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## Bodies, Boundaries and Genealogies of Connection: Locating Networks of Feminism(s) in India/South Asia

Mallarika Sinha Roy <sup>1\*</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

Drawing from the scholarship on women's history, social movements in the wake of 'globalisation', and critical debates in feminism, this paper locates the historically-embedded networks of feminist politics that persistently shape contemporary feminism(s) in India/South Asia. This is an attempt to review the spatial dimensions of connections among the local, national, and global contexts, where gender becomes a foundational category for defining the relations of power. The critical debates on gender, space, and time have contributed to re-thinking the idea of region cutting across geo-political borders and bring the questions of memory within the study of territorial boundedness. How a territorial unit becomes an institutionalised entity of social, cultural, political practices and consciousness can provide an apt conceptual framework for unpacking structures of inequalities that feminist politics addresses. The historical memories have shaped not only the postcolonial nationalist discourses but also became critical for territorialised identities within and across national borders. With a focus on the manners in which discourses of gender violence travel and how unexpected connections among historical events construct different meanings for local and global and the local-global interface, this paper tries to situate the 'politics of space/time' in the region of India/South Asia.

**Keywords:** space, regional feminism, South Asia

### INTRODUCTION

In the age of viral videos, live newsfeed and 'trending' events it is not difficult to imagine how the boundaries between local-national-global are crossed in an instant. However, the spatial and temporal references attached to an event rely on intersecting flows of time and space, meanings attached to the local, national, and global in terms of gender, space and time, and actors situated through multiple markers like class, caste, ethnicity, region and gender. This paper wishes to understand such meanings within the context of the scholarship emerging on South Asian Feminism(s) and attempts to address how historically produced meanings of space impact on the notion of regional feminism. The thematic diversity of this special issue gives a space to articulate the local-global interface in the era of neoliberalism and seek new ways to interpret regional feminism outside the patchwork quilt of feminism(s) bounded by borders of nation-states.

My efforts to conceptualise 'the local', from the lens of space, hinge on two important debates in feminist thought around the definitions of 'global' and 'local', including their interface (Massey 1994; Staeheli et al 2004). The first one concerns the ways in which space becomes feminised as against masculinised time; and the second one reflects on the manners in which 'the local' gets written over by femininity as against the 'global' by masculinity. These thematic debates allow us to theorise regional feminism beyond a descriptive narrative of feminist politics within a conglomeration of border-sharing nation-states, and to probe whether region, as a conceptual category, remains too invested in the oppositional relationship between centre and periphery. Such queries situate the processes of social spatialisation with respect to difference, where it becomes possible to inquire whether creating the category of 'South Asian Feminism(s)' can have a larger theoretical significance.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Centre for Women's Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, INDIA.* The author's book 'Gender and Radical Politics in India: Magic Moments of Naxalbari' (1967-1975) (London and NY: Routledge) has been published in 2011.

\*Corresponding Author: [mallarikasinharoy@yahoo.com](mailto:mallarikasinharoy@yahoo.com)

Defining 'South Asia' as a region becomes the first important task for such a project. The innovative methodological approaches and interdisciplinary content of 'South Asian Studies' reflect the geopolitical realities of this region in its 'modern' frame (Mathur 2000). For South Asia, modernity combines the experiences of colonialism with various strands of nationalist thought and political activism since the nineteenth century, which have shaped the postcolonial condition(s) of this region. The emergence of academic writing on the history, politics and practices of women in South Asia from 1990s has led to publication of several significant collections of essays on South Asian Feminism(s) in the past few years, creating an exciting new field of study (Loomba and Lukose 2012; Roy 2013; Kurian and Jha 2018). Problematising the historically produced spatial meanings of the 'local', the 'national' and the 'global', however, have rarely become the focus of many these richly detailed case studies on South Asia<sup>1</sup>. In this paper, South Asia refers to the historical formation of this region as the import of colonial British India, a spatial formation that has remained rather unexplored in South Asian feminist scholarship. In fact, the title of this paper includes India/South Asia to mark the rather messy historicity of this geo-political space – that this history is replete with accidents and transgressions, defying an 'origin'-al moment of South Asian Feminism(s) with birth of nation-states<sup>2</sup>.

This paper draws from diverse source material to make sense of the spatialisation of South Asia, ranging from the travel-writing of women from nineteenth century Bengal, a contemporary visual text in the form of a documentary film made by a British film-maker after the gang-rape in Delhi on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2012, a feminist historical exploration of infamous Jack the Ripper murders in 1880s London, to critical feminist writings on Development discourses. The sources are, admittedly, uneven and the rationale for selecting them resides in the thematic questions addressed by this paper. They reflect the accidental connections in the writings of gendered travellers of a specific historical period in interpreting 'home'; unexpected similarities in modes of attaching meanings to social spaces inhabited by 'other' women at multiple intersecting points of time and space; and they displace the apparently acceptable critical feminist thinking on Development discourses. The methodology of the paper, thus, draws heavily from Foucault's argument for genealogy to approach the messy history of accidents, discrepancies, and incongruences. Foucault stated that:

[genealogy] must record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality; it must seek them in the most unpromising places...not to trace the gradual curve of their evolution but to isolate the different scenes where they engaged in different roles" and that "[i]t opposes itself to the search for "origins". (1991: 76-7)

But, he asserts, events are not to be found in 'a battle' or 'a treaty' but rather in reversal of forces and appropriation of vocabulary to use against those who had once used it. Transgressions and accidents and unexpected occurrences in the chain of local-national-global contexts are not to be treated as regular manifestations of an alternative set of events. Attaching spatial meanings to the genealogies of overlapping boundaries, and transgressive journeys of people and ideas requires probing the classification of certain spaces as 'local' and certain other spaces as 'global' within feminist politics. The hierarchy of places, which Foucault designates as 'the space of emplacement', can be mapped as series, or grid, or trees and the coded elements within a set can either be randomly distributed or be arranged according to single or multiple classificatory schemes (Foucault 1986: 22-27). The genealogical method allows for unpacking the single or multiple schemes of classification, establishing the points of connection and circulation of meanings attached with spaces and places. The sources, I argue, can be read in relation to one another as they articulate a deeper 'network that connects points and intersects with its own skein' (Foucault 1986: 22).

