.” (p. 29).”

In one of Jhumpa Lahiri’s stories, titled, “The Third and Final Continent”, in *Interpreter of Maladies* the readers witness how “home” is so closely related to one South Asian first-generation diaspora and for another, the younger diaspora, it is understood through maps and media images and stories. The younger generations of a diaspora are familiarised with the homeland or ancestral land through the stories and customs that they inherit from the previous generations, who are first-generation diasporas, and through the intermittent trips to the homeland. The central character of this short story moves to the US from India, after graduating from London. He is a first-generation diaspora in the US, and

makes a life for himself and his wife, Mala, in the hostland. The short story ends with the South Asian diaspora family now being American citizens, and the son attending Harvard, and an image of a diaspora life with its successes, ambitions, and fears:

“We are American citizens now...Though we visit Calcutta every few years, and bring back more drawstring pajamas and Darjeeling tea, we have decided to grow old here. ... Mala no longer drapes the end of her sari over her head, or weeps at night for her parents, but occasionally she weeps for our son. So we drive to Cambridge to visit him, or bring him home for a weekend, so that he can eat rice with us with his hands, and speak in Bengali, things we sometimes worry he will no longer do after we die.” (Lahiri, 1999, p. 197)

The above paragraph suggests how the first-generation diasporics are keeping the homeland alive through the use of homeland practices, such as ways of eating food, and through the homeland language. It also suggests how these traditions are transferred to the younger generations of the diaspora, who have not lived in the homeland and not grown up accustomed to the ways of their parents and ancestors. Practicing of homeland customs, languages, and traditions become an important diaspora act for the first-generations with the younger generations of the diaspora. It is also to be noted that, for this group of South Asian diasporics, the aim was always to settle down in the US, and the memories of homeland and the travels to homeland might remain, but a return to the homeland, mostly, does not become a reality or is intended. The connections with the home in the diaspora make the diasporic individuals into transnational beings. Memories of the homeland remain with an immigrant or first-generation diaspora throughout their time in the hostland. In Lahiri's short story, titled, “When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine” in *Interpreter of Maladies*, the second-generation South Asian diaspora girl, named, Lilia, was becoming aware of the histories and present events of South Asia, through the first-generation South Asians diasporas, as they discussed the events occurring back home, while having their dinner, and while watching news of the homeland. Mr. Pirzada, in the short story, is a South Asian immigrant of Bangladeshi origin, who moved to the US for his research work on

funding. Mr. Pirzada had left his family, wife and children, back in Dacca, and he kept a track of the war that was ensuing in his homeland, through the news channels. Mr. Pirzada started visiting Lilia and her parents, for dinners regularly:

“Mr. Pirzada began carving, without the least bit of intimidation, as if he had been carving jack-o’-lanterns his whole life. ... the national news began. The reporter mentioned Dacca, and we all turned to listen: An Indian official announced that unless the world helped to relieve the burden of East Pakistani refugees, India would have to go to war against Pakistan. ... The knife slipped from Mr. Pirzada’s hand and made a gash dipping toward the base of the pumpkin.” (Lahiri, 1999, p. 36)

Mr. Pirzada remained tense about his family back home all the while he remained in the US, and Lilia, the second-generation South Asian diaspora was gradually learning about the histories of her homeland or land of origin through her parents and Mr. Pirzada. Lilia came to know of the war in Dacca through the news channels and discussions of it during the dinners, which otherwise she would not have realised as South Asian histories and contemporary developments were not accessible to the second-generation of diasporics before the advent of the Internet. Lilia, in the short story, is recalling her and her family’s time with Mr. Pirzada, and notes that South Asian histories are easily accessible to her now than when she was growing up in the US:

“All of these facts I know only now, for they are available to me in any history book, in any library. But then it remained, for the most part, a remote mystery with haphazard clues. What I remember during those twelve days of the war was that my father no longer asked me to watch the news with them, and that Mr. Pirzada stopped bringing me candy, and that my mother refused to serve anything other than boiled eggs with rice for dinner.” (Lahiri, 1999, p. 40)

This short story depicts the close connections that South Asian immigrants and diasporas form in the host nations, despite belonging to different South Asian homelands. Mr. Pirzada found a support system in Lilia’s family, even though,

they belonged to India and he belonged to Bangladesh: As Lilia narrates, Mr. Pirzada, during those days of the war in Dacca, would spend the nights with her family, sleeping on their couch, where they would arrange blankets for him:

“... and high-pitched voices hollering in the middle of the night when my parents called our relatives in Calcutta to learn more details about the situation. Most of all I remember the three of them operating during that time as if they were a single person, sharing a single meal, a single body, a single silence, and a single fear.” (Lahiri, 1999, p. 40-1)

The alliances that were formed during the time of crisis amongst the South Asians diasporas in the short story, tell us of the shared histories of our South Asian nations- the shared trauma, the shared cultures, and the shared ways of living, that find resonance in the South Asian diaspora at the time of any crisis. Lilia realises that Mr. Pirzada was living more in his homeland, through the news channels and memories, rather than living in the US. The first-generation diaspora’s strong connections with the homeland are brought out and understood by Lilia, as: “... life, I realized, was being lived in Dacca first. ... Our meals, our actions, were only a shadow of what had already happened there, a lagging ghost of where Mr. Pirzada really belonged.” (Lahiri, 1999, p. 30-31) Belonging is a complex notion in the diaspora, and it differs for the immigrants, to the first-generation of the diaspora, to the second- and subsequent generations. There are instances in this short story where we realise how, the second- and third-generations of South Asian diasporas do not get the opportunity to grow up with their families back home, with their extended family networks, which is an essential way of living in the subcontinent. As Lilia narrates, how she used to store the treats that Mr. Pirzada gave her on his visits, “... in a small keepsake box made of carved sandalwood beside my bed, in which, long ago in India, my father’s mother used to store the ground areca nuts she ate after her morning bath. It was my only memento of a grandmother I had never known ...” (Lahiri, 1999, p. 29-30) These are the insignificant ways in which objects, memories, and cultures of the homeland are passed down from one generation to the other in the diaspora.

