

The literary identity of Indian women in South African literature, with emphasis on Vanessa Govender's *Beaten But Not Broken*

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ABSTRACT

The demand for gender equity has been recognised as being critical everywhere. Racial and gender prejudice are prevalent in South Africa because prejudice against women is prevalent on many levels, it is crucial to understand South African history as well as the struggles of Indian women. Indians spent a very long period migrating to Africa and encountered discrimination on many different levels. The African Diaspora's involvement to the various struggles on the continent has been documented by a number of academics. The specific contributions of the African Diaspora to the struggles of women, however, have not gotten much emphasis. It is crucial to give a quick outline of how the African Diaspora has engaged with African women's issues. It is crucial to remember that African women's efforts are distinct from those of other women around the world, but they are also connected to large continental struggles for women's empowerment and for independence, democratisation, and sustainable living. By analysing and highlighting how women's identities as sexual beings are produced in South Africa, the aims to clarify gender power dynamics in the community. In diasporic literature, women's identity is portrayed from a new angle. This paper discusses the causes of this shift and examines how race and gender have been used in literature as justifications for prejudice.

Introduction:

The central question in diasporic twenty-first-century research is the concept of identity. Numerous studies have attempted to clarify or challenge the significance of certain identity allusions in diasporic writing. Nevertheless, it is difficult to sum up in a few words because identity is never satisfied. It develops and changes as a result of many factors. Nobody contests the reality that an immigrant's life is always defined by the experiences and memories they have amassed. Living in a completely foreign and unknown place is a really difficult experience that is foreign to everything you have done before. Diaspora refers to the act of removing someone from their place of origin and dispersing, scattering, or dispersing them. A writer who writes about their native country and their memories while literary framing them. The sociological concept of "Diaspora" merely denotes acquiring and assimilating culture, which is the same as socialisation (Chowdhury, 2020). Over time, as a result of their colonial exploitation and subjugation, it started to be employed to disperse Americans and Africans (Chowdhury, 2020). It now refers to a person's distribution, as well as their dislocation and migrations as a result of numerous different symptoms of displacement. Migrations, immigrations, and exiles are the principal manifestations of these phenomena (Asghar, 2020). Discrimination, cultural shock, reverse cultural shock, challenges with adjustment and integration, orientalism and identity crisis, alienation and displacement, contradiction, hybridity, and generational gap are all central themes in diasporic writing.

Women writers of modern fiction connect with the diaspora viewpoint on being African in international contexts. Compared to past eras, women's writing is thriving in Africa nowadays. We have female authors who contribute to the literature. Through a critical lens on Africa's tale in the global era of social, economic, and political changes, literature explores how women develop new ways of narrating the African experience in the global age of social, economic, and political transformation. African women's literature about the diaspora serves as a unifying example of the fact that for African women, living in the diaspora is an unexplored journey over a new landscape of identity outside of African borders. The major female authors who dominated the African literary canon were examined in the fictional works. Within the West's transnational context, the contributors look at a variety of subjects, including immigrant life, racialized identities, and otherness.

This study makes an effort to examine the identity of Indian women in South Africa through current diasporic literature. In recent decades, there has been increased interest in studying women's identities. The position of Indian women in South Africa will be examined, as well as how Vanessa Govender's art reflects Indian women's identity. Within the constraints of the setting, Govender more fully captures the condition of the women. I also want to look at how being a writer of the diaspora differs from Vanessa Govender's

depiction. Firstly, in this research paper look at the literary meaning of women's identity in diasporic writing and how is it used as a theme or background in literary representation? Then look at the How does the literary representation of Indian women in South Africa's identity in Vanessa Govender's Work differ from others? And at the end look at the representation of Indian women in South Africa has changed between the novels of diasporic writers and non-diasporic writers what are the social, economic, geographical, and political factors responsible for this change?