The first section of this paper sets out the conceptual context of the local-global interface in feminist scholarship, especially in the discourses of Gender and Development from 1980s. I have drawn from two critical

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<sup>1</sup> Notable exceptions remain the works of Malathi de Alwis in collaboration with Jennifer Hyndman (2003; 2004) on the spatial nature of political violence and development strategies in Sri Lanka in the 1990s; Mary E John (2009) and Malathi de Alwis (2009) on the idea of 'postnational' to think through the transition from nation-space to globalization; and to a certain extent U. Kalpagam's work on colonial techniques of governance vis-a-vis production of knowledge (1995; 1997; 1999; 2000).

<sup>2</sup> South Asia, as a geopolitical entity consists of: India (independence achieved from Britain in 1947), Pakistan (independence achieved from Britain in 1947), Bangladesh (independence achieved from Pakistan in 1971), Bhutan (in 1910 the Kingdom of Bhutan signed the Treaty of Punakha that recognized the political autonomy of Bhutan from the British colonial rule in India and this treaty was a further consolidation of the Treaty of Sinchula signed in 1865), Nepal (in 1923 the British colonial rule in India recognized Nepal as an independent kingdom and in 2008 it became a federal democratic republic), Sri Lanka (became independent from Britain as the Dominion of Ceylon in 1948 and became Republic of Sri Lanka in 1972), Myanmar (Burma became independent from the British in 1948 and in 1989 the ruling military junta changed the name as Myanmar), Afghanistan (the history of Afghanistan is complex as it was never fully occupied by any imperialist force and yet has been vulnerable to aggressive machinations of several imperial powers throughout nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first century), Maldives (achieved independence from the British in 1965).

feminist authors, Maxine Molyneux and Sally Engle Merry to make sense of the conceptual context as they represent two distinctive approaches to the local-global interface. Molyneux's foundational ideas of 'practical and strategic' gender interests open up the links between the political economy as well as the political sociology of developing nations and the immediate and long-term interests of women of such nations (1985; 2003). The question of 'women's interests', however, as Molyneux alerts us, is difficult to determine in developing nations since women as an interest group do not constitute a single category, but rather, women are aligned with several disadvantaged groups. This positioning of women helps in understanding the significance of difference within the category of 'women', but makes it quite impossible to think of 'women's interests' beyond the specific boundaries of nation-states. Merry provides an important get-away from this bounded concept of nation-state as the site of the local. She unpacks the processes of the local-global interface through the intermediaries: how 'universal' documents of Human Rights are interpreted in the local contexts of developing nations and how culture, especially in terms of the governing principles of law, emerges as an important factor along side the political economy of developing nations (2000; 2006). The emphasis on culture, allows on the one hand to critically review the notion of cultural difference beyond mere acceptance of diversity of cultural practices, and on the other hand, to locate the pitfalls in homogenising the 'culture' of all developing nations. The problem with Merry's framework, however, remains in her unquestioned reliance on the 'universality' of Human Rights, without probing how the idea of universal is a construct of a specific time, produced in a place and modified through machinations of the local-global interface in postcolonial nation-states. Depending on Molyneux's emphasis on difference and Merry's focus on culture, I have concentrated on the complexities of representing the women of South Asia beyond the stereotype of victim *par excellence*, which gets occasionally fractured by demonstrations of courage and resourcefulness (Jeffrey 1998). These complexities are framed by the diverse geographical spaces, involved in producing the knowledge about South Asian women, and the politics of knowledge production through which such spaces attain specific meanings.

The substantive argument of the local-global interface in the historical context of South Asia is elaborated in the second and the third sections. Doreen Massey has been the principal guiding force for these two sections for her pioneering work on gender, space, and place (1992; 1994). Massey has connected the spaces of development, not in the developing nations but in the developed ones, with the abstract ideas of development that equates with progress (2004: 5-18). Her conceptualisation of the time-space compression wrenches the notion of space out of its generalised recognition as stasis, as a passive entity waiting to be marked by time. Consequently, it becomes possible to trace the messy accidents, discrepancies, and transgressions in history, not only through time but through space-time compressions and investigate how spaces become hierarchical, how such hierarchies are sustained or are challenged. The second section analyses how different sets of ideas attached with spaces of 'home' and 'abroad' are evoked in travel-writings of two Bengali women in the nineteenth century – a queen from a princely state under British protection and a middle-class, upper caste woman from the British occupied Bengal presidency. The third section puts in contrast the documentary film *India's Daughter* (2015) on the victim of Delhi gang-rape in 2012 with the history of the Jack the Ripper murders in nineteenth century London (Udwin 2015; Walkowitz 1982: 542-574) to identify the accidental similarities in representing violence against 'other' women – either marked by class or by race – eventually revealing a network of historically produced meanings of social spatialisation. The conclusion is an attempt to bring together these diverse threads to my principal argument that regional feminism needs to move beyond spatial pluralism to ascertain the significance of marginality and produce conceptual formulations from regional contexts, keeping in mind the messy, uneven but contiguous power dynamics laden within the local/global interface.

## **GENEALOGIES OF CONNECTION: THE LOCAL-GLOBAL INTERFACE OF SPATIAL DIFFERENCE**

Maxine Molyneux's formulation of 'practical and strategic gender interests' in her study of women's participation in the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua (in 1979) remains a critical cornerstone in theorising the local-global interface for women in movements (1985: 227-254). Molyneux pointed out early in her essay that:

a theory of interests that has an application to the debate about women's capacity to struggle for and benefit from social change must begin by recognising difference rather than by assuming homogeneity (1985: 232).

Her formulation of the two-fold gender interests was directed at this complexity of difference between the concrete realities of women's lives shaped by contextual contingencies and the abstracted ideological tenets of feminist politics. Molyneux's formulation has since generated interesting debates among feminist scholars regarding its efficacy in capturing the finer nuances of gender politics in women's movements as well as in

movements where women have participated collectively. Feminist scholars from various disciplinary backgrounds have made similar efforts to methodologically explain the diversity of women's experiences across space and time through making difference a part of the conceptual scaffolding for feminism (Moore 1988; Kandiyoti 1988: 274-290; Phillips 1998: 10-31). The significance of a feminist methodological approach lies in the focus of feminist research on difference, on noticing of the relations of power in the practical aspects of 'doing research' and power dynamics in the methods and purposes of knowledge production (Gorelick 1991: 459-477; Alcoff 1991-92: 5-32).