Karmakar (2015) contends that the idea of home differs from one generation of a diaspora to the younger ones, who grow up in the hostland. This search for one's "home" and "self" could lead to creative and political expressions through various literary and cultural modes:

"There is a sense of disjunction that persists among the second- and third-generation diasporics. Their lives are imbued with gaps which catalyse their desire to trace their 'roots'. It also helps them relate to their parents' past. For some writers like V.S. Naipaul, who do not feel at home anywhere, it perhaps gives them an idea of where they might have started as a person. The search for 'home' and 'roots' often leads to the end of literary and beginning of the exploration of the political." (p. 82)

The South Asian diasporic writings and its quest for home and belonging is not an apolitical act.

Racial and Ethnic Identities

The South Asian diasporic youth learn how to live with their racial and ethnic identities in the US. The South Asian diasporic youth confront and reinforce their dual- or multiple-identities; understand the diasporic spaces they occupy in the adopted nation and homeland narratives; and navigate the hostland and homeland spaces in intricate and complex ways, which keep changing with every era and generation, and which need to be studied and analysed for a better understanding of them. These multiple identities and belongings help in the construction of transnational identities of these diasporic youth. South Asian ties and connections in the South Asian diaspora fiction resonate throughout the narratives which help in reinforcing the transnational identities of the diasporic youth. Jhumpa Lahiri's stories are, mostly, of East Indian origins, narrating the lives of Bengali immigrants from India in the diaspora, especially in the US. But the presence of characters from other South Asian nation-states also makes their presence felt in the short stories, reinforcing the fact that, the South Asian diaspora communities have their unique solidarities in the diaspora. As in the short story *When Mr.*

Pirzada Came to Dine, the protagonist, Lilia, yet to be familiar with the divisions prevalent in the homeland, wonders how Mr. Pirzada of Bangladesh could be any different from them. Lilia is explained of the differences and lines that have been drawn between her homeland, India, and Mr. Pirzada's homeland, Bangladesh, despite so many similarities:

“One moment we were free and then we were sliced up,” ... “like a pie. Hindus here, Muslims there. Dacca no longer belongs to us.” He told me that during Partition Hindus and Muslims had set fire to each other's homes. For many, the idea of eating in the other's company was still unthinkable.” (Lahiri, 1999, p. 25)

Lilia, after being told of the differences and conflicts, cannot imagine how such strong lines could have been drawn between people who were so similar in so many ways. For her, Mr. Pirzada and her parents shared the same language, Bangla or Bengali; they enjoyed the same threads of conversations and humour; they even did not look too different from each other; they ate rice for dinner and used their hands instead of spoons; they liked to have pickled mangoes; they shared the same taste in food and had similar food habits; “Like my parents, Mr. Pirzada took off his shoes before entering a room, chewed fennel seeds after meals as a digestive, drank no alcohol, for dessert dipped austere biscuits into successive cups of tea. Nevertheless, my father insisted that I understand the difference, and he led me to a map of the world taped to the wall over his desk.” (p. 25) This is an instance of the second-generation of the South Asian diaspora being made to understand the complex intricacies of histories that the South Asian nations share and histories that have shaped the South Asian nations: “Mr. Pirzada is Bengali, but he is a Muslim,” my father informed me. “Therefore he lives in East Pakistan, not India.” (Lahiri, 1999, p. 26) Lilia further explains the map that her father wants her to study to understand the differences, and she describes that it was marked with lines to indicate the journeys her parents had undertaken earlier; Calcutta, where her parents were born; and she tells the readers that:

“I had been there only once and had no memory of the trip. “As you see, Lilia, it is a different country, a different color,” my father said. Pakistan was yellow, not orange. I noticed that there were two distinct parts to it, one much larger than the other, separated by an expanse of Indian territory; it was as if California and Connecticut constituted a nation apart from the U.S.” (Lahiri, 1999, p. 26)

This is an example of how the second- and third-generation of South Asian diasporics compare the places or events of their homeland, with their adopted homeland or hostland. Having grown up in the US, Lilia could draw analogies of the South Asian nations with the states in the US that she is familiar with and studies at school. As in Lahiri’s titular short story from *Interpreter of Maladies*, the characters of Mr. Das and his wife, Mina, are American born South Asian diasporics, who visits India every couple of years, to visit their parents, and roam around the country with their children, who are third-generation Indian-Americans. As Mr. Das tells Mr. Kapasi, their driver and tour guide in India: ““Oh, Mina and I were both born in America,” Mr. Das announced with an air of sudden confidence. ... ‘This is Tina’s first trip to India, isn’t it, Tina?’” (p. 45) The homeland journeys of the second- and third-generation South Asian diasporics are one of the ways of acquainting themselves with their land of origin. There are times when the diasporic narratives depict them to be out of place with the homeland habits. Yet, these are the journeys and travels, that keep the homeland ties alive, other than the mediums of communication. It is an experience of being treated as a diaspora in one’s own homeland or ancestral land. It unpacks the complex ways in which the meanings that South Asian diasporic youth construct of home, homeland, and hostland.

