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# Narrative of Indian Diasporic Writing: A New Perspective on the Women Writers of the Diaspora

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## Abstract

This article addresses two connected topics in the same breath. The first portion discusses the background, development and present state of Indian diasporic writing, its reception and the controversy around it. The next part of the article focuses on the complexities diasporic Indian women writers face as representatives of their country of origin. The alleged exoticization and orientating of Indian experience by diasporic Indian women writers is discussed at length. A thorough study of different types of feminism is done in this second part to show how the women writers can arrive at an assimilated approach to accommodate the various issues concerning diasporic female characters that people their work. Therefore, this article starts with a panoramic view of Indian diasporic writing; then the theme narrows down to the problematization of diasporic women writers' works. Finally, a suggested approach is put forward as to how diasporic Indian women writers may accommodate both first and third world feminist issues on a greater level in their works.

**Keywords:** Indian diasporic writing, diasporic women writers, feminism

## Introduction:

Indian writing in English is increasingly gaining accolade among readers and prize-panel judges. In recent years, Indian writing in English has achieved some phenomenal success in the form of prizes and best selling status. The history of English writing in India is perhaps best understood from a retrospective glance at its colonial past. Many texts show an engagement with the history of the subcontinent in terms of strong emotions like joy and horror. The Independence and subsequent Partition in the 1940s left indelible marks on Indian writers and their narratives. Apart from this, according to Morey (2000), blending “written and oral traditions, teleological and cyclical understandings of history and narrative and a re-invigoration of both language and genre” give Indian writing a unique identity (Morey, 2000, p.16). The postcolonial novel, some best examples of which coming from India, has been able to free itself from the “long shadow of British writers” and “has in some sense now come to be that main road, rather than some shady and slightly exotic side street”(Morey, 2000, p. 16). However, despite the specific standard of Indian English writing its reception was initially ambivalent.

The emergence of Indian novel and its reception has undergone a series of major shifts. The history of English literary criticism, having been born in the shade of high imperialism in the nineteenth century, was Eurocentric enough to consider tropical literature as inferior. The most spectacular change that took place in Indian English literature's narrative technique coincides with India's journey from colonial to postcolonial phase. The history of Indian English literature indicates certain points of progress, points of departure from a former period towards a new one. This periodisation has been noted by Gita Rajan (2006) in the following words “[t]he gradual progression of story-telling from colonial to postcolonial and cosmopolitan modes (i.e., from

Forster to Rushdie, and more importantly, to the contemporary, emerging focus on ethics in literature)” (p.139), the modes of narration she mentions change with major historical shifts.

### **Demarcation of Historical Phases of Indian English Writing**

The demarcation of colonial, postcolonial, and cosmopolitan periods of Indian English writing is coterminous with changes in both its theme and narrative strategy. Whereas colonial writing was more involved with ideals of nation formation, the postcolonial writers seem, in Riemenschneider’s (2005) words, “distant from or disillusioned with those ideals” (p.16). The postcolonial writers write with a new confidence, especially in the matter of using English as their language. Sunanda Mongia (1997) comments on the changes in Indian writing in English by saying that in this writing one can “discern a pattern of alteration which is characterized not merely by shifts in thematics but more by the adoption, growing, naturalization and final expropriation of the language used” (p. 213). Psychologically as well as technically the use of the language of the colonizers is a complicated pursuit.

This complicated endeavor is a long process of transformation and adjustments. Mongia (1997) stratifies the phases of Indian English writing in three distinct categories. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s *Raj Mohan’s Wife* (1865) is an example of “Nativity” of the English novel. Then the phase of “Confluxion” occurs in the 1930s with writers like Mulk Raj Anand, RK Narayan and Raja Rao. The “clandestine unauthorized use of a colonizing language” ceases to be an issue for the writers of the postcolonial era though some of them wittingly or unwittingly use Orientalism as a subtext, and this is the third phase of Indian English novel (Mongia, 1997, p. 214). In order to present themselves as “an object” for Western eyes, these writers use the “exotic orient” as their novel’s substance (Mongia, 1997, p. 214).

