

Exile, identity, and nostalgia: a study of diasporic themes in the novels of Sunetra Gupta

Dr. Deepa M Madiwal

Submitted: 10- Mar -2026 Revised: 18-Mar-2026 Accepted: 15-Apr 2026 Published: 30-Apr-2026

Manuscript ID:

IJEWLPSIR-2026-030214



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20914919

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20914919>

Volume: 3

Issue: 2

Month: April 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

Assistant Professor, Department of
English, Devchand College, Arjunnagar
Tq. Kagal, Dist. Kolhapur, State.
Maharashtra
Email: deepamadiwal021@gmail.com

How to cite this article:
Madiwal, D. M. (2026). Exile, identity,
and nostalgia: a study of diasporic
themes in the novels of Sunetra Gupta.
*International Journal of English and
World Languages & Literature
Paradigm Shift in International
Research*, 3(2), 50–51.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20914919>

Address for correspondence:
Dr. Deepa M Madiwal
Assistant Professor, Department of
English, Devchand College, Arjunnagar
Tq. Kagal, Dist. Kolhapur, State.
Maharashtra
Email: deepamadiwal021@gmail.com

Abstract

Diasporic literature reflects the emotional, cultural, and psychological experiences of people living away from their homeland. The novels of Sunetra Gupta explore the themes of exile, identity, and nostalgia within the broader context of migration and cultural displacement. Through poetic language and reflective narratives, Gupta portrays characters who struggle to reconcile their memories of home with the realities of life in foreign lands. This article examines how Gupta's fiction represents the complexities of diasporic existence, focusing on the emotional sense of exile, the negotiation of identity, and the persistent nostalgia for homeland.

The present article examines how Gupta's novels portray the emotional and cultural dimensions of diaspora. By analyzing the themes of exile, identity, and nostalgia in selected works, the study aims to highlight the ways in which Gupta represents the complexities of diaspora life. It also seeks to demonstrate how her fiction contributes to broader discussions in diasporic and postcolonial literary studies by offering nuanced insights into displacement, memory, and cultural belonging.

Key words: Diaspora, exile, nostalgia, reconcile, displacement, hybridity etc.

Introduction

Diaspora has become a significant theme in contemporary literature, particularly among writers who depict the experiences of migration and cross-cultural encounters. In this context, the novels of Sunetra Gupta provide profound insights into the emotional and cultural dimensions of diasporic life. Born in India and later settled in Britain, Gupta's personal background influences her literary exploration of displacement, belonging, and identity.

Her novels often depict characters who live between cultures, languages, and memories. Works such as *Memories of Rain*, *The Glassblower's Breath*, and *Moonlight into Marzipan* reveal how diasporic individuals experience emotional exile, negotiate hybrid identities, and remain deeply connected to their homeland through nostalgia.

One of the defining characteristics of Gupta's novels is her focus on the inner emotional lives of diasporic characters. Rather than presenting migration merely as a physical movement from one country to another, she examines the profound psychological transformations that accompany displacement. Her characters often struggle with feelings of isolation, cultural alienation, and fragmented identity. These emotional conflicts highlight the complex nature of diasporic existence where individuals must negotiate multiple culture affiliation and redefine their sense of self.

Exile and Emotional Displacement

In Gupta's fiction, exile is not limited to physical migration but also includes emotional and psychological alienation. Characters often feel detached from both their native culture and their adopted society. This sense of in-betweenness is a defining characteristic of diasporic experience.

In *Memories of Rain*, the protagonist Moni moves to England after marrying an Englishman. Despite living in a new cultural environment, she experiences intense loneliness and emotional isolation. Her memories of India contrast sharply with her present life in England, highlighting the emotional consequences of migration. Through Moni's experiences, Gupta illustrates how exile can lead to a deep sense of cultural and personal fragmentation.

Identity and Cultural Hybridity

The search for identity is another important aspect of Gupta's diasporic narratives. Characters often struggle to balance their cultural heritage with the expectations of the host society. Identity in Gupta's novels is fluid and continuously shaped by memory, relationships, and cultural encounters.

