

Literature of the Indian Diaspora UGENG503/DSE1

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Diaspora and Indian English Literature

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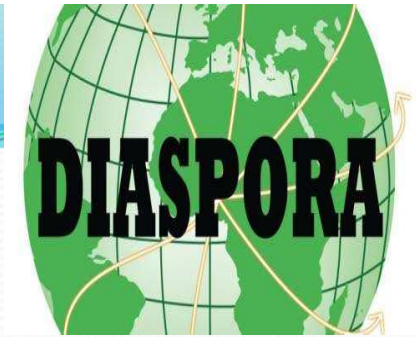


Mapping the talk



- Etymological Definition
- Botanical Metaphor
- Jewish Experience of Exile
- Colonization: A diasporic movement
- Debate on the overuse of the term 'diaspora'
- Discussing diaspora as a phenomenon of uprooting and relocating
- Academic expedition of the term 'diaspora' and its interdisciplinary explorations

Mapping the talk



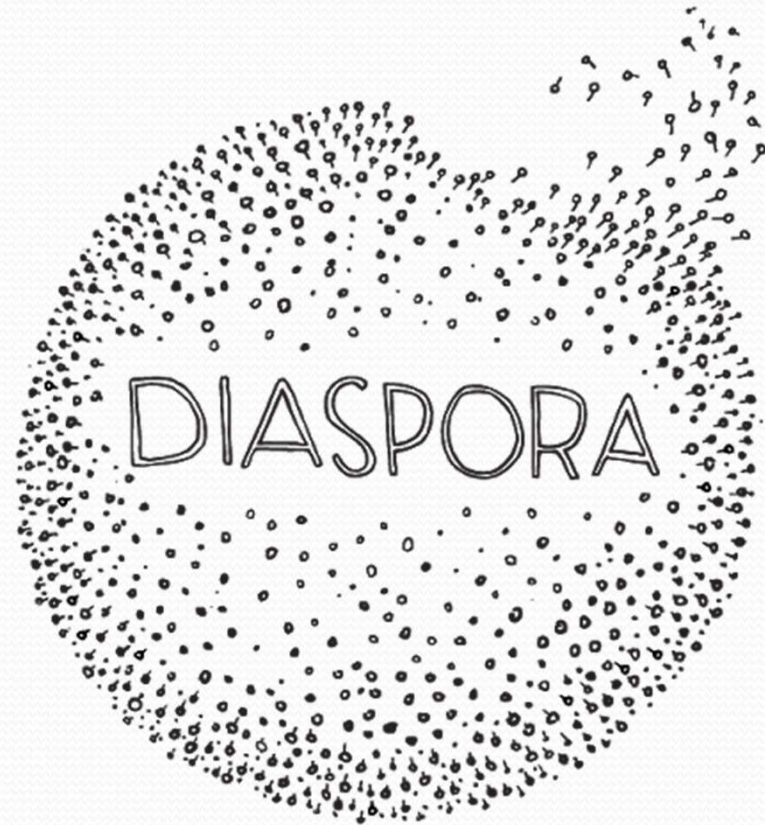
- Transnational Movements—causes
- Terror Attacks and Reactions
- Ideas of Affiliation & Belongingness
- Executive Order 9066
- 6 characteristics of Diasporic Communities
- 5 types of Diasporas

Contextualising Diaspora

- A.K. Ramanujan's poems: Quest for roots and self
- Agha Shahid Ali's poems casting a longing look to the mainstream Indian culture
- Jhumpa Lahiri's short story *Interpreter of Maladies* and Anjan Dutta's film *Bong Connection*: Exploring ideas of isolation and identity, not only personal but also cultural
- Meera Syal's novel *Anita and Me*: Post-imperial British society confronting its colonial past
- South Asian Diaspora: Reading Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* in terms of migration and reverse migration

