

31

July 2017

Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism

South Asian Diaspora in Spain and its representation in Spanish Cinema

Swagata Basu



GRFDT
Global Research Forum on
Diaspora and Transnationalism

Research Monograph Series

GRFDT Research Monograph Series

GRFDT brings out Research Monograph series every month since January 2015. The Research Monograph covers current researches on Diaspora and International Migration issues. All the papers published in this research Monograph series are peer reviewed. There is no restriction in free use of the material in full or parts. However user must duly acknowledge the source.

Editorial Board

Dr. Anjali Sahay	Associate Professor, International Relations and Political Science at Gannon University, Pennsylvania, USA
Dr. Ankur Datta	Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, South Asian University, New Delhi
Dr. Els van Dongen	Assistant Professor, Nanyang Technological university, Singapore
Dr. Evans Stephen Osabuohien	Dept. of Economics and Development Studies, Covenant University, Nigeria
Prof. Guofu LIU	School of Law, Beijing Institute of Technology, Beijing
Dr. Kumar Mahabir	The University of Trinidad and Tobago, Corinth Teachers College, UTT
Dr. M. Mahalingam	Research Fellow, Centre For Policy Analysis, New Delhi
Dr. Nandini C. Sen	Associate Professor. Cluster Innovation Centre, University of Delhi, New Delhi
Dr. Nayeem Sultana	Associate Professor, Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh
Dr. Ned Bertz	Assistant Professor of History, University of Hawaii
Dr. Raj Bourdouille	Migration and Development Researcher, Centre for Refugee Studies, York University, Toronto, Canada
Dr. Smita Tiwari	Research Fellow, Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi
Dr. Veena Sharma	Independent Scholar on Diaspora, New Delhi
Prof. Vinesh Hookoomsing	University of Mauritius, Mauritius

Managing Editor: Dr. Sadananda Sahoo

Email: editor@grfdt.com

Design and Production: Rakesh Ranjan and Feroz Khan

©Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism (GRFDT) . Printed, designed & circulated by GRFDT

South Asian Diaspora in Spain and its representation in Spanish Cinema

Swagata Basu



Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism

K-1/114, First Floor, C R Park, New Delhi-110019,

Email: contact@grfdt.org, Contact: +91-9818602718

Website- www.grfdt.org,

Facebook- www.facebook.com/diaspora.transnationalism

LinkedIn– www.in.linkedin.com/in/grfdt, Twitter- www.twitter.com/grfdt2012

Abstract

Spain, traditionally a migrant sending country, has received a great number of immigrants since early 2000s. Migrants from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh have formed a small but important South Asian Diaspora in Spain that is often perceived as a homogenous group by the Spanish people. Although the number of migrants in this group is comparatively less than the African, Latin American or East European counterpart, their visibility is much higher in Spanish media (film, television and newspapers). This paper will first argue that the pre-existing interest among the Spanish people in Indian cultural aspects such as Yoga, Hinduism, Bollywood etc govern their interaction with the South Asian Diaspora. The paper will highlight the instances which prove that the migrants from South Asia are perceived as a common group by the Spanish people. Then the paper will focus on the representation of the South Asian Diaspora in films. Through the analysis of films the paper will argue that the interaction between the migrants and the autochthonous plays out in either a framework of multiculturalism or eurocentrism. The failure or success of the interaction and/or the possibility of integration depends on this: whether the *Other* is accepted with its differences (multiculturalism) or expected to adopt the culture of the host society (eurocentrism).

Keywords: Migration, Culture, Representation, South Asian Diaspora, Immigration Cinema

Author

Swagata Basu is an Assistant Professor in School of Languages of Doon University, Dehradun. She teaches Spanish language, culture and literature to students enrolled in the Master of Arts in Spanish (Integrated) Program in Spanish. Previously she was a Junior Research Fellow (fellowship granted by University Grants Commission, India) pursuing interdisciplinary research in Jawaharlal Nehru University in the field of Spanish Cultural Studies. She submitted her Mphil dissertation titled "Multiculturalism in Spanish Immigration Cinema" in Jawaharlal Nehru University. Her research interest includes postcolonial studies, migration studies, globalization, diaspora and intercultural encounters reflected in art and culture especially literature and cinema.

Statement: All the views expressed in the paper are of the author(s).

