

REFUGEE, MIGRATION, DIASPORA

Prof. Sarbani Banerjee

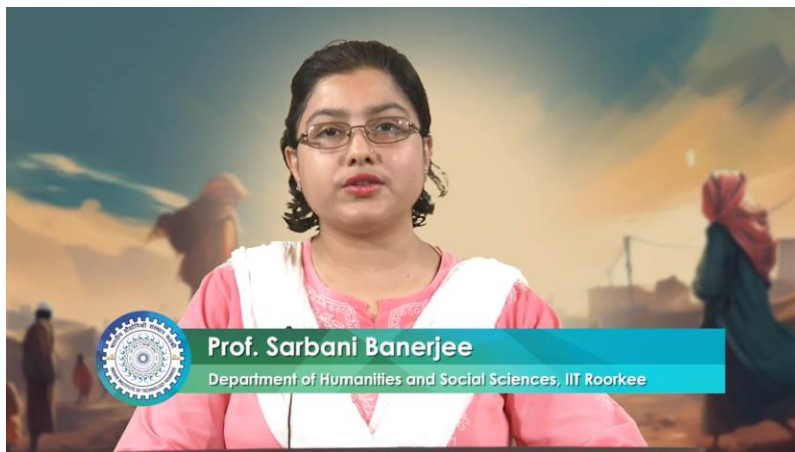
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, English

Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee

Lecture 48

Lecture 48: Transculturality and Culture Navigators in Gurinder Chadha's Bend It Like Beckham - I

Thank you. Good morning and welcome back to the lecture series on Refugees, Migration, and Diaspora. So today we are going to discuss cinema and diaspora through our reading of the film Bend It Like Beckham. So when we think of the world's future, we always mean the destination it will reach, if it keeps going in the direction we can see it going in now.




It does not occur to us that its path is not a straight line, but a curve, constantly changing direction. This is what Ludwig Wittgenstein states in his work, Culture and Value, which was published in 1929. This quotation by Ludwig Wittgenstein, who was an Austrian-born British philosopher, suggests the complex and dynamic nature of cultural change. In recent times, the impact of globalization has increased the intensity of cultural interaction and exchange, thereby resulting in unexpected outcomes.

So, to go back to the quotation, when we think of the world's future, we always mean the destination it will reach, if it keeps going in the direction we can see it going in now; it does not occur to us that its path is not a straight line, but a curve, constantly changing its


direction. So the future of the world is not predictable, to be very precise. There can be so many different kinds of possibilities opening up that are usually unprecedented, that are usually not foreseen in many events. So coming to the question of transculturality, migrants experience a variety of cultural phenomena, both abroad as well as in the host culture. And this includes experiences of multiculturalism, biculturalism, and transculturality, either on an individual or societal level.

Transculturality

- Migrants experience a variety of **cultural phenomena** abroad or in the host culture, such as multiculturalism, biculturalism, and **transculturality**, either on an individual or societal level.
- **Transculturality** is one such phenomenon that occurs on the societal level. According to Maria Pilar Rodríguez, it **encompasses several ways of life and cultures**, which also interpenetrate or emerge from one another, and which are in general **characterised by hybridization** (2016)



Cultures and their Interconnectedness
A visualisation of the concept of Transculturality
Image source: statensberedning.se



So, coming to the question of transculturality, we see that migrants experience a variety of cultural phenomena both abroad as well as in their own host culture, such that experiences of multiculturalism, biculturalism, and transculturality can happen, can be felt either on an individual level or at the societal level. Now, transculturality is one such phenomenon that occurs on the societal level. According to Maria Pilar Rodríguez, transculturality encompasses several ways of life and cultures, which also interpenetrate or emerge from one another. These are, in general, characterized by hybridization. So many of these factors, you know, influence transculturality, and they encompass our ways of life, our cultures, and they do not emerge alone.

They emerge as a result of interpenetration, you know, each other's domains or crossing paths, and then new realities, you know, emerge through these crossroads, through these intersections. Right. So, when we talk about transculturality, we cannot, you know, stay away, very far away from the question of hybridization, a hybrid identity, and a hybrid way of life.

So, transculturality refers to the interaction, exchange, and blending of cultures, often forming new and unique cultural identities. So, as a result of the movement and mixing of people, ideas, goods, the commodities that they bring from their own land, as well as the practices across different cultural boundaries, what happens as a result is transculturality;

transculturality is promoted. So, transculturality has been described by various philosophers and critics in different ways. For example, Wolfgang Welsch defines transculturality as a radical break with rather separatist notions of cultures, whereas Werner Delany in 2006 explains it as the consequence of intercultural exchanges.