Methodology:

The methodology of a research work pertains to the analytical framework deployed to analyse the texts at hand following the research questions. Therefore, I propose to use a sociological lens and standpoint theory for this research. These approaches have been chosen to locate the selected text in their geographical, social, political, and cultural background as feminist theories of the literature suggest that texts cannot be understood in isolation from their larger socio-political realities. It will examine the geographical, social, historical, political, and cultural factors affecting women's sexuality and how diasporic writing has depicted female characters' roles with different geographical structures. Also analyses how the voice of women has been represented in the diasporic work chosen for the study. The research seeks to deploy a multi-dimensional approach by exploring the influence of literature, geography, history, and politics to understand women's identity. The larger theoretical framework in understanding the representation of women's identity in the selected work is broadly guided by the feminist standpoint approach. Standpoint theory advocates that knowledge is located within and mediated by a network of social, political, and geographical epistemological relations. Who creates knowledge would determine the status that it would have? Power determines the value attached to perspective and understanding and knowledge. This theory analyses the causal effect of the power structure on knowledge while also advocating a specific route for inquiry from a standpoint emerging from the shared political struggle within diasporic writing.

Historical Background:

India has the second-largest diaspora in the world, after China, according to the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (Krishna, 2015). There are an estimated 25 million Indians living abroad, who are dispersed across all key parts of the globe (Krishna, 2015). According to Kamini Krishna (2015), the British encouraged the migration of Indians during the colonial era because they needed affordable labour to build East African railroad projects and South African sugar estates. The Slavery Abolition Act, which was approved by the British parliament in 1833 and emancipated slave labour throughout the British colonies, was one of the factors that led to widespread migration. This resulted in freshly liberated slaves taking advantage of their freedom, leaving many plantations without a sufficient labour. The women oversaw agriculture, while the men prided themselves on being warriors. Between 1860 and 1911, there were two waves of Indian immigration to South Africa; this was due to labour migration as well (Krishna, 2015). Due to the early chances afforded by mission schools in India, another social stratum of the educated and elite

migrated. They were primarily Indian accountants, government employees, lawyers, and teachers. However, because of their tenacity and capacity to compete with both cultures, Indian people in South Africa experienced intense animosity from both White people and native Africans (Krishna, 2015).

South Africa experienced a satyagraha, or nonviolent revolution, at the same time that India was battling for its independence. Women participated in this movement as well. The taboos of culture, religion, and societal standards kept some women confined to the constricting responsibilities of domesticity, while others battled with their husbands in the satyagraha or nonviolence movements. Indian women volunteered to actively participate during the First Satyagraha Campaign, a movement that opposed a number of discriminatory laws that limited the economic, political, and social freedom of Indians in South Africa (Krishna, 2015). Indian women of all religions, sects, and linguistic groups were instrumental in the Second Satyagraha Campaign standing up for their husbands in opposition to the Searle Judgment, which invalidated all non-Christian marriages, including all Hindu, Muslim, and Zoroastrian unions (Krishna, 2015). Indian women were remained mainly constrained by custom until the late 1930s. But as the 1940s got underway, a tiny number of politically aware and educated people started to show symptoms of political action in response to shifting socioeconomic realities. Due to the high rate of male unemployment at this time, many working-class households relied on female breadwinners. It gave Indian women a reason and stage to become politically engaged and dispelled the stereotype that they are merely "docile" and "passive." Over 1700 people aged 20 to 25—297 of whom were women—served jail terms between June 1946 and May 1947, sometimes up to four times (Krishna, 2015). Indian women raised loud objections, opposed laws, opposed jail, and sacrificed familial ties. They engaged in combat outside the parameters of their conventional roles as moms, spouses, and daughters. So, social and economic crises served as the catalyst for political unrest. Indians were forcibly relocated into particular townships, and they had limited freedom of movement. Numerous Indian women from the Muslim and Hindu communities battled for women's rights and against discriminatory apartheid laws. Their involvement in the marches of defiance was brave, and their actions resulted in jail. More profound dynamic changes to the political environment were brought about by the Second World War. It promoted the participation of a select number of emancipated women, elevating them to positions of leadership within the movement (Krishna, 2015). The essential and crucial role that women played in the emancipation of their people is something that the Indian community in South Africa owes a lot to.