South Asian Diaspora in Spain and its representation in Spanish Cinema

Swagata Basu

Migration is a very important phenomenon in the world today. The world is becoming more and more interconnected and human mobility is on the rise. Migration flows around the world are constantly growing and impacting nations, citizenships, identities and borders. All growing economies depend upon migrant labour, domestic or international. Spain, a part of the European Union since 1985, is a relatively new migrant receiving country. In fact Spain was a migrant sending country for the longer part of its history. But Spain's location, at a distance of just 14 kilometres from Africa (through the Strait of Gibraltar) and its growing economy made it a gateway to Europe for migrants from all over the world from the 1980s. From around 2000 the population of immigrants saw a major growth which got halted after the 2008 global economic meltdown which had badly affected Spain's economy. As of now immigrants constitute about 10% of Spain's population¹. Out of this South Asians i.e. immigrants from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh (excluding Sri Lanka as it is a negligible minority) constitute a very small number. However, any look at the immigrant barrios or neighbourhoods in Spain reveals that South Asians are a 'visible' group. By this I mean that South Asians can and do reveal and affirm their identity, through clothes, accessories, habits, colours and the kind of business they do for example restaurants selling Indian food, stores selling Indian clothes, artefacts and jewellery etc. This is in sharp contrast to many

other ethnic groups who are much bigger in number but have still not achieved a good level of integration and therefore remain 'invisible' that is, hidden from the gaze of the host society. This can be said of the Maghrebi population who do not enjoy a great deal of acceptability as revealed in many research results¹. This paper intends to look at the South Asian diaspora in Spain and its representation in Spanish cinema.

Before we look into the nature of South Asian immigration to Spain and its diaspora in Spain I would like to make a few clarifications for the term being used in this article and the rationale behind choosing them. I am using a common term South Asians to talk about the people who originate from the nations that are known as India, Pakistan and Bangladesh today. South Asia may also include other countries such as Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Nepal but I believe the way India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are linked to a shared past and common culture is not equally true for those other countries. Besides these nations have not yet registered a significant presence as migrants in Spain. The rationale behind studying these three nationalities together emerge from my observation that while studying migration, diaspora, and transnationalism looking at communities only from national perspective

1 According to the Racism and Xenophobia in Spain Survey, 2009. (Pg. 328.) When asked which group of immigrants receive the least sympathy from a Spanish person, the maximum no. of people mentioned "Morrocans, Moros, North Africans".

can be deceptive. Especially when we look at a diasporic community and try to analyse their experience at a host society we need to acknowledge that the people of the host society may not be fully aware of the national histories of the immigrants. In this paper I will try to show how their interaction could be influenced by age old perceptions, or events going back much beyond modern history, to a pre-nation state scenario. In Spain many such confusing or ambiguous terms circulate in current use. For example the word *indio* in Spanish can refer to any person from India, or anything belonging to or related to India but it can also mean any person of the indigenous races of America or anything related to it². Similarly the word *moro* can refer to anyone from the north African region bordering Spain, or a person who practices Islam, or the historical groups of Islamic people who ruled over Spain between 711 to 1492. Traditionally the term *hindúe* is used for people living in India and any person who practice Hinduism. I therefore feel it will be more useful to look at patterns of the entire South Asian diaspora rather than observing just one nationality.

South Asian Diaspora in Spain (Facts and Figures)

The history of immigration from the Indian subcontinent is very long but is not very well known. Ana Lopez Sala's work in this area is ground breaking. According to her "The history of the Indian community in Spain is fascinating not only for its peculiarity within the general dynamics of immigration to the country, but also because it is one of the least known migration inflows, despite being one of the oldest." (Sala, 2013) The migration of South Asians to Spain happened in different phases. The earliest groups from the Indian subcontinent to settle in Spain were Sindhi merchants who settled in the Canary Islands during the second half of the 19th century. These early migrants were attracted

2 Real Academia Española

by the business opportunities available there as they were free ports. Many of the descendants of these early migrants have become naturalized as Spanish citizens and formed the cream of the business class in the canaries. Sindhi traders migrated in the nineteenth century when India, Pakistan and Bangladesh were part of the same territory known as British India but at present the Sindh province is part of Pakistan. So the Sindhi diaspora may be more appropriately termed as a South Asian diasporic community rather than Indian diaspora. The Sindhi migrant community is a rare case as Spain started to receive a considerable inflow of migration only after the 1970s. By this time the migration from Sindh however halts whereas other waves of migration from South Asia arrive in the decades after the 1980s. In the last decade of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century a sudden growth has been recorded in the population of South Asian origin. A majority of these new South Asian migrants are semi-skilled or unskilled labourers who find employment in sectors which require hard labour such as agriculture and mining. According to the statistics released by the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística* (National Statistical Institute) in June 2016 the total population of Spain is more than 46 million out of which about 4 million are foreigners³. None of the South Asian countries figure in the top fifteen countries sending migrants to Spain. The migration statistics of the community of Madrid show that 13.15% of Madrid's population are constituted by foreigners. The top 15 nationalities in Madrid also does not count any South Asian country. However interestingly both Bangladesh and Pakistan figure in the list of countries registering maximum growth among immigrants between January and June 2015 in the Madrid area⁴. According to the study of Nachatter