Critical explorations of difference, the relationship between difference and identity and the network of power involved in the production of knowledge had also contributed in a dialogue between feminism and the postcolonial situation. "The most significant collision and collusion of postcolonial and feminist theory occur", writes Leela Gandhi, "around the contentious figure of the 'third world woman'" (1998: 83). The figure of 'the third world woman' is complicated due to conflicting claims of patriarchy and colonialism, imperialism and nationalism, cultural essentialism and gender essentialism over her voice, body, actions, and vision. Any overzealous effort to recuperate the third world woman with a pristine history submerged in oblivion may surrender the critical view. Such a pursuit usually depends on marking the 'otherness' of the third-world women, and as a result the third world women's position becomes continuously written over by other meanings of power relations. It is important to flag up at this point of discussion that the figure of the third world woman may not necessarily inhabit a third world space, and yet she carries the spatial meanings 'third world' has accrued over the decades of decolonisation, and carries the legacy of colonies as gendered spaces. The relations of power embedded in spatial meanings, consequently, make space a critical factor in theorising the local-global interface. If the 'third world woman' is not to be treated simply as the protagonist of different 'case studies' and waiting to be incorporated within an abstract feminist knowledge and if the local is not to stand for case studies and global for the larger vision of change in the study of feminist politics, they must be framed in terms of overlapping boundaries, in terms of histories of transgression, in terms of unexpected similarities amongst disparate events.

Before going in the details of tracking the significance of spatial meanings in the local-global interface, however, it is important to briefly recount the ways in which the relationship between local and global, punctuated with national and/or regional, has been explained in the discourses of Gender and Development. These discourses have played a crucial role in shaping the ideas of gender equality and women's agency in Development bureaucracies of the global North – UN institutions and Donor Agencies –, among the Non Governmental Organisations working in the development sector in third world contexts, as well as among activists in social movements. Andrea Cornwall and Althea-Maria Rivas argue that by the mid-1990s a disjuncture between the academic feminist works on gendered relations of power and the policy discourses in the arena of Gender and Development became evident (2015: 396-415). While there was an emphasis in the academia to explore gender politics vis-a-vis the differences within which specific sets of gender relations take shape, the Development discourses had decided on one-dimensional interpretations of women's agency and empowerment in the third world. These interpretations relied on a two-pronged agenda: first, men and women are hierarchically placed where men are with power and women are without power, overlooking the contingent structural inequalities within which both men and women are placed; second, making poor women efficient workers or small-scale entrepreneurs with access to microfinances would serve the larger goal of community upliftment instead of enabling them to recognise and act upon the inequalities that control their lives. Despite a steady stream of critical reflections on the straitjacketed concepts of gender equality, women's agency and women's empowerment from feminist scholars, the Gender and Development terminology gained a certain level of acceptance amongst women's collective action groups as the policy discourses at the national levels advocated them and the banking and business sectors supported them.

Mindie Lazarus-Black and Sally Engle Merry's report on a symposium 'The Politics of Gender Violence: Law Reform in Local and Global Places' states at the beginning that the case of violence against women provides an excellent vantage point to analyse "how new discourses, laws, and practices about gender violence between intimates develop through local, national, and global processes" (2003: 931). The case of violence against women is indeed an apt point of analytical departure to understand the implications of the advocacy and practices of Gender and Development on the relational aspects of gender inequalities. If we remember that turning women's agency and empowerment into economic efficiency and keeping men 'out of the frame' as irresponsible sexually voracious deterrents in the third world contexts defined the local-national-global chain, it is imperative to focus on the sequential meanings produced by the power relations embedded in spatial differences. Merry has persistently argued that the secular and universal documents to ensure human rights for women, which are also 'global' in terms of spatial connections among local-national-global contexts, regularly define 'culture' as local, hence harmful for women. The notion of cultural differences among communities in third world nations produce an unease among the global law and policy-makers because such differences do not easily translate into the straitjacketed meanings of gendered violence. As culture and difference remain 'out there' in the unfamiliar semi-urban and rural hinterlands of third world metropolises, they become, ironically, homogenised as the dangerous unruly margins of modernity where women are brutally victimised.

Framing the local-global interface draws from these power dynamics that animate the relationship between the local and the global in terms of space. Time remains a major feature to unpack the dynamisms of space, but as Foucault puts it, “only as one of the various distributive operations that are possible for the elements that are spread out in space” within the framing processes (1986: 23). As framing involves connecting seemingly disparate events through a sequential chain of meanings, following Foucault, it is possible to argue that the sequential chain of meanings is produced not only through time, but space as well<sup>3</sup>. In fact, Cornwall and Rivas call for (re)framing an agenda for changing UN policy discourses after the failure of current Gender and Development discourse, especially after the ‘post-2015 agenda circus’ (2015: 409). Cornwall and Rivas approach framing the troubled trajectories of women’s empowerment and gender equality from the mid-1990s to 2015 with references to the journey of ‘gender’ as a term in the International Development agenda from 1950s, to feminist academic analyses of gender from 1970s, to feminist writings on women’s empowerment from 1980s. These reference points connect different temporal junctures in the field of feminist reflections on gender equality and women’s empowerment and, though obliquely, these references also connect the spaces from where these discursive points have emerged.

These spaces include: the North American university spaces where feminist academic discourses on gender were taking shape; the headquarters of donor agencies in Europe and North America where policies for Gender and Development were formulated; development projects in India, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Kenya, and Brazil where the local structural inequalities contingent on gender relations were being written over by universalist notions of development; academic institutional spaces in the U.K and the U.S (and presumably in the universities of the third world countries where development projects were running) where critical feminist thinking on development studies were emerging; and women’s activist groups at the grassroots in developing nations. The point I am trying to make is that these spaces are not merely geographical locations, unmarked by historically produced hierarchies. It is not surprising that the relations of power among these spaces have multiple dimensions. Feminist geographers have continuously engaged since 1980s to correlate the ‘political’ with ‘cultural’ economy, focussing on the parameters of classifying these spaces as local, national, or global in ways that often reproduce the hierarchies among geographical locations. My contention is, making space a principal category of analysing the global-local interface vis-à-vis the gender politics of development discourses will allow us to map how these distinctive spaces attain specific meanings in terms of local, national/regional, and global in feminist thinking and how the intersecting axes of time and space impact on the chain of meanings.

## DEAD WOMEN WALKING: GENDERING THE POLITICS OF TIME-SPACE COMPRESSION

Doreen Massey’s *tour de force* exposition of the feminisation of space as against time, and the feminisation of place as against space, unpicks the assumptions that consider time as ‘becoming’ and space as ‘being’: rendering time as dynamism and space as stasis (1992: 65-85). Such a view of space, Massey argues, makes space de-politicised: an ‘other’ of History. Contesting the arguments that reduce space as a flat, immobilised surface over which time writes its narrative of movement, Massey contends for spatial dynamism that are:

constructed out of the multiplicity of social relations across all spatial scales, from the global reach of finance and telecommunications, through the geography of the tentacles of national political power, to the social relations within the town, the settlement, the household and the workplace (1994: 4).