Indian-born women have shakti and are a great value to their nation. Future generations should be greatly inspired by their contributions to the fight for freedom. Women of Indian descent participated in various activities in South Africa. The importance of racial identity holds a major place in the enormous African literature on nation-building in South Africa. Indians in the new South Africa are seen to be socially and economically marginalised as a result. South African Indians use a newly available political language to emphasise their

minority voice while simultaneously extending the isolation and insulation established by apartheid. This act of preserving a minority voice inside a culture that is uniquely gendered has resonances with colonial India's spirit of nationalism, which saw the bourgeois Indian woman as the centre of its national culture. Indians from South Africa reimagine a heterosexual, female figure of Indian culture for overtly political purposes. Focusing on this issue sheds light on the complicated post-apartheid South African landscape's relationships between racial identity, gender, and class. The case provides a potent illustration of how a partially privileged minority might use a racially, gendered nationalism to make cultural and political demands during difficult times of transition (Radhakrishnan, 2005). Recent research on the meaning of race in post-apartheid South Africa emphasises the significance of minority groups as crucial gateways to understanding the racial politics of the modern setting (Radhakrishnan, 2005). The choices for reimagining the country in the post-apartheid vision are constrained and assume divisions based on phenotypically defined racial groups. Minority groups have been created as a result of the current political climate, and they are invested in their exclusion. Gendered subjects are trapped in conflicting settings that play out the boundaries of that categorical identity as South African Indian identity has solidified into a racialized, gendered discourse of national belonging. Examining the intricate relationship between public and private cultural representations helps to understand how conflicting national belonging narratives coexist uncomfortably, as expressed in the interviews. By focusing on these areas of overlapping and contradictory identities, it forced to consider how hybrid or transnational scripts of belonging might counteract a discourse of nationhood that essentializes certain groups of people. Such a change could assist in removing the binary options of expressing political difference or, in the words of one interviewee, "becoming lost in the rainbow nation" (Radhakrishnan, 2005).

Meaning of Diaspora

The term "diaspora" refers to everyone who migrates, immigrates to foreign countries voluntarily or forcibly, is banished by their own country and people, or is uprooted from their ancestral home (Asghar, 2020). Diaspora refers to the dispersion of people from their ancestral home to two or more countries, often leaving behind a terrible legacy for the individuals (Asghar, 2020). As a result of colonial aspirations, it also faces the diversification of people from the home country in search of economic opportunities, better job opportunities, and trade. Studies of the diaspora look at the aspects of how dispersions happen and how they manifest among people from both the originating country and the diasporic goods. Due to everything mentioned, the diaspora has a strong desire for their home country because it is an essential part of who they are. This idea gives people the impression of leading a kind of hybrid existence characterised by geographical shifts and changes in culture, language, and frequently aesthetics. to use nostalgia as a means of relocating their identity within their locality.

Identity crisis is crucial in creating and forming diasporas because it affects how people feel about their former homes (Asghar, 2020). J.U. Jacobs (2006) asserts that "human

history is always a story of someone's emigration." He asserts that due to continuous migrations across the continent, first from North to South, then from South to North, and back again, South African writing has always been diasporic. Instead of grouping topics and chapters that are theoretically connected with theoretical models of diaspora, Jacobs' study's narratives of diasporic identities appear to be grouped around thematic and historical contexts. Even the main purpose this writing is to demonstrate the writers from Diaspora and Identity in South African Fiction can be interpreted in relation to other kinds of creative expression using a diasporic lens.

Theme of Identity

The collective aspect of the characteristics that undeniably identify something or make it known is what the theme of identity in literature refers to. The idea of identity in literature is frequently discussed in academic publications; by using this topic, we can attempt to comprehend both the author's and the reader's points of view. Identification is a common technique used by authors to express their ideas and to portray the social and historical setting of the moment. Since it has affected composition, identity has been a central issue in literature from antiquity to the postmodern age. Many authors also portray particular cultural truths using their fictional characters. Readers should always consider a character's identity and consider why they are who they are and behave the way they do in order to gain a greater understanding of the entire content. Identity is "The collective component of the set of features by which a thing is recognised or known," according to Jennifer Todd (2018). Identity is defined by several scholars in various ways. If we approach this phrase philosophically, it gets very complex and covers a lot of area. As a result of the varied ways that readers have traditionally understood the meaning, numerous authors have depicted characters in a variety of complex, sophisticated, and contradicting ways. Through this description, the author seeks to capture both the diversity of the characters and the current situation of society.