On the other hand, we have Heinz Antor, who sees transculturality as a significantly different concept, which finally blurs the boundaries of different cultures. Guido Rings in his work, *Otherness in Contemporary European Cinema*, which came out in 2016, describes that the transcultural notions deal with the interconnectedness of our increasingly global interactions and exchanges. And through these interactions, through these, you know, crossing paths, through these intersections, what we have are connected potentially new cultural choices, they facilitate new cultural choices, it enables in the development of a pool of global cultures and we have more options to choose from, right. Guido Rings also emphasizes that trans-culturality builds on well-established notions of hybrid societies, which has also been discussed by critics such as Homi Bhabha and Garcia Canclini

A new hybrid music as well as fusion food are some of the products of transculturality. They can be considered as a product of a hybrid culture produced through transcultural dialogue and exchange. In the wake of criticism of transculturality, German philosopher Wolfgang Welsch warns that, I quote Welsch here, if one tells us, as the old concept of culture did, that culture is to be a homogeneity event, then we practice the required coercions and exclusions, unquote. So, basically it is very difficult to maintain culture as a homogeneous entity; when we are trying that it is something forced, it is something coercive and it is in a way something synthetic in nature. There is nothing organic, there is nothing natural about a culture remaining the same across time and space.


When we are doing that, there is a degree of, you know, exclusion. There is a degree of forcefulness and definitely a conservative point of view in our mind because culture flows and culture acquires new things. It gets rid of, you know, things that are deemed as redundant. None of these factors can remain the same, you know, forever. A culture cannot remain the same forever.




The term 'culture navigator' or 'cultural navigator' refers to individuals who help facilitate understanding between two cultures. They work toward bridging the gaps between two cultures through cultural awareness, sensitivity, adaptability, effective communication skills, empathy, and understanding. As the world has become increasingly interconnected

and diverse, there is a growing need for individuals who can bridge cultural gaps and foster positive relationships. So that's why we have these artworks coming up, which celebrate biculturalism, transculturality, and cross-cultural exchanges, where there is an urgent—a pressing—need to understand and appreciate one another's cultural practices.

Culture navigator

- The term '**culture navigator**' refers to the **individuals who help facilitate understanding between two cultures**. They work towards bridging the gaps between the two cultures through cultural awareness, sensitivity, adaptability, effective communication skills, empathy, and understanding.
- As the world has become increasingly interconnected and diverse, there is a growing need for **individuals who can bridge the cultural gaps and foster positive relationships**.
- They are essential for transculturality because they **mediate between two cultures** and **reduce cultural barriers**. They help in creating a more inclusive and interconnected world.





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So, they are essential for transculturality—you know, this bridging of cultural gaps is essential and a key point in transculturality because it enables mediation between two cultures and reduces cultural barriers and misunderstandings, and in turn, they help create a more inclusive and interconnected world. The new trend in European cinema has become well known for its transcultural, post-colonial, and migrant orientation in contemporary films, which confront the rise of Euroscepticism as well as the viewpoints held by conservative governments across the continent. Such conservative standpoints continue to shape European politics. The British Nationality Act, which came out in 1948, is also called the Open Door Policy, and it defines British nationality by creating the status of 'citizen of the United Kingdom and colonies'

as the sole national citizenship of the United Kingdom and all its colonies. This policy has seen a surge in migration from South Asian countries, especially India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. According to critic María Pilar Rodríguez, Asian British films such as 'Bhaji on the Beach' (Gurinder Chadha, 1993), 'East Is East' (Damien O'Donnell, 1999), 'Anita and Me' (Meera Syal, 2002), and 'Bend It Like Beckham' (Gurinder Chadha, 2002),

Cinema and Transculturality

- The new trend in European cinema has become well known for new **transcultural, postcolonial, and migrant orientation in contemporary films** confronting the rise of Euroscepticism and conservative governments across the continent, both of which continue to shape European politics (Rings, 2016)
- **The British Nationality Act, 1948**, also called the **open-door policy**, define British nationality by creating the status of "**Citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies**" as the sole **national citizenship of the United Kingdom and all of its colonies**.
- This policy has seen a **surge in migration from South Asian countries**, such as India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka



And then Love Plus Hate, made by Dominic Savage. It came out in 2005. All of these... Asian British films stand out as internationally recognized productions set in multicultural routines, and they narrate their storylines through a social realist framework. Europe depends heavily on the successful integration of migrants, and so it becomes essential to overcome traditional opposition and racist hierarchies between 'us' and 'them.'