The hostland and the question of belonging and unbelonging get more complex with each new generation of a diaspora. Sunaina Maira’s (2002) “Desis in the House: Indian American Youth Culture in NYC” is a study on the different aspects of the South Asian diasporic youth in the US, and she elaborates how South Asian youth subcultures are formed in the hostland through the cultural modes. The South Asian youth subcultures formed in the city of New York were

expressions of one's ethnicities as well as the fusion of different cultures in a multicultural space. Hostland, for the younger diasporics, is a place where they live a transnational life, with influences from the majority as well as other minority communities and cultures. The South Asian diasporic youth are comfortable with their hostland, and are more at home in the hostland, than when visiting the homeland. This does not signify that they are entirely cut off from their homeland or ancestral land, on the contrary, they keep their ethnic identities intact, and reinforce them in innovative ways while reclaiming their rights in the hostland spaces. Racial and ethnic identities are part of the South Asian diasporic youth in the US, and race forms an integral part of Jhumpa Lahiri's short stories, and there are instances of inter-racial relationships formed in the hostland, in the short story narratives. In Lahiri's short story collection, *Unaccustomed Earth*, the titular story, is about Ruma and her father as the central characters of the narrative. Ruma is a second-generation diasporic youth, born and raised in the US, and her father, a first-generation Indian-American. Ruma's father recalls the differences between how they lived and how he and his wife has raised Ruma, as an independent individual, who could make her own choices in life. Ruma is married to an American man:

“But he pointed out that Ruma hadn't been raised with that sense of duty. She led her own life, had made her own decisions, married an American boy. He didn't expect her to take him in...he couldn't blame her. For what had he done, when his own mother was dying, when his mother was left behind?” (Lahiri, 2008, p. 29)

The above paragraph indicates the guilt that remains with the first-generation of the South Asian diasporas about the fact that they had left their families behind in the homeland in search of better opportunities in a faraway land. In a similar manner, they do not expect their children, the second-generation South Asian diasporic youth to live with them in their old age.

The second-generation diasporic youth might be better integrated and assimilated into the adopted land, yet the racial and ethnic prejudices they face, sometimes,

remain the same as what the previous generations have had to face. As in one of Lahiri's stories, in *Unaccustomed Earth*, "Only Goodness", two South Asian diasporic siblings are shown to grow up in a diaspora family in the US. Sudha, one of the siblings and primary characters of the story, tells the readers about the differences between the diaspora domestic spaces and the world outside in the hostland. She recalled that her parents did not understand or perceive the struggles of their children when growing up in the hostland, such as:

"... being teased at school for the color of their skin or for the funny things their mother occasionally put into their lunch boxes, potato curry sandwiches that tinted Wonderbread green... Her parents would have thought. "Depression" was a foreign word to them, an American thing. In their opinion their children were immune from the hardships and injustices they had left behind in India ..." (Lahiri, 2008, p. 143-4)

There is a gap of understanding between the diaspora generations, and usually, the notion is that the second- and third-generations of the diaspora have it easier than the previous ones in the hostland. The younger generations of a diaspora might be more assimilated and acquainted with the adopted homeland, and live their lives according to the peers they grow up with, yet the experiences of racism and other prejudices remain the same even to this day, be it for a South Asian diasporic youth, or an Asian diasporic youth, and so on. The South Asian diasporic children and youth have to navigate two different spaces: the homeland cultures in the domestic spaces and the hostland cultures in the educational, work, and recreational spaces. They have to acclimatise themselves with navigating both the spaces without offending one or the other. These diasporic spaces also construct and shape their identities and sense of belonging throughout their lives. As in the short story of Lahiri, "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine", Lilia describes her Halloween celebration with her friend, Dora: "For Halloween I was a witch. Dora, my trick-or-treating partner, was a witch too... We shaded our faces green with a broken eye shadow that belonged to Dora's mother, and my mother gave us two burlap sacks that had once contained basmati rice, for collecting candy." (Lahiri, 1999, p. 36-7)

The second-generation diasporic youth learn to celebrate the hostland festivals and traditions with their peers. It is one of the ways of assimilating with the adopted homeland, and one of the ways in which the younger generations understand and experience the other culture better. Celebrating Diwali at home with family and other members of the diaspora community, and celebrating Thanksgiving or Halloween with peers outside home, is a common scenario of the young diasporics living in the diaspora.

Transnational links and identities of the South Asian diasporic youth in the US lead to the increasingly transnational self of the South Asian second- and third-generation diasporic youth, and they exude the confidence and acceptance of their identities, which have been shaped and moulded by more than one culture and nation-state. In one of Lahiri's stories, "Only Goodness" in *Unaccustomed Earth*, Sudha moves from the US to London, where she was born, before moving to the US with her family later on, and she narrates how she was welcomed in London as if she had returned home, owing to her British passport, and she, too, had felt happy returning to the place of her birth:

"She was excited to be in London, curious to know the land of her birth. Before leaving she had applied for her British passport, a document her parents had not obtained for her when she was born, and when she presented it at Heathrow the immigration officer welcomed her home." (Lahiri, 2008, p. 144)

Sudha's life is a transnational life of the South Asian diasporic youth, who has a land of origin, has another land of birth, and another land where they grow up, and other nation-states where they move to work, later in life. The South Asian diasporic youth are comfortable with navigating so many cultures and countries, signifying their ease of being a global citizen, with its complexities and entanglements. In the short story, "Year's End", Kaushik recalls how similar to his stepsisters, he, too had moved with his family, from Kolkata to the US, and the journey has remained with him, as he wasn't too young to not remember the drastic change from the homeland to a hostland: "Like them I'd made that

journey from India to Massachusetts, too old not to experience the shock of it, too young to have a say in the matter.” (Lahiri, 2008, p. 272)

Languages, Accents and Identities

The diaspora and transnational lives of the South Asian diaspora have another important aspect, which is of different accents of the English language. In the short story, “Year’s End”, in *Unaccustomed Earth*, Kaushik describes the English accent of his stepsisters who had recently moved to the US:

“They spoke to me in English, their accents and their intonation sounding as severe as mine must have sounded to your fully American ear when we arrived as refugees in your family’s home. I knew the accents would diminish and then disappear, as would their unstylish sweaters, their silly hairstyles.” (Lahiri, 2008, p. 263)

