

Feminist Perspectives on Women's and Gender Roles in Indian Literature

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Abstract - Female writers' works provide light on their role in literature's ideological past, while also reinforcing class-based cultural disputes. The current thesis examines some of the aforementioned vital components of feminist literature as well as about of the most well-known feminist authors. The primary goal of this investigate is to shed light on key aspects of feminism, major historical periods of feminism, and prominent feminist authors. In other words, it's a worldview that draws on the idea of gender from many different academic perspectives (Zalewski, 341). All feminist perspectives, despite their differences, aim for a world in which men and women are treated as equals. Bell Hooks wrote a book titled "Feminism is for Everybody" with the overarching goal of putting an end to all forms of sexism, including but not limited to discrimination based on gender. In this work, she argues that sexism is an issue and that it exacerbates societal issues. This research concludes by recognizing and appreciating the efforts of these modern Postcolonial women writers, who have been challenging and resisting the hegemonic power discourses in postcolonial societies, enabling women to speak and listen to each other, and redefining their identities with the help of liberating tools like "safe spaces" that they have created through their gender-sensitive writings

Keywords - Gender equality, sexism, racial, sexuality, marriage, spirituality

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INTRODUCTION

The feminist movement emerged in the 18th century (Sevim 8), and it is described as a theory that seeks to improve women's roles and position in society. Feminism is an ideology that promotes gender equality and works to alter traditional gender roles. This ideology is the tenet of a liberation movement for a population that has been marginalized and excluded from society's decision-making processes for a significant portion of its history. The feminist movement got its name from the Latin term for woman, femine. It comes from the French word feme, which also means "woman" (Arat 16). Since settling on a single description for the notion is challenging, it is helpful to look at how others have defined it. J. Mitchel defines feminism as a struggle in social interactions between men and women centered on status rather than biology. This battle is not grounded in biology, but rather is described as a force that ushers in change and alters the course of human history (Mitchel 28).

In other words, it's a worldview that draws on the idea of gender from many different academic perspectives (Zalewski 341). All feminist perspectives, despite their differences, aim for a world in which men and women are treated as equals. Bell Hooks wrote a book titled "Feminism is for Everybody" with the overarching goal of putting an end to all forms of sexism, including but

not limited to discrimination based on gender. In this work, she argues that sexism is an issue and that it exacerbates societal issues. She also discusses the intersection of her feminist views with her experiences of racism and classism. There are chapters on how sexism affects the workplace, family, parenting, sexuality, marriage, spirituality, and other parts of life. In doing so, she takes aim at Several of the core principles of the feminist movement that she believes contribute to the stigma that surrounds it. She hopes that feminism will become not only a theory studied in universities, but a philosophy shared by all people (Hooks 25). Feminist theory holds that all ruling governments are ruled by males and that men have written much of human history. Women and their accomplishments have long been overlooked. Feminism is founded on the conviction that women shouldn't subjected to the same economic, formal, political, and social discrimination to which males are subjected in public and private settings. Feminism seeks to alter the hierarchies that stem from these imbalances. It's an approach to all kinds of inequality, and it aims to transform women's social and political lives. When discussing the major ideas that feminism stresses, "women's subordination" is among the highest. Women's subordination describes women's inferior status and limited opportunities compared to males.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tavassoli, Sarah & Mirzapour, Narges. (2014)

Postcolonial feminism, also referred to as "third-world feminism," is a novel hypothesis explaining how women in colonized nations are oppressed by both indigenous patriarchal norms and foreign ideologies. Postcolonial feminism, in contrast to Western feminism, seeks to widen the examination of the junction of gender and multicultural identity formation beyond the narrow emphasis on discrimination against women. Postcolonial feminists argue that Western feminism ignores the class, racial, emotional, and environmental differences of women in colonized territories. As a result, postcolonial feminists encourage women in the global south to develop their own identities rather than try to mimic Western women. This essay is predicated on the belief that *A Passage to India* (1924) by E. M. Forster has the necessary elements for analysis from the perspective of postcolonial feminism. In this tale, two British ladies go through a traumatic encounter in India that causes them to forever rethink the traditional ways in which the English treat Indians. This work is unusual in that the female protagonist is not a black lady from the third world but a white British woman who is frustrated in her attempt to learn about India's true culture. This essay indicates that the advantage given to the two British women is, in fact, a one-dimensional vision and Western feminist bias by illustrating the women's narrow worldview.