However, most postcolonial writers have been able to shed these inhibitions by asserting their identity. For example, the writers of Indian diaspora, due to their living contact with the English language, use English that is not “stilted, learnt from book English” (Pollock, 2003, p.3). Sheldon I Pollock identifies Indian diasporic English writers as people who are capable of evoking the aroma of Indian life in living English. He calls it a “blend of continuity and experiment” (Pollock, 2003, p.3). The evolution of Indian English fiction from the 1860s to the present day postcolonial diasporic writing needs further elaboration to properly understand the conformity to tradition and new narrative experiments of the diasporic writers.

### **History of Indian English Writing**

The Indian English fiction had a booming period in the mid-1930s with writers like Mulk Raj Anand, RK Narayan and Raja Rao. Then the mid-1950s and 1960s again saw a significant progress in the hands of writers like Arun Joshi, Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Praver Jhabvala and Nayantara Sahgal. According to Mukesh Ranjan Verma these writers “changed the face of Indian English novel” (Verma, 2002, p.1). Thirdly, at the beginning of the 1980s the diasporic writers, who have Indian origin but live abroad, started to receive international recognition. Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* started a new trend of free play of language and style, blending together fantasy, laughter, irony and satire. As a continuation of this trend, “a widening of themes and greater stylistic experimentation” marks the next phase of Indian English fiction. Another important development of this phase is “resurgence of women’s writing” (Jain, 1997, p.60). Jasbir Jain’s words can be matched with Mukesh Ranjan Verma’s comment that “[P]erhaps

the most striking feature of the contemporary Indian English fiction has been the emergence of feminist literature” (Verma, 2002, p.5). He also notes that the women writers are giving voice “to the sufferings, aspirations and assertions of women in a traditionally male-dominated world” (Verma, 2002, p.5). Thus, the rise of women writers creates a significant space in the terrain of postcolonial Indian English writing.

However, one major besetting factor for postcolonial Indian English writing was the dichotomy between nation and the individual self. The intriguing question of representation puzzled the postcolonial Indian English writers by making them choose between two options: narrating Indian nationality or narrating the individual self. An analysis of postcolonial Indian English writing shows that “Indian writing needed to have the capaciousness that was generally granted to the Indian nation itself” (Kumar, 2004, p.xvi). This obligation of representing the nation often resulted in the production of “a monumental national drive” (Kumar, 2004, p.xvi). The possible outcome of such literary works is a kind of polarization between self and nation. Josna E. Rege (1997) in her article “Victim Into Protagonist? *Midnight’s Children* And The Post-Rushdie National Narratives Of The Eighties” defines the early post-independence period of India as a time that “presses particularly heavily on the individual, molding the personal to the national, reproducing, maintaining and consolidating the national ideology at every level of society” (Rege, 1997, p.348). Such impositions are not unlikely to hinder and even silence the natural, spontaneous flow of literature at a certain point in history.

Rege brings out the point that some Indian critics in the seventies dubiously dubbed Indian English writing “Janus-faced” echoing Tom Nair’s term “the modern Janus” for the nation (as cited in Rege, 1997, p.256). Homi Bhabha also builds on this term by pointing out that nationalism is by definition ambivalent, and the ambivalence of the nation is mirrored in the very form of national narrative (as cited in Rege, 1997, p.256). Rege thinks that many Indian writers of the sixties and seventies turned away from the larger social realm in the face of a centrally imposed nationalism. Since this nationalism was supposed to speak for the individual, the writers of that time were often “destroyed by the tensions between their personal realities and the nationalist ideal,” and their works were “deadened by the creative deadlock that ensued” (Rege, 1997, p.348). The dichotomy between self and nation forced Indian English writing in the sixties and seventies to walk on a “tightrope” between Indian “authenticity” and English “correctness” (Rege, 1997, p.364).