This multiplicity of social relations across all spatial scales is defined as time-space compression, and for Massey globalisation in its contemporary form is an example of time-space compression. She posits the politics of time-space compression in its gendered nature, which attributes static ‘being’ to space and dynamic ‘becoming’ to time in the same manner femininity is identified as passive and masculinity as active. Place, Massey argues, similarly becomes feminised as it gets equated with belongingness, and finally with ‘home’ as against the masculinised abstract space (1994: 7).

Massey claims that accepting space as mobile and not as an absence or a lack ‘releases the spatial from the realm of the dead’ (1994: 4). This expression has been the principal inspiration behind naming this section as ‘Dead

<sup>3</sup> Framing has emerged as a powerful conceptual device in the social movement studies in the last three decades. The concept of framing renders seemingly unrelated events or occurrences within a sequential chain of meanings to “infer “what is going on” with the caveat that they are under constant revision based on new occurrences and unexpected actions by others” (Oliver and Johnston 2005: 188). The rich scholarship on framing has produced, over the years, a dialogue between the usefulness of framing as a cognitive ordering of events of collective mobilization and the ideological aspects of collective action where multiple modes of thinking, behaving, and interacting belie any calcified notion of mobilisation (Ferree and Merrill 2004; Oliver and Johnston 2005; Benford and Snow 2000). This critical scholarship is quite at the centre of rethinking the role and status of culture, ideology, emotion and volition in social movement studies, especially the contemporary social movements.

Women Walking’ – where dead women refer to connected states of being and becoming. ‘Dead Women Walking’ is an attempt to indicate that women’s history is not a mere compensatory effort to include dead women in the interpretations of a seamless past but rather about disconcerting fragments of transgressions that destabilise the very seamless-ness of narrating the past. The specific use of this expression intends to suggest that women’s histories of travel, especially the ‘counterflow’ from the periphery to the centre, are about transgressions of several different kinds of social/cultural boundaries – that, quite literally, women of the past have walked across borders that were drawn to contain them (Fisher 2007; Sen 2005).

While unpacking the questions of the politics of locality and a global sense of place in the context of time-space compression, Doreen Massey has argued consistently that the view of place or the locality as bounded, fixed and stable is problematic for its inevitable association with an untroubled sense of the past in the form of ‘tradition’. In her debate with David Harvey regarding the meaning of place, Massey points out that Harvey’s contention of conceptualising place or the locality as seamlessly coherent and tied up with a fixed identity fails to take into account that localities are not only constituted by the sharp contrast with what lies beyond but, are also constituted by the continuous interactions with that beyond (Massey 1994: 132-142). Massey’s global sense of place, thus, follows the patterns of mobility – not only physical practices of crossing geographical boundaries but also the historically produced patterns of discursive and material transactions – between the global and the local.

The notion of unfixed and dynamic locality allows for an understanding of the local inclusive of the set of privileges prevalent in a specific location as well as the processes through which the spatial boundaries can become mobile. Feminist approaches to ‘the local’, consequently, can move beyond mere pluralism of the margins<sup>4</sup>. Attending to the problems of relations of power means taking into account the differences in structures and experiences of inequalities and they ‘must be grounded in the particular configurations of structural inequalities that exist in each specific historical and geographical context’ (Nagar 2004: 35). However, Nagar follows through with a corollary that some of the chief axes of inequalities like race, class, religion may be interwoven with other historical and geographical contexts, producing different braiding patterns of structures and experiences. Taking the example of debates on *mut’a*, or temporary marriage (a contract between a married or unmarried man and an unmarried, divorced, or widowed woman that is religiously sanctioned by Shia Islam) practices in Dar-es-Salaam in the early 1990s, Nagar explains how the ‘local’ stretches beyond its given geographical borders and how the socio-spatial practices continuously re-shape according to the shifting borders between local, national, and transnational.

This kind of mobility not only challenges the fixity of place or the local, but also the masculine/feminine binary that has often been associated with time/space, space/place, and global/local. Treating the above-mentioned categories as interactive rather than mutually exclusive becomes easier in the context of the scholarship on travel, especially histories of travel vis-à-vis gender. The framework of colonial modernity, utilised by feminist historians of South Asia to explain effects and impact of the British Empire on women in colonial and postcolonial times, considers the culture and practices of travel as important axes for the making of ‘self’ against the ‘other’ through constructions of ‘home’ and ‘abroad’. “In the European culture of travel,” writes Inderpal Grewal “mobility not only came to signify an unequal relation between the tourist/traveller and the “native”, but also a notion of freedom” (1996: 136). This idea of freedom was strung in a metonymic chain of meanings with ‘home’ and ‘civilised’, where ‘abroad’ referred to despotic rules of unfreedom suffered by natives and home was civilised and free. Such spatial meanings of ideas, however, got disrupted when English educated ‘natives’ used them during their travels through the imperial centre. Krishnabhabini Das visited England in 1882 and in her travelogue she noted:

Every Indian is, perhaps, curious to know about the person who is ruling over our India, who, despite being a woman, is running the entire British Empire, with the help of Parliament, with fairness, justice, and discipline. Empress Victoria does not wish ill for India, she is doing her utmost to ensure good governance for Indians; but she is not responsible for our colonized status – that, the royal scepter of *Hindustan*, the crown of India is now with Empress Victoria instead of *Hindus*. ([1885] 1996: 58-9, emphasis mine)

This excerpt from the chapter titled ‘Empress Victoria and her Household’ mentions the importance of the parliament in imperial governance and may seem quite consistent with the home/abroad and freedom/unfreedom binary, only in the reverse order. This reference is suggestive for the ‘freedom’ in ‘civilised’ England since ‘parliamentary rule signified representational politics and the voice of the citizens’ (Grewal, 1996: 136). Grewal

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<sup>4</sup> Feminist engagements with transnationalism and space/place offer interesting insights into the conceptualisation of the local-global interface beyond adding ‘empirical vignettes without attending to the particularities of each’ (Pratt and Yeoh, 2003: 160). This paper draws from several such feminist works to formulate the principal thematic argument (Shohat 2001; Talpade Mohanty 1991; Alexander and Talpade Mohanty 1997; Grewal and Kaplan 1994; Moghadam 2005).

