



VIDHYAYANA

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

---

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

## **An Overview of Feminism in Diaspora Literature:**

### **A Critical Study**

**Mittal D. Brahmbhatt**

Research Scholar,

Dept. of English & CLS,

Saurashtra University, Rajkot



VIDHYAYANA



VIDHYAYANA

**ISSN 2454-8596**

[www.vidhyayanaejournal.org](http://www.vidhyayanaejournal.org)

**An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal**

---

## **ABSTRACT**

The literature of the diaspora is literature written by migrant groups expressing their suffering caused by displacement, loss of material possessions and social structures such as nation, ethnicity, race, culture and religion. Many of these people will feel emotions of alienation, nostalgia, loss, and emptiness when they travel. It is as if the Diasporas have a nagging feeling of missing a group connection. They develop long-term symptoms such as loss of identity, culture shock, stress and so on. In the Indian Diaspora, there are three evident types based on social class, occupation, and household characteristics. The strength of Indian diaspora in all the continents is estimated at approximately 35 million, which extend throughout the world. Indian ethnic Indians are divided into different parts of the world, and they have diverse groups, many of whom speak other languages, and many of whom have different occupations, but what binds them together is their Indian heritage and their huge patriotism toward India. The present research aims to study the reflection feminism in Diaspora literature of Indian writers.

**Key Words: Feminism, Diaspora, Nostalgia, Indian Writing in English**



VIDHYAYANA

## **Introduction**

The history of Indian women is largely a mental history. From ancient to modern times, the Indian women are victims of the male dominated family system. While India is the world's largest democratic country, Indian women have, until today, been exploited in the ways of rape, human trafficking, domestic violence and prostitution. The problem of analphabetism and abortion of women in India is also most important. This research is particularly focusing on the literature written by a woman writer. It is also very important to study how feminism is represented in the Indian English Literature.



VIDHYAYANA

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

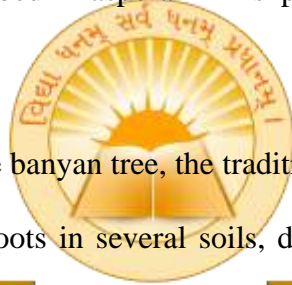
An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

---

The literature market has been greatly changed by globalization. It has transcended national, linguistic and cultural boundaries because of the variety of voices of those who are deemed to be the marginalized groups. A new generation of South Asian woman writers have been able to rise to prominence in the new wave of literature. Post-colonialism leads writers and scholars to explore such issues as ethnicity, race, identity, and other concepts. Most post-colonial writers have lived in exile. It includes culture hybridization, loss of cultural belonging, identity confusion and many more.

## Diaspora Literature

Bhikhu Parekh has rightly described Diaspora in his paper entitled *Some Reflections on Indian Diaspora* (1993). He presents,



The Indian Diaspora is like the banyan tree, the traditional symbol of the Indian way of life, spreads out his roots in several soils, drawing nourishment from one when the rest dry up. Far from being homeless, he has several homes, and that is the only way he has increasingly come to feel at home in the world.

(Parekh 106)

Thus, the Indian Diaspora (the Indian community outside of India) is like the banyan tree, a folkloric symbol of the Indian way of life, which spreads out its roots in many lands.

According to Sudesh Mishra, the concept of home is vital in diasporic writing. There are differences in the ideas, such as "distancing" and "neighboring," that are explored in the writings of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century authors. He says that:

The move from Naipaul to Meera Syal suggests a significant rethinking of the



VIDHYAYANA

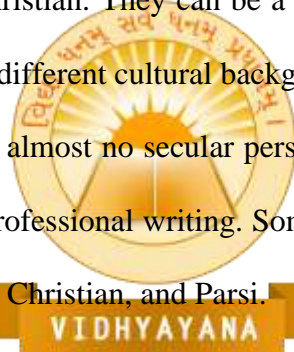
ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