### **New Theme and Style of Postcolonial Indian Novel**

A point of departure for Indian English writing from this ambivalence ensued in the eighties when Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* set a new standard for the postcolonial novel in terms of both theme and style. Rege calls this new start as an enactment of “a discursive reconfiguration of the relationship between Self and Nation” (Rege, 1997, p.342). *Midnight’s Children* endeavored to show that there are options open to Indians against a static national identity. It showed that identity is not necessarily monolithic, but fluid and multiple. This concept, according to Rege, was very liberating for the contemporary Indian English writers as it enabled them “to speak in a multiplicity of voices and write in a multiplicity of modes” (Rege, 1997, p.243) Thus the writers in the eighties broke free from the position of imposed representation of the national self as opposed to the individual one.

The newly found confidence encouraged the Indian English writers of the eighties to experiment with their form and content. In her insightful language, Rege describes this new voice

as “based on a celebration of the simultaneous identity and duality of self and nation, a recognition of the creative potential of ambivalence” (Rege, 1997, p.366). In fact, at that period the writers started to take their fiction out into the public sphere from the previously cloistered position of interiority. However, not all of them were original or remarkable. Some of them, despite making use of the newfound freedom, tended to, says Rege, “gravitate towards two extremes,” which took the form of an urgent need to belong to a Nation-state, or an alienated individuality that did not have any accountability (Rege, 1997, p.367). These extremes, a craving for rootedness, and disillusionment with all types of connectivity, are also a notable trope of Indian English writing of the eighties.

During the time of these developments in Indian English writing, a sub-genre of postcolonial writing started to emerge by the name diasporic writing. The history of Indian diasporic writing can be traced back to 1794 when Deen Mahomed (1759-1851), an Indian by birth, published *The Travels of Dean Mahomet* from Cork, England after migrating there in 1784. Another writer named Mirza Abu Taleb Khan wrote an account in Persian from Europe. These two writers’ perspectives differ due to the different languages they use. Since Deen Mahomed uses English, his addresses are the Europeans, and his role is to represent his compatriots in response to the voices of Europe. Whereas Abu Taleb wrote about his exotic European experiences to the Indian people back at home. Diasporic Indian writing has traveled a long way after that. Postcolonial Indian literature is largely a terrain occupied mainly by diasporic Indian writers like V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Rohinton Mistry, M. G. Vasantji, Bapsi Sidhwa, Kiran Desai, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri.

### **Controversy Around Indian Diasporic Writing**

Nevertheless, the allegiance between postcolonial and diasporic Indian writing has evoked vehement controversies ever since diasporic Indian writers have started to receive notable acclaim from the West. In the introduction of the book *Indian Writing in English and the Global Literary Market* the editors Om Prakash Dwivedi and Lisa Lau (2014) analyze the role of global literary market in the proliferation of post-Rushdian Indian writing in English. Their comparison between the receptions of Indian writing in English from India and from abroad shows a noteworthy discrepancy. Dwivedi remarks that “if one looks at the pattern and framework of the euphoric success of post-Rushdian IWE in the global literary market, it becomes apparent that it is tendentiously marked by greater prominence being given to Indian diasporic writers than to those settled in and writing from India” (Dwivedi and Lau, 2014, p.2). This comment makes a direct link between the Western publishing policies and the production and marketing of diasporic Indian writing in English. Dwivedi goes on explaining his position by talking about the difference in representation of Indian ethnicity by writers from inside and outside India. He opines that the diasporic version of India gets the primary focus of Eurocentric scholarship and postcolonial studies (Dwivedi and Lau, 2014, p.2-3).

Tabish Khair (2014) also registers the complicated relationship between postcolonial and diasporic Indian writing. In the ‘Foreword’ of *Literature of the Indian Diaspora*, Khair observes: “[P]ostcolonialism and diaspora: it is difficult to say, at least in the context of Indian literatures in English, which is the evil twin and which the good one” (Khair, 2014, p.vii). This comment is particularly pertinent in the Indian context because of the country’s colonial past. Postcolonial literature contributes in some ways in the commoditization of human experiences and thereby promotes a new kind of colonization.

