

Performing the Nation
Memory and Desire in Contemporary Literature

E d i t o r s

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Nation in travel writing, myth, culture and religion; Post-nation; Politics of Language and Language teaching and Sustainable development. The conceptual indeterminacy of the very idea of a nation wavers between expression and silence which the essays collected in this volume try to variedly address.

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From the Introduction (“Narrating the nation”) to Nation and Narration <https://prelectur.stanford.edu/lecturers/bhabha/nation.html>

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formations, rendering the notion of nation as an ideology and fixed space obsolete. Transnationalism, per se, involves migrants, dispersed communities, and all sorts of social formations, such as transnationally active networks, groups and organisations and reflects various intellectual genealogies. Constructed to manage diversity, nation is enacted both at the horizontal and vertical levels built on the idea of a collective historical and mythological memory that keeps reworking itself. It becomes a dynamic process momentarily and powerfully realised through literatures of the world. Literature raises and addresses pertinent questions like how is a nation born? How is it preserved? How is it performed? Is it narrated or does it narrate/perform itself through boundaries porous and stable; through migrants and refugees; through gender and caste? And, is the concept of nation becoming redundant in the 21st century? Is language the hallmark of a community with writers like Conrad and Jhumpa Lahiri unlearning and relearning languages?

The theme of the Conference “Performing the Nation” has been open ended and raised many important and debatable questions. This collection of essays are representative of deliberations at the conference which had a range of sub themes like, Nation and colonization; Narrating the nation in the postcolonial perspective; Transnationalism; Nation and gender; Indigenous people in the national dynamics; Nation and individual rights; Homeland in diasporic imaginary; Memory of war and peace; Partition and psychodynamics of nation; Borders and Refugees;

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**Preservation and Loss, Remembering and
Forgetting:
Cultural Memory of
Bengal and the Bengali Language in Selected
Works of Jhumpa Lahiri**

Tania Chakraverty

Jhumpa Lahiri has written quite a few works of fiction about Bengal, America and beyond. My paper is an attempt to analyze the changing role of memories of Bengal and Bengali culture as reflected in selected works of Jhumpa Lahiri dealing with the Indian, more specifically the Bengali diaspora. Most of Lahiri's stories are set in 1960s or 1970s America. It was the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (officially endorsed in 1968) that led to a tremendous surge of Bengali professionals to the US from the mid-1960s. Sanjukta Dasgupta states that skilled middle-class professionals made a move "from a known but deprived space (read Asia) to the unknown space of promised opportunities (read USA)"