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Encyclopedic Dictionary of Diasporic Indian English Writing

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Parajuly, Prajwal (1984–)

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Prajwal Parajuly was born on 24 October 1984 to an Indian father, Bipin Chandra Sharma, and a Nepalese mother, Sarala Bhattarai, in Gangtok, Sikkim, India. He was educated at Tashi Namgyal Academy, Gangtok. Thereafter, he received a BA in Communication with an emphasis on journalism from Truman State University, Kirksville, USA, in 2006, and a Master of Studies in Creative Writing from the University of Oxford, UK, in 2012. He worked as an advertising executive at *The Village Voice* and wrote for *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, the *New Statesman*, and the BBC, before committing to a writing career. He has two major publications till date: *The Gurkha's Daughter: Stories* (2012) and *Land Where I Flee* (2013). His writing focuses primarily on the experiences, negotiations, and everyday realities of Indian Nepali immigrants, especially with narratives that deal with how the Nepali-speaking people of India navigate their complex identity politics in both national and international settings. As such, his texts rethink what it means to be a Gurkha in the diasporic context in contemporary times.

The Gurkha's Daughter consists of eight stories that depict the dilemmas in the lives of the Nepali-speaking diasporic characters, spanning locales in Bhutan, India, Nepal, and the USA. The themes range from diasporic traditions and politics of belonging to the accompanying struggles with racial stereotypes and caste-based marginalization. In "No Land Is Her Land," a Bhutanese Nepali Lhotshampa refugee, Anamika, lives a life of in-betweenness in a refugee camp in Nepal. Despite the racial and sexist taunts and hostility from the Nepalese locals, Anamika's sense of belonging to the refugee camp is symptomatic of the fact that post-expatriation, she no longer has any notion of belonging to her homeland as a Nepali-origin exile. Furthermore, despite ethnic, linguistic, and cultural similarities, the sense of non-belonging between Nepalese citizens and Nepali Bhutanese refugees is what makes the story both relevant and poignant. "The Immigrants," set in Manhattan in the USA, depicts the lives of two Nepali-speaking individuals trying to belong to the country they desire to call home: Sabitri, a Diversity-Visa (DV) Lottery winner from Nepal struggling as a maidservant; and Amit, a Green Card-expectant from India with a fulfilling IT job and a property in Harlem. Using the examples of how differently momo is prepared by Nepali people in Nepal and in India and the way the Nepali language is spoken differently by the two Nepali diasporans, contingent immigrant subjectivity reveals the unique and problematic ways in which diasporic contexts force diasporans to rethink their identity politics outside the Indian subcontinent.

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Parajuly's novel, *Land Where I Flee,* is the story of diasporic Indian Nepali siblings who return to their erstwhile hometown Gangtok in India to attend the "Chaurasi" ceremony, celebrating the eighty-fourth birthday of their grandmother, Chitralekha. The novel interweaves themes of resettlement, dislocation, and alienation vis-à-vis the intersectional strands of caste, class, gender, and homosexuality. The four grandchildren represent varied aspects of the Indian Nepali diaspora: Agastaya, a New York-based doctor who is gay and uneasy with openly asserting his sexuality in both the USA and India; Bhagwati, a struggling Bhutanese Nepali refugee in Boulder in the USA who feels ostracized for marrying a low caste man against the wishes of her Brahmin grandmother; Manasa, an Oxford-educated woman in London, who is stuck taking care of her aging father-in-law; and Ruthwa, an ambitious writer who has brought shame to his family by his scandalous writings. The meeting of the siblings after a long period of absence from their lost/left behind homeland to attempt a family reunion forms the crux of the narrative's focus on diasporic politics. There is also Chitralekha's caretaker, the eunuch Prasanti from Darjeeling, who has also been fighting the fear of non-belonging due to her queer identity. As the first literary text in English that deals with queerness in Sikkim and Darjeeling Hills, Parajuly's novel is crucial for the queer diasporic discourse in the Eastern Himalaya region.

Parajuly's books have garnered much critical praise and received international fame. *The Gurkha's Daughter* was shortlisted for the 2013 Dylan Thomas Prize and long listed for the Story Prize the same year. In the *Hindustan Times*, Manjula Narayan writes that the book, "with its quiet irony and fluid writing [,] is the best short story collection you have read in a while." In his review for *The Guardian*, John Garth calls the book "crisp, inventive and insightful." *Land Where I Flee* was translated and published in French as *Fuit et Revenir* in 2020, and Parajuly received a literary award from Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie Franco Indienne in 2022 for his work. In 2020, it was nominated for France's First Novel Prize and was a finalist for the Émile Guimet Prize for Asian Literature.

Further Reading

Chamling, Rosy. "From Roots to Routes: Navigating Diasporic Sensibility in Prajwal Parajuly's *The Gurkha's Daughter*." *Journal of Exclusion Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2019, pp. 46–61.

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Parameswaran, Uma (1938–)

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A successful writer of fiction, poetry, drama, and literary criticism, Uma Parameswaran's sensibility has been shaped by many cities. She was born to Tamil parents in Chennai (Madras), raised in Jabalpur, did her PhD in the United States, and then pursued an academic career in Canada. She did her BA at Jabalpur University, her MA at Nagpur University, another MA at Indiana University, and finally her PhD at Michigan State University in 1972. She won the Fulbright scholarship to study for her master's at Indiana University. After completing her PhD, she worked as a professor of English at the University of Winnipeg, Canada, and is now a retired professor.

Parameswaran has won many awards: the Lady Eaton Award (1967), for *The Door I Shut Behind Me;* Caribe Playwriting Competition Award (1980), the New Muse Award for the best short fiction collection (1999), and the Canadian Authors' Association's Jubilee Award (2000), for *What Was Always Hers.* She has held the position of Chair in the following committees: Racial