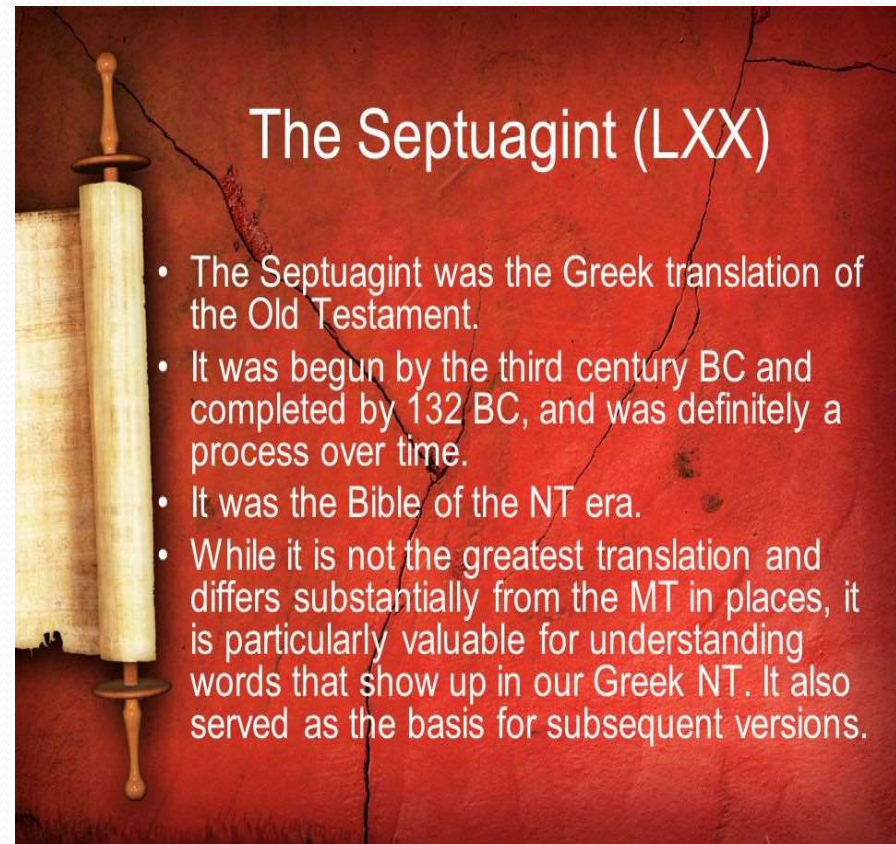
Etymological Definition

- Greek composite verb *diaspeirein*
- *dia* ('through' or 'across') and *speirein* (to sow/scatter)
- act of dispersion or scattering



Jewish Experience of Exile

- Originally used in the *Septuagint*, the Greek translation of the Torah, and was applied in the Jewish experience of exile. Diaspora was a curse word indicative of banishment by God



The Septuagint (LXX)

- The Septuagint was the Greek translation of the Old Testament.
- It was begun by the third century BC and completed by 132 BC, and was definitely a process over time.
- It was the Bible of the NT era.
- While it is not the greatest translation and differs substantially from the MT in places, it is particularly valuable for understanding words that show up in our Greek NT. It also served as the basis for subsequent versions.

Hybridity and Diaspora

- Descendants of diasporic movement develop a distinct hybrid culture of their own which is an amalgamation of their native culture and the culture of the migrated land.



Transnational Movements

National American Indian Heritage Month



“This month, we celebrate and honor the many ways American Indians and Alaska Natives have enriched our Nation, and we renew our commitment to respecting each tribe's identity while ensuring equal opportunity to pursue the American dream.”
—President Barack Obama

6

- Transnational movements are now backed by economic policies or personal aspirations for ‘making it big’ involving highly trained technocrats from Third World countries migrating to achieve the big American dream.