argues that English women, even without any representation or voting right in the parliamentary system, participated in the discourse of ‘civilized freedom’ when they travelled abroad, precisely because their ‘home’ was defined by those two ideas. However, for ‘native’ women travelling abroad in the latter half of the nineteenth century the ideas of freedom were fraught with competing discourses of progress, tradition, and nationhood. From the 1870s social reform movements on the issues of women’s emancipation were going through a critical period in British India as the reformers made efforts to forge an agreeable relationship with a gradually emerging nationalism. Krishnabhabini Das’s appreciation of imperial good governance and her assurance to her readership that Empress Victoria does not wish ill for India contains an interesting twist in her conceptualisation of ‘home’<sup>5</sup>. Das inhabits the intersecting points between home and abroad as she both celebrates and laments for the ‘rulers’ of civilised freedom. She wrote in her travelogue unequivocally that her greatest experience of ‘abroad’ or England was her sense of freedom, and yet she was equally willing to recover the lost Hindu glory at home. It seems that the multiple spatial scales of the British Empire as well as British India of her times constructed her belongingness, which contained an yearning for a civilised home that would ensure freedom.

During her stay in England, Krishnabhabini Das keenly observed the contestations and negotiations in the social relation of sexes, the limits of freedom imposed by class positions, and remained a loyal subject of Empress Victoria, willing to accept several qualities of class-based English ideals of modern womanhood in order to reform women in India. In her personal life, she defied the customary inhibitions of travelling abroad with her husband but experienced tremendous private loss as her only daughter was taken away from her because of her travel to England. She bore this loss stoically while living in England and devoted much of her energy in social reform for women. Her lucid description and pithy observations of life in England scrupulously avoids personal references, but her occasional verses are soaked in intimate details of her feelings – her sorrows about leaving a young daughter at home, her own sense of freedom, her zeal to improve the lot of women in India. This distinction in expressing her social and intimate ‘self’ alludes to the fragmented sense of ‘home’ and belongingness.

The contemporary scholarship on Indian women travellers supports the argument that Krishnabhabini Das was not an exception in interpreting the meanings of home and abroad. Her preoccupation with the ‘woman question’ remains a persistent theme of discussion in travelogues of Indian women, in fact among Indian men as well. Simonti Sen, a scholar on Bengal travel narratives in late nineteenth and early twentieth century and the editor of Das’s republished travelogue, writes that constructing the ideal womanhood for Indian women, especially their emancipation from *antahpur* or *zenana*, occupied male social reformers and they relied on the virtues of the ‘English Lady’ from urban middle-classes, discarding different kinds of ‘whorishness’ of both aristocratic upper-class English women and ‘London street girls’ (2005: 138). Juxtaposing these concerns of Indian middle-class and largely Hindu upper-caste men and women, with Maharani Sunity Devi’s experiences of her visit to England in 1887 can produce a rupture in the seemingly coherent narrative of Indian women traveller’s observations of the ‘abroad’ and reflections on ‘home’.

Maharani Sunity Devi was the wife of Maharaja Nripendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur of Cooch Behar princely state and visited England for the first time in 1887 as an invited guest of the British Empire to celebrate the jubilee year of Empress Victoria’s reign. In her autobiography Sunity Devi writes in detail about her travels, reminding her readership that except for Maharani of Baroda who had previously been to Switzerland, she was the first Maharani to visit England as the queen of an Indian prince (1921: 103). The snippets of her visit include an audience with the Empress, attending State Balls and Parties with European royalty, picnics in the country estates of English peerage, sharing evening tea with women members of the British royal family, and her happy times with her children and husband. At one point, she writes in great detail that at the State Ball she was invited by the King of Greece, the Crown Prince of Denmark, and the Prince of Wales to dance and she was so mortified that she had refused all of them (1921: 103-122). Sunity Devi never articulates why she had refused to dance even with the Prince of Wales, which her husband had told her was a command and not a request. It is, however, possible to surmise that the ‘Indian-ness’ of her self cautioned against overstepping that boundary. Even though she cheerfully describes her silk and brocade gown, her ‘toilette’ and the witticisms of Dukes and Lords directed at her, she stops short of the practice of dancing – a practice marked with non-respectable women in India. In spite of her entry into the English aristocratic life in the high noon of the British Empire, her growing familiarity with that life, and her immense privilege as a Maharani she stuck to an Indian virtue that distinguishes between respectable and vulgar femininity at her ‘home’.

Sunity Devi and Krishnabhabini Das were ‘native’ women, albeit occupying very different locations in terms of privilege, who encountered modernity abroad and accepted it with a measured sense of appropriateness along

<sup>5</sup> Krishnabhabini was born in Kajla village of Baharampur in 1864 (a different historical assumption is that she was born in Chuadanga village in Nadia district) and she was married off at the age of ten to Debendranath Das. Debendranath’s father was an advocate in Calcutta High Court and she came to live in Calcutta in 1875. She went to England following her husband in 1882 and first published her travelogue as a book *England – e Bangamahila* in 1885. She lived in England for a few years after publishing the book and after coming back became associated with social work for the enhancement of women’s education.

with their locations at home. The multiplicity of social relations that constructed the time of modernity and the space of home, defined Sunity Devi's sense of respectability and Krishnabhabini Das's sense of freedom. These were rather contradictory in nature even though they referred to similar ideas of home. The incongruence of their construction of 'home' and 'abroad' present us two different scenes with unexpected connections. The genealogy of connection forms a bridge at this point of intersection between a reformist middle-class Indian woman and an Indian Maharani. Krishnabhabini Das was, nearly, an exemplar of the gentlewoman or *bhadramahila* of colonial Bengal, representing several aspects of colonial modernity. She was educated, enjoyed a companionate marriage, even though her family arranged it, and a wife devoted to her husband's aspirations to become an England-educated public servant for the British colonial government. Sunity Devi was the daughter of Brahmo social reformer Keshab Chandra Sen who advocated for women's education and mobilised for increasing the age of consent to marriage for girls. Sunity Devi's marriage to the prince of Coochbehar was an attempt of both the British government and the Brahmo social reformers who followed her father to bring in colonial modernity to the royal families of princely states and transform the patterns of governance. Then, it is not so surprising a link. It was Sunity Devi's father Keshab Chandra Sen, who exhorted English ladies in his address at the Victoria Discussion Society (in 1870, held at the Architectural Gallery, Conduit Street, London) to impart enlightened liberal education among their Indian sisters to make them good mothers, wives, sisters and daughters (Sen 2005: 140). The politics of location, consequently, played a crucial role in constituting the gendered subject of British India where class, caste, and religion became chief threads of weaving the idealised femininity across borders but were braided differently according to their historical and geographical contexts. The 'local' for the British India, or the 'home' of the emergent Indian nationalist discourses continuously stretched beyond the geographical borders that defined them. The borders were moving with discourses of governance, freedom, and inequality undergirded by the political economy of imperialism while the culture of travel was adding multiple layers of spatial meanings to perceptions of home, belongingness, and community.