Accents form a major part of a diaspora individual, as s/he has to access the hostland spaces with the accent, which could be a marker of identity. The younger diasporics speak in native English accents, having grown up in the hostland, and the first-generation diasporas pick up the native accent with time. Similarly, the younger diasporas would not, typically, be fluent with the homeland languages, compared to the first generations of the diaspora. The second-generation diasporic young people are expected to achieve grand accomplishments as they have the privileges of the developed world now. Failure to adhere to this “successful” image is considered to be an unfortunate incident in the entire diasporic community. The stereotype of a “model minority”, sometimes, exists within the diasporic community as well. In Lahiri’s short story, “Only Goodness”, Rahul, who is a second-generation diaspora in the US, never lives up to the academic expectations of his parents:

“Eventually he got a job managing a Laundromat in Wayland... Sudha knew that the job embarrassed her parents...Other Bengalis gossiped about him and

prayed their own children would not ruin their lives in the same way. And so he became what all parents feared, a blot, a failure, someone who was not contributing to the grand circle of accomplishments Bengali children were making across the country, as surgeons or attorneys or scientists, or writing articles for the front page of *The New York Times*.” (Lahiri, 2008, p. 151)

The stereotypical image and expectations of being a diasporic youth in the South Asian diaspora, and the expectations to study in the most reputed educational places, and holding the most coveted job roles, make it difficult for the diasporic youth who do not want to adhere to the conventional paths of success. Diasporic identities are being constructed through such stereotypical expectations and how the diasporic youth tend to, sometimes, depart from the stereotypes. These experiences and identities add up to construct and reconstruct the South Asian transnational identities of the South Asian diasporic youth, and the dealing of these experiences in fictional narratives reinforces these identities for a larger readership.

Homeland Practices and Memories

The reproduction and performance of homeland habits and customs in the diaspora help in keeping the homeland alive in the diaspora, and helping in maintaining cross-border connections alive. The homeland is kept alive in a diaspora through the recreation of customs, practices and traditions of the land left behind. Many a time, these diasporic recreational performances tend to be frozen in time, as the transformations in the homeland are no longer experienced by the diasporics first-hand. The prevalence of the Internet and communication technologies in the contemporary era helps the diaspora connect and be aware of the changes the homeland has been through since the time they have left. Yet, the older generations of the diaspora still retain and practice the memories of the homeland they carried forward with them, but the ways in which the younger generations of a diaspora practice homeland customs and traditions determine how the homeland identities are negotiated by the diasporic youth. In Jhumpa Lahiri’s “A Temporary Matter” in *Interpreter of Maladies*, Shoba’s mother, a

first-generation South Asian diaspora in the US, still carried with her the practices and customs of the homeland diligently:

“She cooked dinner every night, drove herself to the supermarket, washed their clothes, put them away. She was a religious woman. She set up a small shrine, a framed picture of a lavender-faced goddess and a plate of marigold petals, on the bedside table in the guest room, and prayed twice a day for healthy grandchildren in the future.” (Lahiri, 1999, p. 9)

The South Asian diasporic youth in the hostland are reminded of the homeland in certain occurrences, which might have left a mark on their memories when they were visiting the homeland. As Shoba exclaims in “A Temporary Matter”: “It’s like India,” Shoba said, watching him tend his makeshift candelabra. “Sometimes the current disappears for hours at a stretch. I once had to attend an entire rice ceremony in the dark.” (Lahiri, 1999, p. 11) She further recalls her visits to the homeland and the things she found interesting or amusing: “For some reason my relatives always wanted me to tell them the names of my friends in America. I don’t know why the information was so interesting to them. The last time I saw my aunt she asked after four girls I went to elementary school within Tucson. I barely remember them now.” (Lahiri, 1999, p. 12)

Shoba’s partner, on the other hand, had much less experience of the trips to the homeland. As the story informs us, his parents used to undertake the homeland visits to Calcutta every summer without him, leaving him with an aunt. His interest in his country of origin developed once he had grown up:

“His parents, who settled in New Hampshire, used to go back without him. The first time he’d gone as an infant he’d nearly died of amoebic dysentery... As a teenager he preferred sailing camp or scooping ice cream during the summers to going to Calcutta. It wasn’t until after his father died, in his last year of college, that the country began to interest him, and he studied its history from course books as if it were any other subject. He wished now that he had his own childhood story of India.” (Lahiri, 1999, p. 12)

The South Asian young diasporics are familiarised with the homeland through events on university or college campuses in the hostland. In “A Temporary Matter”, the two primary characters, who were South Asian young diasporics, had met “... at a lecture hall in Cambridge, where a group of Bengali poets were giving a recital.” (p. 13) The first-generation of South Asian diasporas insist on the younger generations being familiar and acquainted with the histories of the homeland. This signifies the need for diverse and inclusive syllabus that would be representative of the majority and the ethnic minorities of the US, and this has been highlighted through the following lines in Lahiri’s story, “When Mr Pirzada Came to Dine”, as Lilia’s father exclaims: “But what does she learn about the world?’ ... ‘What is she learning?’ We learned American history, of course, and American geography. ... During tests we were given blank maps of the thirteen colonies, and asked to fill in names, dates, capitals. I could do it with my eyes closed.” (p. 27)

Lilia’s mother explains that Lilia was born in the US so it’s natural she won’t know much of the history of the homeland. She further goes on to admit that she believes Lilia has: “... a safe life, an easy life, a fine education, every opportunity... Imagine having to place her in a decent school. Imagine her having to read during power failures by the light of kerosene lamps. Imagine the pressures, the tutors, the constant exams...How can you possibly expect her to know about Partition?” (p. 26-7)

The idea that the first-generation diasporas have moved away from the homeland and made a home in a land with better opportunities, thus, securing the futures of the younger generations, making their lives easier, could be said to be common throughout the South Asian diaspora. For Lilia in the short story, she could get a glimpse of the land of her origin through the television from the living room in the diaspora home, to what she describes as, “... the unruly, sweltering world we had viewed a few hours ago in our bright, carpeted living room.” (Lahiri, 1999, p.

32). This brings out the perceived contrast of the “developed and developing” nations by many diasporics.