Terrorism: A Huge Setback to Transnational Movements

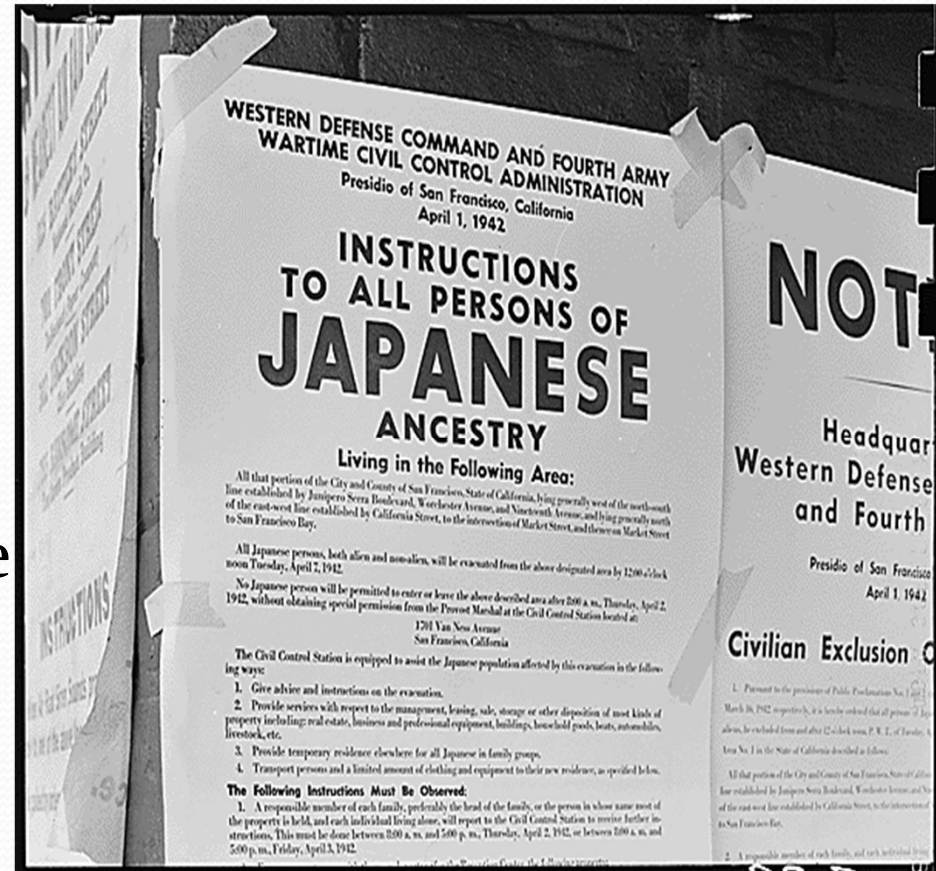


Professor Mamdani's *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*

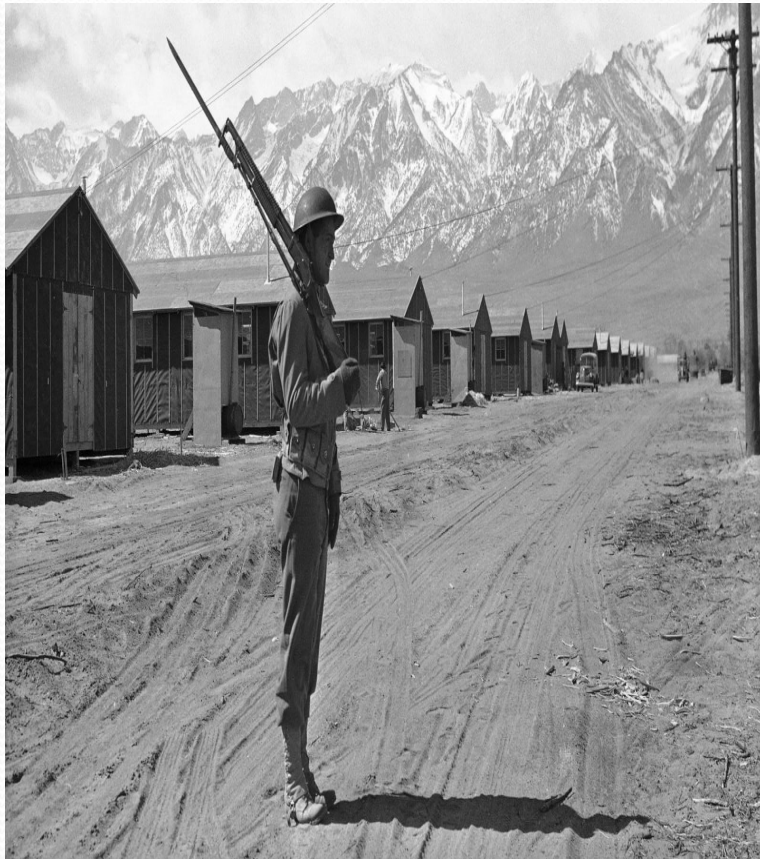
“ After an unguarded reference to pursuing a “crusade,” President Bush moved to distinguish between “good Muslims” and “bad Muslims.” From this point of view, “bad Muslims” were clearly responsible for terrorism. At the same time, the president seemed to assure Americans that “good Muslims” were anxious to clear their names and consciences of this horrible crime and would undoubtedly support “us” in a war against “them.” But this could not hide the central message of such discourse: unless proved to be “good,” every Muslim was presumed to be “bad.” All Muslims were now under obligations to prove their credentials by joining in a war against “bad Muslims.” (Mamdani 15)