3 INE Notas de Prensa (tr. Press Release) dated 30th June 2016

4 Informe de población de origen extranjero empadronada en la Comunidad de Madrid, Realizado

Singh Garha South Asians in Spain are estimated to be 131,230 in 2014⁵. At present Pakistanis are the biggest group followed by Indians and then Bangladeshis although Indians arrived earlier. Although compared to the total population of foreigners in Spain the figure of South Asians is very low, a mere 1.99%. Compared to the total population of Spain it is only 2.08%. However what is interesting about the South Asian population in Spain is the dramatic increase it experienced between 2000 and 2013. The total population of South Asian people multiplied more than ten times to its number within the first decade of the 21st century (Pg. 196, Garha, 2016). This can be attributed to the initiatives to regularize the immigrants in Spain undertaken by the then President José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. Further it can be noted that while the general trend of immigration seems to have slowed down in Spain and in fact an emigration process has started the South Asian community is continuing to grow in Spain.

All the studies of the South Asian diaspora have observed that the South Asian diaspora is dominated by young males who find work in labour intensive sectors. There exist also a migration of highly skilled workers (again male dominated) from India to Spain, a consequence of the internationalization of business and services. India is one of the most important countries in the area of highly skilled labour that the Spanish government is trying to attract through certain policies since 2009. (Gómez Ventura, 2013).

Singh and Galeano Paredes' (2015) study on the spatial distribution, concentration and diversity of the South por el observatorio de Inmigración-centro de estudios y datos. Translation: Report on the Foreign Population Registered in Community of Madrid, done by Observatory of Immigration, Center of Studies and Data. June 2015.

5 South Asian immigration to Spain: Socio-demographic profile and territorial distribution, 2000–2014'. Asia Pacific Migration Journal. Mar. 2016.

Asian community in Spain reveal that the South Asian diasporic community lives in certain specific locations in a densely concentrated manner. The areas chosen by the migrants for settlement are closely linked to the economic activities they are involved in. Therefore early settlement concentrated around the mining regions, later in regions with agricultural activities. The boom in the Spanish real estate industry attracted migrant workers to construction sector in the cities and suburban areas. The most recent settlements have been related to ethnic business (Pg. 22, *ibid*). These are mainly the immigrant neighborhoods of Lavapiés in Madrid and el Raval in Barcelona. According to Lopez Sala earlier the Indian community was concentrated in the Canary Islands, which changed and at present most of the Indian population lives in Catalonia and Valencia primarily; Andalusia and Madrid secondarily. South Asian diaspora is particularly successful in the area of ethnic business. Restaurants offering Indian cuisine, grocery stores that offer products from South Asia, *locutorios* or public phone booths etc. The diasporic community live close to each other which makes their exposure to Spanish natives not very common except for commercial purposes. Many South Asians do not learn the Spanish language. Which makes interaction with natives difficult. Some of these observations are made by Sameer Rawal (2007), an Indian Hispanist who lives and work in Barcelona, Spain. He observes that the South Asian communities and the native Spanish communities may live next to each other but know little about each other except through stereotypes and imaginations which in turn are based on indirect and unreliable sources of information. I quote his own erudite words

“The mutually-delusive ideas are formed based on indirectly available, accessible translations of the culture, provided by sources who in

theory have had direct communicative dialogue with India and vice versa. The misperceptions are reinforced because there is no actual – or psychological – space where things can be seen in their accurate dimensions, and where processes of direct dialogue can be initiated and sustained”. (Pg. 399, Rawal, 2007)

Between 2007, when the above lines were published and the present a lot could have changed but more recent study by Singh and Galeano Paredes also point out that the South Asian diaspora “has showed the prevalence of multicultural mosaic model” in which “the immigrant minorities participate in economic activities but remains socially invisible or encapsulated (Peach, 1997). Another important argument in the favor of this model is that SAP (South Asian Population) has maintained its separate identity and social setup (unlike the assimilation model in which minorities lose their identities and mix with native majority) in the all new territories where they have settled. [...] We can say that the SAP is expanding in the form of homogeneous clusters which are economically integrated to Spanish economy but socially isolated from native society.” (pg. 5, Singh and Paredes, 2015). M.S Aubia and J.R. Roca (2004) conducted a research on Pakistanis in Spain using a collective in Barcelona in 2002. This research shows that most of the Pakistanis live in close ties with friends and relatives from Pakistan in certain neighbourhoods of Barcelona out of which el Raval is the most important. The main business activities they are involved in are grocery stores, butchers, fruits shop, phone booths, mobile phone shops, all at 100 shops and barbers. The researchers observe that the commercial activities carried out by Pakistanis has produced a positive effect on the economy of the neighbourhood, something which was in decline since 1990s. The so called “crisis of the small business” had led to shutting down of small shops in the neighbourhood who found

stiff competition from the big supermarkets. There is a predominance of family owned and run shops among the immigrants that enable these shops to provide more flexible timings to its clients. Indians and Pakistanis have created a niche in the sale of fruits and vegetables at low cost and keeping their shops open for longer duration in the Alicante region of Spain⁶.