Homeland Journeys

The homeland journeys of the South Asian diasporic youth help in the construction of the transnational identities of the diasporic youth. The journeys to the homeland add to the diasporic and transnational identities of a diasporic individual. The second-generation youth in the diaspora, who has not been a part of the act of migration of their parents crossing the borders of the nation-state to move to another nation, encounter the homeland through these journeys and trips, which they might undertake reluctantly or willingly. In Lahiri’s short story, “Only Goodness”, both the South Asian diasporic children reminisce about their homeland journeys in their childhood, and, how, as grown-ups, they would not be undertaking those trips again: “Apart from sitting in Heathrow dozens of times on the way to Calcutta,” Rahul said, and Sudha was reminded of all those trips they’d taken together in childhood to see their relatives, trips that would never take place again.” (Lahiri, 2008, p. 164)

In Lahiri’s short story, titled, “Hell-Heaven”, in *Unaccustomed Earth*, where a first-generation South Asian diaspora marries an American woman, and they start a family, and have two children. Upon which, one of the primary characters of the short story, a South Asian diasporic youth, named Usha, recalls how those two children do not have to make yearly visits to Calcutta: “They were not taken to Calcutta every summer, they did not have parents who were clinging to another way of life and exhorting their children to do the same.” (p. 75) Usha is more comfortable with the hostland way of living, and the strict domestic space of her home conflicts with her wishes. This indicates the dilemma of a diasporic youth, who has to live differently with peers outside the home, and adjust to a different way of life in the diaspora home. Several times, the first-generation of the diaspora would enforce rules on the younger generations, based on their prejudices, as for them, the American way of life might lead their children astray.

It is also one of the ways to keep their homeland knowledge of ways of living alive in the diaspora.

Food and Diaspora

Food traces the homeland memories, diasporic imaginary and identities in the South Asian diaspora. The South Asian diaspora recreate the homeland and reinforce their multiple identities through their distinct culinary practices. The intergenerational changes in the food practices of the South Asian diaspora are indicators of how the younger generations of the diaspora connect with the hostland and homeland in contemporary times. Food and food habits are major indicators of how much of the homeland has integrated with the other cultures in the diaspora. Anita Mannur (2007) contends:

“The desire to remember home by fondly recreating culinary memories cannot be understood merely as reflectively nostalgic gestures; rather such nostalgically-framed narratives must also be read as meta- critiques of what it means to route memory and nostalgic longing for a homeland through one's relationship to seemingly intractable culinary practices which yoke national identity with culinary taste and practice” (p. 13)

Food and food habits, recipes, aromas of the cooked food, ways of using specific spices, and specific ways of cooking, are not just innocent practices, but ways of keeping the homeland traditions alive in the diaspora, ways of remembering the nation left behind, and ways of acknowledging one's ethnic routes. Food is intrinsically linked to memories of the past, of the homeland, of the home that has been left behind. Homeland recipes, food, fusion of food, culinary habits, ways of cooking, and the kitchen of a South Asian diasporic home keep the homeland alive and thriving in a diaspora, and these also exhibit signs of assimilation with the host nation. Imageries of food are abundantly present in most diasporic fictional narratives. In Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*, a short story, titled, “A Temporary Matter”, Shoba, one of the primary characters of the story, elaborately shopped and stocked up food, and was particular about it:

“When she used to do the shopping, the pantry was always stocked with extra bottles of olive and corn oil, depending on whether they were cooking Italian or Indian. There were countless boxes of pasta in all shapes and colors, zippered sacks of basmati rice, whole sides of lambs and goats from the Muslim butchers at Haymarket, chopped up and frozen in countless plastic bags.” (Lahiri, 1999, p. 6)

Food is an elaborate process of reinforcing one’s ethnic identities as well as reproducing one’s willingness to try cuisines from different cultures. Lahiri uses the imageries of food abundantly in this short story, to represent the relationships that the two characters, Shukumar and Shoba, married to each other, shared before and after the birth of their stillborn child. As both of them try to carry on with their lives, after the death of their child, Shukumar recalls the past days through the ways in which Shoba would plan for food at parties, and so on:

“When friends dropped by, Shoba would throw together meals that appeared to have taken half a day to prepare, from things she had frozen and bottled, not cheap things in tins but peppers she had marinated herself with rosemary, and chutneys that she cooked on Sundays, stirring boiling pots of tomatoes and prunes. Her labeled mason jars lined the shelves of the kitchen, in sealed pyramids ...” (Lahiri, 1999, p. 7)

The preparation of chutneys, after an elaborate process, indicates how important these processes of making food are for the South Asian diasporic youth as well. Bonding over food, hours, if not days, spent on the preparation of dishes for the guests, are reminiscent of the South Asian ways of living for the diaspora. It is not uncommon to find the South Asian diaspora carrying ingredients from the homeland, during their home visits, to reproduce the authentic ways of preparing meals that would remind them of home in the hostland. As Shukumar recalls in the short story: “... the mortar and pestle she’d bought in a bazaar in Calcutta, and used to pound garlic cloves and cardamom pods, back when she used to cook.” (Lahiri, 1999, p. 8-9) In another of Lahiri’s short story, titled, “When Mr.

Pirzada Came to Dine”, Lilia describes how elaborate dishes were prepared in the ways of the homeland, as food becomes a source of comfort for the diasporas who miss the homeland: “From the kitchen my mother brought forth the succession of dishes: lentils with fried onions, green beans with coconut, fish cooked with raisins in a yogurt sauce.” (Lahiri, 1999, p. 30) Culinary habits form the identities of a diaspora in a significant manner, and the ways in which they painstakingly collect ingredients to replicate how the dishes are cooked in the homeland, tell us the importance of identities that are being reinforced through the food ways and habits. Razia Parveen (2016), while researching on the ways food and identities are related for diaspora women in a South Asian diasporic community in a place called Lockwood, notes that: “Recipes represent some of the strongest strands of South Asian female oral expression... as well the sense of diasporic memory for a homeland of cultural origin.” (p. 48)

Gendered Experiences in the Diaspora

Jhumpa Lahiri’s short stories focus on the experiences of diaspora women. The gender identities, the loneliness of first-generation diasporan women, the gendered diaspora experiences; the changes in the next generations of diaspora women; the assimilatory processes, and so on. Caroline Brettell (2016) contends on the question of gender in migration:

“... to view migration through a gendered lens means to focus on how men and women relate to one another in theory and in practice, how their experiences might differ, and how gender roles (i.e., the particular activities and tasks that are assigned to men and women), which vary from one culture to another, might both affect and be affected by geographic mobility.” (p. 11)

How diasporic women look at and perceive the act of migration and the process of integrating with the hostland needs to be understood when any diaspora is discussed.