### Defending Indian Diasporic Writing

However, there is no way to dismiss the diasporic Indian English writers merely as neo colonizers who achieve fame at the cost of the history, culture and customs of their country. Diaspora writing all over the world is an acknowledged stream in literature, social studies and anthropology. Diasporic writes experience a poignant transition where they have to assimilate different cultural identities to create a hybrid and cosmopolitan self. Previously colonized countries essentially have an ambiguous attitude towards postcolonial and diasporic studies. At this point, I have to quote extensively from Partha Chatterjee's essay "Our Modernity." Commenting on the ambivalent reception of modernity by Indian ideals of nationhood Chatterjee says: "because of the way in which the history of our modernity has been intertwined with the history of colonialism, we have never quite been able to believe that there exists a universal domain of free discourse, unfettered by differences of race or nationality" (Chatterjee, 1997, p.14).

Due to this preconceived notion of the coexistence of modernity and colonialism there is always skepticism in the reception of anything new as derogatory and humiliating in Indian social, historical and literary scenario. Nevertheless, the instilling of modernity into ethnicity is as inevitable as inhaling the open air. Even the consciousness of imperialist practices and resistance against them are also a part of modernity. Chatterjee notes in an insightful observation: "the burden of reason, dreams of freedom; the desire for power, resistance to power: all of these are elements of modernity. There is no promised land of modernity outside the network of power" (Chatterjee, 1997, p.19). Therefore, the only way to face modernity is to learn the ways of dealing with it. Again, I quote from Chatterjee to see what he suggests about dealing with modernism in the Indian context. "Hence" says he, "one cannot be for or against modernity; one can only devise strategies for coping with it. These strategies are sometimes beneficial, often destructive; sometimes they are tolerant, perhaps all too often they are fierce and violent" (Chatterjee, 1997, p.19). The diasporic writers, in order to cope with their new ways of life, have to devise ways of expressing themselves, which might not always be uncomplicated and innocent.

*Migrant Voices in Literatures in English* by Sheo Bhushan Shukla and Anu Shukla point out the need for an alternative discourse and poetics to the castigation of diasporic writing. They think that a new discourse should offer a "happy blend of the East and the West and which need not be dominantly oriental" (S. Shukla, 2006; A. Shukla, 2006, p.16). Many diasporic writers create characters drawing upon Indian archetypes of men and women but "invest them with the new life and hunger for the unknown and unknowable" (S. Shukla, 2006; A. Shukla, 2006, p.16). These writers "in/scribe" rather than "de/scribe" India and instead of inventing its myths they reinvent them (S. Shukla, 2006; A. Shukla, 2006, p.16).

Postcolonial and/or diasporic writing can be best understood in the entirety of its complexities and complicities. Sandra Ponzanesi analyses the predicament of diasporic writers as "both a material condition of dislocation and a postmodern intellectual notion that expresses existential dispersion" (Ponzanesi, 2004, p.xiv). She illustrates this idea by saying that "diasporic spaces allow for the representation of those who straddle two or more cultures, languages, and ethnicities and offer a way of rethinking postcolonialism as blurring the lines of national enclaves" (Ponzanesi, 2004, p.xv). At the same time postcolonial and diasporic writers unsettle the center-periphery discourse of imperialism. They articulate "newly changed, merged, differently focused perspectives on their adoptive cultures, and their position as writers with multiple roots in the history of several cultures" (Ponzanesi, 2004, p.21). This position with multiple roots creates a

complicated identity for the diasporic writer. They have to go through a painful period of transition to reach a state of hybridity although a successful transition can change their feeling of dislocation and loss. As Gina Wisker opines: “[F]or writers, finding and expressing a sense of identity, location and voice, can change the dialogue with diaspora from one of loss and liminality to a new configuration of hybridity and cosmopolitanism that affects everyone” (Wisker, 2006, p.22). Therefore, diasporic writing can by no means be dismissed as neo colonial or market oriented. Rather one has to be sensible in understanding the complexities and complicities of diasporic writing.