So far we have seen research that has showcased the demographic factors of South Asians in Spain, the number of immigrants, the history of their migration, their spatial distribution and settlement patterns, their occupation patterns and gender ratio etc. However no research has yet been conducted on the integration level of South Asians in Spain, factors influencing the process of integration including representation in media. It is in this area that I would like to make a contribution through this paper and further research.

South Asians in Spain, issues of integration and representation.

Any study on migration has to dwell on the aspect of integration of the migrants in the host society. Integration is the process that enables the migrants to live and work in peace and with dignity in the host society. Despite the long tradition of human migration, integration remains a difficult arena. Migrants unfortunately remain outside the mainstream society in many situations. At times they receive racist or xenophobic treatment from the natives and at times they are forgotten or ignored, rendered invisible by the natives. Various models of integration is often proposed and discussed. In the assimilation model integration is only possible when minorities assimilate in to the mainstream through a process that inevitably leads to the minorities’

6 Fruterías de indios y pakistaníes copan el mercado con bajos precios y amplios horarios. [Tr. Fruit shops by Indians and Pakistanis capture the market with low prices and longer serving hours] Información.es. 15.05.2012 <https://goo.gl/DC2Gil>

losing their cultural difference. On the other hand the multiculturalism model gives value to the preservation of cultural identity of the minority during the process of integration. It emanates from the belief that integration should not and need not take place at the cost of the loss of cultural identity or cultural difference of the minority groups in a society. Those who oppose Multiculturalism claim that it encourages creation of ghettos of people who live together but do not co-exist, that is they remain isolated from each other in spite of inhabiting the same space. In the context of migration to Europe in the twentieth century it has been observed that a new kind of racism has emerged which is not based on the idea of superiority of certain races as traditional racism but a negative attitude towards cultural differences along with the fear that cultural differences threaten certain cultures. (Rathzel, 2002) Taguieff used the term differential racism for this. Whereas multiculturalism as a political idea or model of integration constitutes accepting all cultures as being equal and diversity as a good thing for any culture both within and outside (Parekh, 1999).

When we look at the research on South Asia mentioned in the previous part of this paper we can say that what distinguishes the South Asian diaspora in Spain is their ability to preserve the distinctive features of their culture and society and make use of it both for economic benefit and integration into the host society. The fact that many of them participate in ethnic business allows them to assert their identity to a certain extent. They form a small minority but one that is visible, with distinct features. I believe in Spain, South Asian immigrants have been able to turn their culture into a viable business as well as soft power to enjoy better integration while affirming their identity. This makes it integration following the model of Multiculturalism.

A major factor that influences integration of a group

into a society is how they are perceived which shapes and is shaped by how that group is represented in the media circulated in that society. In the article mentioned earlier Sameer Rawal points out that images about South Asia reach the Spain through media in English which arrives in translation. That a direct contact has been missing for several years. However it is also true that Spanish people may not know the history and culture of India in a profound manner but there is a huge amount of interest in things related to India. Cultural aspects perceived to be related to India like Bollywood Dance and Music, Films, Fashion, Food, Yoga, Hinduism etc. are immensely popular in Spain. According to Fernandez, Ángel A (2015) who has studied the media portrayal of Indian community in Spain culture is the topic which has received maximum attention followed by religion and then business. The study shows that media portrayal of Indians in Spain is generally positive. The focus while covering the Indian community is on cultural and religious aspects. It proves that Cultural aspects such as “Indian cultural festivals, yoga, cuisine, marriage ceremonies, music, art and films (especially from Bollywood) are quite popular in the Spanish media.” I would like to argue that migrants play a role in popularizing these aspects and at the same time benefit from this popularity. A very interesting example of this interest for anything Indian can be seen in BollyMadrid. It is a festival of ‘Bollywood and Indian Culture’ that takes place in Lavapies every year since the last 8 years. Bollywood films are screened, groups and individual artistes perform Bollywood dance, there are stalls selling typical Indian food stuff, costumes and jewellery. There are also presence of NGOs who work in India. What is surprising is that it is called Festival of Indian Culture but what is celebrated really is Bollywood, mainstream commercial Hindi cinema, its dance and music, which is a transnational cultural phenomenon with as many followers in Pakistan and Bangladesh as in India. And