Hyphenated Identity

- Originated in 1890s and used disparagingly as a reference to immigrants who, by brandishing their ethnic origin, allegedly demonstrated an incomplete allegiance to the United States, especially during the World War



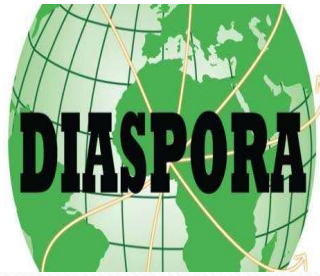
Japanese internment camps established during World War II by President Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066



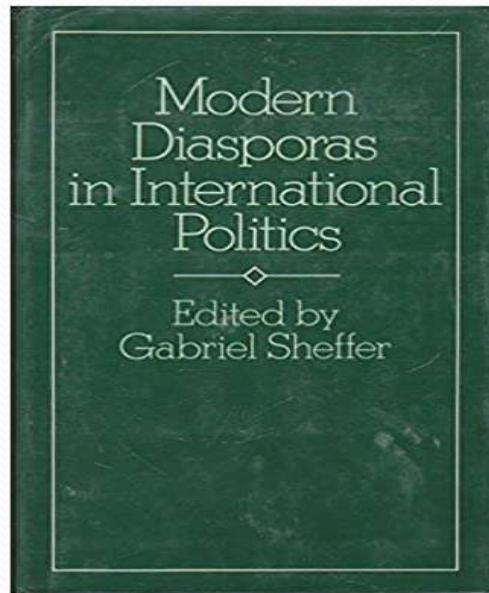
Japanese internment camps established during World War II by President Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066



Characteristics



- People's movement from original center to peripheral or foreign terrains
- Retention of collective memory
- Alienation and anxiety of existence in hostland
- Desire to return



Types

- Victim diaspora (Jews, Palestinians)
- Labour diaspora (South Asian)
- Imperial diaspora (British, Russian)
- Trade diaspora (Lebanese, Chinese, Japanese)
- Deterritorialised diaspora (Sindhi, Parsis)
- Slave diaspora (raw labour in plantation economies of British, Guyana and Caribbean islands)
- Coolie Diaspora (Indian middle/ upper- middle class cyber coolies who are truly transnational)

A.K. Ramanujan

- The diasporic identity, like the transplanted heart, tries to “make connection/ with alien veins, and continue... [its] struggle to be natuarlised :/ beat, and learn to miss a beat in a foreign body.”

(Death and the Good Citizen)

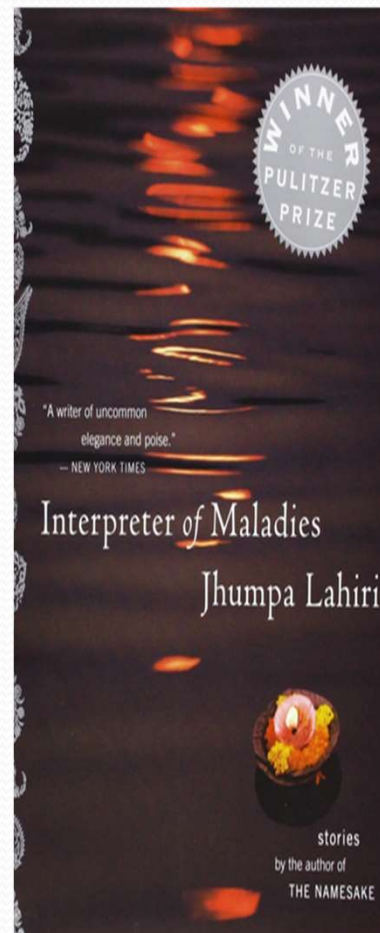


Agha Shahid Ali

- His interior landscape is saturated with a host of scenic aura of Kashmir valley and the cultural heritage of Lucknow (“Banaras thumri-singers”, “Krishna’s flute”)