## An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

concept of 'home' within the Diaspora, particularly as this takes place against the backdrop of the global shift from centric or centripetal logic or monopoly capitalism to transnational capitalism's dicentric or centrifugal logic. For the masala Diaspora, "home" signifies an end to constant wandering, while for the sugar Diaspora "home" signifies the establishment of roots. (Mishra 276-294)

In this area, the subject of marriages between different races or groups of people has been discussed. Interracial marriages between the Diaspora reconcile the works of diasporic writers, such as in the thematization of homosexuality in Agha Shahid Ali's poetry, bisexuality in Vikram Seth's poetry and prose, and lesbianism in Suniti Namjoshi's poetry and prose. In the Diaspora, many Indian-English writers come from religious backgrounds other than Christian. They can be a diverse religious group with a wide range of ethnic partners and many of them have different cultural backgrounds. They are also a group that appears to have an almost organized religion with almost no secular perspective. A diversity of writers contributes to the great strength and variety of their professional writing. Some Indian authors come in through several different religions such as Hindu, Muslim, Christian, and Parsi.



VIDHYAYANA

There have recently been many aspects of society that have been impacted by large scale immigration over the last 100 years. When choosing a country to live in, many Indian immigrants did so because they would gain certain advantages from the particular country – such as education, economic opportunity, or property. There are different ways that immigrants are received by different cultures. Many of the expatriates during their transition found they experienced a feeling of extreme alienation, but were able to adapt and acclimate themselves to life in the country after the move. This style of writing is called diaspora.



VIDHYAYANA

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

## An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

---

Diaspora leads to writing that is popular in Post-Modernism, and there is recognition in Indian Diasporic writings of the special place of women writers in the diaspora. Though in the modern and technologically advanced world, the Diaspora concept has undergone a shift since time and space have shrunk due, in part, to technological inventions and communications development. The rise of the Internet through the use of social networking has made a large positive contribution to eliminating this feeling and provides a sense of security. They have been searching for people in other countries who are still attached to their lost friends. Nowadays, people can access the world through the Internet and through other types of media and technology, and thus, it has become easier to adapt and assimilate with such ease. Due to the death and trauma, the shock and alienation have caused the victim to feel less visible than before.

From diasporic literary writings, socio-cultural perspectives dominate themes. Overseas Indians tend to recreate host country Indian social structure. They also retain their native culture, and adaptation method involves a clear preference for economic integration. These mark the Indian theme together or individually. India's diasporic literature is considered India. Whether diasporic writings are real India, however, is debated. Diasporic literature can be a useful tool to study the psyche of migrants. It reflects on the issues of uprooting and transition to a new country and lifestyle, longing for homeland, the burden of religious faith, identity issues, and cultural assumptions. Writers' dual responsibilities. They write to their adopted country's people about their homeland and speak to their homeland's readers about their experiences.

Makarand Paranjape, one of the famous JNU figures spoke at the Patan University, in Gujarat. He wants to know exactly where diasporic literature would be studied (the world over). He is also interested in why this writing form is considered a part the national literature of some countries, but a different stream of writing for others and he is also interested in how we could tell when this literature really is a national



VIDHYAYANA

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

## An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

literature. What are the similarities to linguistic diasporas in the text? Mr. Makarand suggested two ways of reading some of the texts of diasporic creativity. It should be read next to the text and its surrounding, but the other text can support the opposite text.

### Feminism in Diaspora Literature

Indian Diaspora writers comprise of V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, Kavita Daswani, Anita Desai, Shauna Singh Baldwin, Uma Parameswaran, Bharti Mukherjee, Rohinton Mistry, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Meena Alexander, Jhumpa Lahiri, Meena Syal, Abha Dawesar, Suniti Namjoshi, Rishma Dunlop, Lakshmi Gill, Panna Naik, Anita Rau Badami, Ameena Meer, Hema Nair Sunetra Gupta and many more. These writers have left India sometimes out of their choice of working or studying to live in another country, and sometimes they or their family need to leave India for economic, political or social reasons. Nostalgically, they recall their motherland, custom, culture, language, and people, and creative writers use these things in their writings regardless of any generation. The question of hybridism, centrality and transculturation is the subject of Diaspora writing. Most Indian Diaspora writers have been found to portray the experiences of Indians in foreign lands. While each writer has a different story to narrate, as mentioned above, certain common themes certainly emerge.