many of the people involved in selling the supposedly Indian stuff are also Bangladeshis and Pakistani migrants. From the point of view of nationalism this may seem problematic at many levels. Does India or Bollywood subsume the ethnic identity of other South Asian people? Does this festival truly represent India or even a small part of its diversity or does it generate stereotypical images about India? Does it represent the culture of geo-political South Asia? Perhaps not. But through the lens of transnationalism we can say that the festival actually celebrates the culture of the South Asian diaspora in Spain. Those aspects of the diaspora that unites Indians, Bangladeshis and Pakistanis their culture that they know will appeal to the host society. The festival has grown each year and seen participation by a huge number of Spanish people. It is not directed towards an immigrant audience. The audience is Spanish. The performers are the people of South Asian diaspora in and beyond Spain.



Figure 1. Logo of BollyMadrid.

South Asians Represented in Spanish Immigration Cinema.

The unprecedented levels of human migration towards Europe in the twentieth century has produced new challenges to European societies in dealing with the ethnic and cultural diversity of its new inhabitants. Art, Cinema, Literature etc. have all reflected upon these changes. According to Isolina Ballesteros a new genre

of cinema can be identified in Europe which she calls Immigration Cinema that fictionalizes “a concrete social phenomenon—immigration and the unfortunate but unavoidable ramifications of racism and xenophobia—and a social group, immigrants and their marginal allies, the “undesirables” of society that constitute the ampler category of Otherness.” In my MPhil dissertation I have shown that in Spain too such a cinema has developed which I have termed Spanish immigration cinema, a broad category of cinema which represents the social phenomenon of migration in its various facets. In a previous study I have shown that the majority of films in Spain dealing with migration try to focus on the human aspect of the migrants, of the desire to pursue the dream for a better life, and highlight the similarity in human experiences irrespective of nationality. These are the alternative representation of migrants compared to the sensationalist and negative images circulated by newspapers and television news channels. When we analyse the entire body of immigration cinema of Spain we do find representation of a variety of nationalities such as Africans, Latin Americans and Asians. In this paper I am focussing on the representation of South Asians migrants within Spanish immigration cinema. Two feature films and one made for TV film has been made with leading characters/protagonists having a South Asian identity. *Tomándote* (2000) by Isabel Gardela, *El Próximo Oriente* (2006) by Fernando Colomo and *Masala* (2007) by Salvador Calvo. This is not a small number if we consider the small size of Spanish film industry and the actual percentage of South Asian among the immigrants in Spain. The first two films mentioned are feature films, both of them can be termed intercultural romance or intercultural romantic comedy. *Masala* is a social cause based film about a teacher of a school with several migrant children.

In *Tomándote* a Catalan woman begins to have a romantic relationship with Jalil, an Indian Muslim

florist who lives in Barcelona. In spite of the genuine attraction and affection the two have for each other their relationship ultimately fails due to the several cultural differences between the two. The woman being a writer of romantic novels uses her experience with Jalil to develop a book that gains a lot of popularity because of the exotic element in it.

In *Proximo Oriente* a shy Madrilenian man is attracted to a Bangladeshi woman who actually has a relationship with his married brother. When the girl gets pregnant and faces difficulty in dealing with the situation the man proposes to enter into a false marriage to avoid problems with the family. Through the process of this false marriage the Spanish man comes to know about the life and culture of this Bangladeshi family, set of parents and their three daughters. The two end up falling in love with each other and live a happy life.

Masala is a story of the challenges of running a school in an immigrant neighbourhood where children are unruly, undisciplined and unmotivated to study mainly because of the cultural and economic crisis that is part of their immigrant lives. A motivated and dedicated music teacher tries to bring a change of attitude among the students through music and creativity. One of the students of this group of students is an Indian girl who loves to sing Hindi film songs. Although her parents are against her desire to pursue music she gathers the courage to pursue her passion by the end of the film. She also tries to escape the fate of getting married at a young age to a boy chosen by her parents.

The three movies are very different in the way they deal with the theme of migration in general and that of South Asian migrants in particular. *Tomandote* depicts a failed intercultural romance. It alludes to the difficulty in surpassing cultural differences. *Proximo Oriente* is a celebration of multicultural life in Lavapiés with all its colour, sound and sights. *Masala* is slightly

stereotypical in its representation of an adolescent girl who is struggling with the cultural difference at home and outside.