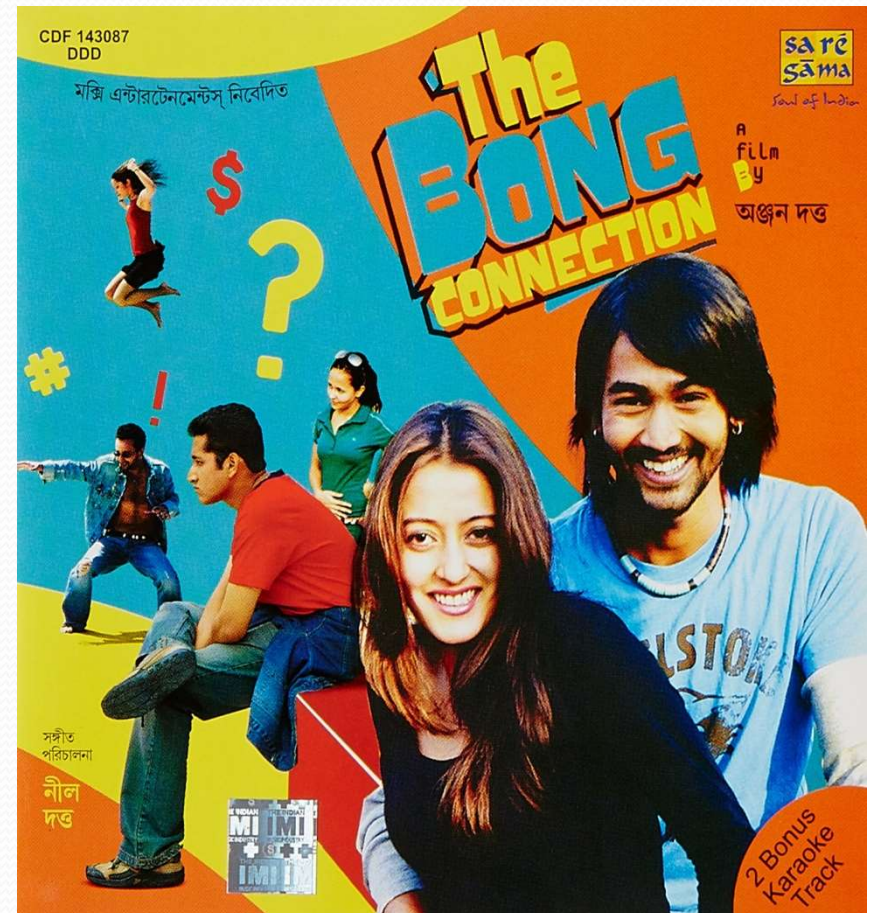
Jhumpa Lahiri's short story *Interpreter of Maladies*



Anjan Dutta's film on Bengali-American Diaspora—*Bong Connection*



- In Anjan Dutta's film (obviously a tribute to Stayajit Ray), Apu leaves a not-so-happening Kolkata for vibrant *videsh*. Only this time, it isn't for bread, but for the proverbial Yankee dollar that makes the American Dream come true for the great Indian middle class turned NRIs.



Cultures clashes in Bong Connection



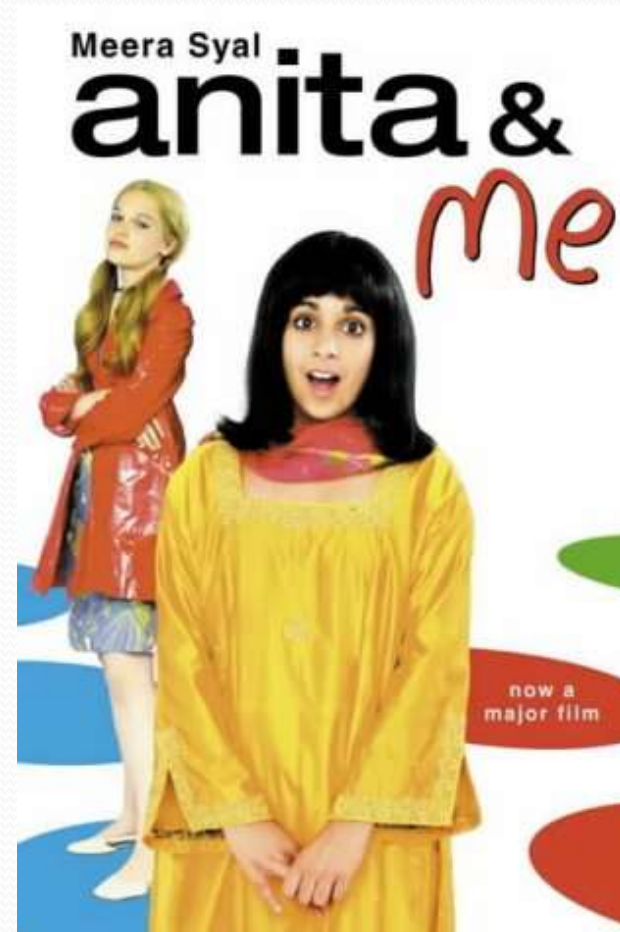
Diasporic crisis: Being occupants of no men's land