In modern literature, women's identities are nuanced. The majority of feminist writers talk about how women identify and how they are perceived as sexual objects in society. As the female self tries to explain the experience of creating art, writing by women brings us into the process of establishing female identity. In what and how they write today, women authors express their understanding of their own identities, frequently doing so with a sense of urgency and fire. The vast majority of the early male fiction writers in India eventually gave way to female authors later in the 20th century. The door for this transition was opened by the advent of women into the literary sphere. Writing had previously just been a long-standing tradition, but it all started with women's writing. In feminist literature, women's sexual identities are highly paradoxical. Women's identities are developed over time, and their primary identities are relational and more adaptable. Because the concept of identity involves a multitude of aspects, the wider feminist discourse surrounding women's writing contributes in our understanding of women's contemporary writing. This research study enlightens us on South African women's identities and changes in writing representation based on racial and gender backgrounds. We focus on one particular piece of literature that explores how women express their

sexual identities and how the author interprets this issue in their work. The topic of sexual identity is a crucial one in literary analysis and contemporary culture.

Representation of Indian women in Vanessa Govender's *Beaten But Not Broken*

Indian novels sparked new perspectives on their civilization. A significant shift in society over the past several years has generated new approaches to comprehending its cultural history that go beyond theories focused on difference and instead emphasize integration. This Fiction is based on the idea that race is a social term that has been shaped by the course of its history. The thesis of this study is that historical and political change are the main themes in the majority of literature. Additionally, Indian women in South Africa face many difficulties. The state wasn't good. The literary work gave Indian South African women less of a voice. South African literacy and cultural studies are at a crossroads where past theories have been proven false and the canon is being forced to adapt even more to accommodate minority work (Frenkel, 2011). The memoir "Beaten But Not Broken" by Vanessa Govender depicts the plight of South Indian women, their pain, and the ways in which they are victimised. She is a journalist who travelled to South Africa, and through her writing, "Beaten but Not Broken," she expresses the agony and disgrace she witnessed there. It explores a victim's mental state and explains why it's so challenging to escape and leave. Every single day, women are killed by their boyfriends. She formerly struggled with an identity dilemma. The fiction she writes about Indian women who live in South Africa's diaspora makes this clear by outlining her position on the subject of identity in the host culture and country. She has created her own identity, formed her own opinions on the world's viewpoints, and shared the experience she had while living in South Africa. As a result, she has given individuals who live there a voice in the diasporic community and in the world of their connection to their native country. By offering a story that is condensed with the meanings and explorations of the experiences of the diaspora as they live there in the host land, she has given transformative ideas and themes of the contemporary world. This book dispels every myth and preconception we have about this abhorrent practise known as abuse. In the end, the book is about finding hope and healing. More than inspiration, it was a fierce drive to speak the truth and expose injustices. Written from memory of the events, *Beaten but Not Broken* is a personal account of the

author's experiences. To protect the identities of several people, including the abuser, names have been omitted. The primary purpose of this book is to inspire other women and others who have experienced gender-based violence to never accept, tolerate, or justify abuse. Women must understand that they are the only ones with power in an abusive situation. She has the power to speak up, call attention to what is happening, and expose her abuser for the scumbag that he is. She can go after justice. We are incredibly powerful even when we are injured and bleeding. Through the lens of this book, women are beginning to emerge from the shadows, speak up, and reclaim their power.

Conclusion:

The majority of male authors discussed women's issues from their point of view, but there was nothing in the literature on women's own experiences. Even today, women's voices are underrepresented, and Indian women in South Africa face double the oppression of male writers. They experienced gender and racial violence. In her biography "Beaten but not Broken," Vanessa Govender describes her trip to South Africa. After several women were killed by men, she witnessed gender-based violence. In this piece, we can see how a female author portrays a strong, straightforward female character. In this piece, she depicts a woman who is autonomous and who creates her own identity after showing the struggle of women and a crisis of identity. In South Africa, the rate of gender-based violence is dangerously high. It is diasporic writing has a unique way of portraying the world and offers a unique perspective on issues. This book revealed that Indian women in South Africa live in extremely risky circumstances and endure a lot of violence. This paper demonstrates the importance of South Africa's reality and to consider the struggles faced by Indian women. According to this, the Diaspora has just recently become actively involved in women's problems, despite being incredibly dynamic and beneficial. It suggested that there should be more feminist writing by Indian women in South Africa's diaspora. The African Diaspora has taken part in the transfer of economic and social remittances toward the economic development, political processes, and the destruction of systems that restrict the empowerment of women in Africa through connections with women writers and individuals in African countries.

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