Stereotypes and Prejudices

Stereotyping is a common aspect in the diaspora when it comes to gender roles. The first-generation diaspora women, mostly, adhere to the stereotypes, but it has been observed that the younger generations tend to chart their paths. The South Asian diasporic youth and the breaking and adhering to stereotypes are common issues in the South Asian diaspora fiction. Lahiri's short story collections do engage with and problematise the stereotypes of the "not-serious" western young men and women" and the "good Indian young men and women", and the themes of acceptance of different sexualities, being comfortable with one's identities at the closure of the stories, and so on, are brought forth in the narratives, which indicate the changing mindsets of the Indian diaspora. In Lahiri's short story, titled, "Nobody's Business" in *Unaccustomed Earth*, one of the primary characters, a young Bengali diasporic in the US, named Sangeeta or Sang, is pursued by many of her suitors from her community, who did not know her personally, but would manage to get her number from distant connections and call her up, and all they knew of her was, "But they'd heard that she was pretty and smart and thirty and Bengali and still single, and so these men, most of whom also happened to be Bengali, would procure her number from someone who knew her parents, who, according to Sang, desperately wanted her to be married." (Lahiri, 2008, p. 174) In many cases, even though the young diasporics have lived most of their lives in the adopted lands, yet, when it came to marriages, they would carry forward the homeland traditions, in the case of South Asia, the tradition of arranged marriages, or self-arranged marriages for the younger generations. It would, many a time, happen that these suitors would pursue someone with an imaginary person in mind, without realising the person could be entirely different from their stereotypical expectations. While, there are other South Asian diasporic youth, who break the stereotypical image of being a "model minority" and chart out their paths. The construction or non-adherence to homeland identities and stereotypes differs amongst young diasporics.

The intergenerational differences in the South Asian diaspora are brought out in the South Asian diaspora fiction. The South Asian diaspora, having made a home for themselves in the hostland for several decades, or even centuries, now, could be studied through the inter- and multi-generational differences. The second- and third-generation South Asian diasporic youth in the US, despite the racial and ethnic narratives, would be better assimilated into the adopted land than their parents or grandparents. The lived experiences of the different generations of a diaspora are bound to be different, and the same stands true for the South Asian diaspora as well. The South Asian diasporic youth, who have been born and brought up in the adopted land, would not have the unmediated experience of leaving the homeland for the first time and making a home in a new nation-state, yet they carry the immigrant and diasporic identities with them all their lives. Their identities are shaped by the journeys and migrations that their parents or grandparents undertook, along with their own identities of being a citizen of the adopted land of their parents or ancestors. In one of Lahiri's short stories, titled, "The Third and Final Continent" in *Interpreter of Maladies*, the first-generation South Asian diaspora recalls his experiences of being an immigrant in the US to his son, who is a second-generation diaspora:

"...and I slow down and point to Mrs. Croft's street, saying to my son, here was my first home in America ... My son always expresses his astonishment ... but at how little I paid in rent, a fact nearly as inconceivable to him as a flag on the moon was to a woman born in 1866. In my son's eyes I see the ambition that had first hurled me across the world ... Whenever he is discouraged, I tell him that if I can survive on three continents, then there is no obstacle he cannot conquer." (Lahiri, 1999, p. 197-8)

The above sentences indicate the ways in which the struggles and successes of the previous generations of the diaspora inspire the younger generations, reminding them that they can survive even when the social and political scenarios in the adopted lands turn hostile. The memories of the migration and survival in the host nation encourage the diasporic youth to claim their rightful place in the host nation and the homeland, creating spaces where multiple identities can exist in

inclusionary ways. The struggles of making a home in the diaspora of the first-generations provide the strength for the next generations to claim their rightful place in the adopted homeland. In Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth*, the short story titled, "Only Goodness", Sudha recalls the struggles of her parents and their extended families back in the homeland. The second-generation diasporic youth in the South Asian diaspora inherit the stories and struggles of their parents and grandparents through the retelling of these memories in the domestic spaces: "Both her parents came from humble backgrounds; both their grandmothers had given up the gold on their arms to put roofs over their families' heads and food on their plates." (2008, p. 140) These stories of struggle are ways to teach the younger diasporics not to take their lives for granted in the diaspora. These stories also contribute to the construction of diasporic identities of the younger diasporics who become aware of their ethnic origins and the homeland.

Conclusion

Fictional narratives provide realistic representations and perspectives of the South Asian diaspora living and experiences through fictionalised tales and narratives. The treatment of diasporic and transnational themes by the diaspora writers provides perspectives and open spaces for discussions and deliberations on the South Asian diaspora. In this chapter, a study and analysis of Jhumpa Lahiri's selected short story collections reveal the presence of strong South Asian diasporic youth characters, as the experiences of the younger diasporas are testimony to the transformations a diaspora goes through from one generation to the next. The short story narratives depict the intergenerational differences in the twentieth-century South Asian diaspora in the US, where television screens were one of the important ways to be updated about the news in the homeland, to changes in the ways in which the young diasporas become more transnational in the twenty-first century, with travels to kith and kin in London from the US; or for work to some other part of the world; and so on. As the literary narratives in this chapter reveal changes in the ways in which the South Asian diasporic youth changed with the hostland and the homeland, in the same manner, it would be

safe to assume that the next generations of the diaspora would display changes and transformations in the way they relate to the homeland; their equations with the adopted land; their networks and nodes with the rest of the world; etc. The platforms and mediums of communication with the homeland and kith and kin settled in different hostlands across the world will also undergo changes as new technologies of travel and communication are invented.