The experience of women from the Diaspora is more intense than that of males from the Diaspora. Their change is not only geographical or physical, unlike men, but it is a change in their inner selves. Literature produced by women of the Diaspora creates a different perspective; most of their writings dominate a question rather than an answer, a question of identity and Indianness. Their identity depends on the feeling of displacement, the loss of home, the desire to return, culture, religion, caste, language, ethnic consciousness, etc. The regional identity and identity of being an Indian are difficult for most women overseas to embrace. They are wrestling with existential dilemmas for women.



VIDHYAYANA

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

## An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

Anita Desai is an exceptional novelist and a proponent of feminine sensitivity. Loneliness and alienation have been the theme of her fiction. In general, she dealt with individuals' personal lives in general and women's in particular. She disagrees with the limited concept of feminism, which does not integrate women's issues with human rights, democratic rights and the wider movement for civil liberties at the national level. *Cry, the Peacock* (1963), her first novel, recounts the storey of Maya, an unimaginative, insensitive lawyer who is married to Gautama. A fatal prophecy had been made by an astrologer that the fourth year of their marriage would kill their husband. Their married lives are punctuated by 'marital silences.' To Maya, she feels isolated and desolate. She turns schizophrenic following the death of her pet dog. She thinks that she has "a body without a heart and a heart without a body" One calm and quiet evening, Maya goes up to the roof. The pale moon's sight is bewitching her. Unconsciously, Gautama is standing between her and the moon. Maya causes her husband to tumble from the roof to death. She comes back to infantilism and subversive insanity, finally committing suicide.

In *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975), the middle-aged Sita woman moves to a more radical revolt. *Fire on the Mountain* (1977) examines two generations of women's protest. The importance of the home and family is shown by *Clear Light of the Day* (1980). Tara and Bim are two sisters in their attitudes and temperaments, who differ. Tara marries Bakul, an overseas diplomatic services employee. There, they feel foreign and return to India for the reassurance of cultural identity. Bim sacrifices love, marriage and motherhood for the life-long care of her elderly aunt and retarded brother. Symbolic motherhood has been achieved and family and home have been preserved. She transcends the sexes' stereotyped binary opposition in order to approximate the ideal of Shiva and Shakti, the male substance and female energy.

The issue of alienation of an educated college teacher from his roots and culture is explored in *In custody* (1984). From a foreign perspective, *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988) is about India. *Journey to Ithaca* (1995) describes three Europeans on their pilgrimage to India. It utilises the journey motif for the



VIDHYAYANA

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

## An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

spiritual quest when demonstrating the uncertainty of the diasporic condition. Sophie is implicated in the intense diasporic experience. She remains with Matteo, but his spiritual craze cannot be justified by her. She gives him two children, but shields them from their father's spiritual insanity. By juxtaposing the spiritual obsession of Matteo with Sophie's rationalistic position, Anita Desai demonstrates the inadequacy of both. She deglamourizes the western craze for instant 'nirvana.' *Fasting Feasting*, as set for both India and the USA (1999). It attempts to portray India and the USA in its multiple perspectives.

Her another novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (1985) deals with the Indians' migration to England and the disillusionment they often encounter there. Dev is coming to England to pursue his studies, but he finds it very difficult to adjust to the alien environment. He is unable to bear the silence and the emptiness of London. He feels trapped and racially conscious that England is questioning his choice to become "Macaulay's Bastard" but he claims that he was there to interpret India for them. Adit is a romantic admirer of England in the beginning, but he is later attracted back to India, the country he called dirty and lazy. As an English woman married to Adit, Sarah is also facing an Identity Crisis. She is romantically in love with India, but when her husband expressed the desire for their child to be born in India, she felt shocked and astounded. She felt the feeling of having been uprooted. In order to bid England goodbye, she is accompanying her husband to India. Anita Desai is also concerned with greater diasporic problems such as inner alienation and uprootedness rather than mere geographical displacement.

