

Negotiating Borders of the Indian Diasporic Identity

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Abstract:

Transcending the boundaries of a singular culture can prove challenging. For transmigrant individuals, this requires a grappling with the cultures of the countries both newly entered into and left behind. A hybridization takes shape in the midst of this struggle, an ongoing formation and reformation of identity. Globalization as a recent world phenomenon has led to an increase in migration, facilitating interactions between people of different cultures, ethnicities and geographical locations. As migrants collide with differing world views, they must reevaluate their identities in the midst of an ever more cosmopolitan world. Interrogating the question of identity formation among the Indian diaspora, this paper focuses on Bengali immigrants who have made their home in the United States. Basing this investigation on *Interpreter of Maladies* by Indian migrant author, Jhumpa Lahiri, these stories act as case studies for analyzing the experiences of the Indian migrant population. Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity, working in conjunction with Mary Louise Pratt's notion of autoethnography and Stuart Hall's understanding of diasporic identity, constitute the grounding theories. Through these texts, an understanding of identity is developed that necessitates the dismantling of binaries such as Self/Other which support essentialist understandings of cultural and diasporic identity.

Key Words: Autoethnography, Binary, Hybridity, Identity, Transmigrant