Datta, Dipannita. (2016) There is a liminal area of transition between "tradition and transformation," with its many characteristics of power relations and traits that comprise the process of negotiation and antagonism across civilizations. Transition was especially challenging in the postcolonial environment of India. Colonialism influenced customs, and the resulting shift reflected a nuanced hierarchy in which the colonizer was seen as culturally superior and the colonized, particularly women, were seen as culturally inferior. This study argues that it would be incorrect to universalize homogeneity in light of India's rich literary history, which includes the heritage of women's writing from various socio-cultural groups. Feminism in India has shown the way to an inclusive cultural transformation without generating exclusivity or a tendency towards separatism, and this book examines and identifies certain issues relating to the possibilities of women's literature in India that would otherwise have remained unresolved at a macro level.

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Ozkazanc-Pan, Banu. (2012) This study aims to provide an overview of the issues that researchers who use postcolonial feminist frameworks encounter when carrying out their studies. Challenges to using important ideas from postcolonial feminist theory, such as representation, subalternity, and reflexivity, are discussed in this study. Implications for feminist practice in international management theory, research, and writing, as well as entrepreneurial education, are then discussed. Focusing especially on the problems and complications postcolonial feminist theories bring to ethnography and auto-ethnography, this study describes the author's experiences doing fieldwork on Turkish high-technology entrepreneurs in the USA and Turkey. The study argues that there are problems with representation that arise while undertaking fieldwork driven by postcolonial feminist theories. In contrast to comparison methods used in researching businesspeople, subalternity gives a relational perspective of topics. In addition, the study explores the effects of positionality on reflexivity through discussions of race, class, and gender. This article addresses challenges occurring at the intersections of feminism and postcolonialism, providing a critical viewpoint on doing research on non-Western topics. It's a significant advancement for feminist researchers who want to concentrate on non-Western societies.

Al-wazedi, Umme. (2020) Postcolonial feminism developed in response to postcolonial theory's early proponents, mostly male scholars preoccupied with nation-building after imperialism and colonialism obliterated indigenous peoples' pasts. It is critical of both the imperial powers and the post-Empire hegemonic power of indigenous males. By tracing some of the most prominent postcolonial feminist thinkers and by explaining some of their concerns regarding the representation of women in the Western imagination, this chapter lays out the arguments revolving around the British colonial discourse in representing non-Western women, especially the issue of satihood in India, and sets out

the concept of the Third World Women (in India and Africa). This chapter argues that colonial and dominating Euro-American discourses have consistently avoided depicting non-Western women as a result of their intersection with gender, class, race, caste and religion, and sexuality. It also touches briefly on the evolution of postcolonial sexualities, delves into the history of Islamic and Muslim feminism, and delves into the intersections of postcolonial feminism and intersectional feminism theory, disability studies, and the rise of activism for social justice, to name a few of the new directions in postcolonial feminist theory.

Misri, D. (2014) argues in her book *Beyond Partition* that 1947 was the beginning of a history of politicized antagonism between groups and regions with different conceptions of "India" and the political-military Indian state. Using a wide range of sources, including literature, history, performance, and visual art, she examines the gendered scripts underlying the violence that has its roots in competing conceptions of what "India" is and how it is expressed, ultimately concluding that cultural expressions do not merely follow violence but determine its very contours. *Beyond Partition* is an ambitious and interdisciplinary look at how depictions of violence are colored by notions of caste, identity, and class, and how these conceptions in turn inform our views of violence and of India.

GENDER REPRESENTATION IN INDIAN LITERATURE: A CRITICAL EVALUATION

Scholars from all everywhere the world have spent years debating the notion of "women's empowerment" and its many facets. As early as the middle of the 20th century, scholars in the field of feminism have been debating the inherent tension between western feminism and its eastern counterparts (postcolonial and third world feminisms), as well as the inherent differential and overlapping markers between them depending on the geopolitical, social, and cultural contexts of their inquiry.

Current arguments, based on performative assumptions and adhering to a complex network of identity politics, are a direct result of the underlying contradictions within intersectional ways of global feminist critiques. The chauvinist underpinnings of characterizing female subjectivity as a subordinate cultural construct are exposed by the 'political' theory in/of identity formation and the accompanying statement. "disarticulate 'woman' from 'culture,' deconstruct woman as symbol, reconstruct women as human beings, and problematize women's rights as human rights" (Moghadam 22) is the way of rejecting such retrograde cultural labeling. The persistent call for "intellectual decolonization" (Nigam 2019) hinges on the assumptions of resuscitation of discursive traces of indigeneity(s) within the volatile and hegemonic political order of the post-colonies, which encourages heterogeneous expressions, through a collective adhesion to a shared understanding of the world. The reassertion of 'the Female' identity within

these enabling tropes of reified gender/power relations necessitates a sustained critique of heteronormativity as the only adaptive model and a proactive resistance to the 'mainstreaming' of gendered narratives. Following the Spivakian tenet of unlearning, one could argue that third-world feminist scholarship should replace the commodity-centered, patriarchal approach of "predictive usefulness" with a more gender-neutral, "mental-metric view" of individual performance. This would involve a re-evaluation of ethnographic, cultural, and functional "differences" in the experiences of women from South-Asian countries.