To an extent, the artworks help in facilitating this kind of cultural barrier or cultural gap. And they enable cultural understanding and transculturality. So, these films play a crucial role in providing answers that might help improve integration, community building, and community cohesion in Europe, in European society. Now, coming to Gurinder Chadha: Gurinder Chadha was born in Nairobi, Kenya, and then her Punjabi family moved to Southall in England. When she was two years old, she became popular for her notable films and documentaries, including *I'm British But...*, which came out in 1990, *Bhaji on the Beach* in 1993, and then *Bend It Like Beckham*, which came out in 2002.

Gurinder Chadha

- Gurinder Kaur Chadha, OBE, was **born in Nairobi**, Kenya, and then her Punjabi family **moved to Southall**, England when she was two years old. She is popular for her **notable films and documentaries** including, *I'm British But...* (1990), *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993), and *Bend It Like Beckham* (2002).
- Being one of the leading **British-Asian film directors**, most of her films are based on the **themes of the lives of Indians living in England**. Her films are also popular for their **portrayal of the struggles of Indian women experiencing an intercultural life** in English society
- She also set up a production company, **Umbi Films**, in 1990, and later, **Bend It Films** in 2001



Image source: imdb



As one of the leading British Asian film directors, most of Chadha's films are based on the themes of the lives of Indians living in England. Her films are also popular for their portrayal of the struggles of Indian women, who experience an intercultural life in English society. She is responsible for setting up a production company named Umbi Films in 1990 and later Bend It Films in 2001. So, coming to the film Bend It Like Beckham: Bend It Like Beckham is Chadha's biggest commercial success to date.

Gurinder Chadha	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Gurinder Kaur Chadha, OBE, was born in Nairobi, Kenya, and then her Punjabi family moved to Southall, England when she was two years old. She is popular for her notable films and documentaries including, <i>I'm British But...</i> (1990), <i>Bhaji on the Beach</i> (1993), and <i>Bend It Like Beckham</i> (2002).Being one of the leading British-Asian film directors, most of her films are based on the themes of the lives of Indians living in England. Her films are also popular for their portrayal of the struggles of Indian women experiencing an intercultural life in English societyShe also set up a production company, Umbi Films, in 1990, and later, Bend It Films in 2001	 <p>Image source: imdb</p>

It was made with a budget of \$5 million and grossed \$350 million worldwide in the first year itself. This film is often referred to as an amusing feel-good film. It's a sports comedy that pleases the audience with a critical undertone, which provokes thoughts and discussions about a wide range of important issues surrounding cultural differences and identity. The film also shares some autobiographical elements of the director's life.

For example, the film is set in Hounslow Southall in London. It's the same neighborhood where Chadha grew up, and it also presents the Indian Sikh background of the protagonist. From the opening scene, the film appears to handle a typical theme of generational conflict within the British Asian diaspora, where the protagonist Jasminder (or Jess Kaur Bhamra), played by Parminder Nagra, a young second-generation British Indian woman, clashes with family traditions to pursue her ambition of education and becoming a professional football player. Her aspiration is to become a professional football player.

Jess is shown dreaming about playing alongside David Beckham, an English football star, and her room is filled with Beckham jerseys and his posters. She also talks to him from time to time. She's an ardent fan of Beckham. She wants to play like him, alongside him.

And so he is her hero and her idol. However, Jess's parents, particularly her mother and her larger family, do not appreciate her interest in football. Coming from the cultural background that they have, they believe that a girl should study, become accomplished, but in the end, get married. So, we have this short clip from the film. The clip shows the opening dream scene in the film, where Jess dreams of herself playing alongside David Beckham and



scores with a headshot. So, the dream is interrupted by her mother, who wants her to go shopping with her soon-to-be-engaged sister and also scolds her for watching the 'skinhead boy.' So, we see that there are two kinds of coordinates, you know, kind of clashing with one another. One is the dreamscape and the ideal scape that kind of inspires, that kind of inspires.

So, we see that there are these two kinds of worlds that are in conflict with one another. One is the dreamscape of Jess, where she wants to play like Beckham, with Beckham. And on the other hand, it's like the ground reality where her sister is getting married. It's a mundane life. That takes her away from achieving her dream.

It's the daily chores, the daily demands, you know, the exacting nature of life that takes her back from her dream and into reality. The reality, a kind of mundane, prosaic reality that she wants to escape from. It's like, you know, on the one hand, we have the Indian home and its culture, its expectations, and on the other hand, it's the transcultural experience that she just wants to explore. So, with this, we come to the end of our lecture here today.

Bend It like Beckham

This clip shows the opening dream scene in the film where Jess dreams of herself playing alongside David Beckham and goals with a headshot. The dream is interrupted by her mother, who wants her to go shopping with her soon-to-be-engaged sister, and also scolds her for watching the "skinhead boy"



Mrs Bhamra, you must be very proud of your daughter.

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Let us meet in our next lecture and continue with the discussion on Bend It Like Beckham. Thank you.