It is interesting to note the references to the feminisation of spaces in the travelogues. The spaces of domesticity in India (*antahpur* and *zenana*), the streets of the imperial metropolitan centres, the public spaces of colonial cities, and the places designated for entertainment and pleasure – all had gendered meanings associated with either respectable or vulgar ideals of femininity. Feminist interdisciplinary scholarship has informed us that such gendered meanings bear a long legacy of complex relationship between gender and space. Colonial expansion intensified racialising and sexualising Europe's 'other', as the shifting boundaries of the known world from fifteenth century compelled stricter codification of knowledge through meticulous and tireless empiricism. Anne McClintock elucidates the time-space compression in colonial knowledge production through the application of Darwinism in the field of cultural history (1995). Such an application allows for placing the axis of time on the axis of space and categorise the people and cultural practices of the colonies not as geographically different from Europe, but rather as temporally different – making the colonies the living history of Europe, occupying the same geographical space and yet separated by time. 'Porno-Tropics' is the term McClintock has used to explain the masculinised fantasy of Europe towards the far-off places they had sailed to and then colonised. Her coinage of 'Anachronistic Space' refers to the trope that homogenises 'the stubborn and threatening heterogeneity of the colonies' and the sexual agency of women from working class in the imperial metropolis through feminisation of space. The next section makes an attempt to situate the impact of this particular system of knowledge that combined the politics of knowledge production with the politics of gender violence.

## **“ANACHRONISTIC SPACES” OF GENDER VIOLENCE**

It is quite heartening to note that the critical feminist scholarship on Gender and Development as well as on Violence Against Women have been arguing for local translatability of global laws to prevent violence against women and for accountability, non-discrimination and inclusion in practices of women's empowerment. However, in scholarly efforts to theorise experiences of third world women in movements or histories of women's movements in third world contexts, spatio-temporal specificities may fall off the maps that are often drawn on the scales of universalistic claims of modernity. Merry has located the discrepancy between the global conventions and local implementations in the processes of vernacularisation and indigenisation – processes that are adopted to make the global conventions like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) effective within a local context through the use of existing cultural norms, values, and practices to frame the universal ideas of human rights (2006). She argues that the rather tricky position of translators makes them vulnerable to critique from both ends – their work may either not-enough-culturally-embedded to become effective, or not-enough-universal to attract international funding for projects. Merry lays out the dilemma without any ambivalence, “[t]his is the paradox of making human rights in the vernacular: To be accepted, they have to be tailored to the local context and resonant with the local cultural framework” (2006: 49). The clear division that Merry draws between the global North and by implication *local* South (even if the nomenclature is Global South)

including the emphasis on making human rights *effective*, accepts in this paper that the local will always be derivative of the global. Her position seems similar with, to quote from Susan M. Roberts, "...those who seek to valorize and champion the significance of place or the local in an era of globalization' and yet 'end up depicting the local as the playing field on which the global does its stuff' (2004: 130). Merry makes an effort to localise the global through the translators or 'intermediaries', who belong half and half to the local and the global, but her deliberate skirting of the self-critique of the human rights discourse (and by extension the development discourses) forces her to limit the 'case studies' in the location of projects, not in the location of project-funding.

Contextualising Merry's paradox, however, requires a close look at the set of historically produced meanings of spaces. Representing the figure of the third world woman in the local-national-global chain of contexts needs to take into account that spatial differences have historically been written in the universalist claims of modernity, and the contemporary global modernity is undergirded by imperial discourses of the colonised 'other'. Recognising the close connection between the colonial encounter and formation of Anthropology as a scholarly discipline marked the beginning of the postcolonial critique of Anthropology (Asad 1973). Fabian's remarkable thesis that the colonial system of knowledge production anthropologised space while historicising time initiated new methodological perspectives in writing the 'other' cultures with self-reflexivity (Fabian 1983; Marcus and Clifford 1986). As the 'fabulous geography' of ancient travel gave way to 'militant geography' of mercantile capitalism, the Enlightenment logic of knowledge production increasingly adopted the metaphor of gender violence – "the male penetration and exposure of a veiled, female interior; and the aggressive conversion of its "secrets" into a visible, male science of the surface" (McClintock 1995: 23). The erotics of knowledge, residing in the lurid fantasies of 'Porno-Tropics', not only feminised colonies but closer to home, the spaces occupied by working-class women in the city of London, became gendered in the same manner colonies were feminised. There seems to be a legacy of 'Porno-Tropics' in the way Merry has indicated the homogenisation of the 'culture' of rural hinterlands of developing nations. From the production of dangerous desires of the feminised colony, the shift has happened in producing the rural hinterlands of the postcolony as the space where the male desire runs amok; and this unruly maleness is defined by race and class.

If we remember that disciplines like Area Studies and Development Studies came into existence with the demise of European empires, it is not difficult to perceive the haunting presence of the colonial systems of knowledge production in defining the hierarchy between 'the global' and 'the local' (Anderson 1998; Corbridge 1995). Feminist interventions in Development discourses, consequently, cannot presume that 'effective' change in culturally diverse yet conceptually singular 'local' can be engineered by the global universal. Mary Gilmartin and Eleanor Kofman have pointed out that geographical borders are drawn both historically and spatially, dividing the world – "...between colonizers and colonized; between the first, second, and third worlds during the cold war; and between the developed and the developing worlds as the cold war ended" (2004: 120). Unless the manner in which the metaphor of gender violence shaping historically produced gendered meanings of space are explored, the paradox of tailoring universal ideals of human rights according to localised cultural meanings will remain unyielding. Genealogies of connection acknowledge the complexity of gendered space vis-à-vis gender violence in multiple temporal scales because it looks for unexpected connections instead of 'origins' in the culture specific gender ideologies.