The strength of diasporic writing lies in the pain that originates from its dwelling between “tradition and modernity, past and present, or peripheries and cosmopolitan life,” (Ponzanesi, 2004, p.12). Ponzanesi and Bernheimer attribute the strength of migrant literature to its unhomeliness. Bernheimer observes, “this very quality of dispossession—a kind of haunting by otherness –is migrant literature’s great strength” (as cited in Ponzanesi, 2004, p.12).

### **Indian Diasporic Writing and Gender Politics**

Indian diasporic literary criticism has largely given rise to a certain kind of gender politics that equally applies to both female Indian American writers and the fictional female characters created by them. Critics like Patricia Chu, Gita Rajan and Shailja Sharma demarcate a divide between the literary voices of male and female diasporic writers of South Asian descent. Chu points out a “gendering” of Asian American narratives of assimilation, emanating from myriad socio-cultural issues (Chu, 2000, p.4). The historical restrictions on Asian women’s immigration and the particular structure of Asian families lead female writers in generating different narratives of self-formation.

The positioning of women as “symbols” of “landscape, society, and nation rather than active subjects” notes Chu, obstructs the Asian American female writers from seeing themselves as contingent subjects in their own right (Chu, 2000, p.5). Additionally, women’s role and work pattern in the household give them little opportunity to pursue scholastic practices to enrich their writing. Because of this, they mostly express themselves as arbiters of Indian cultural tradition. While historicism, geopolitics and imperialism are considered as the foundational bricks of writers like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh and V. S. Naipaul, the female writers’ major trope is considered to be ethnic authenticity.

Alluding to a literary background of South Asian writers such as Bharati Mukherjee, Bapsi Sidhwa, Michael Ondaatje, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh and V. S. Naipaul, Gita Rajan separates them from the popular front of writers like Monica Ali, Rukhsana Ahmed, Shyam Selvadurai, Mohsin Hamid and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. Rajan aligns Jhumpa Lahiri with the latter group of writers commenting that Lahiri is positioned in “an interesting historiocultural spot” that allows her writings to be read in a different way from “earlier postcolonial or diasporic authors” (Rajan, 2006, p.123). Rajan credits Lahiri’s success to her crafting of “familiar, easily recognizable characters and situations” and its juxtaposition with “uncomfortable, ethical issues” (pg 124).

Om Prakash Dwivedi and Lisa Lau in the introduction to the book *Indian Writing in English and the Global Literary Market* observes that Indian women writers writing in English mobilize “the production, distribution and consumption” of Indian writing in English by enhancing a book’s marketability (Dwivedi and Lau, 2014, p.6). Domestication and exoticization of certain books are done in order to undermine the political significance of discourses like

antiracism and feminism that they contain. Belen Martin-Lucas analyses how often a book's literary merits are ignored in favor of a romanticized version of its content to attract the Western reading public. Even the cover page of a book by a South Asian writer, notes Martin-Lucas, features women in traditional costume accompanied by "visual elements" of "seductive otherness" like pagodas or dragons (Martin-Lucas, 2012, p.92). Further exoticization and objectification of women deployed for commercial purposes promotes the marketing of Asian women's writing by Western publishers. Martin-Lucas observes, "publishers show a preference for those narratives that tell a woman's story of courage and defiance in an old-fashioned context of violent traditions" (Martin-Lucas, 2012, p.91). Therefore, the marketing strategies of Indian women writers' books put the literary merit of the books in jeopardy.

Now a question may arise here whether South Asian female writers are actually catering to the need of Western readership's interest in the exotic representation of the East. Such orientaling project cannot be a welcome idea for the readers of South Asian descent in spite of its being economically viable for the writers. Even the writers, no matter how successful they feel at a good reception of their works in the West, might not like the idea of selling their ethnicity in an exotic form to Western readership. To reduce the works of these writers to a mere project of orientaling is not fair judgment to them. A certain mode of representation may be carried out by the publishing industry for commercial purpose. However, in no way this project can reduce the literary quality of the writing. Nevertheless, the question of orientaling inevitably gives site to a debate between real and exotic representation of South Asia in the works of diasporic writers.