Kamala Markandaya is the pseudonym of Kamala Purnaiya, who was born to a reputed family in Mysore in 1924. She moved to England in 1948, with the hope of supporting her as a journalist. However, she did have a tough time in England. She got married to an English man and lived in England as an expatriate. She is now a citizen of Britain, but in her writings, she is anti-colonist and anti-imperialist. Her book *Nectar in a Sieve* (1959) is her tour of literacy by force. *Some Inner Fury* focuses on cultural problems associated with an interracial relationship that develops between Mira and an English man,





VIDHYAYANA

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

## An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

Richard Marlowe. Her novel, *The Nowhere Man* (1972), deals with the suffering in England of the first generation of immigrants. Srinivas leaves his native land to settle in England, the protagonist of the novel, but eventually he discovers that he does not belong anywhere. Through a flashback technique, she recounts Srinivas's past life in India, juxtaposing it with his current suffering in England. The novel deals with the issues of diasporic anxiety, psychological and physical displacement and hyphenated identity that are often experienced by immigrants in an alien country.

Bharti Mukherjee was born in 1940 and moved to Britain with her family at eight. Educated in Calcutta, Baroda, England, and the USA. She married Canadian Clark Blaise in 1963. She moved to Canada with her husband, but later returned to USA where she taught at various universities. In their career, Bharti Mukherjee and her husband played supportive roles. They pursued independent writing, but also produced two nonfiction works in collaboration. She successfully combined creative writing and teaching career. Her U.S. settlement decision had a liberating impact on her artistic career. With enthusiasm and joy, she embraced American culture's openness and respect for individuality. She stated emphatically that she would like to be treated as an American writer, not ethnic or hyphenated. She's happily assimilated in America's environment. Her experience as an expatriate forms her writings' primary source. Migrations, dislocations and relocations also concern her. Her works also address identity issues, belonging concept, alienation and rootlessness. She also questions the biases and biases of both antipodal worlds. Mukherjee deals with cultural encounters between India and the U.S. in earlier works, but later her work shifts focus to other multicultural encounters in the U.S.

In her first novel, *The Tiger's Daughter*, there are significant autobiographical overtones (1971). It tells the storey of Tara, who marries an American and returns to India briefly, but discovers that she is unable to connect with her motherland. She has no ability to adapt to things. She, once loved and admired in the past, feels like an alien in her own town of Calcutta. She eventually brings back to the USA the land



VIDHYAYANA

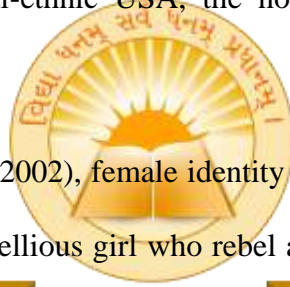
**An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal**

**ISSN 2454-8596**

[www.vidhyayanaejournal.org](http://www.vidhyayanaejournal.org)

of her adoption. *The Darkness Story* (1985) introduces the experiences of Indian immigrants from America. *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988) focuses on immigrants forming the American Salad Bowl from different countries. Even though they are a minority voice, they are an essential part of the American mainstream. As they contribute to the construction of America's culture.

*The Holder of the World* (1993) concentrates on 17th century colonial America and Mughal India. In the amalgam of two cultures of dislocation and transformation, the novelist produces a vivid and complex storey that takes place. *Leave It To Me* (1997) is the tale of a female child abandoned by a Californian hippie mother. In search of her true parentage and her origins, the girl who becomes a young woman goes. The vengeance storey is intertwined with the question of identity, presented by the twin motifs of Kali and Electra. In the multi-ethnic USA, the novelist here explores the dilemma of the hyphenated individual.