Let me begin with Leslee Udwin's controversial documentary *India's Daughter* (2015) on the Delhi gang-rape on 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2012<sup>6</sup>. The visual construction of Jyoti Singh as an excellent example of the new, aspiring lower middle-class in India who would like to grab the opportunities for upward mobility offered by the neoliberal economy continues the older feminist framework of essentialising third world women as victims *par excellence*. The film generated much discussion in the print and online forums and much has already been written about the neoliberal construction of the 'event' and the 'victim' (Dutta and Sircar 2013; Baxi 2014; Menon 2015; Nag 2015; Kaur 2017). Let me outline some of common threads of argument from these discussions. Udwin has made the clear division between the predatory third world men and the struggling third world women where the men unambiguously represent the remnants of an older social system that brutally prevents the new India from realising its full potential. Such a visual construction – through the words of her parents, her mentor, one of her rapists, and families of her rapists – relies on a strategy of representation typical of the 'global' feminist concern of 'speaking for' women from developing countries. While Udwin, possibly with a noble intention, hammers the viewer with the ruthless aspects of urban underclass masculinity and the abject poverty in the hinterland, from where male

<sup>6</sup> The release of Udwin's film in India got into a major controversy when several feminist activists in India raised a set of legal and ethical objections to the content (<http://feministsindia.com/activists-discuss-concerns-over-indias-daughter/>, Accessed 4 January 2018). Though the feminist activists mentioned that they demand restrictions on the screening of the film until the legal process of case gets resolved and not for the possibility that the film may hurt sentiments of Indians, the Indian government stopped the television telecast and all further screenings in India including a ban on DVD sales of the film. This led to serious difference of opinion among different feminist activists as the question of freedom expression became the issue of the debate.

migrant labour comes to haunt the urban spaces with thoughtless violence, there is rarely any attempt to understand the constitutive elements of brutal masculinity. *India's Daughter* designates the urban poor man with an indecipherable viciousness that realises itself through sexualising and mutilating women's bodies. The point I am making, however is that Udwin's representation of male violence on the streets of Delhi finds an uneasy but undeniable connection with the mythical 'Jack The Ripper' murders in the Whitechapel area of London in 1888.

Judith Walkowitz's meticulous account of the reactions and responses of Londoners to gruesome murders of five working-class women explains how a century-old crime has provided the vocabulary for drawing boundaries of women's mobility in the city-space (1982: 542-574). I would like to draw attention to Walkowitz's analysis of social reformers' responses to the Ripper murders in 1888 as they represent dominant forces that rationalised the murders as a warning for women who hovered on the borders of respectable femininity. Walkowitz notes that middle-class social reformers carried out different philanthropic activities in the poor and rough neighbourhoods of Whitechapel but they were overpowered by class-fear when the unemployed poor of London's East End began to hold demonstrations in the wealthy West End from early 1880s. The Ripper murders provided social purity reformers with the apt logic that working class women with loose sexual morality bring fatality upon themselves, and to be rid of the 'bestiality' provoked by such women, proper gender coding of the society must be upheld. Except for a few contemporary feminist voices such as Beatrice Webb, Josephine Butler, and Florence Fenwick Miller, the mystique of male violence prevailed in creating segregating gendered spaces in the East End after the series of murders in 1888. Walkowitz, however, notes that ragged caps were doffed and slatternly looking women shed tears when coffins of murdered working-class women passed through the streets of Whitechapel (1982: 560). The class-based solidarity around the murder victims indicates the acceptability of working-class femininity in the spaces they inhabited, which got delegitimised through a more patient reclamation of their 'lodging houses' by the real estate dealers. Walkowitz concludes her essay with 'take-back-the-night-marches, anti-rape hotlines, battered women's shelters, anti-pornography demonstrations, and prostitutes' rights coalitions' in 1980s England to mark the continuing struggle against the long shadow of Ripper murders and a call to feminists to uncover the complex realities that hide behind a simplified image of horrific male violence against women.

Udwin's documentary carefully avoids the same complex realities present in Delhi of 2012, creating an undifferentiated and unintelligible masculine ferocity daubed in poverty and squalor. The decline in agriculture, manifested through high levels of farmers' suicide, and the vulnerability of urban migrant labour, which is often largely a vast impoverished young male population, remain hidden behind a one-dimensional image of 'male violence'. Udwin allows for the same exceptional status to the father of the rape victim as, perhaps, the social purity reformers were allowed in the popular press in 1888 for their philanthropic efforts to address the plight of working-class women. The critical shift, however, in the discourse of male violence in Udwin's documentary takes place through a specific interpretation of 'women's agency'. The dominant public discourse of 1888 invoked predatory male violence to discipline the agency of poor, urban, working-class women; the 'global' feminist position in 2012 invoked the same predatory male violence, with a twist, to celebrate the agency of aspiring working-class women – the twist lies in the manner in which the 'global' feminist slips into the shoes of the social purity reformer, playing the privileged role of the rescuer of her violated 'local' sisters. The US premier of *India's Daughter* was strongly promoted by Hollywood stars who stated that the experience of watching the film was unpleasant but vital for creating awareness about realities of women's plight in developing countries. Hollywood actor Sean Penn's remark that the film compelled him to ponder over his manhood, and reminded him of a trip he had taken with his children to Tanzania tips Merry's paradox on its head – the heterogeneity of the developing world has to be tailored into a homogeneous narrative by the cultural translators from the first world in order to make an *effective* marketable product<sup>7</sup>. McClintock's reference to the metaphor of gender violence in the Enlightenment's logic of knowledge production also attains a different meaning as the erotics of knowledge shifts from penetrative gaze to protective watchfulness. Consequently, I would like to add to Merry's critique of the local translatability of global concerns, that unless the lens of contextual cultural analysis is equally turned in the direction of the global – the processes through which the global becomes equated with the North and hence becomes universal – knowledge production on violence against women would remain partial.

It is important to remind us at this point of analysis that Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak exposed the revolutionary posturing of Euro-American feminism regarding the struggles of third world women in her critique of French Feminism and made the point emphatically that the first world feminist must learn to stop feeling privileged or superior as women (2008: 187). It is also important to remind ourselves that the sense of privilege in the authorial voice of *India's Daughter* gains legitimacy through the 'agency discourses' in the Development Studies and policy documents. Mary E. John has pointed out that the bilateral aid-donors and the World Bank had been projecting women involved in the informal sector of Indian economy as the primary candidates for 'agency' and 'empowerment' (John 1996: 3074). As the poor women are underwritten in the Development literature as people

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/oct/22/meryl-streep-sean-penn-indias-daughter-oscars> (Accessed 30 September 2017)

with incredible resourcefulness and managerial skills, poor men are being increasingly cast into the mould of degenerate brutes who squander away their potential and earnings. The critical shift in signification of poor women's greater need for access to resources from the earlier period of documenting women's role and contribution to economic development, John has argued, is in turning their exploitation into a narrative of efficiency. Udwin's depiction of Jyoti Singh and her family, thus, follows the script prepared jointly by the global feminists' self-styled task of 'giving voice' to their poorer sisters in the Third World and the neoliberal Development discourses of 'making visible' the incredible efficiency of women from poorer sections.

