

RE-IMAGINING INDIA: REPRESENTATION OF INDIA IN INDIAN DIASPORIC WRITINGS

AN ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the representation of nation and diaspora in the works of three contemporary writers: Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai, and Hari Kunzru. The analysis focuses on their novels and short stories which depict the experiences of South Asian immigrants and their descendants in the United States and Britain. The study employs a postcolonial framework to examine how the authors negotiate the complex and often fraught relationships of their own identities with reference to their homeland and hostland. The dissertation argues that Lahiri, Desai, and Kunzru offer nuanced and multifaceted representations of the South Asian diaspora that challenge dominant narratives of assimilation and integration.

The first chapter provides an overview of the theoretical and historical contexts that inform the study. It situates the authors' works within the broader framework of postcolonial literature and diaspora studies, highlighting the ways in which these fields have shaped our understanding of migration, identity, and belongingness. The chapter also outlines the key themes and motifs that emerge across these theoretical frameworks, including the role of memory, nostalgia and trauma in shaping diasporic identities.

The second chapter focuses on Jhumpa Lahiri's writings, examining her debut collection of short stories, *Interpreter of Maladies* and her Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *The Namesake*. The analysis highlights Lahiri's emphasis on the complexities of transnational identity formation as well as her critique of the pressures and expectations placed on immigrant communities to assimilate into dominant cultures. The chapter also explores Lahiri's depiction of the intergenerational conflicts that arise within diasporic families, particularly around issues of cultural heritage and tradition.

The third chapter turns to Kiran Desai's novels, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* and *The Inheritance of Loss*. The analysis focuses on Desai's exploration of the tensions between the homeland and the diaspora as well as her critique of postcolonial nation-building projects. The chapter argues that Desai's works offer a nuanced perspective on the effects of globalization and neoliberalism on postcolonial societies, particularly in the context of migration and diaspora.

The fourth chapter examines Hari Kunzru's novels *The Impressionist* and *Gods without Men*. The analysis highlights Kunzru's interest in the intersections of race, class, and identity, particularly in relation to the experiences of South Asian immigrants in Britain. The chapter also explores Kunzru's critique of the neoliberal policies that have contributed to the marginalization of immigrant communities, as well as his interest

in the ways in which popular culture and technology shape diasporic identities.

The conclusion synthesizes the findings of the study, emphasizing the contributions of Lahiri, Desai, and Kunzru to the field of postcolonial literature and diaspora studies. The dissertation argues that their works challenge dominant narratives of nation and diaspora, offering nuanced and complex representations of the experiences of South Asian immigrants and their descendants in the United States and Britain. Ultimately, the study suggests that their works offer valuable insights into the ongoing negotiations and tensions between the homeland and the diaspora, as well as the complexities of transnational identity formation in the 21st century.