In her novel *Desirable Daughters* (2002), female identity and re-rooting of self are again the issues. *Jasmine* (1990) is the story of Jyoti, a rebellious girl who rebel against traditional society. She goes to the United States, where she becomes Jasmine, a personification of Americanness. Bharati Mukherjee writes about a community of minorities that liberates itself from the ghetto and adapts to the American mainstream culture and lifestyle. Through adaptation, modification, assimilation and acculturation, she advocates that immigrants can overcome the trauma of displacement and alienation. She is an author of diasporic fiction that maintains that migratory experiences have enriched expatriate literary writings.

Ruth Jhabwala was born in 1927 in Germany to Polish/Jewish parents. Her family migrated as refugees to England in 1939. In her adult life as well, the state of displacement continued. She married a Parsi architect from India and moved to New Delhi. She has made another home in New York after 24 years of fighting in India. Her works include *In Search of Love and Beauty* (1983), *The Nature of Passion*



VIDHYAYANA

**ISSN 2454-8596**

[www.vidhyayanaejournal.org](http://www.vidhyayanaejournal.org)

## **An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal**

(1956), *Esmond in India* (1957), *The Householder* (1960), *Heat and Dust* (1970), *Three Continents* (1987), *Poet and Dancer* (1993) and *Shards of Memory* (1993) (1995). *Heat and Dust* is considered to have won the Booker Prize for her best work. The novel discusses India and its Western effects. Jhabvala's disillusionment is also evident in her short stories. She criticises those who romanticise India for their spiritual search and turn eastward. She abhors exoticism, which frequently attracts Westerners. Equally critical of the Indians running after Western materialism. To absorb the good in another, she believes one needs roots in one's culture. Ruth Jhabwala is a non-Indian writer who writes about Indian lifestyle from an objective, intelligent observer, satirical commentator, and close investigator. She described East-West encounter theme and explored India's expatriation theme. In her works, she depicts expatriates' psychological turmoil with rare insight.

Jhumpa Lahiri, born in London in 1967 to Indian parents, moved to the United States after her birth. In 2000, Lahiri won her prestigious Pulitzer Prize for her short stories, *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999). Set in India, it's a collection of nine short stories. The author assumed the role of suppressed emotion interpreter. The book's theme is emotional anguish and nostalgia. She experienced living two lives as a child of immigrant parents, one in India and one in the USA. *Title storey* is about a young couple caught too early in marriage and parenthood tangles. There's a portrayal of soured marriage in a *Temporary Matter* storey caused by a baby's loss. *Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine* is a New England Pakistani scholar's storey visiting an Indian family. In this tale, Lahiri shows that Indian family and Pakistani scholar experienced "single silence and a single fear" They forgot all the differences both nations always experienced. She also wrote many outstanding novels about Diaspora experiences, such as *The Lowland* (2013), *The Namesake* (2003), *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008). Lahiri summarises the diasporic experience by suggesting assimilation is the only survival solution in an alien land.

Sunetra Gupta was born in Bengal in 1965. She spent her childhood in Ethiopia, Liberia and



VIDHYAYANA

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

## An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

Zambia. She later studied biology at the University of Princeton and then settled in London. In 1996, she won the Sahitya Akademi Award for her first novel, *Memories of Rain* (1992). Her works are characterised by a stream of consciousness style that focuses on her characters' inner lives. *The Glassblower's Breath* (1993), *Moonlight to Marzipan* (1995) and *A Sin of Color* are her other works. Sunetra's interest lies in her characters' inner worlds. Cultures, histories and human understanding are interpolated by her writing. Her fiction shifts from the crisis of identity to the mapping of a process of experience and feeling, the central concern of diasporic writings.

In 1938, Bapsi Sidhwa was born in Karachi. She belongs to Pakistan's Parsi minority group. She contracted polio as a child and spent a great deal of her early life as an invalid. In 1983, she moved to the USA and became a citizen of the United States in 1992. *The Crow-Eaters* (1980), *the Bride* (1983), *the Man of Ice-Candy* (1988), and *the American Brat* (1993). The theme of injustice against women, religious intolerance and cultural prejudices is addressed by Sidhwa. She employs humour, satire, irony and caricature, despite the seriousness of her theme. She gives a rare glimpse into the lives of a marginalised ethnic group of the Parsi community in South Asia in *The Crow Eaters*. *Ice Candy Man* is a story about a Parsi girl crippled by polio, witnessing during the partition the ethnic atrocities in Pakistan. The intercultural problems and difficulties of maintaining a sense of one's community in the new global world are discussed by *An American Brat*. The novel explores an immigrant's encounter with American culture.