The terms "real" and "exotic," as modes of representation, are growingly problematized in American national identity which is both "paradigmatic and exceptional" (Grewal, 2005, p.2). As the borders are becoming more porous, the difference between real and exotic is constantly diminishing. The case of the United States as a transnational site is loaded with questions of racism and imperialism. Grewal argues that the so-called globalization of the U. S. was "a will to globalization that was both profoundly cosmopolitan as well as imperial" (Grewal, 2005, p.22). Therefore, at the end of the twentieth century, South Asian diasporic writers have produced new gendered neocolonial subjects.

The whole point made in the previous paragraph culminates in the proposition that in the context of the socio-cultural and political reality of the United States diasporic female subjects are faced with numerous challenges regarding identitarian affiliations. It is not possible for these diasporic subjects to come up with an uncomplicated, linear identity that is solid and definable. Commenting on this multiplicity of identity of women belonging to countries outside the U.S., Judith Butler (2004) refers to Gloria Anzaldúa in this way "she says, for instance, that she is no unitary subject," that "she struggles with the complex mix of cultural traditions and formations that constitute her for what she is: Chicana, Mexican, lesbian, American, academic, poor, writer, activist" (Butler, 2004, p.227-228). The most inclusive way of defining the identity of a diasporic female subject of color is to consider "the diverse set of cultural connections that make us who we are", so believes Butler (Butler, 2004, p.228). Her rhetorical question whether the different strands of formations that constitute the persona of Anzaldúa can be unified confirms this belief that the simultaneity of all these strands is the very meaning of her (Anzaldúa) identity.

What Anzaldúa contains in her identity is an assemblage of plurality. The postcolonial women as well as the women of color call for recognition of their plurality as opposed to the idea of global sisterhood posed by the second wave Western feminism. The identity formation of the diasporic South Asian women in the US is a complicated combination of history, race, culture, class, politics and gender. To understand the specific situation of these diasporic women it is

crucial to consider the issues of plurality in different brands of feminism. These women have to deal with problems first as women, then as diasporic women. Obviously, this twofold identity makes things more complicated for them than with their native and foreign counterparts. Any analysis of how they learn to survive in the new situation reveals that their transformation is still in process. They struggle between tradition and acculturation. However, it is clear that they are brave enough to listen to their own hearts and to take their own decisions. This attitude gives them an air of independence and makes them people without any fixed boundaries. The last section of chapter one deals with the notion of plurality and its relevance to the identity formation of some fictional diasporic women characters.

### **Identity Formation of Diasporic Indian Women Writers**

Traditional Western feminism proves inadequate to understand the socio-psychological trajectory of the South Asian women migrants in the U.S. and other Western countries. Racial and cultural multiplicity plays a crucial role in their identity formation. Other branches (non- Western) of feminism like postcolonial and postmodern feminism emphasize the necessity of “feminisms” over “feminism”. Their stress on plurality incorporates the particularities of women issues, as opposed to the universalist representation of them. These brands of feminism also stress upon the question of diversity among women worldwide.

Traditional Western feminism, specially the second wave feminism, refers to third world women as a homogenous, singular group. Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1991) criticizes the representation of third world women as a “singular, monolithic” subject in some Western feminist texts because this representation assumes “an ahistorical, universal unity between women based on a generalized notion of their subordination”(Mohanty, 1991, p.17, 31). The homogenizing of women across the globe is founded on the notion of a shared oppression. This homogeneity produces a problem for the collective term “women.” In her seminal essay “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses”, Mohanty observes that when the term “women” denotes a discursively constructed group, the other denotation of the term is neglected, which is, women “as material subjects of their own history” (Mohanty, 1991, p.23). Thus the discursively formulated definition undermines the “historically specific material reality of groups of women” (Mohanty 1991, p.23).

The historically specific material reality of women brings forth the importance of particular local contexts in their identity formation. The questions of social class and ethnic identities cannot be bypassed in the matter of presenting third world women as singular group. Women do not only have gender identities, rather, they are a complex combination of socioeconomic and political factors. It is absurd to try to address the conflicting histories and diverse struggles of third world women under a single rubric. Therefore, the idea of “universal sisterhood” coined by Robin Morgan, instead of being universal becomes a particular self-presentation of Western women (Morgan, 1996, p.1).