When we analyse these three films through the framework developed by Ella Shohat and Robert Stam in their seminal work *Unthinking Eurocentrism* we would find that the interaction between the migrants and the autochthonous plays out in either a framework of multiculturalism or eurocentrism. Shohat and Stam posit that mainstream media in the west has been filled with Eurocentrism which “bifurcates the world into the “West and the Rest” and is the ideology that sees Europe as the unique source of meaning, as the world’s centre of gravity, as ontological reality to the rest of the world’s shadow”. Multiculturalism is an assault on Eurocentrism, which means seeing world history and contemporary social life from the perspective of the “radical equality of peoples in status, potential, and rights. Multiculturalism decolonizes representation not only in terms of cultural artefacts-literary canons, museum exhibit, film series- but also in terms of power relations between communities.” Representation’s importance in identity formation and perception has been highlighted by Stuart Hall who has said that “Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a ‘production’, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation.” (Hall 1990, 222). It is obvious that perception plays a big role in integration. How a community is viewed by another is of great importance in their possibility of co-existence. And representation leaves a major impact on the perception of a community by those who are new at knowing them. It is therefore interesting to observe how South Asians are represented in Spanish cinema. We see that Spanish filmmakers have portrayed South Asian characters as belonging to a very

different culture. We can observe in all the films that the culture of people from South Asia is seen as being very different from that of Spain, very conservative, somewhat patriarchal, governed by rules and morals etc which at times cause clashes or differences with the autochthonous. But the way the differences are represented is different in each film. As Multiculturalism seeks respect for different cultures, representing the cultural difference is not at all problematic. The key is to observe how those differences are portrayed. Has difference been represented as something negative, exceptional, surprising and intolerable or acceptable and normal.

In *Masala* we see only a small focus on the Indian girl named Priya who is very shy but loves to sing. It is a film with several characters from different communities with different problems. Priya's family runs a small store and are shown to be facing discrimination at the hand of the authorities in one scene. Priya is a very talented singer but is not encouraged by her parents to sing. In a conversation with the Music teacher in school Priya describes how Bollywood film songs are, how there is no kissing etc. in it, she describes how when it rains the clothes of female stars stick to their bodies making them more attractive for men. Her parents get upset upon knowing that she plans to sing for a show in front of an audience. They immediately arrange her marriage. She also says that she will be examined by a doctor to get a "virginity certificate" before getting married. As she has been a little intimate with a boy she is afraid that she will be caught although in reality she did not have sexual intercourse. As we can see all of these are very stereotypical ideas that the Spanish people may have about an Indian girl: a controlled life, controlled sexuality, a docile nature and a love for Bollywood. It is not a nuanced representation. A purpose of the film seem to be to showcase the problems of running a

public school in an immigrant neighbourhood with lack of funds etc. and music and creativity as the solution to those social obstacles. So Priya is present in the film to represent the problems of an Indian/South Asian girl. Along with that she represents the Bollywood music style and impresses the Spanish audience with her singing in Hindi.

In case of *Tomandote* differences has been shown to be unsurpassable therefore coexistence fails. Jalil is a conservative Muslim who is shown to have several issues with Gabi's lifestyle. Gabi is shown to have been with Jalil only to extract experience that she could use for writing a book. In this film both the characters seem to be stereo typical representation of their respective identity without nuances. Since the film is shown through the point of view of Gabi, the audience is bound to identify with Gabi and find the thoughts and actions of Jalil and other minor characters like Taj Mahal a Pakistani delivery boy at first amusing and intriguing but ultimately annoying. Daniela Flesler has seen this film as a failed inter cultural Romance, a kind of film that alludes to the impossibility of coexisting with the 'Other'. Another problem with this film is although Jalil is Indian his identity in the film is limited to his being a Muslim. It is quite surprising that although Pakistanis are much higher in number particularly in Barcelona the film shows Jalil as Indian but then hardly touches upon any *Indianness*. The only Indian aspect in Jalil is his sexual performance which incorporates the art of *Kama Sutra*. This makes the representation in this film Eurocentric. Gabi's world is the norm and Jalil's views seem to be the exception that Gabi tries to understand but ultimately rejects. Jalil is the 'exotic Other', attractive and repulsive at the same time. Gabi is the European who wants to study and know about the 'Other' objectively, like Orientalists did, only to find reasons to reject it as inferior of it (Said, 1978).