Suniti Namjoshi is a Bombay-born Indian poet and writer. She went on to study in Poona and then in the USA. She married and settled in Britain with Gilian Hanscombe. She is a great advocate for minorities that are discriminated against by society as a whole and because of India (1989). She is best known for her *Feminist Fables* tables about male-dominated society. She took up the cause of women's liberation and women's empowerment. She is more concerned about women's problems as a diaspora. Her



VIDHYAYANA

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

works are full of irony, sarcasm, allegory, fables and narratives of humour.

## References:

### References

Abrams, M.H., and Harpham, Geoffrey Galt. A Glossary of Literary Terms. 11th ed. Delhi: Cengage Learning, 2015. Print.

Achal Sharma, "Status of Women: A Socio-Historic Analysis in Different Ages of Indian Society." Research Journal of Language Literature and Humanities, Vol. 1 (1), (2014), 10-40.

S.S. Kulkarni, Women in Hindu Society, Mumbai: Indus Source Book, 2011, 44. 14.

Rajaram Mohan Roy, retrieved May 2015 from <http://www.upsc.success.com>. P. 22. 26.

Swami Vivekananda, Thoughts on Women, Retrieved May 2015 <http://www.writespirit.net> 30.

Gokak, V K. "The Concept of Indianness with Reference to Indian Writing." Indian Writing in English, edited by Ramesh Mohan Madas, Orient longman, 1978. p. 114.

Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." Colonial Discourses and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader, edited by Patrick Williams & Laura Chrisman, Columbia University Press, 1994.

Hall, Stuart. "Who Needs Identity?" Questions of Cultural Identity, edited by Stuart Hall & Paul de Gay, Sage, 1996, p.4.

Lakshmi, Vijay. "Of Immigrant's Writing." Dislocations and Multiculturalism's: Essays in Homage to Professor R.K. Kaul, edited by Jasbir Jain, Rawat Publications, 2004, p. 95.

Mishra, Vijay. The Literature of the Indian Diaspora: Theorizing the Diasporic Imaginary.



VIDHYAYANA

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

Routledge, 2010.

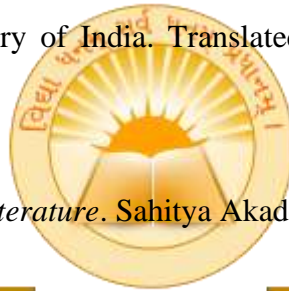
Mishra Sudesh, "From Sugar to Masala: Writing by the Indian Diaspora" illustrated History of Indian Literature in English. Edited by A.K. Mehrotra, Paramount Black, 2003.p. 276-294

Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary. Oxford University Press, 1995

Pal, Adesh, et al. "Makrand Paranjape: Valedictory Speech: Introducing Diasporic Creativity." Theorizing and Critiquing Indian Diaspora, Creative Books, 2004.p.60. Parmeswaran, Uma. Trishanku. Tsar, 1998

Pataki, Eva. "Caught between Two Worlds: The Confusion of Cultural Identity in Three British Asian Novels." University of Debrecen, 2015, pp. 339–359.

Ray, Niranjana. Towards a Literary History of India. Translated by Sujit Mukherjee, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1975, p. 11.



Naik, M.K. *A History of Indian English Literature*. Sahitya Akademi, 1995. Print.

Iyenger, K R. Srinivasa. *Indian Writing in English*. Sterling Publishers Pvt Ltd, 1995. Print.

Mukherjee, Meenakshi. *The Twice Born Fiction*. New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann, 1971. Print.

Mehrotra, Arvind Krishna. ed. *A Concise History of Indian Literature in English*. Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2008. Print.