When it comes to the existing critique of "developing" and "underdeveloped" nations, India serves as a prime example. Even beyond these sociological investigations, the ontological, vis-a-vis teleological conflict typical of 'the third world women' and also of the 'third world' finds adequate echo in the literary imagination(s) of the third world authors (placed in/out[side] the geo-political limits). Through a close reading of two works of Indian genre fiction, Anuradha Marwah Roy's *The Higher Education of Geetika Mehendiratta* (1993) and Advaita Kala's *Almost Single* (2007), this study seeks to critically interrogate the literary ramifications of these churning questions, permeating the various social roles, played by the Indian middle-class women. Despite temporal/spatial/cultural contradistinctions, as evidenced in the protagonists' lived experiences, a 'symptomatic' reading of these two texts would rather divulge some heretical questions, concerning the contested notion of 'women empowerment,' situated in New India within a span of some twenty years; from the 1980s to the early post-millennium era.

This study seeks to appreciate how these two fictional narratives discursively engage with such challenges, responding to the underlying tensions in mapping the empowered status of Indian women through a systematic departure from embedded cultural prejudices and Daedalian gender stereotypes. Keeping track of how Indian women's 'performative' gestures and actions have changed over time helps to corroborate the need to place the development of third-world feminist discourses within the morphing paradigms of the 'post-national' era and to understand why and how the female protagonists of these tales both embrace and reject many of the reforms that have been long-awaited in Indian society.

FEMINIST LITERATURE'S INTERSECTIONALITY

Being 'intersectional' is trendy right now, both in the academy and beyond. 'Intersectionality' as a term has gained traction since 2014. Academics have identified it as a buzzword due to its widespread usage in recent public discourse and debate. However, the concept of intersectionality initially took root in the field of law, namely in Black feminist criticisms of the judicial system. It has evolved from an academic theory into a 'way of being' thanks to its

widespread application across several fields. "Being intersectional" is seen as a theoretical stance, a methodological strategy, and a political stance. Many different approaches have been used in feminist studies to theorize the ways in which intersecting identities influence one another and how individuals perceive discrimination and exclusion. In general, intersectionality cannot be defined, according to feminist publications. The absence of a well-defined intersectional approach is both the central criticism and promise of intersectionality in feminist thought.

EXAMINING GENDER ROLES IN INDIAN DIASPORA LITERATURE

Knitting, sewing, quilting, and cooking are all metaphors for the experience; the diaspora narrative connects it to the traditionally female role of preserving history via documentation and remembrance. Many sociological studies have shown that men are more likely to uproot their lives and move to a new location, but women continue to bear the burden of remembering and honoring their homelands even as they adapt to new environments. The difficulties of this paradoxical circumstance are at the center of contemporary diasporic discourses, highlighting the difficulties of gendered roles inside an act that continues to be beyond the agency of women. The confluence Although diaspora is a historical and cultural phenomenon, there hasn't been much discussion of gender and diaspora and how they've impacted one other current reality has embraced concerns of transnationalism, globalization, hybridity, and multiculturalism.

Focusing on female and Queer subjectivities in the discourse around transnational migration draws attention to the many ways that issues raised by diaspora studies continue to be extremely normative and linked to the notion of diaspora as a heteronormative experience. Resistance to these cultural norms is on the rise, and so is interest in women's perspectives on the diaspora question and related issues. The literary expressions of the diasporic subject's placement within a certain setting have been widely, but awkwardly, examined in ways that give voice to only heterosexual male experience. For instance, Sneja Gunew queries, "While diaspora often evokes a homeland, how do women writers assert, negotiate, and contest multiple, political ideas of home across time, history, and geography?" (Gunew 8).