In *The Glassblower's Breath*, the narrative reflects on personal transformation and the influence of migration on self-perception. The characters attempt to reconcile their past experiences with their present realities. This negotiation of identity demonstrates the complexities of living between multiple cultures and traditions.

Furthermore, Gupta's narratives reflect the concept of cultural hybridity, a key idea in diasporic and postcolonial studies. Her characters inhabit spaces where different cultural intersect, leading to the formation of hybrid identities that change traditional notions of belonging. This cultural negotiation reveals the dynamic nature of identity in diasporic context, where individuals must constantly adapt to changing social and cultural environments.

Nostalgia and the Memory of Homeland

Nostalgia plays a powerful role in Gupta's depiction of diasporic life. Her characters often revisit memories of their homeland, family, and childhood. These memories provide emotional comfort but also intensify the feeling of separation from home.

In *Moonlight into Marzipan*, memory becomes a bridge that connects the past and the present. The recollection of cultural traditions, landscapes, and relationships keeps the homeland alive in the minds of diasporic individuals. Nostalgia therefore functions both as a source of identity and as a reminder of loss.

In novels such as *Memories of Rain*, *The Glassblower's Breath*, and *Moonlight into Marzipan*, Gupta explores the themes of exile, identity, and nostalgia with remarkable sensitivity. These works portray characters who often feel emotionally displaced even while living in cosmopolitan environment. Their memories of homeland, family traditions, and cultural roots remain central to their sense of identity. As a result, nostalgia becomes a recurring motif that connects that past with the present.

Narrative Style and Representation of Diaspora

Gupta's narrative style is characterized by lyrical language, introspective storytelling, and fragmented narrative structures. These stylistic elements reflect the fragmented nature of diasporic identity. Her use of memory, shifting perspectives, and poetic imagery allows readers to experience the emotional depth of displacement and longing.

Through her narrative techniques, Gupta successfully captures the psychological complexities of diaspora and the subtle ways in which migration influences personal relationships and cultural identity.

Ultimately, the novels of Sunetra Gupta reveal that diaspora is not merely a geographical condition but a deeply emotional and psychological experience. Through her evocative storytelling and introspective characterization Gupta captures the intricate relationship between memory, migration, and identity, making her work a valuable contribution to the study of diasporic literature.

Conclusion

The novels of Sunetra Gupta provide a rich exploration of diasporic themes such as exile, identity, and nostalgia. By portraying characters who live between cultures and memories, Gupta highlights the emotional challenges and cultural negotiations associated with migration. Her works reveal that diaspora is not only a geographical movement but also a profound psychological and emotional journey.

Through her lyrical storytelling and deep understanding of human emotions, Gupta contributes significantly to contemporary diasporic literature, offering readers a nuanced understanding of displacement, belonging, and cultural identity.

Acknowledgment

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who supported me in the completion of this study on *Border Literature: Identity, Migration and Cultural Hybridity in Tomb of Sand* by Geetanjali Shree.

I am deeply indebted to my mentor/guide for their invaluable guidance, insightful suggestions, and continuous encouragement throughout this work. Their intellectual support enabled me to critically engage with the themes of identity, migration, borders, and cultural hybridity as depicted in *Tomb of Sand*.

I also extend my heartfelt thanks to my teachers and the department for providing the academic environment and resources necessary for this research. Their encouragement played a vital role in shaping my analytical perspective.

I am grateful to my friends and peers for their support, meaningful discussions, and motivation during the course of this study. Their perspectives enriched my understanding and made the research process more engaging.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family for their unwavering support, patience, and belief in me. Their encouragement has been a constant source of strength.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

References

1. Sunetra Gupta. *Memories of Rain*. London: Phoenix House, 1992
2. Sunetra Gupta. *The Glassblower's Breath*. London: Orion Publishing, 1993.
3. Sunetra Gupta. *Moonlight into Marzipan*. London: Orion Publishing, 1995.
4. Stuart Hall. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." In *Identity: Community, Cultural, Difference*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990
5. Homi K. Bhabha. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994
6. Robin Cohen. *Global Diaspora: An Introduction*. London: Routledge, 1997.