The last film to be analysed is on the other hand multicultural. It does not privilege the point of view of any one character therefore any one culture. As multiculturalism believes in a multicentered world, this film is multicentered as apart from the main couple many other characters and their little stories gain importance: the band of Peruvian musicians, Abdul a Christian who converted to Islam influenced by Sufi, the Spanish lady who owns a Butchers shop. The film was shot in Lavapiés. In fact Lavapiés: a multicultural neighbourhood is the true protagonist of the film. The argument is this: Cain is chubby, shy, does not have much luck with women and Abel, his brother is handsome, married and has twin daughters. Their neighbours are a Bangladeshi family who has set up a restaurant “Shonar Bangla” (which means Golden Bengal) which does not earn much. The father, a very orthodox Muslim is strict and does not serve alcohol at his restaurant. Conflict arises between him and Aisha, the eldest daughter, for her work in a bank and her liberal lifestyle. Abel gets Aisha pregnant but the family of Aisha believes that Cain is the father. Cain likes Aisha from the beginning and decides to help her by having a fake wedding with her. But to marry her, he needs to adopt Islam. So begins the process of approaching a completely different culture for Cain, the culture of a Bangladeshi Muslim family. Here the director does not make the common mistake of homogenizing the identities: Muslim and Spanish. He does not forget that the traditions and customs of the family of Aisha does not depend only on their religion. Their nationality also influences and also the personalities of each character differs and provide them an individuality. Aisha is more rebellious than her two sisters. Aisha’s mother is more liberal than the father. The same goes with the natives who are very different people, and they respond very differently to the same situations. With the multiplicity of characters, all receiving equal

importance, the film rejects a Eurocentric tendency of making generalizations and showcase a multicultural society. And also it reflects that no attitude or thought is permanent and unchanging. With coexistence people’s positions and attitude change. Bhikhu Parekh said that cultural diversity in a plane of equality offers a wide range of possibilities for human beings because no culture, no matter how rich, can cover all possibilities of human life. So “different cultures complement each other and correct, expand each other’s horizon of thought and alert each other to new forms of human fulfillment (Parekh, 2006, 167).” *Proximo Oriente* reflects the enriching value of intercultural contacts. All characters undergo a change when they come in contact with people from other cultures in this film. On one hand the owner of the Butchers change by starting to sell *Halal* meat and thereby gain new clients, on the other hand the Bangladeshi family also bend their rules and start to serve alcohol. The restaurant of the Bangladeshi family goes through several changes, at first it is not at all popular, later it is called Taj Mahal, appropriating an Indian identity, but still it is not that popular, although it does a little better. Finally it becomes a music bar which is hugely popular only after Aisha and her sisters start to perform Bengali music there which attracts a new kind of crowd. We see then how culture that is different helps the immigrants in integrating and gaining acceptance. It needs to be clarified that the film does not exoticize the music or the bodies of these South Asian women and the music used in the film is not Bollywood music unlike *Masala*. Music plays a very important role in this film and it also won a Goya nomination for the best original music in a film. A band of Peruvian musicians play and sing a Native American song at the wedding of Aisha and Cain. The wedding takes place according to Islamic laws. But the red sari that Aisha wears is commonly worn by the Bride in Hindu weddings in India. The film ends with the father of Aisha accepting Cain in spite of

the initial lies that he had said to her and realizing that his family desires more liberty. Aisha too recognizes that she truly loves Cain. While in reality immigrants are the ones who struggle to gain acceptance in the host society in this film at a personal level a native is shown to be desiring acceptance by the immigrant family. In this way this film breaks the typical structure of initial rejection, eventual identification and then acceptance of the immigrant by the native of many films in Spanish Immigration Cinema.

Conclusion

We have seen in this paper first of all how the South Asian Diaspora is growing in Spain and how they are a visible group who are able to affirm their distinct cultural identity. Further they are able to use their culture and convert into an advantage that helps them gain economic success and social acceptance. We have been able to see that in spite of the fact that a tendency to view South Asians through a stereotypical and narrow way does exist, there is also a great amount of interest for South Asians among Spain. Spanish people imagine Indians, Bangladeshi and Pakistanis in a more or less similar vein which in turn may be attributed to the role Bollywood plays in the lives of all these communities both at home and in the diaspora. This can be seen from the films that have been analysed which do not make clear distinctions between Indians, Bangladeshi and Pakistanis. An aspect that has been left for further discussion in this paper is the role played by religion in the difference among the perception of South Asians for Spanish people. Out of the three films analysed, two of the main South Asian characters were Muslim, while one was Hindu. These films do not suggest that a non-Muslim person of South Asia would enjoy better integration compared to a Muslim one. However many scholars argue⁷ that there is an inherent

7 See Daniela Flesler. The Return of the Moor.

anti-Islamic feeling in Spain due to the historical rule of Moors (Moros in Spanish) and also because of the participation of Moroccan (also known as Moros) in the Spanish Civil War. The films do reflect that any Muslim may be termed a Moro in Spain, whether they are from North Africa or India. In that case a Muslim Indian will be caught between these two opposite imaginations “positive South Asian/Indian and negative Muslim/Moro”. What a Spanish person would perceive such a person as is a question that remains open for further research.