As a notion, diaspora may be traced back to William Safran's early writings, This he explained as alluding to a historically dispersed people who have a common desire to come home. The main emotions connected to such a movement are remembrance, loss, and an unbreakable connection to the past; the migrations of the Jews, Armenians, and Greeks were seen as exemplifying such criteria that upheld the diaspora's binary divide between homelands and hostlands. Subsequent analyses, such those by Robin Cohen,

developed the concept of migration and proposed that diasporas may be classified into different groups according on the motivations that initially prompted the migration (Cohen 18). While his categorization of diasporas into those of victims, workers, traders, and colonials broadened the range of populations that might identify with the term, it also continued to classify travelers according to their ethnicity and the us/them dichotomy of the concept of migration.

In the first issue of *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, published by Kachig Tölöyan in 1991, he acknowledged the impact of globalization and transcultural travel by emphasizing the statelessness of the diaspora: "The term that once described Jewish, Greek, and Armenian dispersion now shares meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes works like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest worker, exile communist, and so on (Tölöyan, 4-5)." Later research in globalization and relocation studies expanded its scope by highlighting the multifaceted character of movement across and within the global North and South. James Clifford acknowledged the ambiguity of the word when he cautioned that "we should be wary of constructing our working definition of a term like 'diaspora' by recourse to a 'ideal type'" (Clifford 306), since doing so might lead to certain kinds being more diasporic than others.

"The diasporic imaginary, then, does not act as a new kind of place of origin but indicates a process of identification generative of diasporic subjects" (Axel 412). This is a key point in Brian Axel's use of the term "diasporic imaginary," which also highlights the violent basis of diaspora. Brubaker agrees, arguing that it is crucial to "treat diaspora not as a bounded entity but as an idiom, stance and claim" (Brubaker 1), shifting the focus away from the country of origin. "In sum," he writes, "rather than speak of 'a diaspora' or 'the diaspora' It could bear greater fruit when seen as an entity, a circumscribed group, an ethno-demographic, or an ethnocultural fact (Brubaker 13).

With an emphasis on the mutability of travel, migration, and identity creation, Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall's cultural studies have been pivotal in shaping the evolving idea of diaspora. Hall's argument that cultural identities are more accurately understood as processes rather than static entities overturned the conventional wisdom about diasporic identities.

What I mean by the diaspora experience is not essence or purity, but rather a knowledge of a necessary heterogeneity and variation; a vision of 'identity' that lives with and through difference, not despite it, or hybridity. Those who live in a diaspora are likely to have identities that are continually evolving and diversifying. (Hall 235)

Paul Gilroy's famous as evoked in his *Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, the metaphor of the ship on the sea helped to highlight diaspora as a concept in flux by demonstrating how individuals impacted by forced migration have formed diasporic identities instead of concentrating on a shared national experience that, although useful in the colonial struggle, did not evoke the realities of emerging social realities. Diasporic experience, Vertovec said, should be understood "by both structure (historical conditions) and agency (the meanings held, and practices conducted, by social actors)" (Vertovec 24). Despite its complexity, the word "diaspora" was quickly appropriated in a wide range of mostly patriarchal cultural, social, economic, and ethnic settings.

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE FEMINIST VIEWPOINTS OF KAMALA DAS, SHASHI DESHPANDE, ANITA DESAI, AND ARUNDHATI ROY

As she searches for her true identity, a lady must face several challenges. In order to achieve her goals, she must break a number of rules set up by man to preserve his dominance in society. The first obstacle is the expectation that she would behave in accordance with the whims and fancies of her family members, which is based on the arbitrary standards of familial respectability. They can now control her like a puppet. Any refusal, no matter how polite, and any demand for the status a woman wants are grounds for labeling her as rude. She has been called disobedient, unfaithful, and shameless, among other things. Her reputation suffers as a result, and people start to question her honesty. Despite these challenges, her indomitable character gives her the strength to shatter the patriarchal norm and other societal taboos.

Several modern female authors have tackled topics related to women's liberation. Names like Manju Kapoor, Bapsi Sidhwa, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, etc., to mention just a few, have offered the new images of women who speak up against the mistreatment and injustice they have endured for centuries. They've been leaving the safety of their homes in an effort to find their own way in the world and become self-sufficient. They are seeking equal status and independence in both words and deeds, and they are rejecting patriarchal ideas and servitude with great bravado. As S. Prasanna Sree so astutely observes, it is a fight against the discrimination, sexism, and double standards to which women are subject. The new woman is driven by the need to give her life purpose, and so she fights for the respect and admiration that are rightfully hers. (Sree 32)

KAMALA DAS

One such rebellious author is Kamala Das, who has long spoken out for women's silenced identities and unfulfilled ambitions. She is revered as an unapologetic and forthright feminist poet. She writes in

the confessional mode, baring her soul and exposing her raw feelings. Her literature challenges the notion that men are superior to women. She is one of those feminist poets that value women for their bodies and their sexuality. She is a radical feminist because of the way she portrays sensitive topics that society has traditionally avoided. *My Story*, *Alphabet of Lust*, *A Doll for the Child Prostitute*, etc. are only a few of her great works that expose the struggles of women in a patriarchal society. Many conservatives are shaken by her forthrightness and the clarity with which she presents her feminist worldview.