*Sujan Majhi re
Kon ghat-e lagibatomarnao
Ami paar-er ashaiboishaachi
Amailohiajao
Kon ghat-e lagibatomarnao
Eipaar-etedorodinai
Oi paar-ete jai cholo jai
Hoi naamarpaar-e jawa
Hoi naamaitomaipawa
Jol choliya, Bohiya jai
Kon ghat-e lagibatomarnao*

O Boatman!
To which bank shall you
anchor your boat?
I'm longing for the shore
When will I reach home?
There are no friends in this
alien shore
Let's go to the other bank
This way we will never reach
home
I never get to meet you
The water goes on flowing



Meera Syal's *Anita and Me*



Anita and Me: Post-imperial British society confronting its colonial past



- *“I had seen how in an instant, those you called friends could suddenly become tormentors, sniffing out a weakness or a difference, turning their own fear of ostracism into a weapon with which they could beat the victim away, afraid that being an outsider, and individual even, was somehow infectious.”*

Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*



South Asian Diaspora facing Western Islamophobia

- Re-reading of Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* in terms of migration and reverse migration foreground the issue of Islamophobia in the mainstream West triggering violence, discrimination, dehumanisation and death.

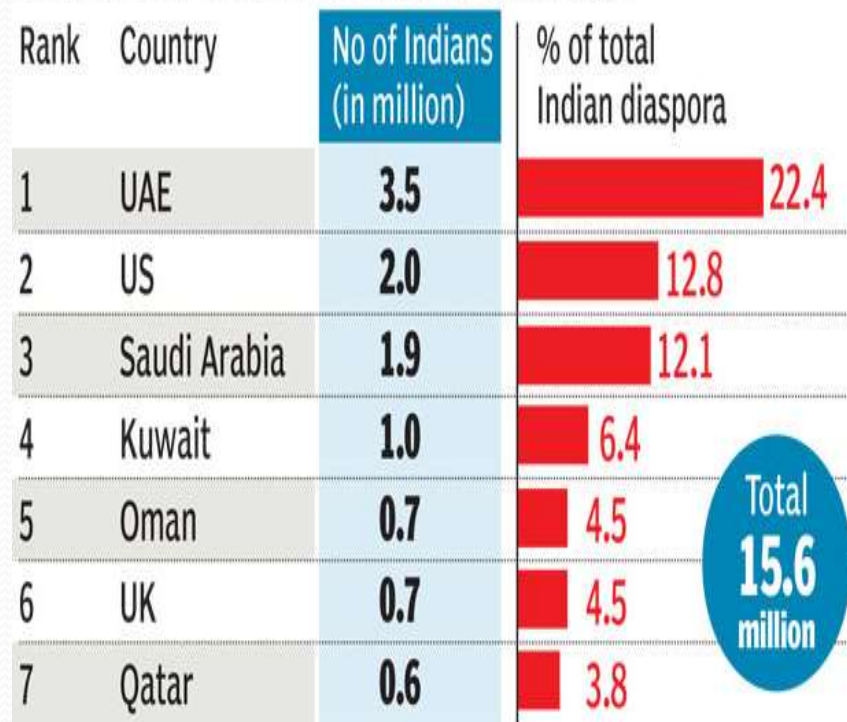
Brick Lane



- Street in East London
- Heart of the Bangladeshi community
- The book by Monica Ali describes the experience of Diaspora in contemporary London

Indian Diaspora

Home away from home: Where Indians go



- According to Amitav Ghosh, “the Indian Diaspora is one of the most important demographic dislocation of Modern Times”, and each day is growing and assuming the form of representative of a significant force in global culture.

Thank you...