This chapter dealt with the South Asian diasporic fiction of Jhumpa Lahiri. The next chapter is the concluding chapter of the thesis, where the research outcomes and common themes of the two primary chapters will be discussed.

Chapter-5

CONCLUSION

The Internet, the social media networking sites, blogs and websites, and the advanced technologies of communications have enabled the formation of a digital South Asian diaspora. The South Asian diasporic youth organisations in the US have a strong presence in the virtual spaces and reinforce the transnational and gender identities of the diasporic youth. Virtual spaces are one of the mediums through which the South Asian diasporic youth in the US get represented. Another important medium of representation is the fictional narratives that focus on the second- and third-generational diaspora experiences of the South Asians in the US. Even though, the mediums of representations selected in this thesis vary in their technicalities, yet, the diaspora consciousness and imaginaries of the South Asian diasporic youth find their space in both these mediums. The intergenerational changes and transformations have been witnessed in the representations of these diasporic youth, both through the short story collections, as well as through the digital content.

The thesis deemed it necessary to offer a considerably clear discussion on South Asia and the South Asian diaspora, before delving into the primary chapters of the thesis, and one of the chapters of the thesis acts as a link between the historical timeline of the formation of the South Asian diaspora and the contemporary construction of the South Asian diaspora, especially in the US. The South Asian diaspora has been formed out of multitudes of different identities, classes of people, caste differences, political and social milieus, and so on. The goal of this thesis has been to study, analyse and understand how South Asian diasporic youth negotiate their identities in contemporary times. A close reading of the selected fictional texts and content analysis of the selected virtual narratives, that represent the South Asian diasporic youth in the US, has provided

new perspectives on the contemporary political and social stances of the South Asian diasporic youth in the hostland and homeland. Contemporary forms of diversities and heterogeneities in the South Asian diaspora through the diasporic youth have been another aspect of the study of this thesis. The focus of the study has been to identify the changing contours of the South Asian diasporic youth in the US and understand the newer as well as continuing forms of hostland and homeland negotiations through the diasporic youth.

The South Asian youth diaspora identities have been analysed in this thesis on the basis of transnational and gender perspectives. The South Asian diaspora is a heterogeneous group of people, who could be placed under different categories of linguistic, land of origin, religious faith, and belonging. Yet, the South Asian diaspora act as a unit in the hostland. There have been different waves of migration from the region of South Asia to other regions of the world. The reasons for moving from South Asia and settling in other parts of the world have been varied throughout the colonial and postcolonial periods. The older forms of the South Asian diaspora have taken on newer forms with the advent of newer technologies of travel and communication. The South Asian diaspora identities exist as much offline as the identities exist in the online spaces through food blogs, online pages of organisations, personal blogs of diaspora individuals, and so on. Digital activism is also prevalent amongst the South Asian digital diaspora, with political opinions of the diaspora being vocalised through social networking sites. Jane Kenway and Elizabeth Bullen (2008) observe the effects of globalisation and technological advancements in the movements of people from one part of the world to the other:

“As a result of globalization, many cultural forms have become disembedded and deterritorialized, and the influence of global corporate capitalism has become increasingly pervasive as technological innovations have escalated the diffusion of consumer–media culture into almost every aspect of everyday life and across the globe. Consumerism is becoming normalized as a defining characteristic of the lifestyle of the so-called global North and South—the minority and majority world, respectively.” (p. 17-18)

The Internet has been playing a huge role in the ways in which diaspora connect with the homeland and their kith and kin across the world. Ralph Schroeder (2018) notes of Internet that when it comes to understanding the long-term impact of the Internet, the social transformation in politics is crucial. He further observes that “The internet pushes media towards greater differentiation, caging people in mediated relations from above, including more targeting and greater responsiveness from elites, and from below, enabling more input and engagement. Again, increasing mediation faces the constraint of limits of attention, as with gatekeepers setting agendas.” (p. 8)

The digital divide and the occupying of the digital spaces by the privileged- the ones who have access to the Internet, the virtual spaces, and digital devices- are real causes of concern, but these virtual spaces also act as democratic spaces, where real-life protests and contestations are not possible. The diasporic youth get to reinforce their transnational and gender identities through their virtual narratives. This thesis has attempted a comparative analysis of the two mediums of representations- the fictional narratives and the virtual narratives- to understand the South Asian diasporic youth identities. Despite the two mediums being different from each other, the diasporic youth engage with several similar issues regarding the diaspora, and both the mediums represent the youth identities and activities. Both the mediums help in the formation of diasporic and transnational identities of the South Asian youth in the US.

Understanding Contemporary Trends of the South Asian Youth in the US

The thesis analyses selected fictional narratives and virtual narratives through qualitative content analysis and intersectionality, placing the methodology within the theoretical lenses and frameworks of transnational and postcolonial theories. The two primary chapters have been analysed using qualitative textual and content analysis of the selected content to understand the contemporary trends of the South Asian diasporic youth in the US. There have been several common

themes that have emerged out of the two chapters, which are listed as follows, and which reinforce the transnational and gender identities of the diasporic youth:

1. Homeland identities and networks form an important part in both mediums of the representations of the South Asian diasporic youth in the United States.
2. Meaning of home is changing and more complex in the second- and third-generations of the diaspora when compared to the first generation.
3. Hostland negotiations and assimilation are important for survival in the diaspora, and the South Asian diasporic youth succeeds in the adopted homeland through their transnational ways of being.
4. South Asian solidarities in the diaspora and community building are essential matters in the diaspora.
5. Transnational identities reiterate how the South Asian diasporic youth are undergoing changes with the changing times, embracing multiple identities with assertiveness, and maintaining transnational links and networks across borders.
6. Gender identities, equalities, and empowerment form one of the most essential issues of the diaspora and the diasporic youth.
7. South Asian youth subcultures in the diaspora, formed offline or online, help in the construction of the diasporic and transnational identities of the diasporic youth.
8. The South Asian diasporic youth are constructing a strong and vibrant digital diaspora as well.