Kamala Das's never-ending disappointment and dissatisfaction may be traced back to her inability to achieve the satisfaction in her marriage that every woman seeks. She talks candidly about this painful event in her best-selling book, *My Story*.

People in my community have every right to wonder how I went down this path, given that I was born to parents with such strong moral convictions. Inquire of the writers, both living and deceased, who helped me find my voice and accept myself. (Das 152-153)

So, feminism is a kind of defiance in her eyes, a way to fight back against the patriarchal order. Her structured rejection of the rotten social order manifested itself in lyrical form.

She offers a repressed woman's feelings a strong platform to be heard. She feels an innate need to level the playing field with the male species. Despite social and familial expectations to play the stereotypical female role:

A FEW FEMINISTS WRITERS' OPINIONS

There is no adequate definition of feminism. It is seen as an outgrowth of Marxism in the West, as that school of thought emerged in capitalist nations as a fortified dogma cloaked in paranoia and resentment. A reading of Woolf that is independent of the author's use of narrative techniques is advocated by Elaine Showalter. She agrees with the significance of Virginia Woolf as a literary figure. Virginia Woolf has long been a source of intrigue for feminist critics since she spent so much time considering issues facing women. Women's values clearly vary from those created by the opposite sex, as Virginia Woolf pointed out in 1929 (*Indian Women Novelist* 66). In her book *A Writing of Their Own*, Elaine Showalter discusses Woolf's critique of androgyny, stating that Woolf's concept regarding women's writing was tangentially related to her own internal fight for self-definition. In an anonymous interview for R. Brimley Johnson's *The Women Novelists* published in 1918 (Showalter 280), Woolf voiced her displeasure with both the feminine novelists who wrote under the yoke of societal

expectations for women of their sex and the feminist authors who want to see the yoke lifted for women.

CONCLUSION

There are significant differences between postcolonialism and feminism, in my view, because both are fundamentally concerned with the rights of a mass of ideological appeal (whether this group is the "third world" or "female"), and as such, have a built-in tendency toward conflict with other groups. The elimination of the distinction between the conceptions of the monolithic character of socialism and the "third world" or "female" in post-colonial critique and feminist criticism. Differences between "first world" and "male" exist for other reasons as well. There is no distinction between the "third world" and the "first world" or between female and male. The idea was developed as a response to the pressure. The idea of independence appears more feasible than this communal appeal. From an individualist stance, what matters most is the autonomy of people, and what really exists are people. Therefore, it is necessary to oppose everything that hides or restricts the existence, freedom, and rights of individuals, regardless of the collective appeal in the name. It is a well-established reality that oppression may arise from any quarter; that males are not automatically oppressors of women, nor is the First World always the oppressor of the Third World. It's not simple to identify or acknowledge such facts if we cling too tightly to the essentialist idea of groupings.

"Women," "men," "the Third World," and "the First World" are not abstract concepts but rather collections of unique people, and these people are unavoidably diverse rather than homogeneous. The same time, "some feminist critics are less harsh than they used to be, stating that males can't have women and that male authors, like Shakespeare, had a predisposition against the women he wrote about. They're finally speaking out for male authors. Both postcolonial feminism and the emancipation movement, in my opinion, would be better served by a complete cancellation of the gender confrontation between men and women, rather than a reversal of the binary confrontation of logic (from slave to general). And the idea behind it is to fight back against oppression from both men and women by shifting from feminism to individualism.

This research concludes by recognizing and appreciating the efforts of these modern Postcolonial women writers, who have been challenging and resisting the hegemonic power discourses in postcolonial societies, enabling women to speak and listen to each other, and redefining their identities with the help of liberating tools like "safe spaces" that they have created through their gender-sensitive writings. In addition, the study identifies the ground-breaking efforts of pro-feminists who are fostering "a new social awareness, consciousness, and awakening which is changing the mind-sets of young minds to reject male superiority and to create new self-definition's that

liberate masculinities from patriarchal, homophobic, and capitalist power" (Ratele and Botha 14-19).

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