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Book's Title: *Global South Asians: Introducing the Modern Diaspora* (2007)

Writer: **Judith M. Brown,**

Publisher: **Cambridge University Press India Pvt. Ltd. , New Delhi,**

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Brown's book projects not only the historical background of South Asian migration since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century but also their mobility to overseas in globalised and multicultural world of 21<sup>st</sup> century. It chronicles how South Asians voluntarily or involuntarily left their natal/imaginary home and reached the remote East Asian, Middle East, Caribbean, South American and African countries. She didn't stop here, since for her, migration is "never just a matter of a journey" (p. 172); it is "an on-going process, often over several generations" (p. 172). To demonstrate this fact, she also charts the twice migration after decolonisation, even thrice migration in 21<sup>st</sup> century. She also challenges the popular notion that migrants are "problem people" (p. 29); she proves that the diasporic people are not only advantageous to the host societies (chapter 4) but also to the society of their origins, to their ancestral 'home' (chapter 5).

The writer proves wrong to the British imperial image of pre-colonial India as a static society of low mobility (p. 27). Instead, she opines how even before the start of British Raj, South Asians migrated to the different religious places, to the enriched agricultural, industrial territories within South Asian territories. She terms this type of migration as "internal migration" (p. 16). Brown argues that "service in Indian army" (p. 17) forced Indians to cross the Indian boundaries and to reach the new ones, like "from China to the Middle East to the Western Front in the First World War" (20). Some wealthier Indians sailed abroad for educational, professional purposes to the western countries, particularly to Britain. Besides, to preach religion via Ramakrishna Movement, *Arya Samaj* etc., some religious mendicants migrated to Caribbean and so called Natal. Though the economic recession of 1930s and the aftermath of Decolonisation somehow restricted their mobility, but later they moved again to some European and South American countries from their first migrated territories as "twice migrants" (26). The advent of cheap communicative and transport system also widens this flow at present time.

She chronicles in details the multiple and immensely divergent migration trajectories of South Asian groups in the age of Empire: Indentured labour in Mauritius, British Guiana, so called Natal and Trinidad roughly from 1834 to 1917; Contact labour/'coolie' in Burma,

Malaya, Ceylon and other East African countries; Free Indian Movement by 'passenger Indians' in South East Asian Countries like Malaya, Singapore, Hong Kong, and in United States and Canada. Brown pays particular attention to the unique circumstances and experiences of East African Asian migrants from Kenya and Uganda in their places of settlement during decolonisation and globalisation. As the African countries like Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania were gaining independence, the anti-Indian spirit and the policies of Africanisation forced the settlers to re-migrate from former British imperial rule and from Dutch Guiana. These "twice migrants" reached to different European countries like Britain, Netherlands; South American countries like United States and Canada, and other developed countries like Australia, New Zealand etc. Besides, the labour scarcity in Middle East countries like Yemen, Egypt, and Jordan etc. attracted South Asian to move those territories. Over times, the different immigrants policies of world developed countries like of the USA, Canada, and Australia also attracted the skilled labours to move the overseas. This chronological and up-to-date narrative of human mobility marks the development of a truly global but very diverse South Asian diaspora by the start of the twenty-first century.

In next section, the writer describes how South Asians have become successful in diasporic lands. These migrated South Asians are quite successful in establishing an economic base, fashioning dense and supportive social networks. They try to link with their ancestral 'home' by maintaining ethnic religiosity, intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic marriage. They try to be liberal at the time of practising religiosity to suit in new globalised world. They not only made physical religious places like the Swaminarayan temple in north London, The Srivaisnava Temple in Pittsburgh etc., but they also made many supportive and charitable organisations, like Maitri to help diasporic women in familial/domestic violence. All these made the host society their almost sustainable 'home' in new lands, and instead of having diversity among the diasporic people, all these interconnected networks tended to form a homogenous "Imagined Communities" (Benedict Anderson *Imagined Communities*, 1991)

Judith M. Brown demonstrates how South Asians relate to the state and society in their places of settlement. This set of relationships is examined through discussions of ethnicity, national identity and citizenship. We can find dual relation between these diasporic people and the host countries' people. These South Asians are victims of racial abuse, verbal comments, work place bias etc., and these force them to feel insecure and frightened in new lands. Some recent terrible incidents like attack on World Trade Centre (2001) and on British transport system (2005) create Islamophobia among the host people. Thus, diasporic people, particularly Muslim as well as Sikh are being discriminated in every social aspect thereafter. There is also host governments' implied racial bias against these ethnic people. Still they manage to stay in host lands. The US's policy of Commission for Equality's (1976) offer of host citizenship, UK's Labour Party's support to the diasporic people etc. make some manageable atmosphere to sustain their lives in host societies. Besides, the ethnic cuisine, dress codes, films, music, religious books-all creates sustainable environments for diasporic people in foreign lands. The diverse nature of migrant experiences in the areas of health and education are also noticeable things among them.

The writer also studies the patterns of re-involvement of the South Asian diaspora in the subcontinent, ranging from the establishment of print media outlets to keep diaspora communities 'connected' through to involvement in political conflicts on the subcontinent. Different magazines, radio talks, B.B.B. programmes, ethnic dress codes, rituals, modern communicative systems like E-mail and cheap call charge etc. help them to connect and contextualise with their old native 'home'. These diaspora also make charitable and religious

investments in their old homelands in times of crisis. Sometimes they also intervene in the public life of South Asia where conflicts like 1984's riot and Kashmir's problems have erupted from where they came. The *Vishya Hindu Parishad*, *Rastriya Swayemyevak Sangha* and other organisations, built in overseas countries also help the Hindu diasporic communities to connect themselves with their native religion.

Brown's survey is based not only on sociology and history but also on law, migration and gender. This book also touches the film and literary representations of South Asians abroad. Several maps of South Asians' mobility to overseas also give the dexterous pictures, statics and empirical flows of them. The use of footnotes creates more credibility among readers. Besides, Brown's use of different pictures of diasporic people's activities gives this text a multimodal status where message of this book can be transmitted to readers through different semiotic resources. This interdisciplinary approach may be an encyclopaedia for a reader who is totally ignorant about the mobility of diaspora and who will read the book at first time. Thus, Brown's practical demonstration chronicles the real pictures of South Asians which can be the sensitising motif for upcoming diasporic people. This book will be a pathfinder and guide for people who are about to embark into overseas.

### Reference:

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. London and New York: Verso, 2006, rpt.