Let me conclude this section with a brief review of the impact of the Delhi gang rape on widening the contemporary discourses of gender violence in India. The immediate upshot was the institution of the Justice Verma Commission, which has since given its recommendations, to review the provisions of the laws concerning rape. While the revised rape law does not include several progressive recommendations of the Verma Commission, the intensity of the public outrage became more than an event to signify women's vulnerabilities in a developing country. It called for serious changes at various levels of governance – from gender-sensitive laws and public safety measures to policies directed at women. People on the streets reminded each other about past atrocities with slogans and songs and the presence of placards remembering *Shopian*, *Kunan-Poshpora*, and *Manipur Mothers* suggested the reclamation of 'agency discourses' through activism and re-signification of places marked with gender violence as memories of struggle<sup>8</sup>. The overwhelming attendance by young women and men in *Bekhauf Azadi* (literally meaning fearless freedom) night-marches across different cities in India marked a resurgence in the women's movement, bringing protesting bodies on the streets and debates on women's issues into the public forum. The calls for stronger securitisation and vigilante justice that also ensued indicated that the resurgence cannot be thought of as an unqualified celebration, but public debates are rarely ever so and yet the importance of such debates cannot be undermined.

## CONCLUSION: A CASE FOR REGIONAL FEMINISM

The geo-political entity of South Asia, as Saloni Mathur points out, is constituted by the radical diversity and the tenacity as well as fragility of South Asian nation states (2000: 90). Critical approaches to new region studies have emphasised that regions are neither 'out there' to be discovered nor passive entities created by adding some border-sharing nation-states; but rather are spaces constructed through several administrative, social, cultural and economic practices (Soja 1971, 1999; Paasi 2002; Agnew 2001; Allen et al 1998; Anderson 1998). Naming of concrete and symbolic landscapes through memory and heritage mark the process of institutionalising a uniform regional (which can also be national in certain cases) past. Ruptures in such social spatialisations are significant for tracing the territorial boundaries and borderlands. Erasure of internal inconsistencies within national contexts and cross-border overlap of memories, populations and social practices indicate limits to the usual understanding of the South Asian region as an assemblage of several different nation-states. Territorial boundaries and their porosity are key elements of rethinking regional history and how it shapes governance, economy and culture (Van Schendel 2005). In other words, a comparative understanding dependent on finding similarities and differences between national contexts is not enough to identify the converging issues at stake for regional feminist politics. It is equally important to see how regions are constituted within the wider discourses of feminist politics beyond/internal to national borders.

South Asian feminism has developed over the last three decades a rich and diverse scholarship on the region. The plurality of this scholarship has contributed, on the one hand, to a critical understanding of the imagined community of the postcolonial nation-state, and on the other hand, to a vibrant interaction among specific histories and shared experiences of 'doing' feminist politics as well as 'writing' feminist knowledge. Drawing from now classic works like Kumari Jayawardena's *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (1984) and Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid edited *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History* (1989), contemporary feminist scholars of South Asia are expanding the field of study into, as Mrinalini Sinha puts it, a global perspective of gender that dislodges the limited and limiting Eurocentric definition of gender as a category of analysis (2012: 356-373). Feminist scholars like Afasneh Najmabadi (2005) and Oweyumi Oyeronke (1997) have paved the way to thinking about gender as contingent instead of a pre-given binary between men and women in Iran and the Oyo-Yoruba in Africa. Their

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<sup>8</sup> Kunan-Poshpora refer to two villages in Kashmir where allegedly mass sexual violence against Kashmiri women were committed by the Indian Armed Forces in 1991 and Shopian refers to the town in Kashmir where two women went missing in May 2009 and later their raped and murdered bodies were recovered. Manorama was the name of a young woman from Manipur who had been sexually tortured and killed in 2004, allegedly by the Indian Armed Forces. The protest against Manorama's killing was perhaps the most spectacular demonstration by women in India when several elderly Manipur women had shed their clothes in front of Kangla Fort a few weeks after her death and held a banner with words 'Indian Army Rape Us'.

challenge to the Eurocentric meaning of gender derives from the claim that the relations of gender in different spatio-temporal contexts are not 'local' variations of the 'global' Europe. Though it is impossible to deny the European 'Western' conceptual categories and knowledge paradigms, as Dipesh Charabarty reminds us, it is necessary to relentlessly question the presumed universality of the same and look for practices and theories that displace the fixed definitions with proliferating case studies (Chakrabarty 2000). Delinking gender from its European geographical location with a particular history serves the purpose of erasing the quotation marks from both local and global, making these two categories free from the burden of the history of colonialism as well as its haunting legacy in contemporary globalisation.

The significance of South Asian feminism lies in realising the enormous potential of the scholarship and diverse feminist practices for this project of displacing the 'global'/Eurocentric feminist position and formulating a global perspective for feminist knowledge and practices. Questioning the very definition of gender, tracing 'difference' in everyday practices of gender relations, exploring the fields of masculinities and femininities at different sites – historically and spatially –, delving into the collective trauma of political violence and its gendered impact on the people who share borders, bringing minor categories like sex work and queer politics within the discourses of postcolonial feminism, and tracking the 'counter-flow' of people and ideas from margins to centre constitute some of the important aspects of this project (Sinha 1995; Kapur 2005; Sunder Rajan 2003; Grewal 1996; Lukose and Loomba 2012). 'This project', Arturo Escobar wrote in his critique of imperial globality and global coloniality:

has to do with the rearticulation of global designs from local histories; with the articulation between subaltern and hegemonic knowledge from the perspective of the subaltern; and with the remapping of colonial difference towards a worldly culture. (2004: 219)

In order to critically read the Gender and Development discourses in studying globalisation and to move beyond the feminist debate of translating global conventions/laws into local cultures/nation-states, it is important to produce scrupulous conceptual approaches from regional contexts. The revitalised women's movement is scripting new histories of shared desires and endeavours through developing critical paradigms of knowledge over and above the memories of partition, civil wars, militarised nationalism, and their gendered ramifications in South Asia.

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