Major Findings

This thesis, on the basis of the study and analysis, has come to the conclusion that South Asian diasporic second- and third-generation youth in the US occupy transnational social fields, as represented through the fictional narratives and virtual narratives focussing on these diasporic youth. It has been observed that these South Asian diasporic youth celebrate homeland as well as hostland festivals; combine hostland and homeland food habits; are increasingly comfortable in both homeland and hostland spaces, and take a political stance on issues pertaining to both the hostland and the homeland.

One of the objectives of this thesis has been to understand if the South Asian youth in the diaspora, in contemporary times, form and create newer assimilatory models and trends. This thesis understands that with the changing times and ever-evolving technologies of travel and communication, the ways in which these second- and third- generation youth of South Asian origins reinforce and maintain their ethnic selves, as well as assimilate with the hostland cultures, have undergone significant transformations. The fictional narratives, the youth organisations, and their virtual spaces construct and produce forms of transnationalism due to their linkages and networks with homeland and the hostland. The analysis in the primary chapters indicates the transnational social fields of the diasporic youth that are represented by the short story collections as well as by the diasporic organisations.

One of the major findings of the thesis is that gender identities and experiences form an essential part of any immigrant or diasporic community. The act of migration entails gendered experiences, and one must consider how each gender perceives the act of movement and settlement from one place to another. Umut Erel (2009) points out how there has been many discussions and deliberations “... on the changing meaning of belonging to a national society with accelerating

transnational relations, migrations and the experience of ‘new ethnicities’ there has been little if any, attention paid to how migrant women themselves re-define the concepts of postnational, multicultural or transnational citizenship.” (p. 1) The study of the South Asian diaspora grows richer with the gendered experiences of the diaspora. Lisa Lau (2016) contends:

“Whether moving from South Asia to the West, or vice versa, or having been born and bred in the West, the one clear message from diasporic South Asian women writers is that they are different, very different, from their Western and South Asian counterparts. They are people who are as multi-cultural as they are multi-lingual. They do not regard themselves as fully belonging in either culture and have practically evolved a sub-culture peculiar to themselves. They try to take the best from both worlds, but suffer the sense of hybridity and cultural entanglement.” (p. 241)

The experiences of women and the third gender in a diaspora are not similar to that of the diasporic men. South Asian diasporic women’s lived experiences in the diaspora are quite different from that of their male counterparts. Most of the South Asian diasporic women belong to homelands that are patriarchal societies. The first generation of the diaspora tend to carry these patriarchal aspects of the homeland to the diaspora as well. Homeland identities serve as reinforcements of identities and provide a home one can always return to, but, sometimes, certain aspects of the homeland can prove doubly difficult in the adopted land. Diasporic women have been marginalised at home as well as in the public spaces in the diaspora. Jeff Hearn (2011) contends that:

“In extending analysis from gender relations to sexuality, and thus also to sexual violence, and its multiple dialectics, sexuality is not a separate or autonomous phenomenon or set of phenomena. As noted, sexualities persist in relations with other social phenomena, social experiences, and social inequalities—around gender, class, ethnicity/racialization, embodiment and multiple intersectionalities.” (p. 216)

Wajihah Hamid (2015) discusses the identity politics of bindi in the hostland and contends that “despite increasing global forces and fusion of cultural practices, cultural identity does still occupy a place of prominence in the psyche of diasporic South Asians. It can also be read as a reflection of the agency of a young woman who signals that she is aware of modernity, but not willing to adopt all of its features.” (p.114) The performance of ethnic identities by the South Asian diasporic women occupies an important place in the diaspora, as these homeland identities help the diaspora women become transnational in the diaspora, balancing two cultures and belonging to two nation-states. This thesis understands these ethnic performances as processes of assertiveness by the South Asian diasporic women in the adopted homeland.

The agency of South Asian diasporic women in the hostland and their choices to reconstruct certain ethnic identities and embrace other hostland cultures, is important. Gender violence in the diaspora needs to be contested and eliminated.

Another major finding of the thesis is that, the South Asian diaspora, through the virtual presence of the youth organisations, contributes to the diaspora having a strong digital presence. The role of the organisations and the diasporic youth and the vital role of the Internet and new technologies in fostering diaspora and transnational networks have been brought forth in the thesis. The thesis also discusses how South Asian virtual identities are being formed and how there are continuities with their real-life selves. It is also highlighted how new transnational networks are formed and maintained which would not have been otherwise possible or easier to forge without new technologies and the Internet.

The thesis makes use of transnational and postcolonial theories as to the theoretical framework on which the primary texts have been studied and analysed to procure transnational and gender themes out of the texts. The short story collections of Jhumpa Lahiri unpack the diasporic experiences of the first- and second-generations of South Asian diasporics in the US.

Future Research

In this thesis, I have undertaken a qualitative content analysis to study and analyse the selected fictional and virtual content on the South Asian diasporic youth in the US. This thesis has not taken into account the traditional ethnographic research and interview methods so that the uniformity of both the primary chapters were maintained. The constraints of time and resources have also acted as major factors to not take up a conventional ethnographic study in this thesis. There is ample scope of research on South Asian diasporic youth through in-depth interviews, which would provide new perspectives on the youth diaspora. The second major area of research could be the study of fourth- and fifth-generations of the South Asian diaspora in the hostland. These younger generations would have further transformed the meaning of home and the homeland. This generation of diasporic youth needs to be studied and analysed. The third area of research would be studying the South Asian diasporic youth in the developing nation-states and not just in the developed nation-states. Further research in the field of digital diasporas concerning the South Asian diaspora would provide new perspectives on how technology has been producing transnational identities in the diaspora.

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