However, the rigid opposition between the first and third world, between Western feminism and feminism of color, is no longer tenable in the fast moving present day world of global capitalism. A new kind of solidarity/ reconciliation between Western and third world feminism is inevitable to resist the new type of masculinist and racist politics that is now growing with global capitalism. The plurality of South Asian feminism now has to be redefined in the light of the changed socio-economic politics of the modern world. Chandra Talpade Mohanty makes some very insightful propositions in her essay as to how solidarity might be achieved between the

plural third world and white Western feminism. This chapter finishes with an analysis of Mohanty's proposition towards solidarity.

Apart from Mohanty, some other feminist thinkers also suggest a likelihood of reconciliation among the diversity of feminisms. This kind of reconciliation is sometimes necessary for third world feminism since a polarity between white and third world feminism may lead to another kind of stalemate. Third world feminism cannot be presented as a homogenous block of plurality in contrast with Western, white, middle class feminism. Over emphasizing of plurality runs the risk of being interpreted as exotic. bell hooks (1992) refers to this risk by saying that "the commodification of difference," is the representation of diversity as a form of exotica, "a spice, seasoning that livens up the dull dish that is main-stream white culture"(hooks, 1992, p.21). Thus the emancipation of South Asian women migrants, if analyzed only by considering their plurality, may lead the study to a dead end. It seems that a reconciliatory approach, one that assimilates both white and third world feminisms, is the best course to be pursued to understand the new women of first and second-generation South Asian diaspora. In her essay "U.S. third world feminism: The theory and method of oppositional consciousness in the postmodern world" Chela Sandoval (2009) talks about a possible alliance between the white and third world feminisms. Maxine Baca Zinn and Bonnie Thornton Dill (1996) point out the limitations of the study of plurality in feminism by saying that this branch of feminism often fails to reach a deeper level because of its failure to attend to the power relations that accompany difference.

Since third world feminist discourse is prone to misinterpretation, the addition of some other strands of thought can give it the desired meaning. Linda Alcoff (1988) agrees with the idea that the term "woman of color" itself is self-contradictory as it "reinforces the significance of that which should have no significance—skin color" (Alcoff, 1988, p.436). To reach an inclusive approach all types of feminisms should go through a process of reinterpretation and reconstruction. Alcoff suggests that a new theory has to be formulated "within the process of reinterpreting our position, and reconstructing our political identity, as women and feminists in relation to the world and to one another" (Alcoff, 1988, p.436). If Alcoff's suggestion can be applied to the analysis of South Asian migrant women's negotiation with the West, two objectives can be achieved: their plurality will get attention as well as their merging with the West will also be recognized.

## Conclusion

An inclusive approach that addresses both third world and white feminism with equal importance can generate a healthy and balanced theory for women around the world. Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003), revisiting her seminal essay "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses" remarks that: "I did not write "Under Western Eyes" as a testament to the impossibility of egalitarian and noncolonizing cross-cultural scholarship, nor did I define "Western" and "Third World" feminism in such oppositional ways that there would be no possibility of solidarity between Western and Third World feminists" (Mohanty, 2003, p.5). This is a kind of self-defense on the part of Mohanty against some critics' over generalization of some terms she used in the original essay. This revisiting of the essay also clarifies some of Mohanty's opinions that invoked much heated debates. One of these misunderstood notions is about solidarity among feminisms across borders the possibility of which Mohanty articulates in a very optimistic way.

Finally, the point this article wants to make is that an all-encompassing approach to feminism may enable Indian women diasporic writers to create a kind of literature that will represent diasporic female characters' day-to-day negotiation with their ever-transforming life. Many female writers have already been practicing this approach with notable success. Women writers along with their male counterparts properly supplement the rich and colorful backdrop of Indian diasporic writing. Therefore, beyond all the controversy and critique it seems that diasporic women writers are capable of bringing together different parts of the world to tell the tale of women's resilience and adaptability.

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