References

- Aubia, Montserrat Solé and Rodríguez Roca, Josep. (2004). *Pakistaníes en España: un estudio basado en el colectivo de la ciudad de Barcelona*. Revista CIDOB d’Afers Internacionals, No. 68, p. 97-118.
- Ballesteros, Isolina. (2009). «“Immigration Cinema” in/and the European Union.» *Cultural and Media Studies. European Perspectives Vol I*. Ed. María Pilar Rodríguez. Nevada: University of Nevada Press. 189-215.
- Cea D’Ancona, M^a Ángeles and Valles Martínez, Miguel S. (2009). “Percepción de la presencia de inmigrantes en España” Encuesta CIS-OBEXE de septiembre-octubre de 2008. EVOLUCIÓN DEL RACISMO Y LA XENOFOBIA EN ESPAÑA [Informe 2009] [Tr. Perception of the presence of immigrants in Spain. Survey CIS OBEXE Sept-Oct 2008. Evolution of Racism and Xenophobia in Spain. Report 2009]
- Fernández, Ángel Alcalde. (2015). Media portrayal of the Indian community in Spain, DEMO-India RR 2015/06, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, San Domenico di Fiesole (FI): European University Institute.
- Flesler, Daniela. (2004) «New racism, intercultural romance, and the immigration question in contemporary Spanish cinema.» *Studies in Hispanic Cinemas Volume I.2* Pg.103-118
- Hall, Stuart. (1990). «Cultural Identity and Diaspora.» *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. Ed. Johnathan Rutherford. London: Lawrence & Wishart. 222-237.
- Informe de población de origen extranjero empadronada en la

Comunidad de Madrid, (2015). Realizado por el observatorio de Inmigración-centro de estudios y datos. [Translation: Report on the Foreign Population Registered in Community of Madrid, done by Observatory of Immigration, Center of Studies and Data.]

López-Sala, Ana. (2013). From Traders to Workers: Indian Immigration in Spain, CARIM-India RR 2013/02, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, San Domenico di Fiesole (FI): European University Institute.

Parekh, Bhikhu. (2006). Rethinking Multiculturalism. Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

—. «What is Multiculturalism?» Seminar 484 (1999): Web. Accessed 19 Oct 2016. <<http://www.india-seminar.com/1999/484.htm>>.

Rathzel, Nora. (2002) “Developments in Theories of Racism.” Europe’s New Racism: Causes, Manifestations and Solutions. Ed. Evens Foundation. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books. 3-26.

Sameer Rawal. (2007) South Asian “Adda” in Barcelona. Sarai Reader. Frontiers. Pp. 396 to 403 Available online at <http://sarai.net/sarai-reader-07-frontiers/>

Shohat, Ella, and Robert Stam. (1994)*Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*. London; New York: Routledge. Print.

Singh Garha, Nachatter, Galeano, Juan and Domingo Valls, Andreu. (2016) South Asian immigration to Spain: Socio-demographic profile and territorial distribution, 2000–2014. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, Vol. 25(2) 191–205.

Singh, N., & Galeano Paredes, J. (2015). Concentration and diversity of south asian population in Spain. In F. J. García Castaño, A. Megías Megías, & J. Ortega Torres (Eds.), *Actas del VIII Congreso sobre Migraciones Internacionales en España (Granada, 16-18 de septiembre de 2015)* (pp. S07/17–S07/34). Granada: Instituto de Migraciones.

Ventura, Germán Gómez. (2013). Highly Skilled Indian Migrant Population in Spain, CARIM-India RR 2013/39, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, San Domenico di Fiesole (FI): European University Institute.

(Endnotes)

1 According to the release by INE (National Statistical Institute) of Spain



GRFDT

Global Research Forum on
Diaspora and Transnationalism

Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism (GRFDT) is a consortium of researchers and policy makers drawn from national and international universities, institutes and organizations. GRFDT is presently based in India and is shaping as the largest such group focusing specifically on the issues related to diaspora and transnationalism.

The GRFDT works as an academic and policy think tank by engaging national and international experts from academics, practitioners and policy makers in a broad range of areas such as migration policies, transnational linkages of development, human rights, culture, gender to mention a few. In the changing global environment of academic research and policy making, the role of GRFDT will be of immense help to the various stakeholders. Many developing countries cannot afford to miss the opportunity to harness the knowledge revolution of the present era. The engagement of diaspora with various platform need to be reassessed in the present context to engage them in the best possible manner for the development human societies by providing policy in-put at the national and global context.